

2014 – 2015 Annual Report

Metropolitan Social Services

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Executive Director's Message

Although it has been years since the Great Recession was supposed to end, thousands of Nashville's families continue to struggle with the serious effects of poverty and unmet need. This annual report describes a couple of examples of how personal and institutional events can create crises that respond only to lengthy and intense interventions that deplete the human and financial resources of MSS and other organizations.

During the 2014-2015 fiscal year, the James Robertson Apartment complex closed and 100 low-income renters were required to vacate by the end of April 2015. The property was sold and the new owner would not accept the HUD Section 8 contract (the new owner was not required to provide affordable housing because the minimum time period for providing affordable housing had expired). MSS staff remained on-site at the James Robertson Apartments for weeks providing assistance to the residents.

To increase efficiencies, MSS made an organizational change by creating a new unit to focus specifically on the intake process for new customers. This specialization will allow social workers to better address case management for customers, including those with increasingly complex situations. An example is described in *A Nashvillian's Struggle*, which discusses the array of detrimental conditions experienced by one customer and how she worked with MSS employees to stabilize her life.

MSS again provided family holiday assistance that served 134 families, including 340 children. The 3rd Annual Ride 2 Thrive was held in June, this year at Cumberland Park near downtown. The 6th Annual *Community Needs Evaluation* was released at the Extent and Shape of Nashville's Poverty. Because the shortage of affordable housing in Davidson County is approaching a crisis level, the event on April 28, 2015 included a panel of housing experts who discussed needs as well as possible solutions for the future.

MSS would especially like to thank the organizations that work with MSS to enhance and strengthen the social/human service delivery system for Davidson County.



Metropolitan Social Services Board of Commissioners – 2014-2015

Dr. Frank Boehm
Renard Francois
Pastor William Harris
Nikita Jones
Betty Johnson
Kim Johnson
Chrissy Kirkwood
Mary Rolando
Bill Sinclair



MSS Creates New Intake Unit

To enhance customer services, MSS has created a specialized unit that is designed to achieve greater efficiencies and better client outcomes.

Specialized intake workers (Trumeko Fox, Catherine Pond, Dorethia Fulson and Carolyn Jackman) will focus on effectively managing the intake process, while social workers focus on complexities of customer needs.



Relocation Assistance

Metropolitan Social Services (MSS) supports government and community initiatives such as the relocation of residents at the James Robertson Apartment complex. The [Metropolitan Development and Housing Agency](#) (MDHA) notified MSS on January 9, 2015, that the new owner would not accept the HUD Section 8 contract that provided housing subsidies to nearly all residents. As a result, the 110 low-income renters were notified to vacate the property by the end of April 2015.

MSS collaborated with MDHA and the former management of James Robertson and developed a plan to assist the 110 residents. Working with MDHA and other community partners, immediate efforts began to find housing for those who were displaced.

On January 15, MSS hand-delivered letters to each apartment to inform residents that MSS would be on site to assist with the housing relocation process. MSS coordinated with the original management company of James Robertson Apartments and posted letters throughout the building that informed the residents of the documentation that they would need for the relocation.

Residents were invited to meet with MSS staff members who were on site three days each week for four weeks, in addition to scheduled visits after that period. Residents who had not arranged for appointments received follow-up letters and again invited to work with MSS staff and other organizations to identify housing. During the relocation process, 42 residents obtained housing with assistance from MSS, 41 found housing on their own (or moved in with family or friends), 14 were placed in MDHA housing and 7 located housing through another agency or program.

A Nashvillian's Struggle

Complex Problems Require Multifaceted Services

After being homeless for 3 years, a 26-year old African American woman came to Metro Social Services homeless, pregnant, and with nothing but a bag filled with a change of clothes. Not only was she dealing with intellectual disabilities, but she had also been physically abused by the father of her unborn child.

It was extremely difficult for her to obtain services on her own, challenged by navigating the complexities of the service delivery systems. She was unable to find employment, had been denied the SSI benefits for which she applied and had been turned away from other agencies. She lacked access to transportation, had no income and had fallen through the cracks of the social/human services delivery system.

When she arrived at MSS, she was without transportation or income and had been falling through the cracks in our system. By providing a comprehensive array of services to meet her need, MSS assisted this customer with temporary shelter while she received case management support.

This resulted in several positive outcomes for her, including: an identification card; a replacement Social Security Card and birth certificate; Food Stamp benefits; WIC assistance; Safelink telephone; presumptive TennCare for adequate prenatal care; participation in the Strong Start Program for education on prenatal care and caring for newborns; Section 8 voucher for housing through the Homelessness Commission and obtained permanent housing; vouchers for clothing and luggage to carry her personal items; worked with a Vocational Rehab Counselor to help her with work/skill development; was connected to an SSI/SSDI attorney to secure income; and attended a nine-week parenting program called Tied Together.



The young woman moved into permanent housing on October 1, 2014, and two weeks later gave birth to a healthy boy. Her social worker linked her with assistance to cover move-in costs, and acquire bedding, furniture and other basic household items.

In addition, the MSS social worker was able to connect her with ongoing case management support through a contract the Metropolitan Homelessness Commission has with Centerstone to help her with the transition from homelessness to permanent housing. She was also linked with Healthy Beginnings, a program that offers weekly home visits to provide resources, education, and parenting support.

Working with other organizations, MSS was able to provide a significant level of assistance to this particular customer. However, this type of intervention involves a tremendous level of time, effort and resources. Because of the level of need and the large number of people in poverty, the resources of multiple organizations are insufficient to meet the needs of too many.

Metropolitan Homelessness Commission

By providing organizational support to the [How's Nashville](#) initiative, the [Metropolitan Homelessness Commission](#) provides planning and coordination services in relation to services for chronically homeless people, particularly those who are military veterans for about 30 community partners.

In January 2015, How's Nashville partners launched the local "2016 by 2016" campaign, with a goal of assisting 2,106 Nashvillians who are veterans or others who have been chronically homeless during the following two years. "2016 by 2016" is modeled after the national "Zero: 2016" campaign. The initiative will inventory all existing resources, revamp our current How's Nashville community effort by setting new goals, and recruit even more community partners, especially landlords to assist a projected 595 Veterans, 1,421 people experiencing chronic homelessness and others who are homeless and at risk of dying prematurely because of known health conditions.

How's Nashville collected data on monthly housing placement rates, finding that from June 2013 to December 2014, about 900 people who were experiencing chronic and/or vulnerable homelessness obtained permanent housing, an average of 46 people who moved into housing each month. Under the 2016 by 2016 effort housing placement for veterans from January 2015 through June 2015, 334 people experiencing chronic homelessness obtained permanent housing (an average of 55/month), in addition to 167 homeless veterans (28/month).

The campaign is supported through generous private donations that help cover move-in costs including utility and rent deposits, first month rent, furniture, and some back arrear costs. For donation information, please visit howsnashville.org.



The Homelessness Commission implemented a training process to help identify the most vulnerable people in our community and prioritize them with appropriate resources. Each partner agency agreed to use a shared database and housing navigators were identified at partner agencies. In addition, the Homelessness Commission designated a staff member to become a property owner liaison and provide housing navigators with assistance to locate housing opportunities. The Homelessness Commission also started a monthly residents meetings for people assisted through How's Nashville to create a forum for them to gather and ask any property owner and housing questions in a safe environment.

Meet Me at the Market

In November 2014, MSS [Senior Nutrition Program](#) participants attended Meet Me at the Market, held at the Farmers' Market. These events are held regularly and are sponsored by AARP. In addition to nutritious meals, the Congregate Meal Program provides educational activities, recreation and field trips for elders.



Family Holiday Assistance

Metro Social Services together with the National Black Police Association-Nashville Chapter, and the Tennessee Bikers Education Association served 134 families including 340 children by providing toys and bicycles. Almost 100 bicycles went to kids of all ages.

On December 3, the partners held the annual toy run, bringing the toys and bicycles to Metro Social Services.

On December 20, the holiday bag distribution was held with volunteers from all three organizations helping to hand out the gifts bringing smiles, hugs and tears of joy to all participants.



The Extent and Shape of Nashville's Poverty

MSS Planning & Coordination presented the 6th annual Community Needs Evaluation at the Extent and Shape of Nashville's Poverty on April 28, 2015. In addition to presentations on the data from the Planning & Coordination staff, Dr. Oscar Miller of TSU (also a Research Advisor for the annual needs evaluations) spoke about the importance of collecting and using data.



An Affordable Housing Panel of local experts discussed the issues related to housing for the many low-income residents of Davidson County and discussed unmet needs and possible interventions. The panel included Adriane Harris (The Housing Fund), Rev. Bill Barnes (Barnes Affordable Housing Trust Fund), Brent Elrod (Urban Housing Solutions), Eddie Latimer (Affordable Housing Resources), Jann Seymour (NeedLink Nashville) and Larry Wade (former resident, James Robertson Apartments).

Metro Social Services to offer housing help Tuesdays

Todd Barnes, tbarnes@tennessean.com

6:51 p.m. CST November 6, 2014



(Photo: Getty Images / iStockphoto)

Nashvillians who are homeless or in jeopardy of losing their homes can receive help from Metro Social Services on Tuesdays at the Nashville Public Library.

Social workers will host drop-in visits from 9 a.m. to noon Tuesdays in the third-floor meeting area known as "The Commons." Workers will not provide direct financial help but instead refer Davidson County residents 18 and older to community organizations that can help them obtain or keep housing and employment.

"We hope our services will enable our homeless population to find resources and help the volumes of people who frequent the library on a regular basis," Renee Pratt, director of Metro Social Services, said in a press release. "We are confident that this opportunity to assist those in need will allow for a successful transition to self-sufficiency."

The department already offers similar outreach at sites across Nashville, including at the Martha O'Bryan Community Resource Center, McGruder Family Resource Center and Matthew Walker Sickle Cell Clinic.

Ride 2 Thrive

On June 27, 2015, MSS held the 3rd annual [Ride 2 Thrive](#) event at Cumberland Park near downtown. It featured free health screenings, healthy cooking sessions, zumba, music, entertainment, food, vendors with resources, information and referral and a motorcycle/Corvette showcase.



Financial Information

Budget Summary		2012-13	2013-14	2014-15
Expenditures and Transfers:				
GSD General Fund		\$ 7,903,600	\$ 7,936,200	\$ 7,883,100
Special Purpose Funds		31,600	158,300	150,800
Total Expenditures and Transfers		\$ 7,935,200	\$ 8,094,500	\$ 8,033,900
Revenues and Transfers:				
Program Revenue				
Charges, Commissions, and Fees		\$ 20,600	\$ 25,600	\$ 26,300
Other Governments and Agencies		1,493,200	1,439,600	1,430,700
Other Program Revenue		65,600	193,300	175,500
Total Program Revenue		\$ 1,579,400	\$ 1,658,500	\$ 1,632,500
Non-program Revenue		0	0	0
Transfers From Other Funds and Units		0	0	0
Total Revenues		\$ 1,579,400	\$ 1,658,500	\$ 1,632,500
Expenditures Per Capita		\$ 12.49	\$ 12.49	\$ 12.20
Positions	Total Budgeted Positions	89	87	93





Metropolitan Social Services Programs and Services

Direct Services

Descriptions and Eligibility Guidelines are available [online](#).

Family Services Program – 615-862-6458

The Family Services Program helps customers in develop or improve their life skills, increase independence and improve family stability. Services include Information and Referral Services, Counseling, Case Management and other assistance.

Homeless Services - 615-880-2526

Address the needs of individuals and families who are homeless or at imminent risk of becoming homeless by providing supportive services and coordinating direct services with partner agencies.

Burial Assistance - 615-862-6458

Provides assistance to families experiencing grief from the loss of a loved one.

Senior Nutrition Services - 615-880-2292

Promotes health and well-being of persons over 60 years of age by providing nutritious meals at congregate meal sites or delivering to senior homes.

Nutritional Food Supplement – 615-892-6458

Nutritional food supplement sold with doctor's prescription.

Adult Homemaker Program - 615-862-6480

Serves frail elderly and disabled adults who need help with household tasks and/or personal care

Children's Homemaker Program – 615-862-6480

Specialized services to support families with children under age 18 who are at imminent risk of entering state custody.

Planning & Coordination

615-862-6494

Planning & Coordination collects and analyzes data regarding social/human service needs to identify unmet needs and anticipate emerging issues. The information is disseminated to elected officials, funders, community organizations and to the community.

Planning & Coordination produces an annual [Community Needs Evaluation](#), issue briefs and newsletters, available online.