

## MEMORANDUM

TO: Regional Steering Committee on Homelessness and Housing

FROM: HomeBase

DATE: January 23, 2008

RE: Building a Policy Platform to End Homelessness

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### Background

Over twenty-two years of solid efforts to understand, respond to, and end homelessness have passed, and still people are on the street. Successive generations of agencies, government staff, and elected officials have put their attention to this problem and have engaged in implementing constructive solutions. The “eras” in which RSC members have participated include:

- the early years of emergency crisis management (surplus federal goods, soup kitchens, shelters)
- the development of strategic plans to galvanize local efforts
- the designating of local government “point persons” to coordinate those efforts
- the passage of the McKinney Act to demonstrate federal department solutions
- the passage of state law to require Housing Elements to include the needs of homeless people
- the construction of regional solutions
- the coining of “continuum of care” phraseology as HUD adapted the local strategic planning process into its streamlined funding mechanism
- the formalized 5-year strategic plans to meet continuum of care criteria, and provide a detailed blueprint for local implementation
- the emergence of Permanent Supportive Housing, Assertive Community Treatment, Service Integration, Outreach and Engagement, Transitional Housing and other strategies as recognized components of successful responses to homelessness
- the passage of state bonds for housing and legislation creating new programs such as SHIA and MICORG
- the adoption of 10-year plans as a tool to engage more business and civic leaders in a new political effort to get chronically homeless people off the street and promote the notion that ending homelessness is possible.

Each successive effort has allowed agencies and localities to build capacity, re-align strategies, participate in new coalitions, and make lasting policy change. Representatives not only do good work at their home agency, but meet in Local Boards/Collaboratives, regional and statewide arenas, and national/federal forums. Homeless people are supported in getting on with their lives, and countless success stories abound. Capitalizing on all good ideas, Northern California communities have made a lot of progress, and contributed substance to the national efforts.

## **Ending Homelessness**

In December 1992, the RSC developed a thirteen point platform, published as [Homelessness in San Francisco Bay Area: Federal Solutions](#).

In June, 2003, the U.S. Conference of Mayors unanimously passed a resolution stating: “The U.S. Conference of Mayors supports the 10-year planning process and strongly encourages cities to create and implement... strategic plans to end chronic homelessness in 10 years.” [Ending Homelessness in America’s Cities: Implementing a National Plan of Action](#) was drafted here, with RSC participating, the following month.

The Regional Steering Committee on Homelessness and Housing (RSC) has for many years made a positive impact on Federal law, policy, and funding related to homelessness. By participating in various national, regional, and local conferences, meetings, and planning initiatives, as well as through ongoing conversations with elected and appointed officials, our voices have been heard by those who need to hear. Federal decision-makers have recognized the depth and perceptiveness of our analyses, and have noted as well our ability to relate legislative issues to our real world, on-the-ground experience in the Bay Area and Northern California communities.

The RSC views the transition to the Obama administration as an exciting and unprecedented opportunity to articulate a policy platform that would allow us – from the highest legislative levels in Washington, DC all the way to the neighborhoods in which we work – to make the changes necessary to end homelessness. Attached is a letter and e-submission developed last month.

We would like to expand on this, with the list attached as a starting point, what are some of your ideas? **CHECK OFF THE ONES YOU LIKE AND LEAVE THIS DOCUMENT WITH US. FEEL FREE TO ADD OTHERS!**

- ◆ **What are the key three things that if you had it, would end homelessness in your area?**
- ◆ **What do you see happening in our nation, that you can “connect” to what you need?**
- ◆ **Any other ideas for strengthening our pitch?**

**Please turn in this completed form to Stacey Murphy at the end of the meeting so that we can include your input and ideas in the RSC Platform. You can also send it via e-mail to [stacey@homebaseccc.org](mailto:stacey@homebaseccc.org).**

## **Ending Homelessness: Building a Federal Policy Platform 2009**

### **COMMIT TO ENDING HOMELESSNESS**

- Implement Priority: Home! The Federal, interagency plan to end homelessness, update with concrete goals and timelines, and investment.
- Institute and enforce requirements for States and local jurisdictions to finalize, approve, and implement their Five- and/or Ten-Year Plans to end homelessness.
- Invest the federal resources needed to implement State and local plans to end homelessness.
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

### **BUILD AND PRESERVE AFFORDABLE HOUSING**

- Include affordable housing development as a key component of any economic stimulus proposal: cite HUD capital plans and HOME funding as crucial source of construction jobs
- Eliminate, reduce, or allow flexibility in meeting match requirements for programs like Shelter + Care, even on an interim basis, to minimize risks for programs facing funding cuts
- Re-commit Federal funds for the construction of deeply affordable housing and the provision of Housing Choice vouchers.
- Increase funding for the Federal Housing Trust Fund
- Expand the McKinney-Vento Continuum of Care programs to address the sizeable unmet need for housing for homeless individuals and families
- Institute meaningful protections for households, especially tenants, at risk of foreclosure, including a moratorium on current foreclosures
- Establish a Supportive Housing Block Grant to create and sustain the provision of support services as well as the development of housing by nonprofit affordable housing developers and the dedication of housing units by Public Housing Authorities for people who have been/are homeless.
- Institute regulatory and programmatic changes to CRA, Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac to stabilize and standardize lending practices
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

### **ADDRESS THE CONNECTIONS BETWEEN INCARCERATION, HEALTH ISSUES, HOUSING, AND POVERTY**

- Strengthen the connections between the different Federal departments and agencies working on homeless issues, including SAMHSA, DHHS, U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, HRSA (DHHS), the U.S. Department of Labor, the Department of Veterans Affairs, the U.S. Department of Education, and others to create a streamlined and coordinated response to homelessness
- Make universal health care coverage a Federal priority.
- Advance Federal, State and local correctional policies that prioritize alternatives to incarceration – such as substance abuse and mental health treatment – as appropriate.

- Implement the “lessons” of the numerous Federal initiatives on homelessness, each of which demonstrated effective strategies for ending homelessness among targeted populations.
- Define the experience of chronic homelessness as a “presumptively eligible” criteria for SSI/SSDI.
- Fund additional staff in every Continuum of Care to prepare successful SSI applications.
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**CREATE MEANINGFUL INCOME AND WORK OPPORTUNITIES TO END POVERTY**

- Include job development and training for formerly homeless people as part of any economic stimulus proposal.
- Increase CalWorks, General Assistance, and SSI payments to allow recipients to cover a greater portion of their actual cost of living.
- Expand Federal funding for child care for working parents.
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**INFUSE MCKINNEY-VENTO RE-AUTHORIZATION WITH 20+ YEARS OF KNOWLEDGE DEVELOPMENT**

- Fund strategies that address the intersection of poverty, job and housing loss, health challenges, and release from incarceration, the military, and foster care.
- Continue the annual CoC HUD funding funnel, expanding resources for new programs and taking those that work to the scale needed to solve the problem.
- Strengthen the access of homeless assistance organization to surplus federal property by providing funding for housing (development/rehab/rental subsidies) and service provision.

**OTHER**

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- \_\_\_\_\_
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