



## Joint News Release

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Contact: *Danis Russell, CEO GCCMH Phone 810-257-3707*

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **\$663,377 IN GRANTS COMING TO GENESSEE COUNTY TO COMBAT HOMELESSNESS**

Genesee County, Michigan – U.S. Housing and Urban Development (HUD) recently announced grants that they are awarding throughout the United States to combat homelessness. \$663,377 will be coming to Genesee County.

Genesee County Community Mental Health (GCCMH) and My Brother's Keeper of Genesee County will be receiving funds to work with individuals and families with chronic homelessness.

Chronic homelessness is defined by HUD as an "unaccompanied, disabled individual who has been continuously homeless for over one year." In Genesee County for the homeless count January 1- December 31, 2010 there are 426 individuals who are considered chronically homeless. Approximately 3,500 persons were identified as homeless.

GCCMH will receive a total of \$281,821.00 over the next 3 years to work with a minimum of 3 individuals with mental illness and 6 families with a parent with mental illness annually who meet the Federal definition, for a total of 9 individuals and 18 families. My Brother's Keeper will receive a total of \$381,556.00 over the next 3 years to work with 20 veterans annually who are homeless and meet HUD definitions.

Genesee County CMH will work closely with individuals and families who are homeless and with mental illness to locate, obtain, and maintain stable housing by working with landlords and paying rents, providing mental health Case Management Services, Peer Support Services, Benefits Assistance, and other mental health services as needed.

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My Brother's Keeper will work with veterans who are homeless by providing committed beds within the shelter and working with them to obtain and maintain stable housing. They will offer the individuals a number of classes to assist them, some mandatory and some optional. Mandatory classes include job readiness, anger management, and social and economic development. Optional classes include religious classes and working with their families.

Stigma is a very large barrier for individuals and families that are homeless and also for individuals and families with mental illness. "Individuals with mental illness face many difficulties due to fear or intolerance of their illness," states Danis Russell, CEO of GCCMH. "Oftentimes when an individual with mental illness meets that fear or prejudice it is very difficult to overcome. Stigma can hinder finding and keeping a job, friendships and social activities, and can hinder acquiring and keeping stable housing. With this grant we will work to address the individual's and family's mental health needs and work with landlords to help overcome barriers and stigma to aid in their recovery and homeless issues."

Those individuals who are homeless face stigma, too. "The difference between the homeless and the rest of society is that the rest of society has walls to hide behind," says Pastor Patrick McNeal, Founder and Operator at My Brother's Keeper. He continues, "We love to have the opportunity to serve America's finest."

According to the National Coalition of Homeless Veterans, 20% of the homeless are veterans. In Genesee County 17% of veterans are homeless.



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Genesee County CMH provides services and supports to Genesee County residents who are adults and children with developmental disabilities, adults with serious mental illness, children with serious emotional disturbance and for adults and children with substance use disorders. For more information call Customer Services at (810) 257-3705.

My Brother's Keeper of Genesee County cares for hundreds of homeless men who might otherwise weather a dangerous night alone. Exhausted, many homeless men spend so much time worrying about the basics of survival that they can't find a way out of their own homelessness. For more information contact them at (810) 234-1163.

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