

---

## VISION

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

---

## GOALS

- ▶ **Finish the job of ending chronic homelessness in 5 years**
  - ▶ **Prevent and end homelessness among Veterans in 5 years**
  - ▶ **Prevent and end homelessness for families, youth, and children in 10 years**
  - ▶ **Set a path to ending all types of homelessness**
- 

## THEMES

### INCREASE LEADERSHIP, COLLABORATION, AND CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

- Objective 1:* 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
- Objective 2:* Strengthen the capacity of public and private organizations by increasing knowledge about collaboration, homelessness, and successful interventions to prevent and end homelessness

### INCREASE ACCESS TO STABLE AND AFFORDABLE HOUSING

- Objective 3:* Provide affordable housing to people experiencing or most at risk of homelessness
- Objective 4:* Provide permanent supportive housing to prevent and end chronic homelessness

### INCREASE ECONOMIC SECURITY

- Objective 5:* Increase meaningful and sustainable employment for people experiencing or most at risk of homelessness
- Objective 6:* Improve access to mainstream programs and services to reduce people's financial vulnerability to homelessness

### IMPROVE HEALTH AND STABILITY

- Objective 7:* Integrate primary and behavioral health care services with homeless assistance programs and housing to reduce people's vulnerability to and the impacts of homelessness
- Objective 8:* Advance health and housing stability for youth aging out of systems such as foster care and juvenile justice
- Objective 9:* Advance health and housing stability for people experiencing homelessness who have frequent contact with hospitals and criminal justice

### RETOOL THE HOMELESS CRISIS RESPONSE SYSTEM

- Objective 10:* Transform homeless services to crisis response systems that prevent homelessness and rapidly return people who experience homelessness to stable housing
-

## Executive Summary

*“Homelessness cannot be solved by a single agency or organization, by a single level of government, or by a single sector. Everyone should be reminded of the intricacies of homelessness as a policy area, and remember that preventing and ending homelessness will take real coordination, collaboration, and a constant exchange of ideas.”*

HHS Secretary  
Kathleen Sebelius

Our nation has made significant progress over the last decade reducing homelessness in specific communities and with specific populations. Communities across the United States—from rural Mankato, Minnesota to urban San Francisco—have organized partnerships between local and state agencies and with the private and nonprofit sectors to implement plans to prevent, reduce, and end homelessness. These communities, in partnership with the federal government, have used a targeted pipeline of resources to combine housing and supportive services to deliver permanent supportive housing for people who have been homeless the longest and are the frailest. The results have been significant.

In many respects, this current period of economic hardship mirrors the early 1980s when widespread homelessness reappeared for the first time since the Great Depression. Communities will need all of the tools in our grasp to meet the needs of those experiencing homelessness, including families and far too many of our nation’s Veterans. In particular, we are concerned that recent national data shows a significant rise in family homelessness from 2008 to 2009.<sup>1</sup>

HUD Secretary Shaun Donovan, HHS Secretary Kathleen Sebelius, VA Secretary Eric K. Shinseki, and Labor Secretary Hilda Solis declared the vision of the Plan to be centered on the belief that “no one should experience homelessness—no one should be without a safe, stable place to call home.” The Plan is focused on four key goals: **(1) Finish the job of ending chronic homelessness in five years; (2) Prevent and end homelessness among Veterans in five years; (3) Prevent and end homelessness for families, youth, and children in ten years; and (4) Set a path to ending all types of homelessness.**

The goals and timeframes we aspire to in this Plan are an important target for the nation. They demonstrate the Council’s belief that ending homelessness in America must be a priority for our country. As President Barack Obama has said, in a nation as wealthy as ours, “it is simply unacceptable for individuals, children, families, and our nation’s Veterans to be faced with homelessness.” We believe it is important to set goals, even if aspirational, for true progress to be made.

This Plan is a roadmap for joint action by the 19-member United States Interagency Council on Homelessness along with local and state partners in the public and private sectors. It will provide a reference framework for the allocation of resources and the alignment of programs to achieve our goal to prevent and end homelessness in America. The Plan also proposes the re-alignment of existing programs based on what we have learned and the best practices that are occurring at the local level, so that resources focus on what works. We will take action in partnership with Congress, states, localities, philanthropy, and communities around the country.

From years of practice and research, we have identified successful approaches to end homelessness. Evidence points to the role housing plays as an essential platform for human and community development. Stable housing is the foundation upon which people build their lives—absent a safe, decent, affordable place to live, it is next to impossible to achieve good health, positive educational outcomes, or reach one’s economic potential. Indeed, for many persons living in poverty, the lack of stable housing leads to costly cycling through crisis-driven systems like foster care, emergency rooms, psychiatric hospitals, emergency domestic violence shelters, detox centers, and jails. By the same token, stable housing provides an ideal launching

**During the year after entering supportive housing, formerly homeless persons in Portland, Maine experienced:**

- ▼ 77% fewer inpatient hospitalizations
- ▼ 62% fewer emergency room visits
- ▼ 60% fewer ambulance transports
- ▼ 38% fewer psychiatric hospitalizations
- ▼ 62% fewer days in jail
- ▼ 68% fewer police contacts

**In Portland, Oregon, the experience was similar:**

- ▼ 58% fewer days in inpatient medical hospitalizations
- ▼ 87% fewer emergency room visits

*(Mondello, M., 2007; Moore, T., 2006)*

pad for the delivery of health care and other social services focused on improving life outcomes for individuals and families. More recently, researchers have focused on housing stability as an important ingredient for the success of children and youth in school. When children have a stable home, they are more likely to succeed socially, emotionally, and academically.

Capitalizing on these insights, this Plan builds on the significant reforms of the last decade and the intent by the Obama administration to directly address homelessness through intergovernmental collaboration. Successful implementation of this Plan will result in stability and permanency for the more than 640,000 men, women, and children who are homeless on a single day in America. At the same time, its execution will produce approaches to homelessness that are cost-effective for local, state, and federal government. The Plan's content presents initial goals, themes, objectives, and strategies and was generated through the collaboration and consensus of the 19 USICH member agencies. Since the Homeless Emergency Assistance and Rapid Transition to Housing (HEARTH) Act requires USICH to update the Plan annually, the substance of this Plan represents the beginning of a process toward our goal of preventing and ending homelessness.

The Affordable Care Act (Health Reform), a landmark initiative of the Obama administration, will further the Plan's goals by helping numerous families and individuals experiencing homelessness to get the health care they need. Medicaid will be expanded to nearly all individuals under the age of 65 with incomes up to 133 percent of the federal poverty level (currently about \$15,000 for a single individual). This significant expansion will allow more families and adults without dependent children to enroll in Medicaid in 2014. In addition, Health Reform will support demonstrations to improve the ability of psychiatric facilities to provide emergency services. It will also expand the availability of medical homes for individuals with chronic conditions, including severe and persistent mental illness. Expansion of Community Health Centers is another major change that will serve many vulnerable populations, including those who are homeless or at risk of being homeless.

The Plan proposes a set of strategies that call upon the federal government to work in partnership with state and local governments, as well as the private sector to employ cost effective, comprehensive solutions to end homelessness. The Plan recognizes that the federal government needs to be smarter and more targeted in its response and role, which also includes supporting the work that is being done on the ground. The federal government's partners at the local level have already made tremendous strides, with communities across the nation—including over 1,000 mayors and county executives across the country—having developed plans to end homelessness. The Plan highlights that by collaborating at all levels of government, the nation can harness public resources and build on the innovations that have been demonstrated at the local level and in cities nationwide to provide everyone—from the most capable to the most vulnerable—the opportunity to reach their full potential.

The Plan includes 10 objectives and 52 strategies. These objectives and strategies contribute to accomplishing all four goals of the Plan.

The first section details the development of this first-ever comprehensive federal plan to prevent and end homelessness. This section sets out the core values reflected in the Plan and the key principles that guided the process. It also describes the opportunities for public comment offered during the development of the Plan.

The second section of the Plan provides an overview of homelessness in America. Since homelessness takes many different forms by population or geographic area, we provide a synopsis of the issues facing these varying groups experiencing homelessness. The section also addresses the sources of data used throughout the Plan.

The third section represents the core of the Plan including the objectives and strategies to prevent and end homelessness. It provides the logic behind each objective, the departments and agencies involved, the key partners, and strategies to achieve the respective objectives.

The Plan concludes with a section that defines the steps USICH partners will take next, providing a framework for action. This includes the impact we aspire to have that will require active work from many partners at all levels of government and across the private sector. This section provides a brief summary about the context in which we move forward in terms of the economic, policy, and political challenges and opportunities. There is a discussion of the measures that will be used to track progress over time toward the Plan goals. Initiatives currently under way that help advance the Plan goals are summarized. Finally, the section lays out the documents USICH will produce to provide information and transparency to the public, Congress, and our partners going forward.

To view a full copy of *Opening Doors*, visit [www.usich.gov](http://www.usich.gov)