

First Step Staffing

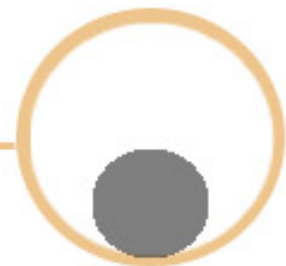
An Atlanta-based Non-Profit Organization

Our mission: To help homeless men and women break the cycle of homelessness by assisting them to develop a source of sustainable income that leads to financial independence.



first step

Staffing · Housing · Benefits



First Step's Two Signature Programs

❖ *Staffing – A transitional employment program that places formerly homeless men and women into the workforce. First Step contracts with employers for jobs and provides supportive services for clients*

❖ *Benefits – Fast-tracks homeless individuals with severe mental and/or physical disabilities for Social Security Disability income and Medicaid using the SOAR model*

Why did we start First Step Benefits?

- ✓ There are an estimated 3,000 homeless men and women per year in Atlanta who have severe disabilities. Before we started:
 - ✓ 19% approval rate on initial SSI applications
 - ✓ 83 homeless people approved in the state of Georgia in one year
- ✓ The SOAR model worked but it had been difficult to implement with busy case managers
- ✓ Scalability - There were more clients than could be served by adding the SOAR process to the existing community resources
- ✓ The process required expertise as well as strong relationships with Social Security
- ✓ First Step envisioned a solution that linked health care, housing and income

How it works in Atlanta

- ✓ Community partners refer their clients to First Step
- ✓ First Step takes on representation for the clients and advocates with Social Security and Disability Adjudication/Determination Services on their behalf
- ✓ Collaborative efforts include:
 - ✓ Accompaniment and transportation to key appointments
 - ✓ Procurement of medical evidence
 - ✓ Housing placement
 - ✓ Health care
 - ✓ Case Management
 - ✓ General assistance (i.e. food, clothing)

First Step's Results

- ✓ 931 homeless men and women approved for Social Security Disability benefits since 2007
- ✓ \$7.9mil in combined annual income for clients
- ✓ Over 85% housing placement rate for approved clients
- ✓ Over \$6mil recovered from Medicaid on behalf of First Step clients from just one Atlanta hospital (*charges previously written off as bad debt*)

Strengths of the Model

- ✓ Specialization & Focus
- ✓ Scalability
- ✓ Collaboration
- ✓ Supports health care and housing resources
- ✓ Replicable
- ✓ Sustainable sources of funding

Grady Health System – A Case Study

- ✓ \$6mil+ recovered from Medicaid in three years
- ✓ Study: 75 clients' health care usage post-SSI benefits approval
- ✓ Emergency Room usage significantly reduced by 24%
 - ✓ Psychiatric ER Usage down 52%
 - ✓ Behavioral Health Outpatient Treatment up 38%
- ✓ Foundations supported the initial hospital work
- ✓ Grady shared Medicaid recovery with First Step to support on-going services

Potential Sources to Sustain SOAR Work

- ✓ Hospitals and other health care organizations
- ✓ Fees from Social Security back pay to clients
- ✓ Collaborative grant applications with strategic partners
- ✓ Participation with outreach and mental health teams such as PATH and ACT
- ✓ The criminal justice system

Important Strategic Partners

- ✓ Hospitals
- ✓ Clinics such as St. Joseph's Mercy Care
- ✓ Local ACT Teams (Assertive Community Treatment)
- ✓ Local PATH Teams (Street Outreach)
- ✓ Community Service Boards
- ✓ Community Health Centers
- ✓ Supportive Housing Facilities



Other Important Stakeholders

- ✓ Social Security Administration
- ✓ Disability Adjudication Services
- ✓ Local Continuum of Care
- ✓ State and local agencies (health, justice, human services)
- ✓ The Community Foundation
- ✓ The United Way
- ✓ The Regional Commission on Homelessness



Where do we go from here?

- ✓ Work closely with individuals exiting the criminal justice system in metropolitan Atlanta
- ✓ Expand relationships in suburban communities outside the city of Atlanta
- ✓ Deepen relationships with supportive housing partners
- ✓ Replicate First Step Benefits model in communities with large numbers of individuals who are both homeless and uninsured



For more information...

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