

## ANTI-POVERTY STRATEGY

The barriers preventing very low-income households from overcoming poverty include health care costs, severe housing cost burdens, household problems, lack of employment or meaningful employment, lack of subsidized daycare, utility costs, prescription costs, transportation issues, the lack of formal education, job training, and specific skills training. The City of Rockford, in conjunction with other organizations, will take on the following initiatives for reducing the number of households with incomes below the poverty level over the next program year.

- The Rockford Housing Authority (RHA), in conjunction with the City and nearly 20 support agencies, has developed a three phased program called the Family Self-sufficiency Program, which helps public housing residents build self-esteem, improve relationships with their families, explore education and career opportunities and become potential homeowners. This effort is expected to reduce the number of households living in poverty by five (5) over the next year.
- The Rock River Training Corporation continues to act as the clearinghouse for all employers who would like to hire high school students and young adults. The Corporation contracts with various organizations to run a vocational exploration program with classroom training for youths 14-17. Older participants (18-21) work for non-profit agencies. The number of opportunities available to disadvantaged youth should remain constant.
- Through the Community Development Department, a Small Business Loan Program, funded by CDBG funds, provides dollars for business development and expansion in designated target areas. For every \$15,000 loaned, a full-time equivalent job must be created and filled by a lower-income person. The Microenterprise Investment Match Program will enable low/moderate-income persons to increase the equity in their Microenterprise. This is expected to spur Microenterprise startups and expansions and aid one family in moving above the poverty level. Seven Microenterprises are proposed to be assisted during the next year. In addition, the implementation of a Rehabilitation & Development Assistance Program will help to increase employment in low poverty areas, by assisting for-profit businesses and requiring them to employ a percentage of low-income persons.
- Health care costs continue to be a crisis nationally, as well as within the Rockford community. The burden of costs associated with health care prohibit the use by very low income persons or cause them to be financially strapped as a result of a crisis in the family or something as common as the birth of a child. The MOMS program has been successful in making subsidized health care more readily available to pregnant and parenting lower income mothers and their children. With the help of the mass transit district, locations have been established that are accessible to the program target population. This project, along with the Kidcare Program, should ensure that mothers and their children have access to the basic

checkups and immunizations necessary for a child's physical development. This program is anticipated to assist 6 families in rising above the poverty level during the next year.

The following were reoccurring issues identified by more than 200 human service professionals, community leaders and representations of various population groups in the Healthy Communities Study. Activities/projects are expected to be identified that respond to these issues.

- ✓ Caring for Our Children
- ✓ Family Dysfunction
- ✓ Health Wellbeing
- ✓ Housing
- ✓ Neighborhoods
- ✓ Racism Human Service Systems Issues: Staffing, System Effectiveness, Technology
- ✓ Transportation
- ✓ Welfare Reform

- Crusader Clinic and Janet Wattles Center provide subsidized health care services to lower income persons. Services are provided at their main facility and also at a number of satellite locations throughout the community.
- The City's annual allocation of federal Emergency Shelter Grant funds are distributed to local homeless providers. As a result of the Housing & Community Development Act of 1992, the agencies awarded funds through this grant must ensure the following:
  1. The homeless will be given assistance in obtaining supportive services available in our community, such as those previously mentioned
  2. To the maximum extent practical, homeless individuals and families will be involved in constructing, renovating, and maintaining and operating facilities assisted under the program

Also, the Emergency Food and Shelter Program now requires #2 above, and that at least one homeless or formerly homeless persons must be a member of the local FEMA board. The following are the priorities set by the Board:

1. 2% Administrative allowance to United Way
2. 8% targeted to Utility Assistance (increased in 2001 as a result of the utility crisis)
3. 60% targeted to Shelter Services
4. 30% targeted to Food Services
5. Food funding targeted to the two largest community pantries and the home delivered meal program, and soup kitchens will not be targeted

to funding. It was felt that of the three basic services, the community is best able to respond to the need for additional food.

It is anticipated that some homeless persons may be able to transition out of poverty as a result of the Act.

- Submit an application for 2007 HUD Continuum of Care to support renewal projects under the Shelter Plus Care and Supportive Housing programs. This will help the Rockford area maintain its Continuum of Care system.
- Several of the housing non-profits also provide work opportunities at housing construction sites either on their own initiative or through programs such as YouthBuild. Mentoring and employment opportunities are also provided by these non-profits. The City will continue to assist them with site acquisition as in the past.
- Many of the very low income having housing problems and either try to make repairs with the little money they have or are forced to let the property deteriorate. The City has several programs available to the very low income in which no repayment is necessary. Once a home is rehabilitated, utility and maintenance costs will decrease resulting in a decreased cost burden and a greater residual income for the necessities in life. Although these programs do not result in reducing the number of households with income below the poverty line, they do give people hope for a better future.
- The integration of childcare into new rental and transitional housing developments as well as one of the emergency shelters has been considered and supported on several housing rehabilitation projects funded by the City. Affordable and stable child care gives parents the opportunity to find and keep employment.
- The City's various economic development programs, both federally and locally funded, will also seek to reduce or prevent poverty. The creation of jobs for low-moderate-income persons, especially those with the potential of advancement and/or those in basic industries, is a priority. In order to create jobs for those most in need, it will be necessary to create new businesses, expand existing businesses, and provide incentives that attract businesses seeking additional facilities. The City intends to assist such businesses by utilizing federal funds (including CDBG, Section 108, BEDI, EDA, and EPA), local funds, state enterprise zone incentives, tax incentives, industrial revenue bond financing, and such other resources deemed appropriate.
- The City intends to preserve its existing housing stock when feasible. Although the City has increased its level of demolition of substandard properties over the last several years, it continues to rehab properties when feasible. In certain situations, as an effort to preserve the existing housing stock, the City will make

referrals to housing non-profits and investor-owners on properties available since they may have the ability to rehabilitate at lower cost because of donated labor, materials and sweat equity. The city also direct private owners and the non-profits to potential funding sources for the acquisition and/or rehabilitation of the property.

- The Head Start Program teaches income eligible pre-school children educational skills and social classroom skills. Head Start gets children on the right track educationally as well as emotionally. While they're learning, their parents are provided access to employment and social services. Head Start serves over 600 children and families at three Rockford locations.
- Through the Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) Program, there are several programs designed to assist people in moving out of poverty. It is anticipated that these programs will either prevent families from entering poverty or bring families above the poverty level in the next year. An estimated 6,000 families will be served.
  1. The Small Business Loan Program provides loans to businesses that agree to create jobs for low-income persons. For every \$20,000 loaned, a job must be created that is filled by a low-income person.
  2. CSBG assists persons who are homeless or are in danger of becoming homeless through FEMA Emergency Food, State Homeless Prevention Funds and Shelter funds and Rockford Township Condemnation funds. These funds assist low-income persons with up to three months' back rent and two months' forward rent.
  3. The Illinois State Board of Education provides funding for the Summer Lunch program that the Community Services Division administers. This program provides free, nutritious lunches to eligible children aged 3-18, at various city locations. Over 2200 children participated in this program last year.
  4. In addition, Community Services provides intensive, long-term case management services to families and seniors. The goal of the Family and Community Development program is to assist families in increasing their skills, improving their income and strengthening family connections.
  5. Human Services will continue to implement an Individual Development Account Program to help low income persons build assets by providing 2 for 1 matching savings account. These savings may be used for homeownership, small business develop or education.

- The Energy Division operates several programs that have a direct impact on the low-income population.

The Low-Income Heating Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) assists income eligible households in paying their heating bills. This program affects low-income households, seniors and disabled by making a one-time payment towards their heating bills. In addition, the LIHEAP Emergency Furnace Program assists income eligible persons with the repair/replacement of furnaces. The Energy Division also offers the Weatherization Program, which assists households in making their homes more energy efficient in an effort to reduce heating costs.

## **LEAD-BASED PAINT**

Those at highest risk of effects of lead paint poisoning are children, pregnant women and people working with lead in their jobs. The types of housing units more likely to have lead-based paint hazards include older units (lead-based paint used prior to 1950 is likely to contain higher concentrations), units in poor condition, units renovated or maintained not using safe work practices and units with exterior lead-contaminated soil.

In Rockford, there are several means for finding out about housing that presents lead-based paint hazards. Those include:

- Children are screened for high lead-blood levels as a part of school enrollment. If a high level of lead is shown, both a State of Illinois Public Health official and a nurse do an inspection of the premise. A common scenario is that younger siblings of a school-aged child have higher lead-blood levels than the school-age child. After an inspection of the premises, action is taken to insure compliance with health code regulations. The owner of the property is then responsible for either abatement or mitigation practices to eliminate or reduce the possibility of future lead poisoning from that unit.
- The City of Rockford, in its administration of its rehabilitation and homeownership programs, ensures that occupants, homeowners, and homebuyers are notified of the hazards of lead-based paint and defective paint is identified and treated in their homes. If a child with an elevated blood level (EBL) is identified, additional steps are taken to inspect for lead-based hazards and stabilize, control, or abate.
- Federal law requires sellers and landlords to make a disclosure of possible lead-based paint hazards in units. Anytime a contractor does repair that creates an opening more than two feet in diameter; the contractor is obligated to inform the residents of possible lead-based paint hazard.