

GETTING TO A TEN-YEAR PLAN

The idea behind ten-year plans to end homelessness is that homelessness must be ended. Rather than spending money on creating more temporary housing or evolving assistance programs according to the latest service trend, many proponents of the ten-year planning process advocate immediate housing, access to mainstream benefits, planning for outcomes, and an overarching systemic change across all systems of care.

One of the early advocates of ten-year plans was the **National Alliance to End Homelessness**. NAEH's strategy, available at www.endhomelessness.org, focuses on:

- Planning for outcomes:
 - First, collect **data** that allows identification of the most effective strategy for each sub-group of the homeless population.
 - Second, bring to the **planning** table those responsible for mainstream as well as homeless-targeted resources.
- Closing the front door (prevention):
 - Homelessness can be **prevented** by making mainstream poverty programs more accountable for the outcomes of their most vulnerable clients and wards.
- Opening the back door (housing)
 - An adequate supply of appropriate **housing** should be developed and subsidized for homeless persons.
- Building the infrastructure
 - Ending homelessness can be a first step in addressing the systemic problems that lead to crisis poverty, including:
 - The shortage of affordable **housing**
 - **Incomes** that do not pay for basic needs
 - Lack of appropriate **services** for those who need them

This model has helped raise public awareness, engage the private sector in seeking solutions to homelessness, increase philanthropic participation, and seen a greater number of elected officials take notice of – and seek constructive solutions for – the problems of homelessness.

The **Interagency Council on Homelessness** has taken up the NAEH's battle cry against homelessness and is in the process of using these plans to increase engagement of local and state elected officials. Hand-in-hand with the development of ten-year plans, the ICH has advocated for the creation of state-level Interagency Councils on Homelessness in an effort to build

effective state and local infrastructure to address homelessness. For further information about the ICH, visit www.ich.gov.

In addition, the federal Department of Health & Human Services (HHS) has been instrumental in creating the **Policy Academy process**. The Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA), which is part of HHS, hosts an information site for the federal interagency Policy Academy process (see <http://www.hrsa.gov/homeless/> for further information).

In November 2001, HHS and the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development announced a series of Policy Academies designed to help state and local policymakers improve access to mainstream services for people who are homeless. The intended objectives for the Policy Academy process include:

- Assisting state and local policymakers to **develop an Action Plan** intended to improve access to mainstream health and human services and employment opportunities that are coordinated with housing for persons who are experiencing homelessness (A 1999 US General Accounting Office report revealed that while funding for programs specifically targeted to homeless persons under the McKinney Vento Homeless Assistance Act amounted to \$1.2 billion a year, more than \$200 billion in assistance was available in the mainstream programs);
- **Creating and/or reinforcing relationships** among the Governor's office, state legislators, key program administrators, and stakeholders from the public and private sectors;
- Providing an environment conducive to the process of **strategic decision-making**
- Assisting state and local policymakers in identifying issues or areas of concern that may result in a formal request for **technical assistance**.

Participation at the Academy is open to all 50 States, the District of Columbia, American Samoa, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, Guam, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands. In all, 55 states and territories have participated in at least one Homeless Policy Academy. Of these, 49 have submitted draft Action Plans itemizing strategies to help the homeless in their state or territory access mainstream services. To date, eight Policy Academies have been held through which states are offered expertise and peer-to-peer learning opportunities on how to maximize the availability and accessibility of mainstream resources for homeless persons. A National Learning Meeting was held in October 2004 to showcase innovative approaches states have implemented, to provide additional opportunity for peer-to-peer technical assistance and to determine what further assistance would be helpful to states in implementing their state plans.

Several federal agencies have partnered to sponsor these Policy Academies, including the U.S. Departments of Health and Human Services, Housing and Urban Development, Veterans Affairs and Labor. The Department of Education has announced that it will be joining the collaboration this year.