



# Driving Progress Toward Ending Homelessness in America – and the Work Ahead

In 2010, the United States Interagency Council on Homelessness, made up of 19 federal agencies, released *Opening Doors*, the first-ever comprehensive federal strategic plan to prevent and end homelessness, building upon strategies and actions taken across multiple administrations. Through the urgent action mobilized by the plan, we’ve seen steady reductions in homelessness across the country between 2010 and 2016:

- 14% reduction in overall homelessness nationwide
- 47% reduction in Veteran homelessness, including a 56% drop in unsheltered homelessness among Veterans
- 27% reduction in chronic homelessness
- 23% reduction in family homelessness, including a 65% drop in unsheltered homelessness among family households

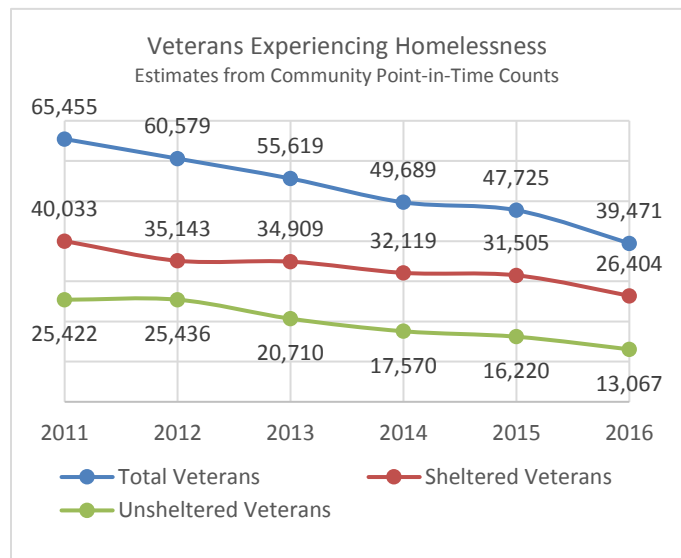
Forty-five communities, and the entire states of Virginia, Connecticut, and Delaware, have also effectively ended homelessness among Veterans. That progress has forever changed the conversation about homelessness in this country.

Communities now have proof that ending homelessness is possible. But there is much more work to be done to replicate those lessons across our nation so that every American experiencing homelessness has the opportunity to build the future they want from a safe and stable foundation.



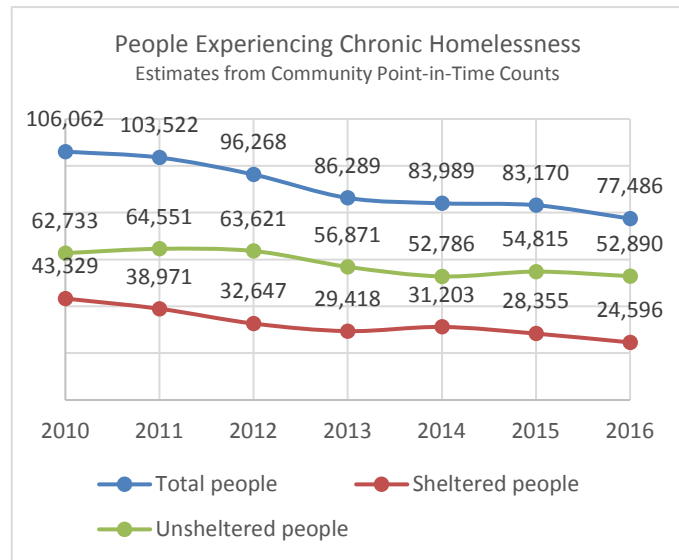
## Our Progress

**Ending Veteran Homelessness:** Our progress has been driven by urgent action at all levels of government and across all sectors to focus efforts on building an effective response to homelessness, as defined by [criteria and benchmarks](#). Federal agencies have engaged in unprecedented coordination and shared responsibility. Through data-driven decision-making, the administration and Congress have expanded investments into federal programs, such as the HUD-VA Supportive Housing (HUD-VASH) program and the Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF) program, which enable communities

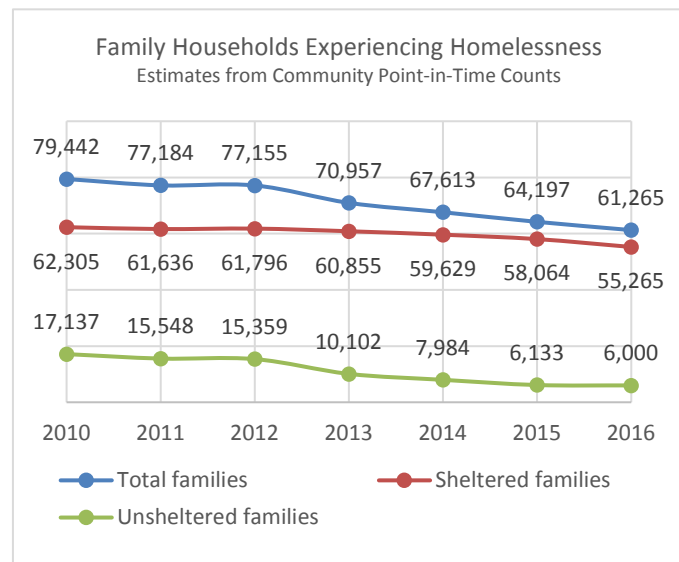


to provide a range of housing and services interventions. State and local entities, and philanthropy, have aligned investments with the federal resources. And communities have formed stronger partnerships to deploy those resources through best practices, including coordinated entry and Housing First approaches.

**Ending Chronic Homelessness:** Our progress is grounded in a strong body of evidence on what works to end the recurring or long-term homelessness of people with disabilities: supportive housing implemented through a Housing First approach. By prioritizing people experiencing chronic homelessness for existing supportive housing, and by creating opportunities to bring new units online, communities have made many more units available for people experiencing chronic homelessness with the highest needs. The recently released [criteria and benchmark](#) are guiding communities as they connect assertive outreach and engagement to permanent housing in order to bring the number of people experiencing chronic homelessness to as close to zero as possible.



**Ending Homelessness among Families with Children:** The vision for a comprehensive community response to family homelessness, [Family Connection](#), is helping government, non-profits, and other sectors increase their focus on evidence-based solutions and driving resources toward the gaps that need to be filled. Just published [criteria and benchmarks](#) will strengthen the ability of communities to use their time and resources as efficiently and effectively as possible.



**Ending Youth Homelessness:** Through the blueprint set out in [Preventing and Ending Youth Homelessness: a Coordinated Community Response](#), communities are engaged in strengthening our understanding of effective interventions and data through initiatives like the national YouthCount! Initiative and HUD’s Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program. In coordination with national organizations, three communities — Los Angeles, Austin, and Cleveland — recently housed more than 400 young people during an aggressive 100-Day Challenge. Communities and young people provided significant input into the recently released [criteria and benchmarks](#), which will strengthen our collective action to make sure young people have the safety and stability they need to pursue their goals.

## Essential Strategies

In implementing the federal strategic plan, federal agencies have prioritized partnering with states and local communities, focusing on several key strategies that are helping drive progress.

**Setting ambitious goals and asking leaders to publicly commit to them to generate significant momentum on a problem once believed to be unsolvable.** For example, almost 900 elected officials from 45 states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico signed on to the Mayors Challenge to End Veteran Homelessness. Urban, suburban, and rural communities across the country have now been confirmed as having achieved that goal. Efforts to end Veteran homelessness are laying the groundwork for communities to end chronic, family, youth — and all — homelessness.

**Defining what it means to end homelessness is providing government and communities alike clear goalposts in order to focus their efforts and resources.** Federal criteria and benchmarks, grounded in the lessons we have learned from communities, have clearly defined how resources can be used to most effectively ensure that homelessness is prevented whenever possible, and if it can't be prevented, that it is a rare, brief, and one-time experience for individuals and families in America. Communities across the country are using those criteria to drive investments into proven strategies. Local agencies and providers are fundamentally rethinking how they can best structure and administer the programs and services that address homelessness within their communities.

**Shifting to Housing First approaches ensures that federal, state, and local dollars all go further to improve outcomes for people — and for communities.** Communities across the country have redesigned their approaches to reflect evidence-based Housing First principles — removing barriers, focusing resources on getting people experiencing homelessness quickly connected to permanent housing in our communities, and providing them with the right-level of support to ensure they can seize that opportunity and succeed in their goals for themselves and for their families.

**Federal agencies are working in closer partnership with states and local communities to support their strategies and actions.**

In addition to homelessness-specific programs, many other federal programs — such as TANF, SSI/SSDI, Medicaid, Workforce, Head Start, and Public and Indian Housing and Multifamily Housing — have released guidance and tools for state and local agencies to better support individuals and families to secure and maintain housing. The Social Security Administration, for example, is working within communities to help improve access to SSI/SSDI for people with disabilities who are experiencing homelessness. Systems like child welfare and criminal justice are increasing their connections to local efforts to prevent homelessness among the populations they serve.



## The Work Ahead

We're making remarkable progress. Yet, there is still much more work to be done to ensure that all Americans have a safe and stable home, in a strong, nurturing community, where they can pursue their goals and succeed. To drive even greater progress, important priorities for the work ahead include:

- **Increasing the supply of affordable and supportive housing.** While continuing to target and prioritize existing affordable and supportive housing to people exiting homelessness, we must also take steps to increase the overall supply of affordable and supportive units. Jurisdictions should identify strategies to remove local barriers to housing development that reduce the ability of housing markets to respond to growing demand. And local, state, and national partners must identify ways to invest in an expanded supply of affordable and supportive housing.
- **Enhancing connections to employment and independence.** To prevent homelessness, and to ensure the success and stability of people exiting homelessness, we must do more to integrate employment services and opportunities into our efforts to ensure that all individuals and families, parents, youth, and people with disabilities, can develop their skills, sustain employment, advance their careers, and strengthen their futures.
- **Continuing to strengthen our data collection and analysis.** We must continue to focus on data and strengthen our understanding of what it tells us in order to help all communities craft effective strategies into the future. In particular, we must conduct the strongest possible youth count during each annual PIT count, with 2017 to be used as the baseline point-in-time estimate against which we can measure national and local progress on ending youth homelessness. At the same time, we need to continue to strengthen and analyze the Education for Homeless Children and Youth program data collected by local school districts, and other data on youth housing and service needs, to have the most accurate projection of the array of interventions and resources communities will need to end youth homelessness.
- **Reducing the damaging cycle between criminal justice system involvement and homelessness.** Specifically, we must continue our efforts to expand evidence-based housing and services solutions, like supportive housing, to help people to stop cycling between homelessness and incarceration. We must increase access to jail diversion and alternatives to incarceration, and reduce barriers to housing, employment, and services for people re-entering our communities, so that they can secure a stable platform and the family support necessary to achieve their goals.
- **Ensuring all communities can provide real access to opportunity and advancement.** We must continue to innovate, and to identify public and private funding sources, to ensure that all Americans, regardless of where they live, have access to a full range of opportunities, including high-quality housing, employment, and advancement. This must include providing more assistance to rural communities and American Indian and Alaskan Native communities to ensure that the housing and services interventions necessary to prevent and end homelessness are available to their community members as well.
- **Maintaining partnerships at all levels of government.** To sustain the progress we've made to date, we must continue to pursue a collaborative approach across federal, state, and local government, with federal investments carefully targeted to ensure that they are complementary to and supportive of on-the-ground efforts by state and local officials to address community-specific challenges.
- **Building lasting responses that will sustain our success.** Finally, we must sustain our investments into the best practices, strategies, and programs that are driving progress toward ending homelessness, knowing that our communities must be poised to respond to crisis every day.

Learn more about [our progress, essential strategies, and the work ahead for Veterans, families, youth, and people with disabilities experiencing chronic homelessness](#).