

**THE SANFORD HOPE TEAM:**  
*A new resource to help the homeless in Sanford and North Seminole County*

**How many homeless individuals are there in the Sanford area?**

The Homeless Services Network estimates that there were more than 225 homeless individuals in the Sanford area in January 2009. During the daylight hours there are between 50 and 75 homeless persons congregating at Lake Monroe, various parks and on the downtown streets of Sanford. At night many of these individuals go for shelter to abandoned buildings, vans or cars. When they can afford it, some homeless individuals rent a room by the day or the week. HSN estimates that there are 75 camps of homeless persons where 2-5 persons live in tents or makeshift shelters in north Seminole County.

**What do we know about these homeless persons?**

Studies have shown that homeless individuals living on the streets, in abandoned buildings and camps have the following characteristics:

- 65% are suffering from undiagnosed or untreated mental illness
- 55% abuse alcohol or are addicted to drugs
- 35% are honorably discharged veterans
- 48% work at least 3 days a week as temporary labor employees
- Homeless individuals are more likely to use high cost services such as EMT squads for medical emergencies and emergency rooms for medical care.

**What type of shelter resources are available for chronically homeless persons in Sanford?**

There are only 50 overnight emergency shelter beds for chronically homeless men in Sanford. There are 42 transitional housing beds available for homeless men who are willing to participate in a case managed program to return to self sufficiency. However neither facility has the staff resources to provide services for the complex mental health and/or substance abuse disorders so prevalent in this population.

**What impact does the increasing number of homeless people on the streets of Sanford have on the city, its businesses, and its residents?**

- Visitors are seeing an increase in the number of homeless panhandling along Lake Monroe and the downtown streets.
- Residents are seeing an increase in the number of homeless persons living in abandoned buildings and other locations in the downtown area.
- Business owners believe that the presence of homeless persons in the historic area of Sanford makes it more difficult to conduct business and attract customers to their establishments.

**What is the Sanford HOPE Team?**

The Homeless Services Network is partnering with Seminole Behavioral Healthcare, the Healthcare Center for the Homeless and the Regional Commission to End Homelessness to staff a three-person HOPE team. Members will include a mental health counselor, substance abuse counselor and outreach specialist, all of whom have the expertise to provide services to chronically homeless persons. The Sanford HOPE Team will operate out of Seminole Behavioral Healthcare's offices in Sanford, FL.

The Sanford HOPE Team's goals will be to reduce the number of homeless on the streets of Sanford by implementing the following strategies:

- Implement a comprehensive ongoing outreach campaign to the street homeless in Sanford
- Develop relationships with clients and refer them to services, treatment and medical care
- Link clients to mainstream benefits (pensions, SSI, Veterans benefits) for which they are qualified
- Prepare clients to move into detox programs, treatment facilities, housing or to reunite with families.

### **How will the outreach process work?**

HOPE Team members will visit the locations where homeless persons gather including camps, downtown parks and city streets. They will offer basic human services (water, blankets, medical assessment), mental health assessment, and transportation to needed social services.

Case workers will develop treatment plans for clients to increase the likelihood of access to mental health and substance abuse treatment programs. After treatment, clients will be referred to whatever housing is available – which may include permanent supportive housing and/or low-income housing.

### **How will the Sanford HOPE Team interact with local law enforcement?**

The HOPE Team will meet regularly with the Sanford Police Department to collaborate in delivering outreach and social services to the homeless and reduce the number of homeless persons who enter the criminal justice system for homeless-related crimes.

### **Will the Sanford HOPE Team be able to find housing for all the chronically homeless persons in its service area?**

Because of the extremely limited resources available in Seminole County, many homeless persons may wait weeks or months before treatment and/or housing are available. Some clients will be referred to programs in Orange or Osceola County that provide services for veterans or other special populations.

However, this research-based outreach model has successfully reduced the number of chronically homeless persons on the streets as well as reducing homeless persons' use of emergency room medical care, EMT, and law enforcement intervention in many other parts of the United States.

### **How can the community support the Sanford HOPE Team?**

- Distribute HOPE Team contact cards to homeless persons
- Donate to a temporary shelter fund that will allow the HOPE Team to move selected clients to motels while shelter and/or services are identified.
- Donate water, blankets, and non-perishable food for distribution to the homeless.
- Support the development of additional emergency shelter beds, detox and crisis unit mental health treatment facilities for the homeless in Seminole County.

### **How long will the Sanford HOPE Team operate?**

- Funding for this new initiative is provided through:
- Two ongoing grants from the Homeless Services Network Supportive Housing Program (SHP) HUD funding which is automatically renewed annually as long as the program meets its operational goals.
  - A Regional Commission on Homelessness grant to staff a percentage of the Health Care Center for the Homeless Outreach Specialist's position for one year.

### **Funded by:**

**Homeless Services Network of Central Florida  
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