



STRATEGIC COLLABORATION AND PARTNERSHIPS

Community Examples

1.

WELCOME HOUSE, INC. KENTUCKY BALANCE OF STATE CoC

Working across the vast geography of the state of Kentucky, Welcome House, Inc.'s street outreach teams take into consideration the varying landscapes in which they operate geographically, culturally, and in terms of the availability of services.

In more populous and urban areas, they act as connectors to networks of available services and providers with whom they maintain strong multilateral relationships.

In the deeply rural parts of the state, outreach workers provide wraparound services that simply aren't available or accessible there. These teams require significantly smaller caseloads to provide that level of service.

Rural outreach teams also cultivate innovative partnerships specific to their geographical context, such as utility companies who can identify hard-to-find encampments.

The state of Kentucky recently enacted some of the harshest criminalization laws in the country, making it illegal to sleep outside on most public land. Welcome

House, Inc. is positioned strategically to reduce law enforcement contact with people experiencing unsheltered homelessness, and has taken a leading role in developing strategic relationships with local law enforcement agencies across the state.

Leadership at Welcome House Inc. has learned to speak the language of local and municipal law enforcement agencies to understand their priorities and needs. From there, leadership can make the case that street outreach helps to increase public safety, lighten workloads, and reduce departmental costs. Using data, they explain how effective street outreach services can reduce the need for police and EMS dispatches and other costly resources.

This relationship-building led to the creation of a 1-800 line for law enforcement agencies to be able to contact street outreach easily. Law enforcement agencies now often contact street outreach providers when they receive calls about encampments before engaging in enforcement actions. Many times, Welcome House, Inc.'s street outreach teams are successful in engaging encampment residents in services without law enforcement getting involved at all, leading to better outcomes for everyone.

2.

REGIONAL OUTREACH COOPERATIVE CHATTANOOGA, TN

The Regional Outreach Cooperative (ROC) in Chattanooga, TN, formed when two different street outreach workers from different organizations both showed up to a campsite at the same time to bring supplies.

They decided to coordinate their efforts, rather than duplicating each other's work. Now, multiple outreach organizations map out their engagements together to cover more ground; ROC reaches around 250 people a week within the city of Chattanooga and Hamilton County.

Daily, outreach teams meet at a central office location and map out routes for the day's engagements together, using a shared and regularly-updated map of known encampments and locations with people living outside.

This daily coordination also provides infrastructure for volunteers to supplement the capacity and the skills of the existing teams. Specialized volunteers from partnering organizations (the hospital system, animal welfare, etc.) help to enhance services available to people on the streets, and help the ROC teams to deploy those skills strategically.

Their coordination has also led to a much larger pool of resources. ROC now has a network of donors that keep them supplied with in-kind donations to meet the needs of the folks they serve (food, tents, sleeping bags, etc.). Their CoC, the Chattanooga Regional Homeless Coalition, supports funding efforts through donations and grants – which, in turn, enable ROC partners to support transitions out of homelessness.

When the CoC embarked on a redesign of their Coordinated Entry system, the ROC was a key partner in designing a system that meets the needs of people experiencing unsheltered homelessness. Now when any of the outreach providers from ROC encounter someone living unsheltered, any one of them can connect that person with the CoC's housing resources and services that make housing easier to access (like help getting identity documents, a place to receive mail, and housing focused case management).

With both permanent housing and clients' needs driving their work, the ROC has also developed robust partnerships within healthcare and other sectors that allow them to quickly and smoothly connect people to treatment, rehab, and other services they may need or want. The CoC is taking ROC's work as an example and working with the regions of the CoC outside of the city to establish similar collaborative efforts in engaging people living outside.

As a result, the Chattanooga area has seen multi-year sustained declines in unsheltered homelessness across their CoC. These declines are a testament to what a community can achieve by aligning existing resources and efforts towards solutions that actually end homelessness.

