Three County Continuum of Care (MA-507) Initiative

EMERG: Emergency Multi-sector Engagement and Response Grid

Overview:

EMERG is a collaborative initiative aimed at addressing the complex challenges associated with homelessness, particularly focusing on encampments, within the Three County Continuum of Care geographic coverage area of Hampshire, Franklin, and Berkshire Counties. Guided by the principles outlined in the U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness (USICH) "19 Strategies for Communities to Address Encampments Humanely and Effectively," EMERG seeks to provide a comprehensive and compassionate response to the needs of individuals living in encampments while working towards long-term solutions to homelessness.

Mission:

EMERG's mission is to engage multiple sectors including government agencies, non-profit organizations, community stakeholders, and individuals with lived experience to develop and implement strategies that prioritize the dignity, safety, and well-being of individuals experiencing homelessness within the Three County Continuum of Care geographic coverage area of Hampshire, Franklin, and Berkshire Counties.

Objectives:

Humanizing Responses: EMERG aims to ensure that responses to encampments are compassionate, trauma-informed, and centered on the needs and preferences of individuals experiencing homelessness.

Multi-sector Collaboration: By fostering collaboration among various sectors including housing, healthcare, social services, law enforcement, and community organizations, EMERG seeks to leverage resources and expertise to provide holistic support to individuals in encampments.

Data-driven Strategies: EMERG will utilize data and evidence-based practices to inform decision-making, assess the effectiveness of interventions, and allocate resources efficiently to address the root causes of homelessness.

The CoC is working on expanding on an existing Clarity interface of Outreach Mapping.

Intervention: EMERG will focus on providing timely interventions to support individuals currently living in encampments, with the goal of transitioning them into stable housing and supportive services.

Community Engagement: EMERG recognizes the importance of engaging with the broader community to foster understanding, empathy, and support for initiatives aimed at addressing homelessness and encampments.

Key Components:

1. Facilitating Collaboration: Create space for service providers, advocates, and municipalities to collaborate in delivering essential services and resources to individuals in encampments.
2. Streamlining Resources: Improve access to and coordination of resources for individuals experiencing homelessness, including those who are unsheltered.
3. Coordinating Encampment Response: Support municipalities in responding to encampments through trauma-informed, equitable, and person-centered approaches, including guidance on sweeps.
4. Reducing Service Duplication: Minimize overlap in services among providers supporting individuals experiencing homelessness in encampments.
5. Developing Outreach Mapping: Assist the CoC in creating and implementing an outreach mapping system to generate aggregate data for internal use, ensuring data is not shared with external agencies.

Guiding Principles:

Dignity and Respect: EMERG will uphold the inherent dignity and worth of every individual experiencing homelessness, treating them with respect, empathy, and compassion.

Equity and Inclusion: EMERG is committed to addressing the disproportionate impact of homelessness on marginalized communities, including people of color, LGBTQ+ individuals, veterans, and people with disabilities, by prioritizing equity and inclusion in all aspects of its work.

Trauma-informed Care: EMERG recognizes the pervasive impact of trauma among individuals experiencing homelessness and will adopt trauma-informed approaches that prioritize safety, trustworthiness, choice, collaboration, and empowerment.

Accountability and Transparency: EMERG will maintain accountability to its stakeholders and the broader community by operating with transparency, integrity, and responsiveness to feedback.

Continuous Improvement: EMERG is dedicated to ongoing learning, innovation, and adaptation to ensure that its strategies and interventions are responsive to the evolving needs of individuals experiencing homelessness and the communities it serves.

Conclusion:

EMERG represents a collective effort to address homelessness and encampments in a humane, effective, and sustainable manner within the three-county continuum of care. By fostering collaboration, innovation, and a commitment to social justice, EMERG aims to create lasting change and improve the lives of individuals experiencing homelessness.