



Responding to Homelessness: A National Plan of Action

Increase Federal commitment to developing safe, permanent, affordable housing

- Increase funding for HUD Homeless Assistance Grants

Samaritan Bonus Project: Napa County

Due to the current formula, the Napa Continuum of Care was eligible for only \$27,102 in additional funding for a Samaritan Bonus Project during the 2008 NOFA process. This money must cover two years of housing and services for chronically homeless individuals. With such a small grant, a potential service provider could only serve one individual under the grant. Service providers are reluctant to apply for a grant that serves only one person, because of the substantial administrative burdens for each grant. If the Bonus Project was set at a minimum amount of \$250,000, as in past years, services providers could serve more clients and have the benefit of an economy of scale for administrative purposes.

- Integrate and coordinate HUD Homeless Assistance programs with other Federal housing programs.
- Restore funding to public housing, Section 8, and other critically-needed Federal housing programs that have been systematically dismantled over the past 30 years. Homelessness in the U.S. emerged largely from Federal disinvestment to the tune of roughly \$50B from housing and anti-poverty initiatives. Ending homelessness starts there.

Strengthen the ability of the McKinney-Vento legislation to meet the needs of homeless populations

- Minimize the number of set-asides and bonuses, which limit the ability of jurisdictions to best meet the need for homeless housing and services as it is experienced in their communities.
- Commit to an allocation formula that is just, carefully considered and consistent with the need. The current mechanism has the value of being consistent with other HUD programs, and having withstood rigorous scrutiny by the Urban Institute, it may in fact be the “best available” mechanism.

Focus on the connections between poverty, job loss, health challenges, incarceration, and release from military service when crafting homeless policy.

- Build strong and meaningful inter-agency connections between service systems, starting with the integration of HUD and SAMHSA, but reaching out to include HRSA, DoJ, CDC, DoE, and other agencies whose work involves homeless individuals and families.

Project Coming Home: Contra Costa County

Contra Costa County's Project Coming Home (PCH) is 1 of 11 sites across the nation that participated in a unique collaboration among the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS)—with participation by SAMHSA and the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA)—the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), and the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). Through PCH, the Homeless Outreach Project to Encampments (HOPE), Health, Housing and Integrated Services Network (HHISN), and Shelter Plus Care programs work together to end an individuals homelessness using a "housing first" approach to immediately place individuals in permanent housing and provide wrap around support services. Outreach teams go out to encampments throughout the county to assist homeless accessing services; multi-disciplinary supportive service teams provide a range of treatment and services tied to permanent housing using Shelter Plus Care rental assistance. The average length of homelessness for clients entering the program is 11 years. Inversely, over two-thirds of the clients remained housed for over 2 years.

- Streamline the eligibility processes for Social Security and other critical entitlements and assistance programs for homeless individuals. This can be done with additional support directed toward the SAMHSA-sponsored SOAR program.

SOAR: Santa Clara, Alameda, and Contra Costa Counties

The counties of Santa Clara, Alameda, and Contra Costa are all investing in a launch of the SOAR program within their communities. Based on data collected from other SOAR communities in the nation, the Bay Area counties project that initial SSI/SSDI approval rates will increase to 70-95% of applicants without appeals. With these important benefits, clients can access housing and regain stability. The California Endowment and the San Francisco Foundation are supporting this effort, as we tap the expertise of Policy Research Associates, HomeBase, and the Advocacy and Training Center.

Direct efforts toward closing the “front door” to homelessness

- Support public housing authorities and other housing providers to assist households on the brink of eviction with remaining housed.

Rapid Re-Housing for Families: the Bay Area and Beyond

During the 2008 NOFA process, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) made resources available for 10 pilot projects to rapidly re-house homeless families. HUD’s intent was to fund already existing rapid re-housing programs across the nation. Many communities would like to start or to strengthen rapid re-housing programs. An expansion of the funds beyond the original 10 grantees would allow communities to implement or strengthen this best practice. Developing a program targeted more deeply to the increased need we are seeing, such as the two-fold increase in families seeking emergency shelter in San Francisco this year, would make a difference in millions of lives.

- Support the efforts of correctional facilities, social service agencies, foster care, health care and housing providers, and others to ensure that individuals leaving foster care, correctional or treatment facilities do not exit to homelessness.

Discharge Planning: Marin County

The California Department of Corrections & Rehabilitation contracts with Center Point, Inc., a nonprofit agency, to screen and assess inmates prior to their release. Center Point connects inmates to substance abuse treatment, housing, mental health counseling, vocational and other supportive services. The case managers develop formal discharge and aftercare plans, coordinating with Parole Agents for follow up. Our communities need assistance establishing and strengthening programs like Center Point, which end the cycle between prison and homelessness.