

Milwaukee Co. Exec. Abele: “County’s homeless program a success”

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MILWAUKEE – It’s been just two years since Milwaukee County Executive Chris Abele launched the County’s Housing First initiative and we’re already seeing a dramatic return on investment – a 40 percent decrease in the total number of homeless individuals living in Milwaukee County.

That progress has Dave Fidlin of Urban Milwaukee hailing the program as a success in an article that profiled Milwaukee County Housing Division Outreach Services Manager Eric Collins-Dyke and his work on the County’s Housing First initiative.

“The hard work, compassion, and dedication of County employees like Eric Collins-Dyke, Luke Rosynek, Nateia Secession-Tolefree, Neisha Johnson, Beth Lappen, Jean Orlow, and Jessica Shriver, the My Home team, and many others on the team led by Housing Division Director Jim Mathy, is why we are seeing significant reductions in the number of homeless individuals in our community,” County Executive Chris Abele said. “I’m so proud of our staff and of this program. It’s a great reminder that government can really make a difference when we all work together.”

From the article:

“The county has set some lofty goals to eradicate chronic homelessness. County Executive Chris Abele, who created Collins-Dyke’s position amid a broader campaign pledge to reform and redesign the county’s mental health system, has announced a goal of serving 300 homeless persons through Housing First.

To date, more than 200 chronically homeless persons have been placed in residences through Housing First. Retention rates during the past two years of the rollout have stood at 99 percent, according to county figures.”

While the county executive launched Housing First because he believes we have a moral obligation to empower safer, healthier lives with dignity, there are other benefits to the Housing First approach, namely a substantial cost savings for the taxpayers. Citing data from the National Alliance to End Homelessness, Fidlin notes that “One study found an average cost savings on emergency services of \$31,545 per person housed in a Housing First program over the course of two years. [Another showed](#) that a Housing First program could cost up to \$23,000 less per consumer per year than a shelter program.”

This approach has helped reduce the overall number of homeless individuals in Milwaukee County by about 40 percent in the past two years.

“Collins-Dyke, beaming with enthusiasm as he discusses the program, calls it a “no-brainer” to bring this approach to Milwaukee County. Attempting to address a person’s needs without first ensuring he or she has a stable place to live has proven an uphill battle in the past,” Fidlin writes.

Read the article in its entirety here: <http://urbanmilwaukee.com/2017/08/21/countys-homeless-program-a-success/>