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For more information, contact
Sara Loken, scloken@csb.org
614-221-9195 x106

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111 liberty street suite 150
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614 221 9195 / main

614 221 9199 / fax

www.csb.org

New program – *From Homeless to Home* – takes major step forward with award of \$2.5 million grant

COLUMBUS, Ohio – Forty-two “navigators” will begin working with single adults who are homeless to help them find homes, stay in them and become self-sufficient under a new program, from *Homeless to Home*, beginning this fall. Today the Community Shelter Board announced a \$2.5 million award to Access Ohio in partnership with Columbus Area Integrated Health and Goodwill Columbus to kick start the new services, which should reduce time adults spend in shelters, end the cycle of repeat homelessness, and provide intensive aftercare assistance even as adults move out of shelters into stable housing.

“Over time, we expect the average length of shelter stay will decrease from the current 45 days to 30 days. This means shelter beds will turn over more quickly and become available for the next person in need. This will alleviate the need to build more shelters,” said Michelle Heritage, Executive Director, Community Shelter Board. “We’ll also be able to get more people housed, ending their crisis for good so they can lead stable lives.”

Heritage also extolled the team for its impressive track record linking those in need to specialty services necessary to maintain housing stability like employment and job training, medical care, mental health/alcohol counseling and housing support.

Access Ohio is a community mental health agency accredited by the Joint Commission and certified by Ohio Mental Health and Addiction Services. Access Ohio has a strong resume helping those who have been receiving facility-based care obtain housing, set up a household, and connect to supportive community resources.

“We are excited about the opportunity to work with people experiencing homelessness and help them return to housing as quickly as possible,” said Dr. John Johnson, CEO and Medical Director, Access Ohio. “We’ll work with people in three phases, providing initial engagement, intensive case management and follow up stabilization services.”

Each caseworker or “navigator” will work with 25 participants, maintaining a presence at all shelters for single men and women across Columbus and Franklin County. The program is expected to serve over 3,000 people during its first year of operation.

Columbus Area Integrated Health Services will provide direct housing, supported employment, and mental health/alcohol and drug prevention services. Goodwill Columbus will assist with workforce development, helping people with multiple barriers obtain and maintain meaningful employment.

Employing navigators is the first step in improving outcomes for adults experiencing homelessness and assuring that no one has to sleep on the streets. *From Homeless to Home* is a redesign of the old system that had become unsustainable because of the increasing instances of homelessness in our community. The new program is a result of a community-wide planning process with hundreds of stakeholders. The new shelter to open this summer is also part of the system redesign.

Community Shelter Board, established in 1986, is a public-private partnership organization that creates collaborations, innovates solutions, and invests in quality programs to end homelessness in Columbus and Franklin County. Community Shelter Board oversees an annual budget of \$13 million to support homeless programs and services. Last year, these programs served more than 10,000 people. The Community Shelter Board is funded by the City of Columbus, the Franklin County Board of Commissioners, the United Way of Central Ohio, The Columbus Foundation, Nationwide Insurance Foundation, American Electric Power Foundation, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, the State of Ohio, and other public and private investors.

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