



Driving Progress in the Year Ahead: Our Top Priorities for 2016

Since President Obama launched *Opening Doors*, our nation's first-ever plan to prevent and end homelessness, we know more than ever before about what it will take to end homelessness in our country. We must seize the opportunities that are in front of us right now. Currently, more than 20 communities across the country, and the entire states of Virginia and Connecticut, have effectively ended Veteran homelessness. Other communities are making remarkable progress toward achieving that goal and toward ending chronic and family homelessness. These communities are proving that a combination of the right strategies, enough resources, and urgent action can solve a challenge that many people considered unsolvable.

Our 2016 priorities build on those lessons. One of the top lessons we've learned from communities' success in ending Veteran homelessness is the importance of a clear definition, criteria, and benchmarks on what it means to end homelessness. Those tools provided us with a shared understanding of the outcomes we were driving toward and focused community efforts on the actions necessary to achieve them. Building upon that lesson, we are working to provide communities with criteria and benchmarks for ending family, youth, and chronic homelessness. Other important priorities for USICH in 2016 include:

Finishing the Job of Ending Chronic Homelessness

We know what it takes to end long-term homelessness among those with disabilities and complex health conditions – permanent supportive housing. In order to see an end to chronic homelessness, we will:

- Assist states and communities to fully realize the opportunities to coordinate Medicaid and housing resources to take supportive housing to scale.
- Strengthen practices for identifying and providing effective outreach to individuals with complex care needs.
- Ensure that communities have the tools they need to prioritize those with the most complex needs for the housing and services opportunities available.
- Support the President's call in his [FY 2017 budget](#) for the resources we need to create additional units of permanent supportive housing to end homelessness for this population once and for all.

Leveraging Community Resources to End Family Homelessness

During 2016, we'll continue to implement strategies that build upon [Family Connection](#), the vision for a system in which every family has access to housing and services to address their needs, including:

- Support the President's budget proposal for \$11 billion in mandatory funding over ten years, along with short-term discretionary funding, to provide communities with the housing assistance needed to achieve and sustain the end of homelessness among families with children.
- Provide direction to communities on how to strengthen coordinated entry systems, especially to more fully engage mainstream agencies and programs into those systems.
- Share best practices for implementing rapid re-housing and coordinated crisis response systems.

- Strengthen partnerships at state and local levels between homelessness assistance and mainstream programs like TANF, schools, early childhood, child welfare systems, and others.
- Ensure that efforts to end family homelessness address the needs of families experiencing domestic violence.

Strengthening Community Capacity to End Youth Homelessness

This will be a critical year for spurring greater momentum in our efforts to end youth homelessness. In 2015, we released a [vision for what a coordinated community response to youth homelessness looks like](#). In the year ahead, we will:

- Provide tools and guidance to strengthen communities' capacity to implement such coordinated responses and provide the full range of interventions necessary to meet the diverse needs of youth.
- Improve data collection and provide guidance regarding the use of different data sources to ensure the fullest understanding of the scale and characteristics of youth homelessness.
- Guide the deployment of federal technical assistance resources and demonstration program funding appropriated in the FY 2016 budget and support the call for additional investments in the FY 2017 budget to further expand our capacity, knowledge, and momentum to end homelessness among youth.
- Submit our report to Congress identifying opportunities to strengthen federal coordination and strategies for ending youth homelessness.

Achieving and Sustaining an End to Veteran Homelessness

Communities across the country are continuing to build – and strengthen – effective and efficient systems to make sure Veteran homelessness is rare, brief, and non-recurring. We will continue to engage all communities driving toward the goal, including:

- Ensure that communities that have achieved the goal can sustain the efficient systems they have so painstakingly built.
- Profile and share successful practices from communities that have achieved the goal as models for other communities.
- Guide communities regarding how the Grant and Per Diem Program can best support efforts to end Veteran homelessness and meet evolving needs in communities.
- Strengthen efforts to prevent exiting service members and Veterans, including OEF/OIF Veterans, from ever experiencing the crisis of homelessness.

Setting a Path to End All Types of Homelessness

In order to end homelessness for all populations, we must continue to address larger structural challenges, like the need for more affordable housing, the need to engage mainstream systems, and the need for criminal justice reform. In 2016, we will:

- Lead an interagency working group to set a path to end homelessness among American Indians and Alaska Natives.
- Engage communities to reduce the criminalization of homelessness and criminal justice involvement among people experiencing homelessness.
- Ensure efforts to engage mainstream systems that address the housing and services needs of all individuals and families experiencing homelessness and housing crises.

We know what it will take to end the crisis of homelessness in this country. We believe our priorities for 2016 will ensure another year of significant progress and will provide communities with the tools needed to propel us forward. What do you think? Do our priorities align with the work you are driving in your community? Let us know at communications@usich.gov.