



# The Housing Crisis for Highly Vulnerable Populations in Central Ohio: The View from I& R

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# Profile of Callers at High Risk of Imminent Homelessness

- No history of homelessness
- Primarily people who are priced out of safe affordable housing
- Low income, many receiving \$750/month SSI, Social Security, or SSDI only
- Various scenarios:
  - Loss of other income in the household
  - Current rental property sold, lease not renewed
  - Significant rent increases
- COAAA I & R staff receiving on average 5-6 inquiries per week that fit this profile.

# Low Income Housing Shortage

- 2-4 year waiting lists for subsidized housing (rent set at 30% of income)
- New properties are Tax Credit, not subsidized (most units slightly less than market, usually a small number of subsidized units)
- Lengthy waiting lists for Housing Choice Vouchers (Section 8)
- Declining inventory of properties that accept vouchers
- Recipients have 90 days to use the voucher, search tools not current
- Loss of public housing

# Market Rate Rentals

- Strong rental market – properties taking no risks
- Properties requiring 2-3X the rent in income
- In Columbus area need at least \$1800 per month income to find a 1-bedroom unit
- Historically, some renters were able to manage on a tight budget, now can't get in the door
- Past evictions, bad credit, felony convictions are now almost insurmountable barriers

# Homeowner Challenges

- Home maintenance costs on fixed income
- Increases in utility and other costs of living
- Increases in property tax
- Increase in bankruptcies / foreclosures
- Little or no equity to leverage
- Limited options to downsize quickly to more affordable housing due to waiting lists

# COAAA Interventions: Homelessness Prevention

- Referral to tenant advocacy organizations  
    Legal Aid, Coalition on Homelessness and Housing in Ohio (COHHIO)
- Referral to Community Mediation Services for landlord/tenant mediation
- Referral for rent assistance (primarily FEMA's Emergency Food and Shelter Program), Veteran's Service Commissions
- Linkage with daily money management/payee services
- Referral to home repair programs
- Referral to organizations that provide Foreclosure Prevention Counseling
- Diversion to care facilities

# COAAA Interventions: Education and Outreach

- COAAA staff conducted workshops in the YMCA's new VanBuren Shelter for almost 2 years to teach housing-related terminology, and teach guests how to conduct a housing search/ navigate housing programs
- Outreach to local shelter staff to educate on COAAA services and long-term care options
- Development of a comprehensive **COAAA Housing and Home Repair Guide** – we distribute and mail copies, also can be downloaded from our website

# Emergency Shelter

- Franklin County has the most emergency shelter capacity in COAAA's service area
- Other counties divert to the Franklin County shelter system
- Central Point of Access for shelter beds via the Homeless Hotline (just relocated from 211 to NetCare)
- Shelter occupancy at or above capacity even as the weather improved this year



# Emergency Shelter for Older Adults and People who have Disabilities

- No emergency shelter to meet needs of people who require assistance with ADLs  
COAAA staff have had reports that the Homeless Hotline is diverting when a person is unable to perform ADLs
- VanBuren shelter was built with some features for accessibility, can accept people who use wheelchairs, walkers, or require oxygen units
- Shelters typically require guests to leave during the day (some exceptions)

# Emergency Shelter

- VanBuren shelter has a “respite care” section with a limited number of beds set aside for people being discharged from the hospital and who were homeless upon hospital admission
- Older adults and people who have disabilities are uniquely vulnerable in the shelter system, intimidation, theft, injury
- Increasingly seeing individuals in shelters who are recovering from major medical procedures
- Limited staff to triage guests to a more appropriate setting
- “Housing Navigators” have high caseloads – not all guests are being assigned a navigator

# Need for Advocacy

- Specifically regarding the unique vulnerability of the populations we serve, older adults and people who have disabilities
- With all levels of government and with community planners.
- Represent these populations with homeless advocacy organizations and at community meetings with a housing focus
- Raise awareness through the media – the general public has no idea of the magnitude of this problem or who is impacted
- Lack of awareness of this crisis affects the ability of people to plan for themselves and/or the needs of vulnerable family members

This is a national issue that will affect an increasing number of people.