

Blue Ribbon Task Force

Focus Groups

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Focus Group #1: Greenville Community Shelter

Question 1: How do you define homelessness?

#1 Not having a place to lay my head; Not having roots in the community; Not having basic needs/shelter

#2 Not having/knowing resources to come out of homelessness

Question 2: How did you become homeless?

#4 Substance abuse

The public should be aware that until we address substance abuse there will be homelessness

#6 Domestic issue – had to decide whether to stay and deal with it or get safe/independent – away from violence; she had been scared to step out – felt she couldn't do it on her own – one day he locked her out and it opened her eyes that she didn't need him.

#2 No SA or DV

Was victim of SA – children were involved in SA – situation was not safe – had to leave Fiancé died and she was staying with her children. When spouses die the other spouse may have no resources or place to live.

#8 ? – could not understand participant's dialect

#5 No SA or DV

Was staying with someone in family – no room – couldn't put him/her up  
Best situation – stay within rules of shelter – get out – go to transition center – get own space

#4 Mental illness played a part – has been in shelter more than one – has been welcomed and treated fairly

Shelter is not set up to deal with mental illness

Until find education/help homelessness will continue

#2 Shelter – meets immediate needs, but can't deal with mental illness, SA – there are no counselors to listen – this needs to be looked into

At this time, group had to be asked to re-focus on the question asked, not on solutions

Question 3: How long have you been homeless or were you homeless?

- #2 Was homeless – shelter – 3 months before transitional housing
- #6 Off and on for 9 years. Currently – 3 months
- #4 Off and on 2-3 years
- #5 Off and on 3-4 years – would stay with friends and family – was like a ball bouncing around
- #2 If count bouncing around family – since January 07 after fiancé passed away
- #8 54 days (first time?)
- #1 Since August – was in streets until came to shelter in November
- #3 3 years

Question 5: How has homelessness affected the way you think about yourself?

- #2 Low self esteem, feel worthless and useless, don't feel part of anything
- #6 Scary feeling; people look at me like something is wrong – others could lose their paychecks and be homeless
- #4 First time was scary – hard to bare – smacking self. Not shame – use shelter for what it's worth – blessing to have shelter behind her – tries not to worry about what people think of her. Feels good regarding self and outlook – will get me out of the shelter
- #2 Created supreme sense of failure; failed to do what needs to in order to survive

Question 6: Thinking back to when you first became homeless, what would it have taken to prevent it?

- #4 Known about SA and what it would lead to. Addiction took precedence – even over eating. Second time – disease kicked in – knew what would happen but chose addiction – would sleep under a bridge if it meant could keep using.
- #2 Being more independent while with fiancé could help avoid situation that lead to homelessness. Didn't have a clue – didn't know how to pick up the pieces. Worked PT b/c fiancé was main supporter. If had a full time job would have been okay. Needed better financial understanding.
- #6 Listen to what's right in my mind – not letting others influence; peer pressure from family – they were giving advice to come home and they'd help but then left her at the

shelter. Needed to do what she knows is right. Had no faith in family – lost faith in self which kept him/her down.

- #5 Should listen to family when they told her not to be with him. Someone had legal trouble (participant??) and after out of jail was homeless. Had no basis of home
- #1 Under influence of drugs – no preventing it – chose addiction – can't change unless wants to; desire to change would take him/her out of homelessness

Question 7: What do you need to maintain a home/housing?

- #1 Education (started college)  
Job  
Don't forget where came from or will be back to addiction
- #4 Education regarding drug addiction  
Med compliance  
Accept facts – doing something about it  
Serenity prayer
- #2 Education  
Better Job  
Financial help – money management – clean up credit rating (husband destroyed it)
- #6 Education  
Full time/better job  
Learn to budget money  
Encouragement  
Come above being so hard on self

Question 8: What would you do if you had unlimited resources and could end homelessness?

- #1 Build a place for people – they'd have to contribute to the community – could live there 6 months – transitional housing- out in community  
School – better self  
Train people – vocational trade
- #2 Get everyone into housing and teach them how to maintain – parenting, financial education, etc)
- #4 Find out what's going on – give people resources they need – some people will choose homelessness
- #5 A shelter big enough and transitional living center that could wipe out homelessness – can't drag everyone – would be there if they wanted to.

- #2 Shelters are not the answer – are a “stop gap”  
Get people into their own homes – feels like it belongs to them – then put in place resources
- #6 Agree with #2 – like Habitat for Humanity  
Classes for budgeting, maintaining home – take time – willing to learn  
Shelter is a place to stay – don’t think about the future
- #3 Set people up on their feet – up to them to stay there – give place to stay for a while  
Job  
Save money
- #8 Money  
Look at what’s happened  
Place – keep house  
Learn what to do to keep home

Question 9: What effect has homelessness had on your children?

- #6 1 child at shelter – child is a people person – will miss everyone at shelter – he became more helpful, sensitive, and listens more – being out of bad environment has helped.
- #2 Has grown kids or teens – teen boys with dad – never told them she was homeless
- #5 Stresses them – they had to switch houses – daughter feels the most pressure

Question 10: Did you ever double up? Do you know others who have?

- #2 With children – friend (was worse than with kids) – rough being with people you know too well or not enough
- #6 Ex mother in law 2 times – friends – off and on a lot over the years
- #5 With kids, friends, relatives
- #4 With mom, brother, neice, sister – see a lot of people sharing housing
- #3 With daughter
- #2 Thinks that the numbers are way off – when staying with family and friends don’t consider selves homeless
- #1 Men have a lot of girlfriends and will move around among them
- #4 Number 2 is dead right – for a long time I didn’t think I was homeless

Question 11: What three things should Pitt County do to end homelessness?

- #4 Substance abuse is taboo (hadn't heard about NA in Farmville)  
Resources – need awareness  
Education about DV  
Can't force resources on people
  
- #2 Educate community regarding homelessness situation  
Open resources – education about resources (especially in outlying towns – e.g. no bus route)  
Transitional housing has limited space but is awesome program
  
- #6 Big buildings (like Salvation Army shelter in western part of the state) where people work on site – 1 year lease  
Training for better jobs  
Teach to save money – classes  
Bad credit affects your job, being able to get an apartment, etc.
  
- #4 Community doesn't see the problem until it knocks on their front door
  
- #6 Homelessness is not always b/c of SA  
Homeless are looked down on – feel like have to hide the fact  
Need public education – some jobs think that homeless = undependable
  
- #5 Employers think homeless = undependable – won't give you a job if you live at the shelter
  
- #2 Businesses/county partnership to provide jobs for people who are really looking and need jobs
  
- #4 Affordable housing
  
- #2 Grief counseling  
More accessible drug rehab  
DV counseling  
Legal help

