



## **Seminole Action Board**

# **SEMINOLE COMMUNITY ACTION STRATEGY**

## **YEAR ONE REVIEW**

**Seminole Action Board**



**Presented to the**

**Board of County Commissioners  
Seminole County, Florida**

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*Accountability and Action*



## Seminole Action Board

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# Seminole Action Board

## SEMINOLE ACTION BOARD – YEAR ONE OVERVIEW

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

One year has passed since the Seminole County Board of Commissioners accepted the Seminole Action Board's *Seminole Community Action Strategy: An Approach to Impact and Reduce Homelessness in Seminole County* in May 2016. Implementation of the Action Strategy began in June 2016.

This one-year update covers that period June 1, 2016 to May 31, 2017.

The modest goals of the Action Strategy were:

- To end the homelessness of the 120 most vulnerable families in Seminole County.
- To end the homelessness of the 50 most vulnerable and disabled individuals in Seminole County.
- To end the homelessness of a total of 400 of our homeless neighbors.
- To create a “Template for the Future” in years two to five through identification and visibility of strategies to advance the larger goal of accomplishing the end of homelessness.
- To frame ongoing strategies and to make recommendations to the Board of Commissioners for future direction and investment.

This Action Strategy Report will quantify outcomes and identify elements of a Template for the Future. Suffice to say here that the coordinated partnership of government, providers, philanthropy, and the private and civic sectors created quantifiable achievements. The quantifiable results achieved for our homeless neighbors were:

- 142 of our most vulnerable families were placed in housing.
- 117 of our most vulnerable and disabled individuals were placed in housing.
- 500+ of our most vulnerable moms and dads and children and adult individuals are no longer homeless.
- Leveraged more than \$2 million in housing and service resources from government and philanthropy

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## *EXECUTIVE SUMMARY . . .*

The SAB Board did not place these neighbors of ours in housing. Our partners did. What the SAB Board did add was a business frame focused on performance and quantifiable outcomes.

**W**hile there is much more to do to achieve our larger vision, the past year has offered an opportunity to understand what is working and what is not in our County. With that knowledge our efforts have begun to evolve to the performance-based, results-oriented, cost-effective initiatives that will accomplish our larger goal.

- In the last year, we have seen the business community rally to this issue with their analytical and results focused mindset.
- We have seen the School Board and Foundation mature a new approach while supporting the goals of the Action Strategy.
- We have seen the Seminole Housing Authority rally resources to support the tenancies of 25 homeless families.
- We have seen the faith community deepen its resolve to be part of the solution.
- We have seen law enforcement progress beyond distinguishing between panhandlers and homeless people to an offer of data and research that has the potential to transform our approach to unsheltered homeless people.
- We have created a “Dashboard” to communicate to the community the quantifiable results of the Action Strategy.
- We have identified impediments to advancing our goals, resolving some.
- We have questioned funding sources and challenged some to ensure equitable resources for our County.
- We have questioned federal policy approaches that are seemingly detrimental to the creation of stable and secure tenancies for homeless households.
- We have supported the implementation of the evidence-based, field-tested Housing First approach.
- We have called for a strategy of engagement with our homeless neighbors that offers on-going support and the building of social capital in their lives to sustain their well-being and tenancies.
- We have engaged housing developers to prioritize homeless households.

We are, of course, most pleased by the quantifiable outcomes achieved by the partnerships in the community and region. 500 of our neighbors no longer homeless. We can celebrate that achievement while recognizing that our work has begun in earnest.

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### *EXECUTIVE SUMMARY . . .*

We can now say that here in Seminole County we know what to do and how to do it. As we move forward we need to scale that effort with the necessary investment.

**W**e conclude this First Year Report with several Recommendations. Perhaps none is more important than the need for this community to invest in a strategy that is producing quantifiable results.

We are now in need of private and foundation resources that will provide flexible funds to solve problems, to overcome impediments. We are committed to maximizing government resources from every level – local, state, federal.

We have already seen an increase from the County given the recognition that new resources are being invested in new ideas that offer a return on that investment. We are focused on maximizing federal dollars as well. And we are already leveraging regional and local resources, more than \$2 million in the past year.

The Seminole Action Opportunity Fund (SAOF) offers community members, whether corporate or individual, the opportunity to invest in strategies that are making Seminole County a better place to live for all of us – housed and homeless alike.

We are purposeful in asking for “investments.” We are prepared to demonstrate a quantifiable R.O.I. (Return on Investment). Our First Year Action Strategy identified the investment needed in housing and support services to ensure stable tenancies for our homeless neighbors. Five hundred housed. Another 1700 to house.

The goal is finite. The strategies, refined. Investments, welcomed.

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## YEAR ONE REVIEW

**T**he Business Task Force convened by Leadership Seminole and supported by the Board of Commissioners and the County Manager’s Office created the Seminole Community Action Strategy to ensure that a results and data-oriented, performance-focused, community-based strategy would inform Seminole County’s approach to reducing the homelessness of families and individuals. The Action Strategy was constellated around two quantifiable goals with all attending strategic elements in support of those two objectives:

- 1. End the homelessness of the 120 most vulnerable families in Seminole County.**
- 2. End the homelessness of the 50 most vulnerable and disabled individuals in Seminole County.**

When we began our efforts, we were told – the compilation of census information and data lie outside Seminole hands – we were told that according to data available to the regional continuum of care and others, 600 homeless families and 400 chronic homeless individuals constituted the vast majority of homeless people in Seminole County. Without the capacity to determine the numbers on our own, we tentatively accepted them until we could create a strategy to secure more accurate and complete numbers.

Given those numbers we set out to remedy the homelessness of at least 20% of the families and the most vulnerable individuals in our first year strategy. Even with our quantifiable outcomes in accomplishing these strategic goals, we recognize that our numerical goals were modest. Our objective was to add value to what was already in place in the region and the County. How many more placements were made by virtue of our Strategy and strategic assessments and our focus on action and accountability is unknown. But there is no question that our emphases on quantifiable outcomes and basic business principles, including the discovery of what is working and what’s not, did indeed add value, as did the numerous convenings of individual and family providers, our SANE group to address impediments, and our SAB unpacking of issues. As well as our persistent inquiries regarding pass-through funding sources to ensure Seminole County is receiving equitable resources.

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We learned early on through the tireless work of our Dashboard and Accountability Team that the verifiable quantification of accomplishing these goals was nearly as arduous as the work in the field. Consistent recalibration of the numbers of families and individuals placed in housing was a hallmark of the Team's quest for integrity in the numbers.

Ongoing monthly meetings with providers to assemble the numbers, supplemented by the collection of data by the Homeless Services Network (HSN) and, subsequently, by Northland Church personnel, not only collected the numbers, but revealed the difficulties in doing so. Duplications in counting by agencies who had served the same person(s), defining "placement" in housing, and determining eligible and ineligible numbers, among other concerns were unremittingly examined and re-examined.

Even with the cooperation of HSN, Seminole's efforts to ensure accuracy and integrity in our numbers would have been better served with all numbers related to homelessness, including HMIS and PIT data, compiled and available on Seminole IT systems. Local community policy should be based on data and research. Ready accessibility in real time is necessary for policy development and nimbleness in responding to shifts in resources and demographics.

With those caveats on the numbers associated with our goals, at the end of Year One of the Action Strategy, we can report these findings:

## HOMELESS INDIVIDUALS

**The stated goal in the Action Strategy was to "end the homelessness of the 50 most vulnerable and disabled individuals in Seminole County."**

According to the data collected through HSN, providers, agencies, and County sources, 117 individuals were placed in housing from June 1, 2016 to May 31, 2017, exceeding by more than 100% the goal. 105 of these individuals were experiencing chronic homelessness, that is, had a disability and at least one year of homelessness, the most vulnerable and disabled.

Partnerships with the Central Florida Foundation, the Homeless Services Network, Aspire Health Services, Health Care Center for the Homeless, and Pathways to Home, all complemented the County's efforts through the Community Services Department.

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The Seminole Action Board recognizes and acknowledges the value of community partners and their resources in achieving this goal. As we move forward into years two to five, we look forward to this configuration of partnerships, however governance and the continuum of care are configured.

## HOMELESS FAMILIES

**The stated goal in the Action Strategy was “to end the homelessness of the 120 most vulnerable families in Seminole County.”**

According to data collected through HSN, Seminole School Board personnel, provider agencies, the Seminole Housing Authority, Northland Church statistics, and County sources, 142 families were placed in housing from June 1, 2016 to May 31, 2017.

Once again partnerships were vital to this achievement. The Seminole School Board and Foundation, HSN, Northland, A Church Distributed, Pathways to Home, Heart 2 Heart, Seminole County Housing Authority, Goodwill, and Community Based Care of Central Florida have all been essential in supplementing the County’s capabilities and resources.

## HOMELESSNESS ENDED

Through the Individual and Family Initiatives the homelessness of more than 500 residents of Seminole County was ended.

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## TEMPLATE FOR FUTURE ACTION

**W**hile these goals stand as the quantifiable realization of the Action Strategy, we know there are far more homeless families and individuals continuing to live that long misery in Seminole County than we have resolved in our first year.

We knew that would be the reality. While we were focused on those numbers, our Action Strategy was also the beginning of the creation of a template for action for the future.

We wanted to learn in our community which programs were aligned with the goal of ending homelessness and were able to implement programmatic strategies to do so. We wanted to learn what resources Seminole could depend on in implementing a County-wide effort.

We wanted to know if the capabilities and scaling needed existed in the County or would need to be added through training or importing programs from elsewhere.

We wanted to know if resources were available to support homeless households to be placed in housing, and if there were sufficient available units to house them.

These and a number of other concerns have been the focus of our efforts in this first year as much as our quantifiable goals. We have learned a great deal about our County, about the resourcefulness and commitment of County government in its focus on homelessness from the Commissioners to the County Manager to the Community Services Department. We have begun to address some of the skepticism in the public domain that sometimes impedes their confidence in homelessness strategies.

We have acknowledged, supported, and cajoled provider agencies to upgrade their performance and mission while respecting their commitment to the issue. We have been a partner in reconfiguring a faith-based response that is solution-oriented and calls on these communities to be part of a larger integrated strategy.

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In sum here are some of the “upgrades” that the Seminole Action Board has initiated or enhanced over the past year:

1. Convening and sustaining business leaders to apply their mindset to homeless solutions.
2. Adding community agencies and institutions to the partnership on the SAB and including Goodwill, Northland, A Church Distributed, the Sheriff’s Office, Wendover Development, the Seminole County Housing Authority, and others.
3. Creating an Action Strategy with quantifiable goals and a mechanism for performance improvement.
4. Educating the Board of Commissioners on a strategic approach offering solution-oriented initiatives in place of well-intentioned responses.
5. Prioritizing quantifiable outcomes for the strategy as a whole and for individual provider agencies.
6. Convening providers of both family and individual programs at monthly meetings to review progress and identify impediments.
7. Creating stepped-up response mechanisms for identified impediments via the SANE and SAB Boards.
8. Evolving policy on families away from the non-data based “1000’s” of homeless children to a focus on the most vulnerable families beginning with those living outside.
9. Creating a tiered strategy (still in progress) to support formerly homeless families in their housing, partnering school social workers, agency case managers, faith-based social capital, and employment opportunities.
10. Encouraging a greater role in partnering in solutions with the faith-based community.

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11. Encouraging the Sheriff's Department in its listing of unsheltered people encountered by its personnel to broaden its frame to incorporated jurisdictions.
12. Identifying community agency capacities and encouraging the investment of resources in the housing of homeless households. Assessing what's working and what's not.
13. Creating a philanthropic initiative, Seminole Action Opportunity Fund, to support results-oriented initiatives and to supplement the County's investment.
14. Partnering with the Seminole County Housing Authority to offer invaluable Section 8 vouchers for homeless families.
15. Engaging a Seminole-based developer to create housing targeted for homeless households. Inviting an imported regional housing developer to assess opportunities in Seminole County.
16. Working with HSN and CFF to ensure investment in Seminole County.
17. Challenging a discrepancy in the share and distribution of federal HUD funds. Identifying and driving the "fair share" concerns.
18. Assisting in the identification of a chronic homeless mental health provider and housing manager.
19. Encouraging and quantifying the placement of more than 142 homeless families in permanent supportive housing.
20. Leveraging housing and case management resources for homeless individuals and families valued at more than \$2,000,000.

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## VIEW TO THE FUTURE - RECOMMENDATIONS

**G**iven our experience over the past year with the Seminole Action Board and in conversation with community agencies, the Board of Commissioners, and other stakeholders in the community and region, the following recommendations are a strategic element in the template for future action.

- 1. That Seminole County have direct and immediate access to all data and research related to homelessness in Seminole County.** Without direct access to the numbers, the data, our capacity to respond to changes in demographics is inhibited. Since our value-added is a business sensibility, the lack of immediate access to the research that allows nimble and flexible responses to our “customers” is unacceptable.
- 2. That Seminole County receive resources directly from funders.** While we have experienced increased collaboration from HSN over the past year regarding federal HUD dollars, the conduiting of funds to support Seminole efforts seems both too slow and too agency dependent, rather than community oriented. Further, the uncertainty of funding levels and regional provider investment in Seminole is a hindrance and impediment to jurisdictional response. Seminole is prepared to make the investments for results that the Action Strategy prioritizes without the need for a mediating agency. The elected Board of Commissioners acting in concert with the County Manager’s office and the Community Services Department is prepared to prioritize all government resources according to the priorities set by government funders within the context of the local community strategy and the deeper resources already being targeted in the community.

The Seminole Action Opportunity Fund (SAOF) under the auspices of the Seminole Action Board is prepared to complement the work of government funds with philanthropic investments that add value to our community’s strategies and initiatives. We would ask that other foundation and private resources be conduited in the same manner with the same intent. The proper nexus point of investment of all resources, public and private, is within the context of the local community strategy accepted by the local jurisdictional authorities.

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3. **That increased private philanthropy and foundation support be prioritized in year two of the continuing Action Strategy.** Even with the increased considerable investment of County resources and the resources from the Central Florida Foundation and from the federal government conduited through the Homeless Services Network, there are persistent gaps in housing and services that are impediments to our goal of housing our homeless neighbors, be they children or adults. Without considerable philanthropy through the SAOF activities, flexible funds needed to solve problems and fill gaps will be unavailable. The lack of those solution-oriented investments, supplementing government resources, will prolong the homelessness of families and children and leave individuals languishing in our streets.
4. **That, until housing specifically targeted to homeless households is created in proportion to the need for units, Seminole County will act to enhance the creation of a housing search initiative** to act as a real estate vehicle for homeless households, identifying units across the County and beyond. This initiative will replicate best practice efforts from across our country.
5. **That Seminole County pursue, in tandem with other efforts to secure resources focused on solutions to homelessness, the maximum amount of resources available from the federal government through HUD McKinney-Vento funding and other federal resources.** While the resources of the County are in the forefront of response, Seminole County has the responsibility to increase as much as possible resources that are targeted to homeless people from federal agencies, most especially, HUD. Seminole County should pursue all strategies that increase federal resources targeted to our homeless neighbors.

Internally, the SAB Board through its Dashboard and Accountability Committee is taking action to ensure two vital metrics:

1. **The number of homeless people in Seminole County.** Without some level of confidence in this number, we cannot be confident that our achievements in housing homeless families and individuals is actually reducing homelessness in this County. While there are both a Point in Time Count (PIT) and a Homeless Management Information Systems (HMIS) in place, those numbers are unfortunately unreliable and incomplete.
2. **The resources available to Seminole County from the Department of Housing and Urban Development's homeless resources.** Methodology and due diligence are being applied to reported numbers.

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## SPECIAL THANKS AND COMMENDATIONS

1. To the Board of Commissioners for their support of the Seminole Action Board (SAB) focus on performance, investment, and outcomes.
2. To the County Manager's Office for its unwavering support for the SAB initiative and nimble investments to leverage federal and foundation resources.
3. To the School Board and Foundation, especially Davia Moss, for the commitment to families and students experiencing homelessness and the performance-oriented investment of resources to encourage a results-based platform of provider intervention.
4. To the Seminole County Housing Authority and its Executive Director Shannon Young for its early investment of housing vouchers to support homeless families.
5. To the provider agencies who have adopted quantifiable metrics in their approach to solving homelessness.
6. To the faith community, especially Northland, A Church Distributed, for rallying around homeless families as a bridge to the social capital in their generous congregations. And for Northland Church's generous and gracious hospitality and leadership (we just love those cookies – and the fruit, too!) for our innumerable convenings.
7. To the Sheriff's office, especially Captain Dan Purcell, for a creative approach to the identification of homeless people on the streets and in encampments throughout the County and the promise of a listing of all our neighbors who are homeless outdoors.
8. To the team at the County's Community Services Department, especially Valmarie Turner and Carrie Longworth, who have supported the initiatives of the Task Force and Seminole Action Board and who are embracing and envisioning a more robust approach to outcomes in ending the homelessness of our poorest neighbors.
9. To the support of the Central Florida Foundation, the Homeless Service Network (special kudos to Joan on the data recapitulations!), and other agencies who have conduited resources that make possible the quantifiable achievements of this first year of the Action Strategy.

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We are especially grateful to Mark Brewer who has championed the themes of performance and results in the Central Florida region, themes that resonate with the Seminole Action Board membership, and ensure a continuing robust relationship between regional and Seminole County initiatives.

10. To the leadership of John Hillenmeyer, whose retirement has been impinged upon yet again, and Wendy Brandon, leading our SAOF efforts, in their chairing of the Seminole Action Board with gracious and imperturbable acumen.
11. To the American Round Table to Abolish Homelessness for its strategic and analytical support of Seminole County's quest to reduce and end homelessness. ART's focus on business principles and results has framed our efforts.