

COVID-19 and Georgia's Homeless Population: Impact and Solutions

GMA Webinar

April 28, 2020





Presenter Background Info



Mayor Keisha Lance Bottoms, 60th Mayor of Atlanta

A daughter of Atlanta, Mayor Bottoms is committed to realizing her vision of One Atlanta – an affordable, resilient and equitable Atlanta – which stands as a model city for both commerce and compassion. Mayor Bottoms was appointed the Chair of the Committee for the Homeless and Displaced by Governor Brian Kemp, as part of the Governor’s Coronavirus Task Force.



Jon Keen, Deputy Chief Operating Officer, City of Atlanta

Jon is part of the Mayor’s senior leadership team and cabinet with responsibility for defining and leading strategic priorities and operational improvements across a portfolio of city agencies and initiatives. His portfolio focuses on economic and workforce development, community planning, and housing and homelessness.



Cathryn Marchman, Executive Director, Partners for HOME

Cathryn has dedicated her career to working with individuals experiencing homelessness and marginalized communities for over 20 years. As a licensed clinical social worker, Cathryn has provided direct clinical care and advocacy to disenfranchised individuals in jails, criminal justice, residential, medical and outreach settings.



Agenda

- **Overview of the Gov's Coronavirus TF Committee for the Homeless and Displaced**
 - Mayor Keisha Lance Bottoms, 60th Mayor of Atlanta
- **How to effectively leverage the Continuum of Care and partnership with DCA**
 - Jon Keen, Deputy Chief Operating Officer, City of Atlanta
- **Best practices and key challenges from implementing the recommendations**
 - Cathryn Marchman, Executive Director, Partners for HOME
- **Open Q&A**

Committee for the Homeless and Displaced



Purpose of the Committee: To ensure adequate shelter, resources, and care for the homeless and displaced in Georgia during the coronavirus pandemic response

Committee Composition: Public health professionals, representatives from the Continua of Care across the State, State officials, health care providers, homeless service providers, and community organizations

The Committee established six objectives:

- Prevent Additional People from Becoming Homeless;
- Support Enhanced Cleaning, Screening, and Referral;
- Expand Testing for High-Risk Individuals and Areas;
- Establish a Reporting Process Specific to Homeless and Displaced Persons;
- Ensure Appropriate Options for Quarantine and Isolation are Available;
- And, Ensure Transportation Options are Available.

Sixteen (16) recommendations in areas such as policy, coordination, funding and advocacy were developed to meet the objectives



Leveraging the Continuum of Care

HUD Continuum of Care (CoC) Program: Designed to promote communitywide commitment to the goal of ending homelessness; provide funding for efforts by nonprofit providers, and State and local governments to quickly rehouse homeless individuals and families while minimizing the trauma and dislocation caused to homeless individuals, families, and communities by homelessness; promote access to and effect utilization of mainstream programs by homeless individuals and families; and optimize self-sufficiency among individuals and families experiencing homelessness.

Georgia has nine (9) Continua of Care:

Balance of State CoC

Atlanta CoC

Dekalb County CoC

Fulton County CoC

Savannah / Chatham County CoC

Columbus CoC

Athens / Clarke County CoC

Cobb County CoC

Augusta / Richmond County CoC

How to Best Leverage the CoC:

- Gathering information on the greatest needs of the community
- Coordinating with non-profit service providers
- Providing uniform guidance and supporting implementation
- Working with health care providers to track test results and isolation needs
- Informing policy and funding decisions



Partnership with DCA

Georgia Department of Community Affairs (DCA) has taken a leadership role in coordinating state-wide implementation of the recommendations.

DCA is leading weekly calls with the local Continua of Care (CoCs) and State agencies to share best practices and coordinate actions related to the Committee's objectives and recommendations.

Key Ways to Best Partner:

- Ensure your local Continuum of Care is participating in the weekly calls and debrief with them on progress made and challenges
- Coordinate and access federal grant funding and guidance to support these efforts
- Ask DCA to assist with coordinating other relevant State agencies in support of the specific needs of people experiencing homelessness in your communities
- Leverage the resources DCA has organized specific to COVID-19
 - <https://www.dca.ga.gov/safe-affordable-housing/homeless-special-needs-housing/covid-19-resources>



Best Practices and Key Challenges

Many lessons have been learned during the process of implementing the recommendations from the Committee.

Prevent Additional People from Becoming Homeless

- Extended stay motels are a unique challenge
- Designate someone to coordinate emergency assistance programs
- Leverage housing authorities and federal ESG and HOPWA grant funds to assist

Support Enhanced Cleaning, Screening, and Referral

- Access to cleaning and sanitation supplies can be a challenge—survey provider needs and do one large procurement
- Develop a coordinated outreach plan to provide education and supplies to shelters and unsheltered individuals

Expand Testing for High-Risk Individuals and Areas

- Work with the local Board of Health and local healthcare providers to implement a testing plan for shelters and the unsheltered, esp. congregate environments
- Ensure the plan includes a method of contact once the results are received and options for isolation and transportation



Best Practices and Key Challenges

Establish a Reporting Process Specific to Homeless and Displaced Persons

- Work with local healthcare systems to ensure they know the points of contact for coordination of discharge for anyone without a home
- Develop a tracking mechanism that respects privacy, but ensures people experiencing homelessness are getting the necessary support if they test positive

Ensure Appropriate Options for Quarantine and Isolation are Available

- Consider options for safe isolation within the existing shelter infrastructure, if possible
- Scaling staffing can be a challenge, if developing additional shelter infrastructure through partnerships with hotels or other temporary housing
- Ensure clear processes for intake and case management for permanent housing planning are part of the plan

Ensure Transportation Options are Available

- Consider partnerships or contracts with local EMS or health care providers to facilitate transportation of individuals who test positive

Overview of Atlanta's Coordinated Response





Questions?

Thank you for the opportunity and your time.

Feel free to email Jon Keen with any additional questions (jkkeen@atlantaga.gov).