



Behavioral Health Care

HB 2723 – Testimony

House Committee on Welfare Reform

3/5/2024

Bill D. Persinger, Jr., CEO, Valeo Behavioral Health Care, Inc., Topeka, Kansas

Honorable Chair Averkamp and distinguished members of the Committee, I am Bill D. Persinger, Jr., CEO at Valeo Behavioral Health Care, Inc., a nationally accredited, state-licensed community mental health center (CMHC) and substance use disorders treatment center. Valeo is a (provisionally) Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinic (CCBHC).

It is an honor to present to you today on HB2723 which, if signed into law, would bring much-needed resources in our collective on-going effort to end homelessness, helping our unsheltered neighbors achieve independence and self-sufficiency. Thank you for the priority you're giving to this most pressing issue.

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What is Valeo doing now to help the unsheltered?

1. Partner in the Mobile Access Partnership (MAP). Please see brochure attached.
2. Partner in Warming Centers (during polar vortex events) and Cooling Centers (via the Extreme Weather Workgroup).
3. Crisis Residential Center / Crisis Transitional Living Center.
4. Homeless Outreach Team (Homeless Outreach Partnerships for Empowerment).
5. Co-Responder Program.
6. Partnering with the Topeka Police Department and the Shawnee County Sheriff's Office's Crisis Intervention Teams (CIT) Program.
7. Crisis Case Management.
8. Assertive Community Treatment (ACT) Team.
9. Offering emergency supplies such as food, clothing, personal hygiene, and survival gear.

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24 HOUR CRISIS LINE
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What trends and factors are we seeing in Topeka and Shawnee County?

1. City of Topeka's Homeless Initiative Task Force. Report with actionable and specific steps due to City sometime in April.
2. 80+% of unsheltered individuals want a permanent home.
3. Severe mental illness and/or addiction is a struggle and challenge for many who are unsheltered.
4. The unsheltered population is aging and they have health problems associated with aging and pre-mature aging.
5. Increase in the number of unsheltered individuals in Shawnee County over prior years (but awaiting our annual Point In Time Count results).
6. Seeing more cases of unsheltered folks who have fallen on hard times.
7. Increase in number of individuals living in abandoned houses, trailers, and campers with no utilities.
8. City of Topeka camping ordinance and designated camping areas.
9. A number of people enter jail from homelessness and are released into homelessness.

What is needed to reduce or end homelessness?

An enduring inter-governmental, multiple agency (non-profit and faith community), multi-sector response/plan that is unified and comprehensive, such as the one being developed in Topeka and Shawnee County. The following is a partial list of services/initiatives essential to the success of such a plan:

1. Low barrier housing and (very) low-cost rental housing and rental and utility subsidies.
2. Increased support for emergency shelter beds, especially for women with children.
3. A One Stop Shop for access to a variety of local services and supports.
4. Increased access to, and funding for, healthy and affordable food, medicine, and primary care.
5. Increased funding for the public behavioral health safety net of mental health crisis services and substance use disorders treatment for uninsured persons.
6. Increased funding for mental health staff who work on the street with homeless individuals.
7. Funding for more transitional/residential center living beds for individuals with severe mental illness.
8. Mental Health and other specialty courts, such as Veterans Court and Drug Court.
9. Supported employment and other employment and educational programs for adults with mental illness.

Summary

Honorable Chair and Members of the Committee, thank you SO much for your work in elevating discussions and actions this most important community issue. Stable, safe, and affordable housing (low barrier temporary housing and permanent housing) is the most essential and fundamental element in properly addressing homelessness and in giving folks a hand up. Ending homelessness will require an increased, sustained, integrated, and collaborative community effort and plan that focusses on the whole person (and the family) with improved access to, and funding for, public mental health and addictions treatment services, expanded social services (food and job supports, for example), emergency shelter beds, and healthcare.





The Topeka Police Department

City ID Program

- The Topeka ID Card Program is designed to bridge the gap for those who otherwise wouldn't be able to afford or have the proper documentation to apply for a state issued ID.
- The city issued Topeka ID cards are free.
- The Topeka ID cards can be used to apply for a job through Day Labor Services, apply for residency and more.

Follow us on Facebook to keep up on our schedule, volunteer needs and wish list items at:

@MobileAccessPartnershipTopeka



Or scan this QR code with your smart phone to go directly to our page!

Get Involved

To volunteer for MAP, call (785)730-8856 or sign up at volunteer@trmonline.org.

Questions?

Please contact Jenny Falk, Director of MAP Operations at jfalk@trmonline.org or Aimee Copp-Hasty, Corporate Development Director with Valeo at acoppahasty@valeotopeka.org.



MAP would not be possible without the assistance of all our partners, volunteers or financial support of grant funding and generous donations from the community.

SUPPORTING PARTNERS:

- Doorstep, Inc.
- GraceMed
- Hygienic Cleaners
- Salvation Army
- Kansas Department of Health and Env.
- Scotch Cleaners
- KSU College of Veterinary Medicine



MOBILE ACCESS PARTNERSHIP



Taking comprehensive services to the unsheltered homeless through innovative, multi-agency collaboration



Why is MAP Important?

MAP is a collaborative approach to providing mobile access to medical, social, and behavioral health services for Topeka's unsheltered homeless population, as well as those whose living/housing situation is precarious. MAP expands the work that partnering agencies are doing to give at-risk adults and families a hand-up as they seek to move forward. MAP operates on Tuesday & Thursday throughout the community.

MAP is a division of Compassion Strategies Inc.
a 501(c)3 Not-for-profit

Contributions may be sent to Compassion Strategies PO Box 8626
Topeka KS 66608
Questions 785-730-8800

Valeo Behavioral Healthcare

Valeo's Mobile Shower and Laundry Trailer

Valeo's Mobile Shower and Laundry Trailer at MAP may be the only chance the unsheltered have to shower in days or even weeks.



We believe everyone deserves the health, dignity, and hope a shower can bring.

Funding for the Mobile Shower and Laundry trailer was provided by the Kansas Housing Resources Corporation

Topeka Rescue Mission

Mobile Kitchen - Topeka Rescue Mission's mobile kitchen trailer will provide breakfast and lunch for the homeless.



Clothing Trailer - Topeka Rescue Mission's clothing and supply trailer is the mobile unit that houses and provides clothes and other various supplies.



Street Dog Coalition

Street Dog Coalition partners with KSU's Shelter Medicine Program to provide free veterinary care to pets of individuals experiencing homelessness with a One Health approach that values the lives on both ends of the leash.



Shawnee County Health Department

- Resource and Logistical Support
- Evaluation of COVID-19 Situation in Shawnee County
- COVID testing



Stormont Vail Health Mobile Clinic



Primary Care services to include:

- Regular check-ups (blood pressure, diabetes screening, labs), etc.
- Preventive/wellness care (annual screenings, immunizations, flu shots, care for on-going chronic conditions), etc.
- Referrals to specialty care as needed.
- Bilingual staff available