



Opening Doors: Federal Strategic Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness **2014 Amendment Participation Guide**

Background Information:

Together, since the launch of [*Opening Doors: Federal Strategic Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness*](#) in 2010, we've changed the trajectory of homelessness in America. The [steady reductions](#) in homelessness seen in the annual Point-in-Time Count data clearly show our progress, nationally. Our progress demonstrates that *Opening Doors* is the right plan with the right set of goals, objectives, and strategies. *Opening Doors* is working because we developed the plan together and because we've implemented it together. *Opening Doors* is working because it brings the right people to the table—providers, practitioners, policy-makers, advocates, and people with firsthand experience of homelessness—from all over the country and from every level of government and the private and not-for-profit sectors.

We believe that every strategic plan should be a living document, strengthened by new information and lessons that are learned through implementation. *Opening Doors* is no different. With your input we amended *Opening Doors* in 2012 to strengthen the plan's focus on youth homelessness and educational outcomes for children experiencing homelessness. The [2012 amendment](#) is driving progress at the federal level and in a growing number of communities across the country to end youth homelessness in 2020.

As we embark on the fifth year of the implementation of *Opening Doors*, we are intending to amend *Opening Doors* again. We need your input to ensure that this amendment incorporates the latest information, data, and insights on the strategies, and approaches that we know work to end homelessness.

Provide Your Input:

Your input is essential to the ongoing success of *Opening Doors*. We want to make sure any amendment reflects the perspectives, insights, and lessons learned from communities across the country. We have created an on-line forum at <http://usich.uservoice.com/> through which you can share and vote for the ideas you think would have the greatest impact in an amendment to *Opening Doors*.

To help you consider your feedback and input, the information on the following pages summarizes the Vision, Goals, Themes, Objectives, and Strategies of *Opening Doors*, including changes and additions made through the 2012 amendment.

We hope that you will join us as we continue to strengthen *Opening Doors*, advance its impact, and gain greater momentum and shared progress.

OPENING DOORS: FEDERAL STRATEGIC PLAN TO PREVENT AND END HOMELESSNESS

VISION	No one should experience homelessness. No one should be without a safe, stable place to call home.
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| GOALS | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Finish the job of ending chronic homelessness by 2015 (<i>being amended to 2016 via 2014 amendment</i>) 2. Prevent and end homelessness among Veterans by 2015 3. Prevent and end homelessness for families, youth, and children by 2020 4. Set a path to ending all types of homelessness |
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THEME: INCREASE LEADERSHIP, COLLABORATION, AND CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

OBJECTIVE	STRATEGIES
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<p>ONE <i>Provide and promote collaborative leadership at all levels of government and across all sectors to inspire and energize Americans to commit to preventing and ending homelessness</i></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Educate the public on the scope, causes, and costs of homelessness, the Federal Strategic Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness, and the reasons for taking action. b. Engage state, local, and tribal leaders in a renewed commitment to prevent and end homelessness in their communities. c. Get states and localities to update and implement plans to end homelessness to reflect local conditions and the comprehensiveness of this Federal Plan, as well as to develop mechanisms for effective implementation. d. Involve citizens—including people with firsthand experience with homelessness—and the private sector—businesses, nonprofits, faith-based organizations, foundations, and volunteers—in efforts to prevent and end homelessness. e. Test, model, and learn more about interagency collaboration. f. Seek opportunities to reward communities that are collaborating to make significant progress preventing and ending homelessness. g. Review budget processes to determine avenues for recognizing savings across partners resulting from interventions to prevent and end homelessness. h. Seek opportunities for engaging Congressional committees collaboratively on issues related to preventing and ending homelessness.
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<p>TWO <i>Strengthen the capacity of public and private organizations by increasing knowledge about collaboration, homelessness, and successful interventions to prevent and end</i></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Collaborate on and compile research to better understand best practices, the cost-effectiveness of various intervention, metrics to measure outcomes, and the gaps in research. Identify and fill gaps in the body of knowledge. b. Coordinate federal technical assistance resources related to preventing and ending homelessness and provide information to states, tribes, and local communities on how to access the support they need. c. Make information more readily available on best practices and strategies to finance them at scale. d. Make information more readily available on working effectively with special populations, and the overlap between and among groups. e. Attend to the unique needs of rural and tribal communities to respond to homelessness and develop effective strategies and programs that use best practices that contribute to housing stability and prevent and end homelessness on American Indian lands, in rural/frontier areas, and urban centers.
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<i>homelessness</i>	<p>f. Develop and maintain an inventory of federal emergency response programs to help communities identify what is being funded in their community with federal resources and which resources are available to them.</p> <p>g. Continue to increase use of the Homeless Management Information System by local communities and encourage its use by additional programs targeted at homelessness. Develop standards that permit data inter-operability between data systems while protecting the confidentiality of all individuals.</p> <p>h. Create a common data standard and uniform performance measures if feasible, especially related to housing stability, across all targeted and mainstream federal programs. This will facilitate data exchanges and comparisons between both targeted programs and mainstream systems in order to improve identification of people experiencing or at risk of homelessness. Encourage the dynamic use of state and local data warehouses.</p> <p><i>Added via 2012 amendment:</i></p> <p>i. Access to and retention in early childhood education programs, elementary and secondary education, and post-secondary education.</p> <p>j. Awareness of child and youth development and strategies to support healthy child and youth development within housing programs.</p>
THEME: INCREASE ACCESS TO STABLE AND AFFORDABLE HOUSING	
OBJECTIVE	STRATEGIES
<p>THREE <i>Provide affordable housing to people experiencing or most at risk of homelessness</i></p>	<p>a. Support rental housing subsidies through federal, state, local, and private resources to individuals and families experiencing or most at risk of homelessness. The rent subsidies should be structured so that households pay no more than 30 percent of their income for housing.</p> <p>b. Expand the supply of affordable rental homes where they are most needed through federal, state, and local efforts. To provide affordable housing to people experiencing or most at risk of homelessness, rental subsidies should better target households earning significantly less than 30 percent of the Area Median Income so that residents pay no more than 30 percent of their income for housing. The supply will need to include units that are accessible to persons with mobility needs.</p> <p>c. Improve access to federally-funded housing assistance by eliminating administrative barriers and encouraging prioritization of people experiencing or most at risk of homelessness.</p> <p>d. Increase service-enriched housing by co-locating or connecting services with affordable housing.</p>
<p>FOUR <i>Provide permanent supportive housing to prevent and end chronic homelessness</i></p>	<p>a. Improve access to and use of supportive housing by encouraging prioritization and targeting for people who need this level of support to prevent or escape homelessness.</p> <p>b. Create protocols and consider incentives to help people who have achieved stability in supportive housing—who no longer need and desire to live there—to move into affordable housing to free units for others who need it.</p> <p>c. Expand the supply of permanent supportive housing, in partnership with state and local governments and the private sector.</p> <p>d. Assess options for more coordinated, sustainable, dependable sources of supportive housing service funding. This should include consideration of incentives for local communities to develop supportive housing and how best to coordinate service funding with housing funding.</p>

THEME: INCREASE ECONOMIC SECURITY	
OBJECTIVE	STRATEGIES
<p>FIVE <i>Improve access to education and* increase meaningful and sustainable employment for people experiencing or most at risk of homelessness</i></p> <p><i>*as amended via 2012 amendment</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Collaborate with economic recovery and jobs programs to ensure that job development and training strategies focus attention on people who are experiencing or most at risk of homelessness. b. Review federal program policies, procedures, and regulations to identify educational, administrative, or regulatory mechanisms that could be used to improve access to work support. c. Develop and disseminate best practices on helping people with histories of homelessness and barriers to employment enter the workforce, including strategies that take into consideration transportation, child care, child support, domestic violence, criminal justice history, disabling conditions, and age appropriateness. d. Improve coordination and integration of employment programs with homelessness assistance programs, victim assistance programs, and housing and permanent supportive housing programs. e. Increase opportunities for work and support recovery for Veterans with barriers to employment, especially Veterans returning from active duty, Veterans with disabilities, and Veterans in permanent supportive housing. <p><i>Added via 2012 amendment:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> f. Improve identification of children and support for them to enroll in school. Provide seamless transitions from early childhood education through elementary, secondary, and postsecondary education. g. Review existing federal, state, and local program policies, procedures, and regulations to identify mechanisms that could increase both access to and retention in high-quality programs. These mechanisms should help ensure early childhood-to-adulthood educational access: quality child care and early-childhood education through elementary, secondary, and post-secondary education. h. Educate homeless assistance providers about the laws, and the programs and practices under those laws, designed to increase access to early care and education, such as those carried out under Head Start, the McKinney-Vento Act’s education subtitle, and the independent student provisions of the Higher Education Act.
<p>SIX <i>Improve access to mainstream programs and services to reduce people’s financial vulnerability to homelessness</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Document, disseminate, and promote the use of best practices in expedited access to income and work supports for people experiencing or at risk of homelessness. This includes improved outreach to homeless assistance providers and collaborations across government and with community nonprofits, online consolidated application processing, and electronic submission. Consider lessons learned from the SSI/SSDI Outreach, Access and Recovery Initiative (SOAR), and the Homeless Outreach and Projects and Evaluation Initiative (HOPE). b. Review federal program policies, procedures, and regulations to identify administrative or regulatory mechanisms that could be used to remove barriers and improve access to income supports. c. Enhance public information, targeted communications, and a national toll-free homeless call center to ensure that all Veterans and their families know they can obtain homelessness prevention assistance from the VA or other places in their community. d. Create clear pathways to greater financial independence. Collaborate to review program eligibility and termination criteria across the range of programs which people experiencing or at risk of homelessness may access. Identify changes that should be made to create incentives for work, earning and retaining income while maintaining access to health coverage, housing assistance, child care, etc. until a household is earning enough through employment to be financially stable. e. Prepare for Medicaid expansion to effectively enroll people who experience or are most at risk of experiencing homelessness. This should include systems to reach out to, engage, and enroll newly eligible people in health care insurance benefits.

THEME: IMPROVE HEALTH AND STABILITY	
OBJECTIVE	STRATEGIES
<p>SEVEN <i>Integrate primary and behavioral health care services with homeless assistance programs and housing to reduce people’s vulnerability to and the impacts of homelessness</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Encourage partnerships between housing providers and health and behavioral health care providers to co-locate or coordinate health, behavioral health, safety, and wellness services with housing and create better resources for providers to connect patients to housing resources. b. Build upon successful service delivery models to provide services in the homes of people who have experienced homelessness including using Medicaid-funded Assertive Community Treatment Teams for those with behavioral health needs. c. Seek opportunities to establish and evaluate the effectiveness of a “medical home” model to provide integrated care for medical and behavioral health, and to improve health and reduce health care costs in communities with the largest number of people experiencing homelessness. d. Seek opportunities to establish medical respite programs in communities with the largest number of people experiencing homelessness to allow hospitals to discharge people experiencing homelessness with complex health needs to medical respite programs that will help them transition to supportive housing. e. Increase availability of behavioral health services, including community mental health centers, to people experiencing or at risk of homelessness. f. Improve access to child and family services that improve early child development, educational stability, youth development, and quality of life for families— including expectant families, children, and youth experiencing or most at risk of homelessness.
<p>EIGHT <i>Advance health and housing stability for unaccompanied youth experiencing homelessness* and youth aging out of systems such as foster care and juvenile justice</i></p> <p><i>*as amended via 2012 amendment</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Improve discharge planning from foster care and juvenile justice to connect youth to education, housing, health and behavioral health support, income supports, and health coverage prior to discharge. b. Review federal program policies, procedures, and regulations to identify administrative or regulatory mechanisms that could be used to remove barriers and improve access to stable health care, housing, and housing supports for youth. c. Promote targeted outreach strategies to identify youth experiencing homelessness who are most likely to end up in an emergency room, hospital, jail, or prison, and connect them to the housing and support they need. <p><i>Added via 2012 amendment:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> d. Obtain more comprehensive information on the scope of youth homelessness by improving counting methods; better coordinating and disseminating the information collected by different programs and systems; and conducting new research to expand and improve our understanding of the problem. e. Build an evidence base of the most effective interventions for the different subsets of youth experiencing homelessness. Refine the preliminary intervention model (discussed below), and conduct additional research on effective interventions. f. Improve access to emergency assistance, housing, and supports for historically underserved groups of youth. Such groups include youth who have been involved in the juvenile justice and/or child welfare systems; sexually exploited youth; Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Questioning (LGBTQ) and gender non-conforming youth; pregnant or parenting youth; and youth with mental health needs.

<p>NINE <i>Advance health and housing stability for people experiencing homelessness who have frequent contact with hospitals and criminal justice</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Improve discharge planning from hospitals, VA medical centers, psychiatric facilities, jails, and prisons to connect people to housing, health and behavioral health support, income and work supports, and health coverage prior to discharge. b. Promote targeted outreach strategies to identify people experiencing homelessness who are most likely to end up in an emergency room, hospital, jail, or prison, and connect them to the housing and support they need. c. Increase the number of jail diversion courts at the state and local levels that are linked to housing and support, including those specifically for Veterans, those experiencing homelessness, or people with mental health issues or drug abuse problems. d. Reduce criminalization of homelessness by defining constructive approaches to street homelessness and considering incentives to urge cities to adopt these practices.
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THEME: RETOOL THE HOMELESS CRISIS RESPONSE SYSTEM

OBJECTIVE	STRATEGIES
<p>TEN <i>Transform homeless services to crisis response systems that prevent homelessness and rapidly return people who experience homelessness to stable housing</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Develop and promote best practices for crisis response programs and increase their adoption by agencies receiving federal funds. b. Determine opportunities to utilize mainstream resources to provide housing stabilization assistance to clients who are homeless or at high risk of homelessness. c. Develop implementation strategies for the HEARTH Act—especially the new Emergency Solutions Grant—that sustain best practices learned from the Homelessness Prevention and Rapid Re-Housing Program and the Rapid Re-Housing Demonstration. d. Ensure continuity in the provision of homeless prevention and rapid re-housing services to families, youth, and individuals—including Veterans and their families—through HUD’s Homelessness Prevention and Rapid Re-Housing Program. e. Ensure that homelessness prevention and rapid re-housing strategies are coordinated with Education for Homeless Children and Youth, and incorporated within federal place-based strategies to improve neighborhoods and schools, including Promise Neighborhoods and Choice Neighborhoods.