



OPERATION NET-REACH

A Systematic Plan to Address Homelessness

**Reaching the Community through
Neighborhood Empowerment Teams***

*Hearing that Jesus had silenced the Sadducees,
the Pharisees got together. One of them, an expert in the law,
tested him with this question: "Teacher, which is the
greatest commandment in the Law?" Jesus replied:
"Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul
and with all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment.
And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'
All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments."
Matthew 22:34-40(NIV)*

The Concern

- Homelessness has increased dramatically in our nation and community in recent years.
- Existing shelter capacity at the Topeka Rescue Mission has reached beyond authorized limits.
- New unsheltered homeless are being discovered weekly.
- Economic conditions throughout the nation are not predicted to improve in the near future.
- Systemic causes of homelessness have not been adequately addressed.
- Failure to become proactive in addressing the above may result in compromised community safety and quality of life for all.

The Plan

- Topeka Rescue Mission (TRM) in collaboration with church and community partners will develop immediate and long-term action plans to address current homeless population concerns as well as systemic causes of poverty in our community.
- TRM will acquire an overflow facility to be known as the “Intake Shelter” to address current shelter space concerns and to prepare for a future homeless service system change.
- TRM in collaboration with church and community partners will develop a SIX COMPONENT STRATEGY to address current and future homeless/poverty issues with a goal strengthening and empowering neighborhoods.

Component One

EXPAND OPERATION STREET REACH

Purpose

- To reach, identify and assist unsheltered homeless persons.
- To prepare for the potential of the Topeka Rescue Mission exceeding maximum capacity limits.
- To strengthen community collaborations.

Component Two

ESTABLISH AN “INTAKE SHELTER”

Purpose

- To provide immediate relief from unsafe environments due to homelessness.
- To address Topeka Rescue Mission capacity concerns.
- To provide a safe environment to assess and evaluate appropriate solutions.
- To develop more effective service delivery through collaboration with service providers.
- To provide a venue for timely referrals to be made for housing and other social services.

Component Three

DEVELOP N.E.T. SHELTER PROGRAM

Purpose

To assist homeless individuals in gaining the necessary tools to become successful as they re-enter community by:

- Transforming existing Topeka Rescue Mission shelters into a program-based shelter which would prepare individuals for reintegration through Neighborhood Empowerment Teams (NET).
- Serving as an incubator that would train and equip motivated homeless individuals to reintegrate into community through comprehensive programs designed for individual needs and abilities (i.e. S.I.T., T-MAP, etc.).
- Equipping individuals through the “team concept*” of working together to support other team members with a goal of bringing positive character and direction to the neighborhoods in which they relocate.

Component Four

ESTABLISH A MENTOR DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

Purpose

To develop and equip mentors who will:

- Internally lead Neighborhood Empowerment Teams (NET) within the Topeka Rescue Mission.
- Externally facilitate the development of neighborhood strengthening initiatives.

Component Five
DEVELOPMENT OF N.E.T. PROGRAM-BASED HOUSING

Purpose

- To provide a safe and supportive environment for individuals to begin a new life in the community.
- To empower individuals to make a positive impact on the neighborhoods in which they live known as Success Zones*.

Action Steps

- Topeka Rescue Mission (TRM)/Topeka Housing Authority (THA) and other community partners will collaborate to develop NET program-based housing.
- THA will use tax credits and/or other resources to obtain and prepare program-based housing units.
- TRM NET Shelter Program will make referrals to THA units.
- TRM mentors will internally and externally facilitate (coach) the Neighborhood Empowerment Teams (NET).

Component Six
PRODUCE REPLICATION

Purpose

- To bring forth transformation of individuals and communities.

Explanation Successful implementation of the first five steps will encourage replication. As replication occurs, the transformation of individuals and communities will take place.

* Footnotes

- * Empowering the Community through Neighborhood Empowerment Teams: In Luke 5:1-11, Jesus urged the fisherman occupying the boat to cast their nets into the sea on the opposite side of the boat. When doing so, in spite of previous attempts that had been unsuccessful, an abundance of fish were caught which caused their nets to overflow. Likewise, Jesus exhorted the fishermen to become fishers of men. Previous attempts to break the cycle of repetitive homelessness within our community have not been successful. The Topeka Rescue Mission recognizes the importance of utilizing a new strategy of net-casting to address the current and future state of homelessness which is predicted to increase as our nation's economy continues to experience instability. Embracing the concept of NET-Reach will change the face of our community by strengthening and empowering homeless individuals to, not only successfully reintegrate back into the community, but also bring forth positive impact and change to their communities which will both strengthen and empower.

- * Team Concept: The majority of individuals experiencing homelessness have been disenfranchised from family and community. They often find themselves alone and frightened. Fear and desperation lead to unwise choices such as drug and alcohol usage and/or unhealthy relationships. The Topeka Rescue Mission (TRM) has historically noticed that those who achieve the greatest success do so in part because they have been part of a group of individuals who are together working towards a common goal. Unfortunately, we have witnessed that after these individuals leave the group and the support of the environment of the Mission, they find themselves simulating back into neighborhoods amongst others who have been disenfranchised

from positive and healthy relationships. Thus, they return to prior behaviors and consequences and remain impoverished emotionally and practically; oftentimes resulting in repetitive homelessness. The goal of the Neighborhood Empowerment Teams (NET) is to keep intact the positive relationships of the group with a strong leader/mentor who will engage with the intentional formation of the group while at the NET-Shelter of TRM and will remain the leader/mentor of the group as they transition into the community. The goal as the team reintegrates into the community is that they will have a corporate purpose in serving other disenfranchised individuals in order to model healthy decisions and relationships that will consequently assist in the strengthening and empowering of communities.

- * **Success Zones:** Defined as an area within the community in which healthy decisions and relationships are displayed by all individuals within that area. In these success zones, individuals work together corporately for the common goal of the community in which they live.