

Potential Barriers to Success

The economy, political change and the success of various nonprofit and government organizations often dictates the success of strategic planning. Beyond these, the medical sector agencies identified several additional barriers. First, the local and state funding mechanisms are fragmented for homeless services as well as behavioral and substance abuse treatment. Funding distribution can be skewed towards the loudest advocate rather than the most effective services. Second, there is a lack of coordination among leaders regarding planning, prioritization and spending. This arena is the one most fraught with territorial tensions and where the **community-wide** continuum-of-care must work hardest. Third, funding is often constrained by regulations that limit blended funding streams and creative solutions. Finally, community integrated medical services (planning and treatment) must work within HIPAA restrictions. Colorado Springs is lucky to have five years of experience with HealthTrack, a HIPAA compliant web-based software system, that provides a virtual medical home for the under- and uninsured. HealthTrack helps healthcare providers and community agencies understand who the uninsured are, where and when they go for care, and what services they most often seek. Lessons learned from operating this system should ease barriers to community-wide service plans and treatment.

Meeting HUD Priorities

The medical sector specifically supports the following HUD Priorities.

HUD Priority	
F3	Establish substance abuse treatment programs targeted to the homeless population.
F5	Establish counseling programs that assist homeless persons in finding housing, managing finances, managing anger, and building interpersonal relationships.
F6	Provide supportive services, such as health care assistance that will permit homeless individuals to become productive members of society.
F7	Provide service coordinators or one-stop assistance centers that will ensure that chronically homeless persons have access to a variety of social services

SECTOR 3: FOOD

Overarching Goal

To provide food for every homeless person in the Pikes Peak region in need of emergency food assistance.

Sector Description

Food for the homeless falls into two categories - meals and bulk food sources. Meals are provided daily at several locations. The **Springs Rescue Mission** serves breakfast and lunch six days a week for the homeless men in its New Life Program. The Mission then opens its kitchen to the low-income and homeless public to serve dinner Monday through Saturday. During 2007, 244,000 meals were served. This translates into over one million meals during the last decade. More than 14,000 lunches were delivered to children through the Kids Café program and 2,000 meals were provided at the Peak Addiction Recovery Center.

Catholic Charities' Marian House Soup Kitchen is the largest soup kitchen in the region and serves lunch to an average of 424 guests every day without stipulations. In 2007, volunteers served over 149,955 hot, nutritious meals to low-income, disabled and homeless adults and families. Local grocery stores, dairies, and prominent hotels and restaurants donate more than an estimated 200,000 pounds of food annually, an amount sufficient to run the soup kitchen, stock the Marian House Community Outreach Program food pantry and frequently to supply other, smaller soup kitchens that serve evening meals. In FY 2007-2008, community outreach delivered 365 food boxes averaging 50 pounds each. In the same year, the Catholic Charities' Life Support Center gave out 1,537 cans of formula and 10,128 jars or boxes of baby food and cereal.

Care and Share Food Bank of Southern Colorado acquires food from national regional and local food industry sources, the US Department of Agriculture, food purchasing sources (e.g., good brokers, manufacturers, wholesalers), and the local community. In turn, Care and Share distributes that food to approximately 435 partner agencies across southern Colorado. Nearly 75% of partner agencies are food pantries rather than meal preparation sites. Thus most distribution is in consumer-size rather than bulk packaging. Care and Share also distributes various produce, breads and dairy products by the pound. In 2007, an estimated 61,000 individuals in El Paso County received 4,453,000 pounds of food. Approximately 2,440 (4%) of these individuals were homeless.

The **Springs Rescue Mission** has the second largest food pantry in the city. It receives 28% of its food resources from Care and Share with the remaining 72% from wholesale and retail markets and individuals. Over 5,500 food boxes were given out to the general public last year, a 32% increase over 2006. Bulk food from both Care and Share and the Springs Rescue Mission is distributed through to local food banks such as those at **Westside CARES, Northern Churches CARES, and Tri-Lakes CARES.**

The El Paso County Department of Human Services' (EPCDHS) primary food distribution to the homeless is through the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) funded by the US Department of Agriculture. EPCDHS currently has 16,000 approved households in El Paso County to which is distributes \$43,000,000 in federal food assistance funds. SNAP funds enable families to purchase food with an electronic benefits transfer (EBT) card. EPCDHS caseworkers and technicians actively refer clients to community resources for food assistance and other supportive services such as:

- 2-1-1 to connect families with community resources;
- Women, Infant and Child (WIC) program through the El Paso County Department of Health and Environment;
- Food Stamp Job Search program for individuals able to work;
- Feed the Children, an event that distributes 2,000 boxes of food to 1,300 families;
- Care and Share and other agencies receiving county Community Partner funding; and
- Youth assistance for young adults exiting the foster care system to prevent homelessness.

Progress in the Last Five Years

Successful capital campaigns over the past 24 months have proven the community's support for the continuum of care's food sector. The Springs Rescue Mission currently serves 120 meals plus prepares 30-40 bag dinners per night. New kitchen facilities, scheduled to open in 2009, will allow the agency to feed 350 meals daily. In addition, the SRM opened a new building on its campus that enables staff to better serve clients needing food boxes or The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TFAP).

A decade ago, Marian House served just over 100,000 guests annually. Last year it served 155,000 guests reflecting the dramatic population growth in El Paso County. Growing meal service coupled with an aging facility resulted in the construction of a new facility with general dining hall seating 150-175 people and the family dining area that seats up to 50. Improvements will include a larger, commercial grade kitchen, centralized food storage and expanded office space. A basement underneath the dining area provides ample storage for both the soup kitchen and the Community Outreach Program.

Five years ago, Care and Share's annual food distribution was 4.5 million pounds. Today it is 7.3 million pounds per year. The agency now serves all 31 counties in its service area, up from 21 counties in FY 2004. The new branch facility in Pueblo doubled storage capacity. A successful capital campaign resulted in a warehouse that triples the Colorado Springs storage capacity. The delivery fleet of trucks has increased from two to nine vehicles. Most importantly, Care and Share has nearly doubled the number of people served annually.

EPCDHS continues to see increases in the number of applicants and families approved for food assistance. Two satellite offices at Sand Creek (eastern Colorado Springs) and the Lorraine Center (Fountain, CO) process food applications easing service access issues. Expedited food assistance is a priority to help those with the greatest needs. The agency's

Services Integration initiative promotes staff training and support the utilization of both internal and external resources to assist clients.

Current Gaps and Barriers

For meals programs, service providers agree that there are three major service gaps.

- A significant percentage of the community (homeless, donors, and social service agencies) lack information about meal availability and ancillary services such as showers, communication tools, and clothing available at meal sites.
- The community is experiencing Increasing numbers of homeless and the economically disadvantaged. For the Springs Rescue Mission, direct emergency services have increased 16% since August 2008. Individuals who used to donate to the Mission are now clients.
- Lack of communication with other agencies in the continuum of care, leads to a disjointed services system and unmet client needs.

Care and Share faces a similar struggle in finding quality partners willing to distribute quality food in adequate quantities. Securing adequate donations of nutritious food **on a year round basis** is a constant struggle for all food pantries.

EPCDHS works diligently to process applications in a timely manner. Accurate data entry to ensure accurate benefits is an ongoing issue. Lack of funding for additional staff as well as staff recruitment and retention issues are evidenced by crowded lobbies and long wait times.