



## **United States Interagency Council on Homelessness**

### **Fiscal Year 2016 Congressional Budget Justification**

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

**FISCAL YEAR 2016 SUMMARY STATEMENT**

	<b>Enacted/Request</b>	<b>Obligations</b>	<b>Outlays</b>
FY 2014 Enacted	\$3,500,000	\$ 3,342,337 <sup>1</sup>	\$ 3,292,985 <sup>2</sup>
FY 2015 Enacted	\$3,530,000	\$ 792,818 <sup>3</sup>	\$ 721,819 <sup>4</sup>
FY 2016 Request	\$3,530,000		

**BUDGET PLAN COMPARISONS: FY 2013 – FY 2015**

	<b>FY 2014 Actual Obligations</b>	<b>FY 2015 Operating Plan</b>	<b>FY 2016 Request</b>
<b>Category</b>			
<b>11.0: Full-Time Permanent Personnel</b>	\$1,716,628	\$2,068,028	\$2,084,325
	<i>19.5 FTE<sup>5</sup></i>	<i>21.5 FTE</i>	<i>21.5 FTE</i>
<b>12.0: Civilian Personnel Benefits</b>	\$514,074	\$581,282	\$589,510
<b>21.0: Travel and Transportation of Persons</b>	\$143,805	\$168,000	\$168,000
<b>22.0: Transportation of Things</b>	\$0	\$487	\$960
<b>23.0: Communications, Utilities, and Miscellaneous Charges</b>	\$304,166	\$301,200	\$300,000
<b>24.0: Printing and Reproduction</b>	\$7,939	\$5,000	\$5,000
<b>25.0: Services</b>	\$571,242	\$376,003	\$352,205
<b>26.0: Supplies and Materials</b>	\$29,931	\$30,000	\$30,000
<b>42.0: Insurance Claims and Indemnities</b>	\$5,000	\$0	\$0
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>\$3,342,337</b>	<b>\$3,530,000</b>	<b>\$3,530,000</b>

<sup>1</sup> As of 12/31/14

<sup>2</sup> As of 12/31/14

<sup>3</sup> As of 12/31/14

<sup>4</sup> As of 12/31/14

<sup>5</sup> All positions not occupied entire FY

## Our Request: a Summary

USICH presents its Congressional Budget Justification request in the amount of **\$3,530,000** for planned FY 2016 activities and agency operations. This requested investment supports *Opening Doors: Federal Strategic Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness* (the Plan). Approval of this modest request will provide a smart, sustained and significant return on investment across the Federal government and through to local communities to drive the progress that is necessary to realize the Plan's vision that no one will be without a safe, stable place to call home.

Our FY 2016 request includes a total of 21.5 FTE and necessary operations costs to support the high performance of these staff members. USICH requests two legislative changes via this budget request: 1) a change in the Executive Director's compensation level to be on par with other Federal executives who manage Federal agencies with similar staff size and budget levels as USICH, and 2) deletion of USICH's current sunset date to ensure that achieving and sustaining an end to homelessness continues to be a priority in this country.

## Our Results: a Summary

Our ability to guide Federal policy and implement those policies locally is premised on engagement with local stakeholders. Without any programs or regulatory authority, our tools for good governing come in the form of highly skilled, expert staff members who drive smart, efficient systems change among our partners and stakeholders through innovative collaboration, use of data, and strategic engagement.

USICH has been a model of successful interagency collaboration<sup>6</sup> and local engagement, helping to steer several billions of dollars in targeted homelessness funds into evidence-based solutions that are measurably reducing homelessness in America. Our focus on data and performance measurement provides a foundation for evidence-informed practice and policy. We encourage Federal, state, and local investment in what we know solves homelessness and in areas where success can be measured.

With *Opening Doors*, we acknowledge the importance and viability of realizing the vision that no one in America should be without a safe and stable place to call home. The Plan generates momentum, provides a roadmap for achieving its goals, and through its implementation, forges strong and lasting partnerships with community leaders on the front lines in the fight to end homelessness. This work has delivered year after year reductions in homelessness, including a 33 percent reduction in homelessness among Veterans over the last four years. Chronic homelessness is down 21 percent since 2010 and is the lowest since HUD began requiring counts of this subpopulation; and family homelessness is also decreasing<sup>7</sup>.

Although HUD's annual Point-in-Time data also shows that unsheltered family homelessness has decreased by 15 percent since 2010, the Department of Education reported earlier this year that more than 1.2 million school-aged children lacked a home of their own at some point during the 2012 – 2013

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<sup>6</sup>GAO, February 2014. MANAGING FOR RESULTS: Implementation Approaches Used to Enhance Collaboration in Interagency Groups

<sup>7</sup>Department of Housing and Urban Development, October 2014. [The 2014 Annual Homeless Assessment Report to Congress, Part 1.](#)

school year—75 percent of these families with children were living doubled up with friends or in hotels.<sup>8</sup> Taken together, these numbers show us that although fewer families are living on the streets or in shelters, families still face housing crises and a severe shortage of affordable housing.

Trends over the last four years indicate that the number of families on the street or in homeless programs at a point in time has remained steady, and the number of families experiencing homelessness over the course of a year has increased. Data on family homelessness points to the need for additional Federal efforts.

USICH has also supported accelerated and targeted efforts across the Administration to better serve unaccompanied youth who live in unstable or precarious housing situations. Currently, the nation lacks reliable estimates of the number of unaccompanied youth experiencing homelessness. The federal government, with partners across sectors, is undertaking steps to improve the quality of data on youth experiencing homelessness, including focused efforts to improve the point-in-time count for youth. Meanwhile, as we are gathering better data on the scope and needs among youth, USICH with federal and advocacy partners are taking action now to improve the lives and outcomes of youth experiencing or at-risk of homelessness by working to focus programs on helping youth to achieve stable housing, health and well-being, employment and education, and permanent connections as well as building greater integration of programs that serve youth with local efforts to end homelessness through Continuums of Care.

USICH's work has led to measurable progress and a clear sense of what is needed to fully realize the Administration's goals. We remain dedicated to our mission, and respectfully ask that our full FY 2016 request be considered to support the vital work we do on behalf of the people in this nation who experience homelessness and the communities in which they live to realize the vision that no one in America should be without a safe and stable place to call home.

## **Our Request: Details**

### **OC 11.0 Personnel**

USICH is able to drive Federal policy through a very modest number of high performing staff. USICH is successful, even without having direct authority over Federal programs, because talented staff with expertise work nimbly and efficiently across the Federal government and in partnership with state and local governments as well as the non-profit and private sectors.

By leveraging national private-sector partners and key Federal partners at HHS, HUD, and VA, USICH brings collaboration and innovation to scale across this country. USICH's staffing structure effectively integrates field and policy work to support Plan implementation.

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<sup>8</sup> Data from EDfacts, US Department of Education, as reported in the Education for Homeless Children and Youth Consolidated State Performance Report Data, School Years 2010-11, 2011,12, and 2012-2013, September, 2014, available at: <http://center.serve.org/nche/downloads/data-comp-1011-1213.pdf>

For FY 2016, USICH proposes no additional staff. Support for 21.5 full-time equivalents (FTE) is requested as follows:

Executive Director	Regional Coordinators (4)
Senior Policy Director	Management/Program Analysts (3)
Director of Finance and Administration	Communications Specialist
Director of Communications & External Affairs	Program Assistant
Director of National Initiatives	Program Assistant
Chief of Staff	Program Assistant
Policy Director	Staff Assistant
Policy Advisor	Interns (3 part-time)

USICH supports high performance via its performance management system and a merit-based compensation system to include the availability of within-band increases and performance-based awards for eligible staff. These tools greatly increase the ability to competitively recruit and maintain a high functioning, high performing staff to expertly carry out the agency's mission and the Plan. These tools are cornerstones in efforts to make USICH's compensation system comparable and competitive with other Federal entities by supporting a culture of high performance and incentives for sustaining high performance.

#### **OC 12.0 Civilian Personnel Benefits**

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

#### **OC 21.0 Travel and Transportation of Persons**

The costs included in this category support the ability of headquarters and regional staff to engage directly with state and local stakeholders to provide guidance and develop cross-sector partnerships. Travel costs are absolutely necessary to support work in priority communities and key states.

USICH has been heralded as a model for interagency collaboration, and that success is predicated on the support provided to Council member agencies and partners in the field. USICH's ability to inform Federal policy and implement those policies locally is dramatically influenced by the ability to engage, in person, with local stakeholders. Adequate resources for travel are necessary to drive the momentum gained from the success of *Opening Doors* deeper into the local systems, which will determine much of the nation's success in preventing and ending homelessness. Homelessness cannot be solved nationally if it is not solved locally. Inadequate travel support would greatly impair USICH's ability to translate policy work from the field to the Federal government and vice versa. While USICH continues to use new technologies to virtually preserve and maintain a local presence, the most successful relationships are those we are able to foster face to face. Additionally, 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 and achieve the most impact.

#### **OC 22.0 Transportation of Things**

Estimated costs are for mailings and deliveries.

#### **OC 23.0 Communications, Utilities, and Miscellaneous**

These costs cover agency-leased office space as well as office phone, cellular phone, internet connectivity, and IT-security costs.

#### **OC 24.0 Printing and Reproduction**

Estimated costs represent production support for online documents, versus printing of materials, as USICH produces very few printed publications.

#### **OC 25.0 Services**

This category includes operations assistance and infrastructure support from GSA in finance, payroll, human resources (HR) processing, auditors for compliance with the Accountability of Tax Dollars Act (ATDA), IT support, and other operational support items. The budget estimate also includes costs to ensure agency compliance with the Administration's commitment to ensure and promote equal opportunity as USICH uses GSA's Office of Equal Employment Opportunity to support this work. Costs to ensure compliance with OMB security policies and guidance from the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) are also included in this category.

#### **OC 26.0 Supplies and Materials**

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

### **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 compensation level that is consistent with the position's high level responsibilities and makes the position comparable with other independent Federal agencies of similar staff size and budget. This correction is required to sustain the quality of leadership USICH needs 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 specialized range of skills, expertise, and experience in order to successfully advance the complex change-agenda that is required by *Opening Doors*.

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

*Opening Doors* calls for Council action beyond the current sunset date, at least through 2020 (end family, youth, and child homelessness), and then beyond to focus efforts on ending homelessness for people other than those in the current, focused populations. This is needed to ensure that achieving *and sustaining* an end to homelessness continues to be a priority in this country. Removal of the current sunset date will allow USICH to continue to confidently, and without reservation, lead local communities and work with our Federal agency partners to achieve the vision set forth in *Opening Doors*.

## **Our Results: Details**

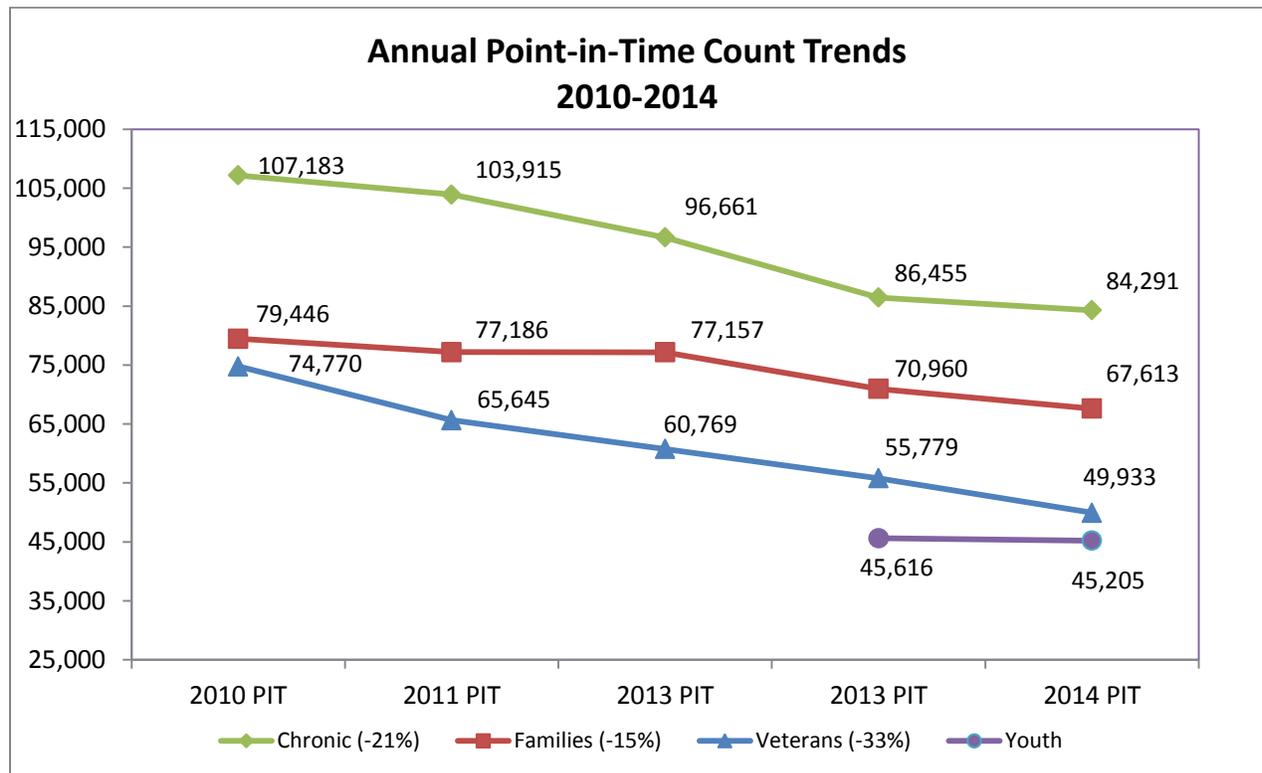
### **Preventing and Ending Homelessness for our Citizens**

*"I regularly bring [USICH's] work out as an example of the government setting high marks and meeting them because we know how to end homelessness. We can do what many people think is impossible. But it's not impossible and we have the metrics to show for it."*

*– Cecilia Munoz, Director of the White House Domestic Policy Council*

USICH has been a model of success for interagency collaboration and local engagement, helping to steer \$5.081 billion in targeted homelessness funds (FY 2014 enacted) into evidence-based solutions that are measurably reducing homelessness in America. This success is predicated on the support we provide our Federal council members and our partners in the field.

Our modest budget and staff have accomplished a great deal and we have proven our value in the efforts to prevent and end homelessness in this country as outlined in the request. Since launching *Opening Doors*, the Council has made progress year after year toward preventing and ending homelessness despite the economic recession and subsequent recovery.



Source: Department of Housing and Urban Development. The 2014 Annual Homeless Assessment Report to Congress, Part 1.

HUD's Point-In-Time (PIT) count provides a snapshot of the number of people experiencing homelessness on a given night in America and is the best available data for measuring trends and progress against the goals in *Opening Doors*. It is important to note that our effort to count youth experiencing homelessness as part of the PIT is a new one, and challenging as this is a particularly difficult population to count. USICH has and will continue to work with partners across sectors to improve the quality of data on youth experiencing homelessness, including focused efforts to improve the PIT count for youth.

These accomplishments provide a significant return on investment for the government and, ultimately, for taxpayers. Across the country, communities are increasingly investing in cost-effective interventions, like permanent supportive housing. Studies have found that permanent supportive housing not only improves housing stability but also reduces emergency department and inpatient services. Even with the

progress made, there is still much work to do. Preventing and ending homelessness is a lofty but achievable goal. It requires equally ambitious **collaboration, focus on data and performance measurement, emphasis on evidence-informed practice and policy, coordination among Federal agencies, innovation, disciplined place-based work, and above all, an aggressive commitment to getting to the finish line.** Communities across the country are providing examples of this commitment every day. USICH and our Federal partners are weaving together resources and reforms to ease the journey. Together, USICH is making the necessary strides toward *Opening Doors*' goal of preventing and ending homelessness in America.

### Collaboration Across the Nation

*"Through President Obama's Opening Doors plan, the United States' first comprehensive strategy to prevent and end homelessness, we have helped more than a million Americans get their lives on track. We've implemented an effective rapid re-housing approach that quickly rehouses families after they lose their homes so they don't fall into the cycle of homelessness. We've advanced the Housing First model in order to help those experiencing homelessness find a place to live first, so they can begin to address other issues in their lives. HUD and Veterans Affairs have worked in partnership like never before, using unprecedented evidence-based research to help Veterans who have served our country so courageously." – Former HUD Secretary Shaun Donovan*

Homelessness is a complex problem with a variety of causes and manifestations. It requires comprehensive solutions that cut across systems and sectors; effective collaboration is essential to success. For this reason, collaboration is at the core of the work of USICH and its partners at all levels. Collaboration generates broad support for the strategies to prevent and end homelessness, which is evidenced by the involvement of business and civic leadership, local public officials, the faith-based community, and mainstream systems that provide housing, human services, and health care.

The value added of USICH includes the ability to collaborate in all directions. For instance, the work with state and local governments and the private and nonprofit sectors helps ensure that Federal funds are used more wisely and in sustainable ways. Collaboration enables a feedback loop to the Federal government on what's working well and where there is opportunity to improve efficiency and effectiveness.

### Coordination Among Federal Agencies

*"To represent the collective interests of its participants, USICH has a policy to reach agreement among its members to ensure that all views are heard. As noted above, USICH is composed of the heads (or their designee) of 19 Federal agencies. All 19 agencies have equal votes in any decisions brought before the group. USICH worked through its Council Policy Group to develop strategic interagency opportunities, built consensus, and laid the groundwork for the decisions brought before the leadership. We observed this process take place in June 2012 when USICH was considering revisions to objectives in its strategic plan." —GAO, February 2014. MANAGING FOR RESULTS: Implementation Approaches Used to Enhance Collaboration in Interagency Groups*

*“For many of the advancements we’ve made...it’s been because of the Council’s work to streamline and coordinate our efforts across agencies.” - Michelle Obama, June, 2014*

USICH was established in 1987 by the Stewart B. McKinney Homeless Assistance Act (later renamed the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act). USICH’s mission, per the HEARTH Act of 2009, is to:

*Coordinate the Federal response to homelessness and to create a national partnership at every level of government and with the private sector to reduce and end homelessness in the nation while maximizing the effectiveness of the Federal Government in contributing to the end of homelessness.*

USICH is currently comprised of the heads (or the designees) of 19 Federal departments and agencies. The current Chair is Labor Secretary Thomas Perez, and the current Vice Chair is HHS Secretary Sylvia Mathews Burwell.

Coordination among Federal agencies means avoiding duplicate efforts and smartly using all available Federal resources to prevent and end homelessness. Just as no one sector can address homelessness by itself, neither can one Federal agency. USICH makes it possible to address the multi-faceted issue of homelessness by forming links across the individual budget, programs, staff, and experiences of each Federal agency.

USICH continues to work strategically, coordinating the national effort to end homelessness through activities involving all levels of government, nonprofit organizations, and the private sector. In these efforts, because USICH does not have programmatic or regulatory duties, USICH is well situated to act as an honest broker among Federal and local stakeholders.

### **Focus on Data and Performance Measurement**

*“Over the last several years, local, state and Federal elected officials, along with many in the nonprofit and business communities, have taken critical first steps to ensure that taxpayer dollars are invested in solutions that use evidence and data to demonstrate better results – but more must be done.” – Moneyball for Government*

Progress on reducing homelessness requires data to understand the needs and gaps of Federal, state, and local service systems. Obtaining accurate data on how individuals fare in programs is essential to see a clear picture of an individual’s journey through a system. USICH focuses on data and performance measurement because it allows us to monitor progress, share lessons across Federal agencies, and identify which efforts contribute to reducing and ending homelessness.

USICH’s performance management activities monitor the Council’s progress on implementing *Opening Doors*, are used to identify what’s working well and where changes are needed, and ensure Council members are focused on the highest priority activities. USICH is accountable across agencies for the full implementation of the Plan. USICH performance management activities include:

- Building consensus on Federal policy and interagency activities necessary to prevent and end homelessness;
- Bringing strategic opportunities and critical data to Federal leadership for decision making; and
- Implementing systems of accountability to promote follow-through, track implementation, and provide feedback on what is working, what is not, and how to adjust.

### **Disciplined Place-Based Work**

*"[W]e have also created a new and sustainable rapid response model that combines all available local, state, and Federal resources with the work of our local active duty and former military personnel – utilizing Veterans to help Veterans. I hope our model here in New Orleans can be replicated nationwide so that we can end Veteran homelessness in America once and for all." - Mitch Landrieu, Mayor, City of New Orleans*

USICH works with local communities to support their efforts to implement the strategies of *Opening Doors*. This work also enables USICH to discover when and if Federal practice and policies are working on the ground. Through direct interaction in local communities, the Federal government can better understand the opportunities that need to be supported and elevated.

In 2014, USICH's National Initiatives Team facilitated a peer-to-peer convening in Los Angeles for senior staff from 13 states who play key roles in coordinating activities and resources within their states, either through official Interagency Councils on Homelessness or through other coordination activities. The convening provided an interactive way to ensure participants learned from one another, discussed common challenges, and identified and informed strategies these staff can pursue in their home states. Topics included opportunities created through the Affordable Care Act and Medicaid; the role of states in advancing the creation of coordinated entry systems; effective management of interagency planning and action; and efforts to engage mainstream resources, such as TANF, affordable housing, and workforce development services. USICH's Regional Coordinators continue to provide information and guidance to these participants, strengthening Federal, state, and local coordination. This is one example of the critical nature and value of strategic travel by USICH national and regional staff. USICH optimizes the use of virtual tools on a daily basis, but nothing is a substitute for face-to-face engagement with leaders at all levels of government to improve understanding and increase accountability for tackling the hard issues and complexities required to make progress.

### **Our Work: FY 2014 Activities and Plans for FY 2015 and FY 2016**

As required by the HEARTH Act of 2009 and consistent with the mission, USICH is working to coordinate the national effort to end homelessness through activities involving all levels of government, non-profit organizations, and the private sector. This section gives an update on FY 2014 activities, and outlines work that is planned for FY 2015 and FY 2016, all of which is executed via the staffing, travel, and operations complements described above. Activities described in this section are based on the request level. Under less than the request level, work described here could be diminished due to inadequate funding levels. Activities described in this narrative do not, in any way, represent all of the collaborations and day-to-day activities that are performed by USICH or

that are necessary to prevent and end homelessness in the United States. FY 2016 activities flow from activities already started in previous fiscal years, as the target dates for the goals outlined in the Plan will be the culmination of work planned and executed over a number of years.

### Finish the Goal of Ending Chronic Homelessness

According to HUD's Annual Homeless Assessment Report (AHAR), 84,291 single individuals were experiencing chronic homelessness on a single night in 2014—a **21 percent reduction since 2010**. People who experience chronic homelessness are frequently highly vulnerable. The longer they remain without housing, the more their health deteriorates. The path to better health starts with housing. Permanent supportive housing has been shown to improve health and behavioral health outcomes, while actually lowering health care costs by stopping the revolving door of repeated emergency room use and hospitalizations. Medicaid can be used to cover and finance the necessary supportive services in permanent supportive housing. By ending chronic homelessness, the Federal government would not only achieve its state Medicaid goals, but would demonstrate its ability to solve one of the most visible, costly, and seemingly intractable manifestations of homelessness.

Research indicates that people experiencing chronic homelessness consume a disproportionate amount of public resources through repeated use of publically funded services such as shelters, jails, emergency rooms, and psychiatric centers. Studies estimate that the total average annual public costs incurred by each individual experiencing chronic homelessness range from \$40,000 to over \$70,000. Extrapolating the lower estimate to the total current chronic homeless population (84,921 individuals) suggests that allowing chronic homelessness to persist costs the American public over \$3 billion annually.

Ending chronic homelessness means enabling people who are currently experiencing chronic homelessness to move into permanent housing with access to necessary services. It also means having a systematic response in place that prevents more people from becoming chronically homeless. USICH, working with its Federal, state and local partners, will prevent chronic homelessness by supporting local responses that ensure that no person with a disability or chronic health condition will experience homelessness longer than a year or in repeat episodes over many years.

Originally, USICH expected to achieve this goal by the end of 2015. However, analysis in FY 2012 determined that the goal could not be achieved in this timeframe, in large part due to the lack of resource investments. In FY 2013, USICH launched and co-led the Interagency Working Group on Chronic Homelessness to identify resources and key strategies needed to achieve the goal of ending chronic homelessness. The interagency working group developed a strategy that would make it possible to end chronic homelessness. This strategy involves five components:

- 1) Directing existing targeted homeless programs (e.g. HUD's Continuum of Care Programs) and leverage mainstream resources (e.g. Housing Choice Vouchers, Medicaid, and mental health and substance abuse block grants) to expand permanent supportive housing.

- 2) Ensuring that communities are targeting their new and existing permanent supportive housing to people experiencing chronic homelessness, prioritizing those with the most severe challenges for assistance.
- 3) Connecting permanent supportive housing to street outreach, shelter, and institutional “in-reach” that can identify and engage people experiencing chronic homelessness.
- 4) Lowering barriers to housing entry through the community-wide adoption of Housing First principles.
- 5) Requesting additional resources from Congress to meet the need for new units of permanent supportive housing.

The working group has made significant progress in advancing these strategies, encouraging communities to reallocate existing funds to expand permanent supportive housing, improve the targeting of existing permanent supportive housing, increase the adoption of Housing First, and engage states around this goal. Despite these successes, the achievement of the goal still depends on the availability of funding to meet the need for permanent supportive housing units, as requested in the 2015 and 2016 budgets. The timing of the goal is therefore dependent on when those additional resource investments will be provided.

In FY 2015 and FY 2016, USICH will continue to drive progress through interagency work and capacity building efforts at the state and community levels. USICH will work with HUD to continue directing existing resources towards permanent supportive housing, leveraging mainstream housing resources such as Housing Choice Vouchers, and ensuring that existing units are targeted to the most vulnerable individuals. In addition, USICH is working with HHS and HUD to provide technical assistance to states around how to leverage Medicaid to cover and finance services in permanent supportive housing, based on guidance released by HHS in FY 2015. USICH will develop new tools to assist communities to implement proactive outreach and engagement to identify and prioritize individuals experiencing homelessness, increase access to legal services to help resolve barriers to housing, and to help states link their efforts to end chronic homelessness to efforts that comply with the *Olmstead* mandate to integrate people with disabilities into the community.

#### **End Homelessness Among Veterans and Their Families in 2015**

Ending homelessness among Veterans in 2015 is a national priority, one that has widespread bipartisan support. HUD’s 2014 AHAR reported that 49,933 Veterans were experiencing homelessness, a 33 percent reduction since 2010. Included in this is a 43 percent reduction in unsheltered homelessness among Veterans. Additional and extraordinary measures over the next 11 months are necessary to achieve the goal. With the support and assistance of the White House, USICH, HUD, VA, DOL, and HHS have developed an interagency quarterly work plan that includes the actions necessary to achieve the goal in 2015. The work plan focuses on actions in four priority areas:

- 1) Support community-level efforts through engagement of local and state leaders, technical assistance, and communications.
- 2) Ensure optimal deployment and implementation of targeted programs for Veterans experiencing homelessness.

- 3) Fully leverage Federal resources and programs to identify, engage, and assist Veterans experiencing or at-risk of homelessness.
- 4) Assist Veterans with other-than-honorable discharge status.

The execution of these four strategy areas will allow the Federal government to meet the goal of ending homelessness among Veterans and their families in 2015.

### **End Homelessness Among Families and Children in 2020**

Data from HUD indicates that 578,000 people experienced homelessness on a single night in January 2014, including more than 194,000 children and youth. As noted above, while PIT data shows that the number of unsheltered homeless families is decreasing, additional data from the Department of Education illuminates a growing population of sheltered families experiencing homelessness who are doubled up, living with friends or in hotels. The severe shortage of affordable housing is real.

When families become homeless, the experience itself is traumatizing, especially for children. Children in families experiencing homelessness also have high rates of acute and chronic health problems, and most have been exposed to violence. School-age children experiencing homelessness are more likely than similar age children in the general population to have emotional problems such as anxiety, depression, withdrawal, and a manifestation of aggressive behavior. Moreover, repeated school mobility leads to decreased academic achievement, negatively impacting both the child's and the school's overall performance.

The costs of family homelessness are high and impact a number of systems. But most importantly, they have a lasting detrimental social impact. Ending family homelessness requires leveraging national priorities around closing the achievement gap, increasing graduation rates, and improving economic stability for future generations.

Our work in FY 2015 and FY 2016 will focus on implementing the strategies identified by the Interagency Working Group on Family Homelessness. Since FY 2013, USICH has convened and co-facilitated an Interagency Working Group on Family Homelessness with active participation from 13 agencies. This group is charged with implementing key strategies needed to achieve the goal of ending homelessness among families and children by 2020. The working group developed a framework titled *Family Connection: Building Systems to End Family Homelessness* outlining a systems approach to ending family homelessness along with a set of short-term and long-term strategies. The working group and local partners will continue work on the following activities:

- Disseminate and provide information on *Family Connection* to assist communities in developing a systematic response to family homelessness;
- Encourage communities to redirect funding from low-performing or less cost-effective programs towards cost effective solutions like rapid re-housing;
- Leverage existing mainstream Federal resources, such as TANF, to provide rapid re-housing assistance and mainstream housing (public housing, Housing Choice Vouchers, and multi-family housing) to the majority of families experiencing homelessness;

- Develop “system of care” models for integrating and coordinating Federal , state, and local resources to ensure that families with children have access to supportive services; including those served by domestic violence and homeless service programs;
- Encourage workforce system and homeless services partnerships to increase access to employment and career ladders for families;
- Strengthen connections between local educational agencies, schools and Continuums of Care to identify and respond to homelessness among families;
- Support communities in the development of trauma-informed coordinated systems that improve access to and targeting of resources for families experiencing or at-risk of experiencing homelessness through coordinated interagency messaging and technical assistance; and
- Develop strategies to help communities expand temporary shelter capacity and access to end unsheltered homelessness among families.

### **End Homelessness for Youth in 2020**

The number of unaccompanied youth (age 12 – 24 years) experiencing homelessness is difficult to pinpoint. Due to barriers that exist for young people in accessing adult-only shelters and their lack of connection to most social services, many, if not most, youth experiencing homelessness go uncounted. More also needs to be known about the costs associated with youth homelessness. These costs compound over a lifetime as today’s homeless youth become tomorrow’s homeless adults.

In light of these concerns, Congress’ recently passed FY 2015 budget calls on USICH to provide a report and evaluation on youth homelessness. USICH will engage with Federal partners and local communities to prepare a detailed, data-driven picture of youth experiencing homelessness as well as programs and systems solutions that are currently finding success in alleviating youth homelessness.

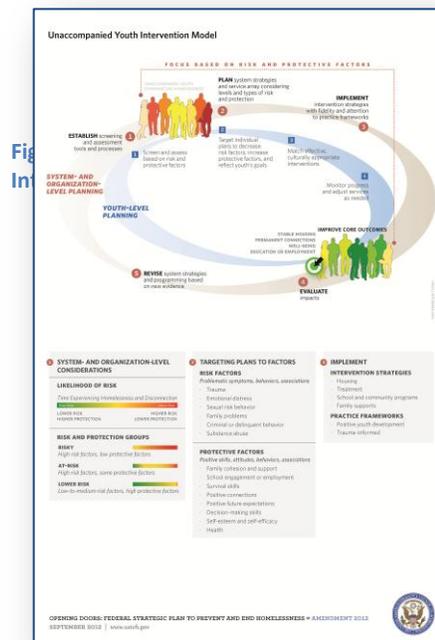
### **Federal Framework to End Youth Homelessness**

In FY 2013, USICH released the *Framework to End Youth Homelessness: A Resource Text for Dialogue and Action*. This document was developed for Federal, state, and local stakeholders to use as a resource in their work to get better outcomes for youth in stable housing, permanent connections, education, employment, and well-being. The framework details the intervention model contents, including risk and protective factors, practice frameworks, intervention strategies, and core outcomes (stable housing, permanent connections, education and employment, and well-being). In FY 2015 and FY 2016, Council agencies will refocus efforts on youth homelessness towards a more practical approach that identifies the range of interventions known from practice to have results on ending youth homelessness and to determine how to improve the use of Federal programs and resources to scale up these interventions.

Specific USICH actions that will continue or accelerate in FY 2016 include:

- Defining an end to youth homelessness, including specific metrics to determine when this state has been achieved;

- Collecting information from the field on promising interventions and on the relative need for these interventions based on the best available information on youth experiencing homelessness;
- Assisting communities to develop youth-focused coordinated entry systems;
- Continuing implementation and collecting and disseminating lessons learned from a LGBTQ prevention pilot in collaboration with the True Colors Fund, HUD, HHS, ED, and USICH to allow communities to test the youth framework's preliminary intervention model;
- Evaluating how current Federal programs like Family Unification Program vouchers can be better leveraged to assist youth experiencing or at-risk of experiencing homelessness;
- Engaging child welfare systems to provide housing assistance and services for youth transitioning from care;
- Encouraging juvenile justice systems to recognize homelessness and housing instability among justice-involved youth and to provide or coordinate housing assistance and services;
- Translating HEARTH Act performance measures for programs that serve youth;
- Continuing to improve data collection on youth through HUD's PIT count; and
- Providing tools to support local prevalence studies on youth experiencing homelessness.



### Increase Access to Mainstream Housing, Income, Health Care and Employment Resources

Targeted homeless resources alone will not end homelessness. Accessing mainstream resources, including health care, education, employment, housing, legal services, child care and early childhood education, and financial supports is critical for all populations and the overall success of the Plan. People who are experiencing or at-risk of homelessness may have difficulty navigating the application or re-certification process for these programs. During FY 2015 and FY 2016, the Council and USICH will continue to pursue strategies to improve access to needed mainstream resources, benefits, and services by:

- Ensuring all agencies support and expand, where appropriate, efforts that increase access to mainstream resources, such as Housing Choice Vouchers, multifamily housing, SSI/SSDI, and educational and employment supports, including their ability to measure increases in access;
- Promoting community-level coordination to provide person-centered systems of care that link directly to health, employment, child care, educational, and legal services;
- Supporting HUD on guidance to PHAs and providers of multifamily housing to encourage prioritization of mainstream affordable housing resources for people experiencing homelessness and broad dissemination of this information to stakeholders through FY 2016;

- Continuing to update and promote the USICH-launched PHA Portal, an interactive web-based resource to inform public housing authorities about how they can contribute to local plans to end homelessness, using strategies that are tailored to needs, goals, and opportunities;
- Disseminating and providing trainings around a forthcoming resource, *Key Strategies for Connecting People Experiencing Homelessness to SSI/SSDI*;
- Disseminating and adding to a web-based tool to help communities better leverage mainstream service resources in order to end homelessness;
- Continuing to conduct webinars, local meetings, conference calls, and other targeted engagements to support local understanding and capacity to leverage Medicaid towards efforts on homelessness; and
- Strengthening partnerships between workforce systems and efforts to end homelessness as well as leveraging opportunities in the recently enacted Workforce Investment and Opportunity Act of 2014.

### Supporting National Implementation of Opening Doors

USICH continues to support local implementation of the strategies outlined in *Opening Doors* through engagement with regional and state coordinating bodies, elected officials, public housing authorities and community leaders. With a complement of four (4) regional coordinators led by the Director of National Initiatives, USICH provides a range of targeted community engagement and technical expertise in communities through the implementation of place-based work, partnerships, and strategic communications.

Our focus in states and local communities continues to be:

- Partnership. USICH is a bridge between community level work and Federal policy. By providing information to the field and sharing real world challenges in implementing Federal programs back to agencies, USICH helps resolve and support community level efforts. This improves crucial partnerships between communities and the Federal government necessary to accomplishing goals on ending homelessness;
- Proactive engagement and building collaboration at the local level, both by directly convening people (as was done in LA), and by supporting local leadership (as was done in Houston and Salt Lake City for example) to implement a coordinated approach to homelessness; and
- Technical assistance and capacity building by sharing solutions and resources to support their implementation.

### Priority Communities

Through the work of our Regional Coordinators, in FY 2016, USICH will continue its strategic and proactive engagement in priority communities, which are communities that have been identified as having the greatest incidences of homelessness. USICH is strengthening local collaboration, targeting of resources, technical assistance, and our strategic messaging to communities



that are home to the majority of people experiencing homelessness in this country.

- In FY 2013, USICH undertook a **new partnership with HUD** to engage their mainstream housing resources in 10 communities. This work included convening and managing local leadership teams and equipping them with a tool to use their data to determine needed housing interventions and analyze resources to identify opportunities where mainstream housing could meaningfully contribute to local efforts to reach the goals in *Opening Doors*. The Council will build on this work through FY 2016 by supporting the implementation of opportunities identified and taking lessons learned to scale nationally.
- Regional Coordinators participated on leadership teams for the four state-level **SAMHSA Policy Academies** to reduce the rate of chronic homelessness through a SAMHSA-sponsored, cross-agency Federal technical assistance effort. USICH brought necessary partners to the table, added content expertise, and in some areas is currently supporting follow-on activities. Similarly, the Council will build on lessons from this work in our support of state efforts in FY 2016.
- USICH's National Initiatives team will continue to provide guidance and engage partners in activities launched through the 25 Cities effort to expedite the creation of efficient coordinated assessment and housing entry systems that ensure the most effective, targeted use of Federal, state, and local resources to end homelessness within the priority communities. In FY 2016, it is expected that these communities will be continuing to strengthen these systems, aiming toward full geographic coverage within their jurisdictions and ensuring that programs serving all populations experiencing homelessness are utilizing the coordinated assessment and entry systems that were designed in FY 2014 and FY 2015.
- USICH supports the coordination of **federally funded technical assistance** in priority communities, by convening HUD, HHS, VA, and privately funded agencies to ensure communication and strategic implementation of activities.
- USICH will continue engaging in specific, purposeful activities related to implementing the **Youth Framework**, such as developing a screening and assessment tool that assesses youth based upon risk and protective factors, encouraging data sharing between local homeless service providers and schools, and incorporating the four outcomes into youth provider service evaluation.
- USICH has expanded its work in support of state-level planning and coordination activities, especially in the 17 states that include priority communities. This focus will continue in FY 2016, including an emphasis on providing guidance on the use of mainstream resources (such as Medicaid, TANF, and affordable housing funding) to create housing and services opportunities for people exiting homelessness.

### Partnerships

USICH supports and advances the national implementation of *Opening Doors* through fostering strategic partnerships on initiatives, amplifying key messages, and identifying opportunities for collaboration to further efforts to end homelessness. In FY 2014 the Council saw considerable success from partnership activities that will continue into FY 2015 and FY 2016. Most notably, Community Solutions' 100,000 Homes Campaign announced in June 2014 that the effort had succeeded in its goal to connect 100,000 Veterans and individuals experiencing chronic homelessness with permanent housing. USICH and

Council agencies played a significant role in the success of the campaign. Federal partners continue to work closely with Community Solutions and other national and local partners as we drive to end chronic and Veteran homelessness.

### Philanthropic Partners

The importance of public-private partnerships has never been greater. As states and communities continue to face constrained resources, many philanthropic organizations dedicated to serving populations at-risk of or experiencing homelessness can play a larger leadership role. Coordination among all of these stakeholders is essential to achieving the goals of the Plan. Examples of ongoing activities include:

- Promoting leadership in local planning efforts and awareness of evidence-based approaches among philanthropy and private funders;
- Partnering with Funders Together to End Homelessness to convene funder networks around opportunities for collaboration and the Community of Practice focused on ending youth homelessness;
- Engaging local leaders on better ways to involve philanthropy and coordinate efforts with funders at the community planning table;
- Collaborating with Joining Forces and local communities to identify resource gaps specific to ending Veteran Homelessness; and
- Providing technical assistance and policy guidance to formal Funders Collaboratives in several communities, including Los Angeles, Houston, and San Diego.

### Mayoral Partnerships

Mayors are critical partners in local community efforts to prevent and end homelessness. USICH continued its collaboration with their official non-partisan organizing body, the U.S. Conference of Mayors, throughout FY 2014 with work expected to continue into FY 2015 and FY 2016. In addition, USICH plays a lead role in the development and implementation of the Mayors Challenge to End Homelessness which was publicly launched by First Lady Michelle Obama in June 2014 and which engages mayors and other elected officials across the country in making public, firm commitments to end Veteran homelessness in their communities in 2015. USICH has:

- Engaged with mayors to provide guidance and resource ideas based on specific community needs;
- Organized peer learning conversations between mayors with shared interests and concerns;
- Leveraged expertise from mayors whose communities are already making significant progress towards the goals of *Opening Doors* to share promising practices and create momentum with other communities across the country; and
- Continued to collaborate with the U.S. Conference of Mayors and VA around the resolution adopted at the June 2013 Conference that reinforced the need for collaborative action by

mayors and VAMC directors to achieve the goal of ending homelessness among Veterans in 2015.

### **Advocates**

USICH hosts quarterly meetings with national advocacy organizations and Council agencies, creating an important opportunity for open dialogue among stakeholders and policy makers from multiple agencies. Participants have planned a series of topics to facilitate ongoing opportunities for public-private collaboration. In response to questions and issues raised in this open forum, USICH undertook research on criminalization of homeless youth in local communities which will further inform the Council's work on youth. In addition, USICH engaged national partners on efforts to accelerate progress on chronic homelessness by engaging this group in ways to improve identification, outreach, and prioritization of resources for individuals experiencing chronic homelessness. In FY 2015 and through FY 2016, USICH will continue these meetings as a way of maintaining transparency, momentum, and public-private partnerships.

## **Communications, Research, and Common Data**

### **Communications**

Communications activities are an essential way USICH supports the broad implementation of *Opening Doors*. USICH shares information on Federal policies and resources and evidence based practices with local communities. USICH also provides tools, information, and resources to enhance the capacity of these communities to implement solutions to homelessness.

Through the website, regular electronic newsletters, social media, and webinars, USICH disseminates information to build capacity, awareness, and political will to implement *Opening Doors*.

- USICH's website is a go-to resource for open Federal requests for proposals, other new funding opportunities to assist in ending homelessness, best practices, and linkages to key Federal agency partners, programs and initiatives;
- USICH newsletters reinforce policy priorities and promote stakeholder understanding of the Administration's efforts and commitments to prevent and end homelessness;
- USICH leverages partnerships to provide webinars and interactive learning opportunities in order to support field implementation of key systems-level work;
- In FY 2014, USICH staff spoke at over one hundred public events, elevating solutions and the work of Federal agencies and local partners on the issue of ending homelessness;
- USICH's increased social media engagement in FY 2014 has improved the accessibility of information on promising practices, successful community solutions, and relevant research.

### **Common Vocabulary and Data Standards**

USICH works to develop and promote a common Federal vocabulary and data standard regarding housing status across all targeted homeless and key mainstream programs for low-income households. This work began in 2011 as part of a Congressional mandate in the HEARTH

Act and is critical to our ability to identify people served by government programs that are experiencing or at-risk of homelessness and to measure the impact of homelessness programs. In FY 2015 and 2016, USICH will continue to:

- Promote adoption of common vocabulary and data standards across homeless targeted and mainstream programs, through the adoption of HUD's Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) data standards, especially in reporting on housing status;
- Support HUD and HHS efforts to integrate HHS's Runaway and Homeless Youth Management Information System (RHYMIS) with HMIS;
- Promote the adoption of HMIS for HHS's Projects for Assistance in Transition from Homelessness (PATH) program, and support data sharing efforts between VA's homeless programs and HMIS, including the direct use of HMIS for select VA programs; and
- Assist ED and HUD in determining options for aligning reporting categories for residence and housing status with HMIS data standards.

### Annual Update to Congress

Pursuant to the HEARTH Act, USICH prepares annual reports on progress toward the goals of the Plan and also proposed amendments to the Plan. The amendment was approved by Council at the October 2014 meeting. USICH is currently working on this targeted amendment to the Plan to adjust the timeframe on the goal of ending chronic homelessness based on analysis of progress and resource needs, provide updated strategies around retooling the crisis response system, clarify the role of Medicaid in financing services to end homelessness, and include new strategies related to the use of data to manage performance and decision-making in ending homelessness. In addition, USICH will develop and publish its annual report on progress in FY 2015.