



## **United States Interagency Council on Homelessness Fiscal Year 2017 Congressional Budget Justification**

**“No one should experience homelessness — no one should be without a safe, stable place to call home.”**

**United States Interagency Council on Homelessness  
Fiscal Year 2017 Summary Statement**

|                  | <b>2015 Enacted</b> | <b>2016 Enacted</b> | <b>2017 Request</b> |
|------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|
| Budget Authority | \$3,530,000         | \$3,530,000         | \$3,600,000         |

**Comparisons by Budget Object Classification: 2015 - 2017**

|  | <b>2015 Actual</b> | <b>2016 Enacted/Plan</b> | <b>2017 Request</b> |
|--|--------------------|--------------------------|---------------------|
| 11.0: Personnel- 20.5 FTE                          | \$1,821,992        | \$2,055,388              | \$2,189,035         |
| <i>FTE</i>   | <i>19.5</i>        | <i>20.5</i>              | <i>20.5</i>         |
| 12.0: Civilian Personnel Benefits                  | 551,946            | 618,430                  | 650,110             |
| 21.0: Travel and Transportation of Persons         | 178,479            | 168,000                  | 125,000             |
| 22.0: Transportation of Things                     | 0                  | 960                      | 960                 |
| 23.0: Communications, Utilities, and Misc. Charges | 319,371            | 300,000                  | 304,000             |
| 24.0: Printing and Reproduction                    | 5,888              | 5,000                    | 5,000               |
| 25.0: Services                                     | 507,624            | 352,222                  | 298,830             |
| 26.0: Supplies and Materials                       | 80,916             | 30,000                   | 27,065              |
| <b>Total Obligations, Estimate</b>                 | <b>3,466,216</b>   | <b>3,530,000</b>         | <b>3,600,000</b>    |
| <b>Total Outlays, Estimate</b>                     | <b>3,349,511</b>   | <b>3,530,000</b>         | <b>3,600,000</b>    |

## I. Executive Summary

We know how to end homelessness in America. In 2015, the Commonwealth of Virginia, and cities including Philadelphia, Las Vegas, and New Orleans, have proven that when investments in evidence-based solutions are coupled with leadership and a commitment to deliver those solutions with urgency, communities can end Veteran homelessness. Communities are already translating those lessons to their work ending homelessness for families, youth, people with disabilities, and other individuals.

That success has been made possible through the leadership of the U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness (USICH) in implementing *Opening Doors: Federal Strategic Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness* (the Plan). In a February 2014 report, the General Accountability Office found that USICH is a model of successful interagency collaboration and local engagement. We have established, led, and sustained policy priorities across federal agencies that have focused several billions of dollars in targeted homelessness funds on evidence-based solutions and ensured their deployment led to measurable reductions in homelessness in America. We continue to remove barriers for states and communities to leverage federal mainstream programs — like Medicaid, disability benefits, and Housing Choice Vouchers — to support individuals and families experiencing homelessness. And we continue to drive action and accountability at the federal, state, and local level by providing clear and objective measures of success.

The results are clear that *Opening Doors* and USICH's implementation of the Plan is working. According to HUD's 2015 Point-in-Time count, the total number of people experiencing homelessness at a given point in time had been reduced by 11% since 2010, the year the Plan was released. Further, unsheltered homelessness had been reduced by almost 26% over the same timeframe. These reductions include:

- Veteran homelessness was reduced by 36%, including a 47% reduction in the estimated number of Veterans experiencing unsheltered homelessness;
- Chronic homelessness was reduced by 22%, including a 13% reduction in unsheltered chronic homelessness; and,
- The number of families experiencing homelessness was reduced by 19%, including a 64% reduction in the number of families experiencing unsheltered homelessness.<sup>1</sup>

Priorities for USICH's work in Fiscal Year 2017, as described in greater detail below, include continuing our efforts to sustain the national progress on ending Veteran homelessness, and strategies and activities to drive greater progress toward achieving all of the goals of *Opening Doors*. To support those efforts and continued progress toward ending homelessness, USICH presents its Congressional Budget Justification request in the amount of **\$3,600,000 for planned FY 2017 activities and agency operations**. Approval of this request will provide significant return on investment and help to save taxpayer dollars by continuing to strengthen the efficiency and effectiveness of the federal government's approach to

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<sup>1</sup> While fewer unaccompanied youth and young adults were counted between 2014 and 2015 (the only two years that such youth data has been gathered), communities are continuing to refine their methods and we continue to work toward a more accurate count of youth experiencing homelessness.

homelessness. This request includes a total of 20.5 FTE and necessary operations costs to support the high performance of these staff members.

Additionally, USICH requests **two legislative changes**:

- 1) **A change in the Executive Director’s compensation level** to reflect the broad range of high-level skills, expertise, and experience necessary in order to successfully advance the complex agenda that is required by *Opening Doors* and to make the salary consistent with equivalent positions at similar federal agencies.
- 2) **An extension of USICH’s current sunset date from October 1, 2017, at least to October 1, 2020**, to continue progress toward achieving all of the goals of *Opening Doors*, and to reduce obstacles to hiring and retaining expert staff.

## II. Our Request

### OC 11.0 Personnel - \$2,189,035

USICH is able to drive federal policy through a small number of high-performing staff. Our employees work nimbly and efficiently across the federal government, in close partnership with state and local governments, and with non-profit and private sectors to end homelessness and foster housing stability throughout the country. Staff steer the work of federal partners at HHS, HUD, and VA to better align their investments and achieve maximum impact and return on investment of taxpayer dollars.

For Fiscal Year 2017, USICH requests funding for 20.5 FTE, as outlined:

|    |   |      |  |
|----|---|------|--|
| 1  | Executive Director                        | 12   | Policy Advisor                               |
| 2  | Deputy Director                           | 15   | Management/Program Analysts (three Analysts) |
| 3  | Director of Finance and Administration    |      |  |
| 4  | Director of Communications                | 16   | Communications Specialist                    |
| 5  | Director of National Initiatives          | 19   | Program Assistants (three Assistants)        |
| 6  | Chief of Staff                            | 20   | Staff Assistant                              |
| 7  | Policy Director                           | 20.5 | Intern (1 part-time intern)                  |
| 11 | Regional Coordinators (four Coordinators) |      |  |

USICH uses its OPM-approved performance management system and a merit-based compensation system to sustain and encourage continued excellence among our staff. These tools greatly increase our ability to competitively recruit and maintain our high-functioning staff to expertly carry out the Agency’s mission and the Plan. Included in this top line Personnel category is \$22,000 for merit-based compensation changes.

This category also includes a 1.6% COLA increase for all General Schedule employees.

In FY 2016, USICH converted all positions, except the Executive Director position, to the General Schedule after we received guidance from OPM directing us to do so based on a reinterpretation of our

statute. For FY 2017, and due to this unexpected directive, USICH has had to make reductions in other categories including Travel, Services, and Supplies and Materials, in order to sustain the personnel and benefits increases moving employees to the General Schedule requires in addition to the estimated 1.6% COLA. Our employees are our most important asset for accomplishing our mission and driving national progress, however, the necessary reductions in other critical areas, particularly Travel, is not insignificant for our ability to directly engage with, and inform the work of, state and local leaders.

**OC 12.0 Civilian Personnel Benefits - \$650,110**

These costs reflect agency-provided and OPM-approved benefits for all applicable employees.

**OC 21.0 Travel and Transportation of Persons - \$125,000**

The costs included in this category are for headquarters and regional staff to work directly alongside state and local stakeholders to provide guidance and develop cross-sector partnerships and solutions. Travel costs are necessary to support USICH's ability to directly engage with partners and to have the direct impact proven necessary to further progress towards ending homelessness in states and communities that are most critical to the achievement of *Opening Doors'* national goals.

While USICH continues to utilize new technologies as much as practicable to preserve and maintain our local partnerships virtually, we have been most successful in translating those relationships into local actions and policy changes through significant levels of in-person engagement.

As a matter of practice and prudence, USICH regularly combines as much stakeholder work into each trip as possible, which helps ensure that we utilize travel funds in the most cost-effective manner, while achieving the most impact.

This category is greatly reduced, down from \$168,000, as compared to FY 2016, in order to accommodate the conversion of positions to the General Schedule, as noted above.

**OC 22.0 Transportation of Things - \$960**

Estimated costs are for mailings and deliveries.

**OC 23.0 Communications, Utilities, and Miscellaneous - \$304,000**

These costs cover agency-leased office space as well as office phone, cellular phone, internet connectivity, postage and package delivery costs.

**OC 24.0 Printing and Reproduction - \$5,000**

USICH-produced publications are developed primarily for online use, but printing and duplicating small supplies of documents also helps support our dissemination of information regarding evidenced-based best practices, solutions, guidance, technical assistance materials, and other mission-related information.

**OC 25.0 Services - \$298,830**

This category includes operations assistance and infrastructure support from USDA and GSA in finance, payroll, human resources processing, outside auditors for compliance with the Accountability of Tax Dollars Act, information technology desktop and network support and other operational support items.

Additionally, costs included here support our communications work in support of the Plan, including our website and webinars hosted by USICH.

This category is greatly reduced, down from \$352,222, as compared to FY 2016, in order to accommodate the conversion of positions to the General Schedule, as noted above.

#### **OC 26.0 Supplies and Materials - \$27,065**

This category covers necessary supplies and materials to support the work of USICH.

This category is reduced, down from \$30,000, as compared to FY 2016, in order to accommodate the conversion of positions to the General Schedule, as noted above.

### **Legislative Requests**

#### **Change in Salary Level for Executive Director from EX V to EX IV**

The requested change will provide USICH's Executive Director with a pay level that is consistent with other independent federal agencies of like staff size and budget. This correction supports the quality of leadership USICH requires in order to ensure effective and accountable collaboration across federal agencies and with national, state, and local leaders. The Executive Director is a highly visible leader who must possess a broad range of high-level skills, expertise, and experience in order to successfully advance the complex agenda that is required by *Opening Doors*.

#### **Extension of the Agency's Sunset Date**

Currently, the USICH termination date is October 1, 2017. We respectfully ask Congress to extend USICH's authorization at least to October 1, 2020. The Agency's termination clause continues to create recruitment and retention challenges because such a looming sunset date results in uncertainty regarding the life of the agency and its future ability to accomplish its goals.

Further, *Opening Doors* calls for significant Council action well beyond the current sunset date, in order to finish the job of ending chronic homelessness in 2017 and to achieve the goals of ending homelessness among families, youth, and children in 2020. USICH's work is essential for the implementation of strategies to end all types of homelessness and to ensure that we do not experience a resurgence in the number of people experiencing homelessness within our nation. USICH will continue to evaluate this request in future years, as continued leadership may be required to focus on sustaining the systems and partnerships necessary to prevent and end homelessness for all Americans.

## **III. Our Value**

USICH leads the coordinated federal response to homelessness, aligning and strengthening the efforts of 19 federal agencies who serve as members of the Council. USICH's continued interagency coordination role is critical to achieving an end to homelessness because:

- Homelessness is a complex and multi-faceted problem that cannot be solved by any single agency, level of government, sector, or system on its own;

- While the direct interventions for ending homelessness are provided at the community-level, those interventions require a coordinated range of federal resources, guidance, and technical assistance;
- Effective solutions to homelessness combine and coordinate different types of assistance for households, linking the appropriate level of services and supports with opportunities to access permanent housing, and must necessarily rely on resources from many different sources;
- It is not possible to achieve an end to homelessness through targeted federal programs alone. Existing federal mainstream programs, along with state, local, and private and philanthropic investment, must also be leveraged to assist people experiencing homelessness; and,
- With so many federal agencies necessarily engaged in efforts to prevent and end homelessness, it is essential that a specific entity, outside of these agencies, leads the coordination of those efforts. This ensures that federal resources and guidance are objectively aligned in support of common goals and are able to be integrated effectively in communities, and that federal actions are continually aligned with the Plan.

The progress that has been made thus far on achieving the goals of *Opening Doors* is a testament to the unique role of USICH. We have achieved specific and impactful results by:

1. Creating and Leading a Common Vision;
2. Reducing Fragmentation and Duplication; and,
3. Driving National Implementation of Cost-Effective Solutions.

### **Creating and Leading a Common Vision**

*Opening Doors* is a shared blueprint for individual agencies to follow in defining and implementing activities and in setting policy priorities. USICH leads interagency processes to ensure that those activities and priorities remain aligned with the plan's strategies and shared priorities as new activities are initiated and during changes in staffing and leadership at agencies. In addition, USICH manages focused interagency working groups and collaborative processes to translate the vision and objectives outlined in *Opening Doors* into targeted action plans focused on specific populations. These plans align federal policies and programs and provide agencies with a guide for setting priorities. These plans then drive specific actions and changes by federal agencies. For example, USICH:

- Developed a clear definition of an end to homelessness, included within the 2015 Amendment to *Opening Doors*.
- Provided a set of criteria and benchmarks for measuring whether or not a community has achieved an effective end to homelessness among Veterans.
- Developed and released an interagency vision for a coordinated community response to youth homelessness that calls for increased collaboration between the set of youth-serving programs funded by HUD and HHS, as well as increasing the role of mainstream systems like schools and child welfare agencies.

We are now working to provide similar criteria and metrics for ending chronic homelessness, family homelessness, and youth homelessness in Fiscal Year 2016, along with tools to assist communities to meet those criteria and benchmarks.

Simultaneously, USICH is leading efforts across agencies to develop and promote a common federal vocabulary on homelessness and housing status across all targeted homeless and key mainstream programs for low-income households including TANF, child welfare, corrections, and health care. In addition, USICH is guiding efforts to align and integrate federal data sources on homelessness. USICH is also focused on increasing the role of mainstream programs in identifying and tracking housing status and homelessness, specifically with TANF, workforce systems, criminal justice agencies and re-entry programs, and Medicaid. Efforts have included:

- Developing guidance to TANF agencies on assessing and tracking homelessness and housing status among TANF recipients;
- Drafting guidance for workforce systems on their new obligation to track homelessness and housing status among workforce program participants under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act; and
- Providing information to Medicaid agencies, health care providers, and hospitals on assessing housing status and homelessness, including using the diagnosis code that indicates homelessness in their data tracking systems.

Moving forward, focus will be on finalizing guidance, as well as dissemination and training. USICH will also explore how to provide similar guidance on assessing and tracking homelessness and housing status to child welfare agencies.

#### **Reducing Fragmentation and Duplication**

Crucial federal programs and policies relevant to ending homelessness are administered by several different agencies, none of which are authorized to solely focus on, have the resources to support, or are expert in all of the varied strategies necessary for addressing the problem, such as housing assistance, income supports, health care, behavioral health care, employment, and education, among others. This dispersed responsibility can result in gaps in the type of assistance federal programs can provide, a lack of coordination between these programs at the community level, or a duplication of efforts. For example, both HHS and HUD fund programs serving youth experiencing homelessness, but communities' implementation of these programs will benefit from strengthened federal coordination across agencies.

USICH bridges areas of government that have typically operated in silos to achieve meaningful and effective collaborations. A key example of how we have reduced fragmentation and duplication across agencies is work USICH has undertaken to build stronger connections between the health care and housing sectors. In late Fiscal Year 2015, USICH spearheaded planning for a federal interagency technical assistance effort in which, beginning in Fiscal Year 2016, USICH, HUD, and HHS will work with national organizations to strengthen state-level interagency collaboration between housing, Medicaid, and behavioral health agencies to end chronic homelessness. This six month long Medicaid – Housing Agency Partnerships Technical Assistance effort will provide intensive technical assistance and federal guidance to a cohort of six to eight states. The participants will apply technical knowledge to rapid action planning to link housing, Medicaid, and behavioral health resources and ultimately create permanent supportive housing to end chronic homelessness. This technical assistance effort serves as a prime example of how federal-level collaboration both fosters and models collaboration at the state and local levels.

#### **Driving National Implementation of Cost-Effective Solutions**

USICH's focus on data and performance measurement provides a foundation for evidence-informed practice and cost-effective policy. We encourage and guide federal, state, and local investments into practices that solve homelessness and for which success can be measured. This includes:

- Working jointly with agencies to set policy priorities and adopt incentives that direct resources to evidence-based programs to the fullest extent possible;
- Ensuring that federal targeted programs are deployed quickly and working toward maximum performance; and
- Engaging existing programs and resources, including mainstream programs that are not specifically targeted to people experiencing homelessness, in support of cost-effective strategies to prevent and end homelessness.

For example, in response to the 2015 findings of HUD’s Family Options Study, USICH redirected the administration’s strategy on ending family homelessness to include a greater emphasis on long-term affordable housing. Likewise, it is our intention that our work on youth will be informed by a continual and real-time feedback loop in which data and research will shape and refine both our vision of a coordinated community response and our modeling regarding the interventions and resources needed to end youth homelessness.

In the field and across the country, USICH drives local implementation of cost-effective strategies by providing technical expertise to regional and state coordinating bodies, elected officials, public housing authorities, advocates, philanthropic partners, and other community leaders. Our work bridges and reinforces community efforts with federal policy and provides strategic direction to existing state and local leadership to implement a more coordinated approach to homelessness.

In Fiscal Year 2017, USICH will continue this critical work and directly engage with partners within states and communities, especially those jurisdictions that are vital to achieving *Opening Doors’* national goals. Specifically, our work will include:

- Guiding the implementation of coordinated entry systems across the country;
- Sustaining the progress made on Veteran homelessness to ensure that we do not see a resurgence in Veteran homelessness in the future;
- Escalating awareness and emphasis on strategies and efforts to end chronic homelessness;
- Promoting the full adoption of Family Connection — a framework developed by USICH that provides the federal vision for a coordinated community response to family homelessness — and the models for coordinated community responses to youth homelessness; and
- Strengthening the targeting of mainstream housing resources to people exiting homelessness.

## **IV. Our Work: Plans for Fiscal Year 2017**

### **1. End Homelessness among Veterans and Their Families**

USICH will enter Fiscal Year 2017 buoyed by the continued national progress on ending Veteran homelessness, which is demonstrating that an end to homelessness for all Americans is achievable. The interagency Mayors Challenge to End Veteran Homelessness has achieved tremendous results and USICH, HUD, and VA confirmed that 19 jurisdictions — including New Orleans, Houston, Philadelphia,

and Las Vegas — and the Commonwealth of Virginia had achieved an effective end to Veteran homelessness in 2015. We also confirmed Connecticut and New York City as having achieved the milestone of ending chronic homelessness among Veterans.

The focus of efforts on Veteran homelessness in Fiscal Year 2017 will be on supporting communities to sustain the local systems that USICH helped put in place to prevent Veteran homelessness and connect Veterans who experience housing crises or homelessness with housing. USICH will provide guidance and assistance on how to codify practices through protocols, as well as through the creation of permanent collaborative infrastructure, including VA Medical Centers, Continuums of Care, and community partners.

In addition, USICH will document and apply lessons learned through the effective strategies for ending Veteran homelessness, including through the surge of activities that took place in Fiscal Year 2015, to federal, state, and local efforts to end homelessness for other populations.

## **2. Finish the Job of Ending Chronic Homelessness**

Individuals who experience chronic homelessness have complex health and behavioral conditions and high rates of premature mortality. The longer they remain without housing, the more their health deteriorates. The human and fiscal toll of chronic homelessness is high. By ending chronic homelessness, the federal government would demonstrate its ability to solve one of the most visible, costly, and seemingly intractable manifestations of homelessness.

Although we achieved a 22% reduction in chronic homelessness between 2010 and 2015, there is still much more work to do to ensure that every individual experiencing chronic homelessness obtains a safe and stable home through permanent supportive housing. The lack of new resource investments in the Fiscal Year 2016 Omnibus means that the nation will be unable to fully achieve the goal of ending chronic homelessness in 2017. Some communities will be able to achieve the goal through existing resources, but many will not. We remain committed to ending the costly tragedy of chronic homelessness in America and will continue to support communities to use existing resources to reduce chronic homelessness as much as possible. When additional investments necessary to finish the job are made, we will then be able to end chronic homelessness nationally.

In Fiscal Years 2016 and 2017, USICH will concentrate on providing technical assistance to states and communities to increase the supply and availability of permanent supportive housing, and to fully implement the practices that will ensure that the most vulnerable individuals are identified and prioritized for assistance. This technical assistance includes:

- **Setting local paths to end chronic homelessness** – USICH will work with communities to develop and launch local action plans for ending chronic homelessness, focused on strengthening local collaboration, identifying and filling resource needs, and improving outreach/engagement and the permanent supportive housing delivery system.
- **Implementing Housing First** – USICH and HUD will work to fully implement the Housing First approach across the country, by encouraging communities to conduct a local assessment of their current adherence to Housing First, using an assessment tool developed by USICH.
- **Ensuring strategic allocation of targeted homeless assistance resources** – USICH will encourage communities to maximize the impact of their targeted homeless assistance funding, including the Continuum of Care Program funds. To end chronic homelessness, communities should

reallocate funds from underperforming projects or less cost-effective models like transitional housing and services only grants toward expanded supplies of permanent supportive housing.

- **Leveraging Medicaid to finance services in permanent supportive housing** – USICH will assist states and communities to maximize the coverage and financing of services in permanent supportive housing under Medicaid. Both through structured technical assistance (e.g., the Medicaid – Housing Agency Partnerships Technical Assistance effort) and more general technical assistance, USICH will provide communities with its fact sheets that summarize information and guidance from HHS on how to cover services in permanent supportive housing under Medicaid. Additional tools for states developed in Fiscal Year 2016 through the first round of the Medicaid-Housing Agency Partnerships Technical Assistance will also be shared more broadly.
- **Leveraging public housing authority housing resources for permanent supportive housing** – USICH will continue to support collaborations between public housing authorities and Continuums of Care to end chronic homelessness. USICH will continue to disseminate its PHA Guidebook and HUD’s PHA-Continuum of Care (CoC) Collaboration Quick Guide, which provides information to Continuums of Care on how to engage public housing authorities around homelessness, including the creation of permanent supportive housing.
- **Improving outreach and engagement capacity** – To assist communities to enhance their capacity to reach people with the most significant challenges, USICH, HUD, and SAMHSA are jointly developing and will disseminate new tools on assertive outreach and engagement. For example, USICH and its partners will develop new tools focused on: innovative practices for identifying and engaging individuals experiencing chronic homelessness including through partnerships with hospitals and corrections; and data sharing and matching, providing communities with step-by-step information on how to share, cross-reference, and match data to identify individuals experiencing chronic homelessness including high-utilizers of public services.
- **Aligning efforts to end chronic homelessness with other initiatives** – State-level efforts to end chronic homelessness should be aligned with, rather than compete with, larger efforts to address the institutionalization of people with disabilities and mass incarceration. In Fiscal Year 2016, USICH will issue a brief for states encouraging them to align their efforts to end chronic homelessness with their efforts to ensure the community integration of people with disabilities under *Olmstead*. USICH will also develop and publish tools on the alignment of efforts to end chronic homelessness with efforts to improve community re-entry for people leaving criminal justice settings.

As we continue work with states and communities, we will develop priorities for additional tools and materials to be developed in Fiscal Year 2017 to complement the suite of tools described above.

### **3. Prevent and End Homelessness among Families and Children**

Although the national trend data shows that the point-in-time prevalence has been reduced, homelessness among families and children clearly remains a significant problem. The most recent Point-in-Time count data documented 206,286 people in families experiencing homelessness on a single night in January 2015. In addition, the Department of Education’s (ED) data indicates that that approximately 1.3 million school-age children and their families were experiencing homelessness or were unstably housed (including doubled-up households) at some point during the 2013–2014 school year. This data

on family homelessness and housing instability points to the need for USICH's action and continued push to accelerate federal efforts.

Reflecting this urgent need for resources and coordinated federal efforts, the President's FY 17 Budget requests an investment in housing assistance at a scale that will prevent and end homelessness among American families once and for all. Specifically, the Budget requests \$11 billion over 10 years in mandatory funding to fund short- and long-term rental assistance to prevent and end homelessness for 550,000 families with children. If these funds are appropriated, USICH will drive the interagency work necessary to ensure that this significant investment of resources is deployed and used efficiently and effectively.

Also in Fiscal Year 2017, USICH will continue to provide expanded guidance to communities regarding how to effectively use different federal sources of data to inform local planning, utilization of resources, and other efforts to end family homelessness. In addition, USICH will drive progress on engaging mainstream public systems and agencies around family homelessness including public housing authorities, multifamily housing owners, child welfare agencies, schools, TANF and human services agencies, and workforce systems. In addition, we will continue to provide guidance regarding the targeting of housing vouchers, which research indicates serve as the foundation for ending family homelessness and the platform for connection to services.

USICH will continue to lead interagency efforts to increase access to longer-term affordable housing assistance and leverage mainstream systems. Specific activities and milestones in Fiscal Year 2017 will include:

- Continuing to disseminate and educate communities regarding the vision of a systematic response to family homelessness in *Family Connection*;
- Developing criteria and benchmarks for the goal of ending family homelessness, at both national and local levels;
- Working with national partners to engage and provide technical assistance to public housing authorities to increase access to Housing Choice Vouchers and public housing for families;
- Supporting HUD's technical assistance effort for multi-family housing owners to adopt homelessness preferences;
- Developing a vision, along with successful examples of a collaborative approach to wrap-around supportive services for families experiencing homelessness, supported by the following tools:
  - Tools for TANF and local human services agencies regarding their role in ending family homelessness, including around the use of TANF for short-term housing assistance and case management services;
  - Tools for child welfare agencies on how to identify homelessness and housing status among families experiencing homelessness, how to collaborate with CoCs, PHAs, and other agencies, and using Title IV-E and other child welfare funding streams to provide housing-related services; and
  - Tools regarding Medicaid's role in financing behavioral health and housing-related services for families with disabilities in permanent housing.
- Continuing to encourage the integration of early childhood supports as part of the response to family homelessness;

- Continuing to encourage communities to redirect funding from less cost-effective programs like transitional housing towards cost-effective models like permanent supportive housing and rapid re-housing;
- Continuing to support local-level capacity to implement evidence-based practices and innovative approaches, including disseminating findings from ACYF's demonstration project for child welfare-involved families; and
- Supporting HUD, HHS, and DOJ efforts to implement a federal technical assistance consortium for families impacted by domestic violence, including:
  - Disseminating findings from research on use of transitional housing and rapid re-housing for families impacted by domestic violence;
  - Developing guidance and training resources to support community capacity building to better coordinate and integrate domestic violence and homelessness assistance resources; and
  - Promoting use of Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) funding for rapid re-housing and connections to longer-term wraparound supports for families.

USICH will also further refine modeling regarding the interventions and resources needed to achieve the goal of ending family homelessness. Particular attention will go to determining the combination of rapid re-housing, existing affordable housing (i.e., through PHA and multifamily owner preferences), and new targeted vouchers needed to achieve the goal, in addition to services provided through increased local collaboration among mainstream and community-based services.

#### **4. Prevent and End Homelessness for Youth**

While data collection improvement efforts through the Point-in-Time count and through RHYMIS and HMIS integration are now underway, we do not have a confident estimate on the number of unaccompanied youth (age 12-24 years) experiencing homelessness. At the same time, the response to youth homelessness in most communities continues to lack adequate capacity to address the diverse and complex needs represented within this population. Programs and services tend to operate in isolation and within the "silos" of their funding sources. Moreover, the set of programs and services for youth tend to be fragmented from larger efforts to end homelessness for other populations. In response to this lack of capacity, in Fiscal Year 2015 federal partners articulated a preliminary vision for a coordinated community-level response to youth homelessness, comprised of both targeted HUD and HHS programs, as well as the set of mainstream systems that encounter and share responsibility for addressing youth homelessness, namely schools, child welfare, juvenile justice, and workforce systems. This vision built upon USICH's *Framework to End Youth Homelessness* and formed the basis for accelerated federal efforts around youth homelessness.

By the end of Fiscal Year 2016, we will have developed criteria and benchmarks to define an end to youth homelessness, and created preliminary modeling around the set of interventions and resources needed to end youth homelessness in 2020. We will then use those criteria and benchmarks in Fiscal Year 2017, to drive coordinated community responses to youth homelessness, while continuing to improve data collection and research efforts to better understand the needs of youth. Specific Fiscal Year 2017 activities include:

- Working with HUD and HHS to implement the demonstration program funding and technical assistance funding included within the FY 2016 Omnibus budget.
- Continuing to disseminate the vision of a coordinated community response to youth homelessness;
- Issuing tools to support communities to adapt coordinated entry systems, reflecting the unique needs and experiences of youth;
- Refining modeling on interventions and resources needed to achieve an end to youth homelessness in 2020;
- Continuing to strongly encourage, through messaging and funding solicitations, collaboration between youth-serving organizations and Continuums of Care and broader efforts to end homelessness;
- Supporting HUD and HHS grantees in the successful integration of HMIS-RHYMIS data sources; and
- Supporting national research and data collection efforts through the Point-in-Time count and a national prevalence study on youth homelessness.

## **5. Setting a Path to End All Homelessness**

To prevent and end homelessness for everyone, communities must have systems in place that ensure all people who are experiencing a housing crisis have access to the housing and services they need. That includes both the homelessness service system and the mainstream systems — housing, employment, education, health care, and benefits — that can help people stay stably housed.

Our work for Fiscal Year 2016 and Fiscal Year 2017 will include:

### **a) Leveraging Mainstream Resources**

Work to leverage mainstream systems and resources will continue into Fiscal Year 2017. Specific USICH efforts will focus on:

- Encouraging public housing authorities and multifamily housing owners to prioritize admission to households experiencing homelessness;
- Encouraging mainstream systems like TANF and Medicaid to more systematically identify homelessness and housing status;
- Encouraging TANF agencies to fund short-term housing assistance and services;
- Strengthening collaborations between SSA field offices and homeless services organizations;
- Encouraging homeless services organizations to incorporate early childhood educational supports for families entering permanent housing;
- Supporting Continuums of Care to engage mainstream systems in community-level efforts to prevent and end homelessness; and,
- Providing more specific tools to help mainstream systems to prioritize assistance to people experiencing homelessness wherever possible.

## **b) Transforming Homelessness Services into Crisis Response Systems**

Over the past year, USICH significantly increased Council agency efforts to transform homelessness services into crisis response systems that help prevent homelessness wherever possible or resolve homelessness quickly when it occurs. This work will expand in Fiscal Year 2017 when USICH will:

- Continue coordinating agency technical assistance around coordinated entry system implementation, including engaging mainstream systems around how to connect to, and align their programs with, homelessness services through coordinated entry systems;
- Implement the shared vision for transforming Grant and Per Diem and HUD transitional housing programs, including conversion to permanent housing models, shift towards short-stay transitional housing, and/or reallocation of resources towards cost-effective permanent housing models;
- Disseminate tools on how to shift practices and resources towards more cost effective programs; and,
- Engage providers of emergency shelter on how to transform their practices to align with Housing First practices and principles and emphasize connection to permanent housing.

## **c) Ending Homelessness among American Indians and Alaska Natives**

While only 1.2% of the national population self-identifies as American Indian or Alaska Native (AI/AN), 2.3% of all people experiencing sheltered homelessness, 2% of all sheltered individuals, and 2.9% of all sheltered families self-identify as AI/AN (HUD, 2013). Simultaneously, at least 8.8% of households in Native American communities are overcrowded, compared with 3% nationwide (Housing Assistance Council, 2013).

In order to address the issue of homelessness among American Indians and Alaska Natives, USICH spearheaded work on an historic memorandum of understanding in 2015 that commits USICH and seven other agencies to work together on several key actions to address homelessness both on and off tribal lands. Work in Fiscal Year 2017 will include:

- Improving access to housing and services through administrative action, where possible, and provide guidance and technical assistance to: a) increase the knowledge and capacity of tribal communities and homelessness services and housing providers and b) increase the availability of housing options for Native Americans experiencing or at risk of experiencing homelessness both on and off tribal lands;
- Improving data collection on homelessness among Native Americans both on and off tribal lands to better enumerate the size and scope of the problem;
- Ensuring that federal strategies and actions are informed by consultation and engagement with tribal leaders, urban native communities, and experts in the field; and,
- Elevating awareness of the crisis of homelessness and housing instability among Native Americans.

**d) Breaking the Cycle of Homelessness and Criminal Justice Involvement**

Many people experiencing homelessness are caught in a revolving door between the streets or shelters and jails. Of the 11 million people detained or incarcerated in jails every year, as many as 15% report having been homeless. Roughly 48,000 people entering shelters every year are coming nearly directly from prisons or jails. USICH works to lessen criminal justice system involvement among people experiencing homelessness, both by educating communities on the effects and costs of the criminalization of homeless citizens and by assisting in the release of persons experiencing homelessness from correctional settings. Specific action areas include:

- Continuing efforts to reduce the criminalization of homelessness;
- Increasing the training of law enforcement regarding encounters with people exhibiting psychiatric symptoms;
- Increasing access to jail diversion and alternatives to incarceration;
- Expanding evidence-based housing and services solutions, like permanent supportive housing, for people caught on a cycle of homelessness and incarceration; and,
- Reducing barriers to housing, employment, and services for people with criminal histories.