

How Rockford Changed Course to Tackle Veterans' Homelessness

Using Data to Diagnose and Remedy Complex Problems

Epilogue

What Rockford Did: BNL & Case Conferencing

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- Everyone at the table, including the VA (US Veterans Administration) and authorized to share its data
- Used an easily accessed, adaptable By-Name List (BNL) shared by everybody; each client is a row on the spreadsheet, with columns identifying needs and assigning a provider to take responsibility for the client and keep the group informed

“You identify the barriers and you work as a team to figure out how you’re going to solve it to get the person housed”

- Angie Walker, housing advocate at Rockford community services

Case Conferencing II (sample dialogue)

- **Veterans Administration:** “Look, they have a voucher, and they’re set up with it and it expires in ninety days. I don’t know why they’re not housed.”
- **Rockford social services agency:** “They tried on their own to find an apartment. They can’t find anyone who will accept the voucher.”
- **Local facilitator (e.g., Rockford community services):** “Can you do some housing navigation with this person? Does the case manager know why the documentation isn’t there?”

“Truly shared ownership is when you have people jumping out of their seats to say, ‘Hey, I’ve got him. I’m the lead case manager for Joe Smith. He’s still homeless but we’re going to get to him. Could you help us out?’”

- former Rockford Mayor Larry Morrissey

Rockford reaches Functional Zero

“Functional Zero” for veterans experiencing homelessness by end of year

When Rockford began in Jan 2015, the target was forty-two veterans. On Dec 18, Community Solutions announced Rockford had achieved Functional Zero:

“In the entire Rockford region, zero veterans remain on the streets and just eight remain in transitional housing. This is equal to the number of veterans Rockford has proven it can routinely house in a given month. All eight of Rockford’s remaining homeless veterans are in the process of being connected to permanent housing. They are indoors, known to the city by name and represent just .08 percent of all veterans living in the city.”

In 2017, Angie Walker announced that Rockford had housed 104 veterans.

Identifying the next goal

Can Functional Zero for *chronic* homelessness be achieved next (with its different definition and population)?

“We didn’t know a lot when we started. We didn’t know how to measure progress. We didn’t know how to measure interventions. We didn’t understand how to test and use the data from a test to improve our system. To me, data is what makes our system work—in terms of a system. It doesn’t necessarily make that personal contact or that housing placement work, but it makes the system work. Without the system, the personal contacts and the one-on-one stuff doesn’t work.”

- Jennifer Jaeger, Community Services director, City of Rockford, IL