



Ending Family Homelessness: Our Progress, Essential Strategies, and the Work Ahead

Our Progress

The work to end family homelessness is a national priority for many reasons. Being in safe and stable housing benefits both parents and children for a lifetime, improving their overall well-being, health, education, and future employment opportunities — outcomes that strengthen our communities and our country as a whole.

Through strengthened crisis response systems, more effective use of public and private resources, and stronger practices, our most recent Point-in-Time count data tells us that the number of families experiencing unsheltered or sheltered homelessness on any given night has been reduced by 23% in this country between 2010 and 2016 — including a 65% reduction in unsheltered homelessness. But given the scope of the challenge, we need much greater progress.

To end family homelessness once and for all, we need to continue building strong public-private partnerships, marshaling existing resources, and investing new resources to ensure all families have access to safe, stable housing they can sustain long-term, with connections to opportunities that contribute to self-sufficiency and overall well-being.



Essential Strategies

To prevent families with children from experiencing homelessness, and to make sure that when families do experience homelessness they can quickly regain permanent housing, communities need robust, coordinated systems, focused on shared outcomes.

Federal, state, and local action has focused on [four key strategies](#):

1. Develop a centralized or coordinated entry system with the capacity to assess needs and connect families to targeted prevention assistance where possible and temporary shelter as needed.
2. Ensure interventions and assistance are tailored to the needs of families:
 - a) Provide rapid re-housing assistance to the majority of families experiencing homelessness;
 - b) Increase access to affordable housing and help communities target resources; and
 - c) Direct more service-intensive housing interventions to the highest need households.
3. Help families connect to the mainstream resources (benefits, employment, and community-based services) needed to sustain housing and achieve stability. Improve linkages to local mainstream systems to help families gain access to these resources more quickly.
4. Develop and build upon evidence-based practices for serving families experiencing and at risk of homelessness.

The Work Ahead

The progress we've made is promising, but there is much more work to be done to end family homelessness in this country. In their [2016 Point-in-Time counts](#), communities estimated that more than 61,000 family households were experiencing unsheltered or sheltered homelessness on any given day, representing nearly 195,000 people, about 60% of whom are children under age 18. In addition, 1.26 million public school students were identified as experiencing homelessness at some point [during the 2014-2015 school year](#), including children who are living in shelters or who are unsheltered, and also children who may be staying in motels or in doubled-up arrangements. Further, [a 2015 Point-in-Time count of domestic violence programs](#) indicated that more than 40,000 victims of domestic violence and their children are in domestic violence emergency shelter or transitional housing on any given day, a number that has been increasing in recent years.

To achieve our goal of ending family homelessness once and for all, we must focus even more effort on several important priorities:

- **Increasing the supply of housing affordable to families.** The findings from the [Family Options Study](#) provide powerful evidence of the impact of affordable housing on ending family homelessness and helping families achieve progress in many other areas. We must maintain a range of housing options and continue to target and prioritize existing affordable housing to families exiting homelessness, while also taking steps to increase the overall supply of units affordable to families. Jurisdictions should identify strategies to remove local barriers to housing development that may reduce the ability of housing markets to respond to growing demand, and local, state, and national partners must identify ways to invest in new affordable housing.
- **Continuing to strengthen our capacity to rapidly connect families to housing and services interventions.** The path to help for families must be as simple, straightforward, and short as possible, and must focus on linking families to permanent housing, integrated into our neighborhoods, as a platform for long-term self-sufficiency. We must continue to learn from the rapid re-housing programs with the strongest outcomes, apply those lessons more widely, and take rapid re-housing strategies to greater scale within our communities.
- **Enhancing connections to support economic self-sufficiency, including stronger partnerships with employment services, child care and early childhood programs, and other opportunities.** These connections can both prevent families with children from ever experiencing homelessness and ensure the long-term success and stability of families who have exited homelessness.
- **Fostering stronger interdisciplinary partnerships to respond to families in crisis.** Given its complexity, ending family homelessness is not something that any single agency, system, or sector can solve on its own. We must strengthen the connections between housing opportunities, community- and faith-based services, and public systems that can support two-generation approaches to meet the needs of both parents and their young children and provide access to a fuller array of opportunities, including education, employment, early childhood, child welfare, domestic violence, and health and behavioral health services.
- **Maintaining partnerships at all levels of government.** To further the progress we've made to date, we must continue to pursue a collaborative approach across federal, state, and local government, with federal assistance carefully targeted to ensure that it is complementary to and supportive of on-the-ground efforts by state and local officials to address community-specific challenges.
- **Building lasting systems that will sustain our success.** Finally, we must sustain our investments into the strategies and programs that are working, knowing that our communities must have lasting systems that are poised to respond to crisis every day.

Together, we can drive our progress even further. We can end family homelessness.