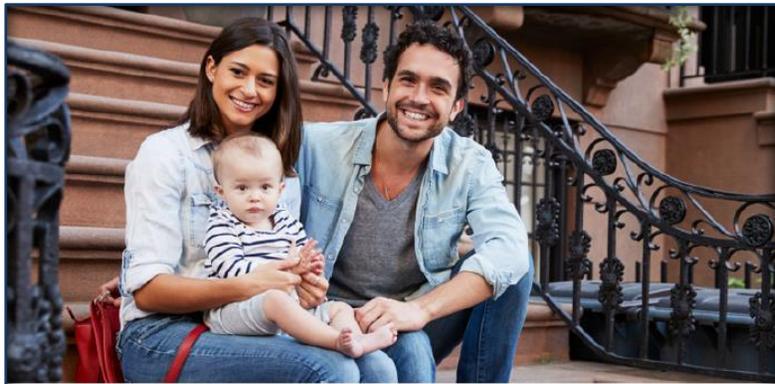




Home, Together: The Federal Strategic Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness

Summary of Essential Elements of the Plan



Home, Together: The Federal Strategic Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness, available at usch.gov, was issued in July 2018, covers Fiscal Years 2018 – 2022, and builds upon strategies and actions taken across multiple administrations and upon the previous federal strategic plan.

The Plan was developed with extensive stakeholder input from staff across federal agencies, national organizations, state and local agencies and organizations, and from people with lived experiences of homelessness.

The Plan reflects strategies that have helped drive national reductions within the annual Point-in-Time counts of people experiencing homelessness performed in communities across the country between 2010 and 2017, including:

- 13% reduction in overall homelessness nationwide
- 27% reduction in family homelessness
- 18% reduction in chronic homelessness among people with disabilities
- 46% reduction in Veteran homelessness

Despite these indicators of progress, there is still much more work to be done to ensure that everyone in our country has a safe and stable home, in a strong, nurturing community, where they can pursue their goals and succeed. This Plan seeks to provide a road map for addressing the challenges we must face together.



HOME, TOGETHER: THE FEDERAL STRATEGIC PLAN TO PREVENT AND END HOMELESSNESS	
TITLE	<p><i>Home, Together.</i></p> <p><i>Home.</i> Because we know that the only true end to homelessness is a safe and stable place to call home.</p> <p><i>Together.</i> Because the causes of homelessness are complex, and the solutions are going to take all of us working together, doing our parts, strengthening our communities.</p>
GOALS	<p><i>Home, Together</i> has one fundamental goal, a goal shared across federal, state, and local partners: to end homelessness in America. The Plan sets important population-specific goals as well:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To end homelessness among Veterans • To end chronic homelessness among people with disabilities • To end homelessness among families with children • To end homelessness among unaccompanied youth • To end homelessness among all other individuals <p>Achieving these goals as a nation means achieving these goals in all of our communities, communities that are diverse—in their demographics, in their needs, in their geographic characteristics, in their progress to date, in their resources, in their infrastructure, in their housing markets, and in many other ways. Therefore, the Plan does not set uniform timeframes. Rather, federal partners will continue to work with communities, and provide tools and information, that will enable them to set their own ambitious goals, tailored to their local conditions, and grounded in their local data.</p>
DEFINING SUCCESS	<p>Achieving these goals is grounded in a shared vision of what it means to end homelessness: that every community must have a systemic response in place that ensures homelessness is prevented whenever possible, or if it can't be prevented, it is a rare, brief, and one-time experience. That means that every community must have the capacity to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quickly identify and engage people at risk of and experiencing homelessness. • Intervene to prevent people from losing their housing and divert people from entering the homelessness services system. • Provide people with immediate access to shelter and crisis services without barriers to entry if homelessness does occur. • Quickly connect people experiencing homelessness to housing assistance and services tailored to their unique needs and strengths to help them achieve and maintain stable housing. <p>To help communities to assess their progress toward achieving this vision, USICH and our federal partners have developed qualitative criteria and quantitative benchmarks that provide states and communities a clear road map for assessing how well their local systems are designed and implemented, for measuring the effectiveness of those systems, and for determining if they have achieved the goals.</p>

<p>OBJECTIVES</p>	<p>#1: Ensure Homelessness is a Rare Experience</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Objective 1.1: Collaboratively Build Lasting Systems that End Homelessness • Objective 1.2: Increase Capacity and Strengthen Practices to Prevent Housing Crises and Homelessness <p>#2: Ensure Homelessness is a Brief Experience</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Objective 2.1: Identify and Engage All People Experiencing Homelessness as Quickly as Possible • Objective 2.2: Provide Immediate Access to Low-Barrier Emergency Shelter or other Temporary Accommodations to All Who Need it • Objective 2.3: Implement Coordinated Entry to Standardize Assessment and Prioritization Processes and Streamline Connections to Housing and Services • Objective 2.4: Assist People to Move Swiftly into Permanent Housing with Appropriate and Person-Centered Services <p>#3: Ensure Homelessness is a One-Time Experience</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Objective 3.1: Prevent Returns to Homelessness through Connections to Adequate Services and Opportunities <p>#4: Sustain an End to Homelessness</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Objective 4.1: Sustain Practices and Systems at a Scale Necessary to Respond to Future Needs
<p>AREAS OF INCREASED FOCUS</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increasing Affordable Housing Opportunities • Strengthening Prevention and Diversion Practices • Creating Solutions for Unsheltered Homelessness • Tailoring Strategies for Rural Communities • Helping People Who Exit Homelessness to Find Employment Success • Learning from the Expertise of People with Lived Experience
<p>MEASURING OUR PROGRESS</p>	<p>To drive and track progress against the federal Strategies outlined in <i>Home, Together</i>, USICH and its federal partners will develop and utilize an annual performance management plan with specific target actions, milestones, and deadlines. USICH will also use multiple performance measures to assess the overall impact of the implementation of <i>Home, Together</i>, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The number of people experiencing sheltered and unsheltered homelessness at a point in time in the annual Point-in-Time count, including Veterans, people experiencing chronic homelessness, families with children, unaccompanied youth, and all individuals.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The number of states reporting increases versus decreases in the number of people experiencing sheltered and unsheltered homelessness within annual Point-in-Time counts. • The number of Continuums of Care reporting increases versus decreases in the number of people experiencing sheltered and unsheltered homelessness within annual Point-in-Time counts. • The number of people, including Veterans, people experiencing chronic homelessness, families with children, unaccompanied youth, and all individuals, spending time in emergency shelter and transitional housing annually. • The number of children and youth, including both students in families and unaccompanied students, identified as experiencing homelessness at some point during the school year. • The number of communities, states, and Continuums of Care that have achieved each population-specific goal.
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#1: ENSURE HOMELESSNESS IS A RARE EXPERIENCE

OBJECTIVES	STRATEGIES
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<p>1.1 <i>Collaboratively Build Lasting Systems that End Homelessness</i></p>	<p>a) Equip states and communities to set their own bold and ambitious goals for ending homelessness and to prioritize and appropriately scale state, local, public, and private investments. Federal agencies will provide technical assistance and modeling tools that can be implemented locally to project current and future needs and the types and scale of housing and services interventions that will be needed to achieve their goals and sustain those successes.</p> <p>b) Strengthen the collection, reporting, and utilization of essential data sources, including Point-in-Time count data, Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) data, State and Local Education Agency (LEA) Education for Homeless Children and Youth data, Worst-Case Housing Needs data, and other relevant data, to better understand and enumerate the size and scope of the challenges that must be addressed. This work also includes increasing community capacity to match administrative data sets, such as health care and corrections, to improve interventions, tailor strategies, and improve outcomes for populations that are disproportionately represented among people experiencing homelessness.</p> <p>c) Engage people with lived experience through advisory committees and policy and planning processes at the federal level and encourage such engagement at the local and state levels to ensure meaningful opportunities to provide expert advice and input.</p> <p>d) Further engage and support state and local elected officials, and educate partners and the public, regarding the: scope, causes, and costs of homelessness; necessary solutions; evidence-based practices and strategies; and risk-factors of homelessness locally, including the disproportionate and persistent impact of homelessness on some populations.</p> <p>e) Provide guidance about the roles that a wide range of federal programs and resources can play to support best practices and increase their impact within efficient systems to prevent and end homelessness—including both the programs that are targeted to addressing homelessness and those that are not.</p>
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1.2
Increase Capacity and Strengthen Practices to Prevent Housing Crises and Homelessness

- a) **Promote development of an expanded supply of safe and affordable rental homes** through federal, state, and local efforts and investments. This includes assisting communities that are working to adopt policies to expand overall housing supply and to project the scale of affordable housing units—including units that are affordable to people exiting homelessness and units that are accessible to persons with disabilities—needed to meet local demand on an ongoing basis.
- b) **Improve access to federally funded housing assistance by eliminating administrative barriers and encouraging targeting and prioritization of affordable housing** to people experiencing homelessness in a community and/or to populations that are especially vulnerable to homelessness.
- c) **Increase community capacity and state-level coordination to effectively identify, target, and connect at-risk individuals and families to local resources and opportunities that contribute to and strengthen housing stability**, including job training and apprenticeship programs that create access to career pathways, primary and behavioral health services, early childhood programs, and elementary, secondary, and post-secondary education. For children and youth at risk of homelessness, this work includes strengthening connections to school- and community-based resources that encourage education retention, high school completion, and services that address needs related to these goals, including transportation and additional education services.
- d) **Strengthen the evidence base for effective homelessness prevention programming and interventions**, including through rigorous evaluation strategies where possible, disseminate results widely, and use that evidence to encourage resources that are not specifically targeted to ending homelessness to prioritize individuals and families imminently at risk of experiencing homelessness.
- e) **Improve efforts to prevent people from entering homelessness as they transition from other systems, such as justice settings, health care facilities, and foster care**, by supporting the development of stronger transition planning, discharge practices, and re-entry processes to improve outcomes, and by prioritizing connections to housing options, family-focused interventions, education resources, health and behavioral health supports, employment and income supports, health care coverage, and legal services.
- f) **Strengthen diversion strategies and practices** through guidance and technical assistance with a focus on using identified strengths and existing connections and on assisting people to access safe alternatives to emergency shelter.
- g) **Identify and promote implementation of eviction prevention strategies**, including access to: civil legal aid and legal assistance to address obstacles to employment and housing; eviction and foreclosure prevention; and short-term and flexible financial assistance for households experiencing financial crises.
- h) **Utilize opportunities in child welfare policy to expand resources for community-based preventive services to support stable housing outcomes** for children and families involved with or at-risk of involvement with the child welfare system.

	<p>i) Encourage programs that are not specifically dedicated to ending homelessness to fund interventions that promote and support housing stability or to prioritize or serve individuals and families experiencing homelessness. Federal partners will further encourage partnerships with sources of public resources that can fund housing and related interventions, or that can prioritize or serve those experiencing homelessness, such as public housing, TANF and child welfare agencies, as well as Head Start programs and Child Care and Development Fund providers, to strengthen the communitywide approach that ensures that homelessness is a brief experience in any community.</p>
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#2: ENSURE HOMELESSNESS IS A BRIEF EXPERIENCE

OBJECTIVES	STRATEGIES
<p>2.1 <i>Identify and Engage All People Experiencing Homelessness as Quickly as Possible</i></p>	<p>a) Support increased capacity of communities to ensure that identification, outreach, and engagement efforts are comprehensive and coordinated across sectors and agencies, are focused on creating connections to permanent housing with appropriate services, are maximizing utility of shared data sets, and are effectively identifying and engaging people with diverse experiences, needs, and challenges.</p> <p>b) Provide targeted guidance and technical assistance to communities with high rates of unsheltered homelessness and high-cost, low-vacancy housing markets to support innovation, develop stronger practices, and build the evidence base for the most effective practices and strategies for reaching, engaging, and linking people experiencing unsheltered homelessness to options for shelter and to permanent housing opportunities.</p> <p>c) Promote targeted outreach, in-reach, and data collection strategies to strengthen state and local efforts to identify people experiencing chronic homelessness and frequent users of shelter and other systems, including emergency health services and the criminal justice system, and connect them to the housing and support they need.</p> <p>d) Strengthen capacity in rural and suburban areas to maximize outreach efforts tailored to the unique challenges posed by geography and population distribution. Federal partners will develop guidance and tools to support such communities to build partnerships and efficient systems to identify and engage individuals and families experiencing homelessness.</p> <p>e) Support communities to develop partnerships with law enforcement that reduce the criminalization of homelessness. Federal partners will develop further guidance on best practices in addressing unsheltered homelessness and encampments and strategies that reduce the criminalization of homelessness.</p> <p>f) Help communities to develop the skills of staff to implement essential best practices, such as trauma-informed care, motivational interviewing, and critical-time intervention, as well as other skills, such as open communication, cultural responsiveness, mental health first aid, staff care, and recognizing patterns of interaction.</p>

<p>2.2 <i>Provide Immediate Access to Low-Barrier Emergency Shelter or other Temporary Accommodations to All Who Need It</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Partner with communities to identify and define appropriate standards for the provision of emergency shelter and other temporary accommodations, addressing physical environments, service strategies, operational protocols, and performance expectations. b) Enhance the capacity of emergency shelter providers to implement low-barrier approaches, to provide fair and equitable access, to address the needs of households of all compositions, and to implement Housing First approaches and provide adequate services within communities to strengthen exits to permanent housing. c) Improve access to emergency assistance, housing, and supports for historically underserved and overrepresented groups, such as youth who have been involved in the juvenile justice and/or child welfare systems; people who have been sexually exploited or labor-trafficked; people who identify as LGBTQ; people who are gender-non-conforming; people living with HIV/AIDS; youth that are pregnant or parenting; people with mental health needs; and racial and ethnic minorities. d) Increase the availability of medical respite programs in communities to allow hospitals to discharge people experiencing homelessness with complex health needs to medical respite programs that can help stabilize their medical conditions and assist them to access or return to safe and stable housing. e) Align services to ensure that people with behavioral health care needs have adequate and appropriate access to emergency shelter or other temporary accommodations that can address their service and housing needs. f) Continue to assess and retool transitional housing programs to best address local needs. Federal partners will support communities to reduce barriers to entry and consider conversion or reallocation of resources where appropriate to cost-effective alternatives, such as permanent supportive housing, rapid re-housing, crisis or interim housing, or transition-in-place models, and to maximize the effectiveness of transitional housing programs where appropriate.
<p>2.3 <i>Implement Coordinated Entry to Standardize Assessment and Prioritization Processes and Streamline Connections to Housing and Services</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Support the implementation of strong coordinated entry processes that provide effective, low-barrier, comprehensive, and coordinated access to housing and services programs. Federal partners will assist communities in improving access to programs, standardized assessment, prioritization, and referral processes between systems. This work will include developing guidance and technical assistance to navigate emerging challenges. Federal partners will also provide technical assistance and tools to support communities to address data-sharing concerns, particularly navigating confidentiality and safety concerns for survivors of domestic violence, individuals living with HIV/AIDS, and minors, including children identified by schools as experiencing homelessness. b) Encourage a wide range of programs to develop or strengthen partnerships with coordinated entry processes and to implement effective practices for referrals between systems. Federal partners will encourage schools, early childhood programs, child welfare agencies, health and behavioral health care providers, HIV/AIDS housing and service organizations, affordable housing

	<p>programs, benefits programs such as SSI/SSDI, and other programs to implement processes to identify individuals and families who are experiencing homelessness to connect them to local coordinated entry systems and to connect people identified by the coordinated entry systems to other necessary programs.</p> <p>c) Strengthen the focus on income and employment within coordinated entry systems to effectively target and connect individuals and families to opportunities and services needed to attain and sustain income and employment, including job training and apprenticeship programs that create access to career pathways, primary and behavioral health services, early childhood education and child care programs, and resources for young children and youth available through schools and post-secondary institutions.</p> <p>d) Develop and strengthen best practices in population-specific coordinated entry strategies and processes to ensure that practices effectively engage people with varied experiences of homelessness, diverse service needs, and differing eligibility for programs and services.</p> <p>e) Support rural and suburban areas to implement effective, regionally specific coordinated entry processes. Recognizing the unique challenges posed by geography and population distribution in these areas, federal partners will offer technical assistance and tools to support communities in strengthening their coordinated entry processes and ensuring that they are fully accessible.</p>
<p>2.4 <i>Assist People to Move Swiftly into Permanent Housing with Appropriate and Person-Centered Services</i></p>	<p>a) Support communities to expand the supply and increase access to rental housing subsidies and other affordable housing options for individuals and families experiencing or most at risk of homelessness. These efforts will include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encouraging collaboration between public housing agencies, multi-family housing owners, and homelessness services systems, and promoting guidance on how public housing agencies and multi-family housing owners can adopt admissions preferences and successfully house people exiting homelessness; and • Supporting states and communities to better target and align rental assistance and capital financing sources to support new construction and rehabilitation of affordable housing units that can be effectively accessed by people exiting homelessness. <p>b) Increase the capacity of communities to implement Housing First and harm reduction practices in programs across their systems, and further explore and refine alternative housing interventions, such as shared housing, and evaluate effectiveness.</p> <p>c) Encourage increased use of health, behavioral health, TANF, workforce, early childhood education, K-12 and higher education supports, and child welfare programs to provide supportive services in conjunction with housing programs and interventions in order to expand capacity to create stable housing outcomes.</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> d) Provide guidance and technical assistance to assist communities to implement and improve outcomes for rapid re-housing for families, youth, and individual adults, drawing upon knowledge gained from implementation of VA’s Supportive Services for Veteran Families program, HUD-funded programs, and program evaluations and research studies on effective models. e) Increase access to permanent housing models for people with substance use disorders, including opioid use disorders, by aligning housing and services, and scaling evidence-based approaches, like medication assisted treatment. f) Support communities to implement expanded “move-on” strategies to assist people who have achieved stability in permanent supportive housing—and who no longer need and desire to live there—to move into other housing options they can afford and create access to those permanent supportive housing units for other prioritized households currently experiencing homelessness. g) Help communities set specific, ambitious short-term goals to swiftly connect people experiencing homelessness to housing and services appropriate to their needs, and support their efforts in achieving and tracking performance against those goals. h) Continue to improve targeting of permanent supportive housing for people with disabilities experiencing chronic homelessness and for other individuals and families that are particularly vulnerable in order to improve cost savings and outcomes. i) Improve access to federally funded housing assistance by eliminating administrative barriers and encouraging prioritization of people experiencing or most at risk of homelessness, including implementing the housing anti-discrimination and eviction protection provisions covered in the Violence Against Women Act. Federal partners will 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. j) Encourage partnerships between housing providers and health and behavioral health care providers, such as health centers, to co-locate, coordinate, or integrate health, behavioral health, safety, and wellness services with housing and create better resources for providers to connect patients to housing resources.
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#3: ENSURE HOMELESSNESS IS A ONE-TIME EXPERIENCE

OBJECTIVE	STRATEGIES
<p>3.1 <i>Prevent Returns to Homelessness through Connections to Adequate Services and Opportunities</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Strengthen effective implementation of the core components of rapid re-housing—housing identification, rent and move-in assistance, case management—by helping communities to assess outcomes being achieved and tailor their financial subsidy and services practices in order to reduce returns to homelessness among individuals and families, including households residing in high-cost, low-vacancy markets. b) Support communities to increase on-the-job training and apprenticeship opportunities, supported employment, and other strategies that offer access to employment and career pathways for people with histories of homelessness and other significant barriers to employment, including people with disabilities.

	<p>c) Review federal program policies, procedures, regulations, and administrative barriers to improve access to employment opportunities and income supports. Identify and promote ways in which the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Employment and Training, the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC), early care and education, SSI/SSDI, and TANF programs can help people who are experiencing or most at risk of homelessness— including people with multiple barriers to employment—access and maintain jobs.</p> <p>d) Encourage state and local efforts to implement a flexible array of behavioral health services that impact housing stability, including quality case management and care coordination, peer supports and navigation services, intensive in-home services, mobile crisis and stabilization services, and other home- and community-based services.</p> <p>e) Support communities to increase access to and retention within high-quality education programs, including quality child care and early childhood education through elementary, secondary, and post-secondary education.</p> <p>f) Share examples and best practices that support communities to maintain capacity to provide resources that will promote the long-term stability of people who have entered permanent housing, including employment supports, case management and peer support, emergency financial assistance, transportation, legal services, early care and education, connection to programs, and other necessary services and supports.</p> <p>g) Strengthen coordination between early childhood, education, housing, employment, and homelessness services providers as part of a whole-family approach to improve both child and family outcomes through meaningful connections to community-based programs and resources that target and prioritize the assessed needs of the entire household, including infants and young children, for sustained housing stability and economic mobility.</p>
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#4: SUSTAIN AN END TO HOMELESSNESS

OBJECTIVE	STRATEGIES
<p>4.1 <i>Sustain Practices and Systems at a Scale Necessary to Respond to Future Needs</i></p>	<p>a) Support communities to track and measure their progress on a routine basis by looking at key metrics, such as inflow, permanent housing rates, average length of time homeless, and housing retention rates. Provide technical assistance and tools to help communities develop and refine by-name or master lists of people experiencing homelessness to track and report essential data and to inform projections.</p> <p>b) Identify and promote the strategies of communities that have effectively ended homelessness among one or more populations and are successfully sustaining those achievements to enable other communities to learn from, replicate, and adapt those practices to their own local contexts.</p> <p>c) Support communities to implement continuous quality improvements to housing and services interventions in order to sustain their successes and to be able to respond to changes in needs and conditions into the future.</p>