



DOING
THE MOST
GOODSM

Betty Zylstra, Director of Booth Family Services – Kent County

The Salvation Army

- Meeting energy assistance needs of low-income households in MI since the late 1800s
 - All 83 counties served
- Over the last decade, served an average of 20,000 Michigan households annually through various funding sources
 - These were people who received DHS assistance, but the assistance was not sufficient to resolve their crisis, or
 - People who were ineligible for DHS assistance for some reason
- Involved in community coalitions that help address the energy needs in Kent County and Statewide
 - Coalition to Keep Michigan Warm, Kent County Essential Needs Task Force



Complex Problem

- 97% of households that seek assistance have a household member who would be considered vulnerable
 - Minor child, Senior citizen, or Disabled person
- In the last heating season, we have seen the average energy assistance payment climb more than 39% over the prior year
- Through funding administered by the Public Service Commission, The Salvation Army coordinated assistance with over 500 energy vendors
 - Majority of vendors are small, unregulated utilities
- Energy self-sufficiency just one component of household stability



Homeless Prevention

- Energy assistance serves as a tool for homeless prevention and helps to improve household stabilization
- With the Vulnerable Household Warmth Fund, The Salvation Army addressed energy assistance needs for a total of 8,507 accounts statewide
 - Averted shut off on 6,991 accounts
 - Provided fuel delivery on 451 accounts
 - Restored service on 1065 accounts



Carefully Designed Solution

- More than one solution
 - Requires a system that addresses the chronic needs of vulnerable households or materially poor individuals
 - Also address those in short term crisis
- While taking into consideration the needs of the utility vendors, the solution needs to focus on the needs of residents
- Energy education and weatherization
 - Save taxpayers and ratepayers money
- Affordable, energy efficient housing stock needs to be part of the long-term plan for Michigan



Strength-based Case Management

- Maintain household stability
 - Financial intervention
- Build relationships with household members
 - Relational intervention
 - Address their situation/crisis holistically
 - Work to move from crisis into self-sufficiency
- Skilled workers
 - Address vulnerable households' needs
 - Strength-based perspective
 - Goal attainment



Making Good Energy Decisions

- Consistent, predictable funding stream necessary
- Coordinated and streamlined approach to getting households the assistance they need
- Keeping dialogue open to discuss issues
 - Both qualitative and quantitative review of issues as we're doing today
 - Process Evaluation
 - Outcome Evaluation
- Freedom and ability to conduct a household needs assessment in order to create individualized case plans

