



# **From Evidence to Action: A Federal Homelessness Research Agenda 2024-2028**

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## OVERVIEW

Launched in December 2022, [\*All In: The Federal Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness\*](#) is built on a commitment to advance evidence-based practices to prevent and end homelessness. One foundational pillar of the plan, “Use Data and Evidence to Make Decisions,” includes a strategy to “develop a federal homelessness research agenda in collaboration with federal agencies, academic researchers, people with lived experience, and innovative programs to conduct, compile, and disseminate research on best practices, the effectiveness of various interventions, and metrics to measure outcomes.”

This research agenda was developed with significant input from researchers, people with lived experience of homelessness, national homelessness organizations, and experts from federal agencies. It is intended to shape federal investments in homelessness research and offer a roadmap for academic researchers, philanthropy, students, and others committed to advancing the most effective responses to homelessness in the United States.

## Goals

Through this federal homelessness research agenda, the United States Interagency Council on Homelessness (USICH) aims to:

- Strengthen our nation’s collective base of knowledge on what works to prevent and end homelessness through rigorous qualitative and quantitative evidence
- Reinforce existing evidence to combat disinformation
- Align research priorities and prevent fragmentation at both the federal and non-federal levels
- Facilitate meaningful engagement and collaboration with a diverse group of funders, researchers, people with lived experience, and partners at every stage of developing and implementing research
- Promote research to address gaps in policy and practice, and facilitate the uptake of evidence by decision makers and service providers
- Catalyze governmental and non-governmental investment in homelessness research

## Values

This research agenda and the process used to create it embody the following values:

<b>Collaboration</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Meaningfully engage people with lived experience of homelessness in all aspects of homelessness research through ongoing partnership and dialogue, and by hiring people with lived experience as experts in conducting research</li><li>• Break down silos in research and funding at federal and non-federal levels</li><li>• Develop research priorities and policy solutions that promote the dignity, rights, and liberties of people experiencing homelessness</li></ul>
<b>Racial Equity</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Acknowledge the historical and ongoing harm of research and data collection on people of color and other marginalized groups</li><li>• Work with historically marginalized people to co-create inclusive and equitable research processes, including collection and analysis of demographic information</li><li>• Address the most pressing questions to understand and disrupt systemic racial disparities</li></ul>
<b>Research to Action</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Support policymakers to use evidence as they shape local, state, and national responses to homelessness</li><li>• Provide guidance and messaging about how national data and evidence can be used to inform state and local decision-making</li><li>• Develop tools and strategies to support uptake of evidence by service providers</li></ul>

## Development Process

From May to September 2023, USICH undertook the following process to assess the state of homelessness research and develop a comprehensive research agenda:

- Conducted over 50 key informant interviews, focus groups, and listening sessions with researchers, people with lived experience of homelessness, national organizations, and federal agencies
- Analyzed systematic reviews of homelessness interventions ([see Appendix 1](#))

- Reviewed federal agency learning agendas and research agendas developed by academic institutions and other non-governmental organizations ([see Appendix 2](#))
- In partnership with the National Institutes of Health, assessed the portfolio of federal funding for homelessness research from 2000-2023
- Convened a research workshop with Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago that included a diverse group of researchers, people with lived experience of homelessness, and national advocates
- Held discussions with federal agency partners
- Released a provisional framework for public comment
- Integrated public feedback into the final research agenda

## RESEARCH FRAMEWORK

As highlighted in the *All In* plan, this research agenda recognizes that the needs of people experiencing homelessness vary based on factors such as age, disability, race/ethnicity, sexual orientation, and gender identity; and it acknowledges that tailored research questions are needed to address the needs of specific populations and geographic areas. The agenda seeks to identify equitable data collection methods and understand the effectiveness of population-specific interventions.

Further, the research agenda centers racial equity and includes a focus on historically marginalized groups, including communities of color, people with disabilities, the LGBTQI+ community, and others. Subpopulations of focus include families, older adults, youth and young adults, people living in vehicles, people experiencing chronic homelessness, unaccompanied women, and military veterans. USICH encourages the identification of relevant strategies across each research topic to address the needs of each subpopulation ([see Appendix 3 on key populations and geographical focus](#)).

The research agenda is framed around two key questions:

1. What would it take to prevent homelessness?
2. What would it take to end homelessness?

The areas of inquiry in each section below are intended to be illustrative rather than comprehensive. Our hope is that federal agencies, as well as non-governmental funders, national and local organizations, researchers, and students will identify additional areas for research, and that together, we will continue to build a strong evidence base for preventing and ending homelessness.

## Section 1: Preventing Homelessness

**Background:** To understand what it would take to end homelessness in the United States, we must develop and rigorously test approaches to help people exit homelessness, access housing and supports, and remain stably connected in the community, *and* we must understand how best to keep people from experiencing homelessness in the first place. We must answer the fundamental question: *What would it take to prevent homelessness?*

While communities are increasingly focused on homelessness prevention, the research base remains limited. Initial studies demonstrate the promise of approaches such as guaranteed basic income, flexible funding pools, shelter diversion, and targeted interventions for specific subpopulations, providing a foundation to build upon.

To expand the evidence base on homelessness prevention, future research should address:

1. **Universal Prevention:** Strategies that impact large groups of people who are living in poverty and have moderate to high risk of homelessness. Priority research topics include:

Topic	Areas of Inquiry
<b>Housing Choice Vouchers</b>	What strategies are most effective for incentivizing landlords to accept vouchers? What would it take to scale the voucher program to serve all households at risk of homelessness?
<b>Income Supports</b>	Did the pandemic-era expansion of the child tax credit prevent families from experiencing homelessness, and what impact would permanent expansion have in preventing homelessness? To what extent do Social Security and disability payments serve as protective factors? Has Medicaid expansion played a role in preventing homelessness?
<b>Large-Scale Eviction Prevention</b>	To what extent have community-level and statewide eviction prevention interventions disrupted inflow into homelessness? How do local practices (e.g., nuisance ordinances, discriminatory tenant screening practices, rent control, right to counsel) exacerbate or mitigate risk of homelessness?
<b>Guaranteed Basic Income</b>	How does providing a guaranteed basic income for specific groups (e.g., mothers with young children, transition-age youth, and people receiving public benefits) impact longer-term risk for homelessness? How can the Supplemental Poverty Measure be used to design effective basic income interventions? What innovative new approaches are showing promise?
<b>Flexible Funding Pools</b>	How effective are flexible funding pools (e.g., for rental and utility arrears, car repairs, and other unexpected expenses) in preventing homelessness?
<b>Renter Tax Credits</b>	How effective are state-level renter tax credits in helping people stay housed? What is the feasibility of a federal renter tax credit?

**2. Targeted Prevention:** Strategies that provide housing and services for people at very high risk of homelessness at critical moments in their lives. Priority research topics include:

Topic	Areas of Inquiry
<b>Youth and Young Adults</b>	What are the most effective homelessness prevention interventions that target crucial transitions for youth (e.g., emancipation from foster care or exit from the juvenile justice system)? What new approaches could be tested and scaled?
<b>Older Adults</b>	What housing and service interventions are most effective for preventing homelessness among older adults? How can tools like the Elder Index be used to understand homelessness risk among older adults? What new strategies are needed?
<b>Families With Children</b>	What housing, service, and income-related interventions are most effective for preventing homelessness among families with young children (e.g., 0-5 years old) and pregnant women?
<b>Criminal/Legal System Reentry</b>	What are the most effective interventions for preventing homelessness upon exit from jails and prisons? What new interventions are needed?
<b>Racial Equity</b>	What systemic interventions decrease inflow of Black, Native American, Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, Hispanic/Latino, and multiracial households into homelessness response systems? What innovations are needed? How do racial inequities specifically impact people with mental health and substance use disorders?
<b>LGBTQ+</b>	What strategies (e.g., peer support, housing subsidies, and legal counsel to combat discrimination in work and housing) are most effective for reducing risk of homelessness among people who identify as LGBTQ+?
<b>Service Members</b>	What practices can support transitioning service members pre-transition, at the point of transition, and post-transition to prevent homelessness in both the short- and long-term?
<b>Domestic Violence</b>	What housing and service interventions are most effective for keeping survivors of domestic violence stably housed and out of the shelter system when they leave a dangerous situation?
<b>People With Disabilities</b>	What homelessness prevention strategies are most effective for people with disabilities, including physical disabilities, cognitive disabilities, and traumatic brain injuries?
<b>People Experiencing Life Transitions</b>	What strategies can communities deploy to identify and support people at risk of homelessness due to life transitions such as a health crisis, divorce, or death of a loved one?

<b>Health Systems</b>	How can health care systems effectively screen for risk of homelessness and connect people to services? What are best practices for discharge planning? How can medical respite support effective discharge planning?
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3. **Diversion:** Strategies to reconnect people with housing and support immediately after losing housing—and prior to entering the shelter system. Priority research topics include:

Topic	Areas of Inquiry
Diversion	What are barriers to uptake of effective diversion practices, and what new strategies can be developed to increase uptake?
Flexible Funding	What are the most effective and efficient uses of flexible funding pools at the community level (e.g., car repairs, child care, transportation, past-due rent, utilities)?
Subpopulations	What are the impacts of diversion on specific subgroups, including families, youth, unaccompanied women, people with disabilities, and communities of color (specifically Black, Native American, Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, Hispanic/Latino, and multiracial households)? What are emerging culturally relevant practices to meet people’s needs? What innovative new approaches can meet the needs of these groups?

4. **Screening and Identifying Risk:** Although tens of millions of Americans each year experience poverty, housing instability, and poor housing conditions each year, only a fraction become homelessness. We must learn how better to target resources and scale prevention efforts to meet the needs of those most at risk of experiencing homelessness. Priority research topics include:

Topic	Areas of Inquiry
Universal Screening	What would be the impacts of widespread adoption of new or existing screening tools for homelessness risk in health care and educational settings, followed by supportive service interventions to keep people stabilized in housing?
Predictive Analytics	How can we responsibly leverage tools such as predictive analytics to determine risk of experiencing homelessness? How can we embed safeguards to prevent racial bias?



5. **Cost and Scale:** In addition to building evidence for effective prevention strategies, it is critical to understand the size and scope of the population at risk of homelessness. Answering these questions will make efficient use of current resources and understand the need for future resources. Priority research topics include:

Topic	Areas of Inquiry
Annual Cost	What is the annual cost estimate for preventing all new entries into homelessness in the U.S., and cost savings to other systems (e.g., homelessness response, emergency rooms, ambulances, law enforcement, courts, and jails/prisons)?
Lost Tax Revenue	What is the estimated lost tax revenue due to high unemployment rates among unhoused people, and how would that change if significantly more of those individuals were housed and able to work?
Housing Supply	What is the impact of housing supply and affordability on homelessness in specific geographic areas? What actions are needed to stabilize the current stock of affordable housing?
Zoning and Housing Policies	What is the effect of local zoning and housing policies on exacerbating or preventing homelessness?
Public Housing	What can be learned from previous initiatives to expand public housing (i.e., 1940s-1960s) and the impact on homelessness?
Doubled-Up Households	Among those doubled-up with friends and family (i.e., non-leaseholders), who is most at risk of falling further into homelessness, and what interventions are most effective for preventing homelessness? What innovative new approaches are needed to support doubled-up, non-leaseholder households?

## Section 2: Ending Homelessness

**Background:** Over the past few decades, significant research has documented what works in helping people exit homelessness. For example, the evidence is robust for Housing First and Critical Time Intervention as effective strategies for helping people exit homelessness and remain stably housed. To better understand how to scale housing and supportive services to meet individual needs, however, more research is needed.

To expand the evidence base on ending homelessness, future research should address:

1. **Cost:** Together, with evidence-based strategies and sufficient accompanying resources, we can end homelessness. To do so, we must better understand the full cost of scaling interventions to meet current and anticipated needs. Priority research topics include:

Topic	Areas of Inquiry
Total Cost of Ending Homelessness	What is the total estimated cost of stably housing everyone who is currently experiencing homelessness in the United States? What is the cost of not ending homelessness? What interventions are most cost-effective?
Shifting Narratives to End Homelessness	What strategies are most effective in shaping public and political will to solve homelessness? What innovative new approaches are needed to shift public narratives? What actions can help reduce stigma of homelessness?

2. **Longitudinal Outcomes:** To end homelessness, we must ensure housing and services interventions meet people’s needs both in the short- and long-term. Priority research topics include:

Topic	Areas of Inquiry
Housing First Subpopulations	What are the long-term outcomes of the Housing First approach for different subpopulations?
Housing First Models	What are the long-term outcomes of different models that fall under the Housing First approach, such as scattered site vs. project-based permanent supportive housing? How do outcomes vary by geography—particularly rural, suburban, and urban settings? What are secondary outcomes of Housing First approaches including health, income, and education? What actions promote sustainability of Housing First models? How do long-term outcomes for Housing First compare with long-term outcomes for rapid rehousing and transitional housing?
Recovery Housing	What are the most effective models of recovery housing, and what are the long-term housing and behavioral health outcomes for residents of these programs?
Behavioral Health Programs	How does medication-assisted treatment help people exit homelessness? What is the role of inpatient/residential mental health and substance use treatment programs in helping people exit homelessness? What interventions show long-term housing stability for program graduates? What are the effects of involuntary treatment and institutionalization? What is the role of assisted outpatient treatment?

<b>Domestic Violence Housing</b>	What are long-term outcomes of different domestic violence housing models, including Domestic Violence Housing First?
<b>Shelter and Interim Housing</b>	What is the role of emergency shelter—both congregate and non-congregate—in expediting or impeding rapid exits from homelessness? What features of shelters and interim housing make it successful as a bridge to permanent housing?
<b>Health Care</b>	How do medical respite care programs facilitate connections to permanent housing? How is harm reduction best incorporated into approaches to care? What housing models and services best support those with substance use disorder?
<b>Racial Equity</b>	How do Continuums of Care use their resources to reduce racial disparities in homelessness?

3. **Housing and Services:** Housing ends homelessness, and voluntary supportive services can help keep people stably housed. It is important to build upon this knowledge base to learn more about person-centered approaches to tailoring housing and services to meet individual needs. Priority research topics include:

<b>Topic</b>	<b>Areas of Inquiry</b>
<b>Housing First Fidelity</b>	To what degree are Continuums of Care following the Housing First approach to fidelity?
<b>Exploring the Outcomes of Data and Service Connectivity Among Housing, Services, and Health Care</b>	What is the most effective mix of housing and services for specific subpopulations? What is the feasibility of an adaptive mixed methods study that evaluates long-term housing stability, health, equity, involvement with criminal justice, and well-being for different types of housing (e.g., project-based, scattered site, shared housing, recovery housing) and case management models (e.g., Critical Time Intervention, Assertive Community Treatment, Intensive Case Management) and mental health and substance use treatment to meet needs of individuals, especially those of high acuity (older adults and those with mental health and substance use disorders)?
<b>Permanent Supportive Housing</b>	What is the total estimated need for permanent supportive housing supply for specific subpopulations and what are the implications for racial equity? What innovations encourage equitable scaling of housing supply?
<b>Shared Housing</b>	What are promising practices around shared housing as a cost-effective strategy to help people exit homelessness?

<b>Time-Limited Vouchers</b>	How could time-limited vouchers or shallow subsidies help end homelessness for specific subgroups?
<b>Supportive Services</b>	What supportive services are most effective for helping people maintain housing once they have exited homelessness, and how do those services differ for various subpopulations? What outcomes are associated with services such as housing navigators? What employment and income supports are most helpful for preventing returns to homelessness?
<b>Homeownership</b>	What are the most effective pathways to homeownership for people who have experienced homelessness?
<b>Educational Supports</b>	What educational supports are most effective for improving educational and social-emotional outcomes for children and youth experiencing homelessness?
<b>Workforce</b>	What strategies promote staff retention and development of the homelessness workforce, including those with lived experience?

4. **Specific Subpopulations:** As highlighted above, more research is needed to better understand the unique experiences of all subpopulations experiencing homelessness, as well as the barriers and opportunities to provide more effective housing and service interventions. In particular, USICH proposes a strong focus on particularly high-risk groups—older adults, youth/young adults, and unaccompanied women. Priority research topics include:

<b>Topic</b>	<b>Areas of Inquiry</b>
<b>Older Adults</b>	What are promising approaches to meet the needs of people over the age of 55—the fastest-growing segment of people experiencing homelessness, often with chronic health conditions? What interventions are most helpful for activities of daily living, dementia, and other specific geriatric needs?
<b>Youth and Young Adults</b>	What would a large, longitudinal, direct cash transfer program for youth ages 18-25 teach us about how to support a key transitioning population? What actions can affirm chosen family and stabilize informal hosting? How is housing connected to permanent connections, education, employment, and social-emotional well-being?
<b>Unaccompanied Women</b>	What are the most effective practices to address the unique needs of unaccompanied women?

5. **Unsheltered Homelessness:** As unsheltered homelessness is at crisis proportions in many communities, jurisdictions have begun to implement a range of approaches to provide short-term shelter and permanent housing with services to people experiencing unsheltered homelessness. Simultaneously, the nation has seen an increase in harmful and dangerous local and state laws that criminalize homelessness. To understand how best to address encampments and other forms of unsheltered homelessness, priority research topics include:

Topic	Areas of Inquiry
<b>Encampment Experiences</b>	What are the experiences of those living in encampments, including measures of health, safety, and social connectedness?
<b>Outreach and Engagement</b>	What outreach and engagement strategies are most helpful and effective from the perspective of encampment residents?
<b>Short-Term Housing and Services</b>	When permanent housing is not immediately available, what are the best short-term approaches to move encampments residents into safe settings and provide wraparound supports?
<b>Safe Parking</b>	How effective are safe parking facilities?
<b>Criminalization</b>	What is the long-term impact of anti-camping laws on individuals and communities? What new alternatives are needed to reverse the trend toward criminalizing homelessness? How may current government policies be engaged in criminalization? What are the effects of encampment sweeps on the health and safety of residents?
<b>Mental Health and Substance Use</b>	What strategies are most effective for addressing the needs of unsheltered people with mental health issues and substance use disorders? How does addiction to specific substances impact people experiencing homelessness (e.g., methamphetamine, fentanyl and other opioids, alcohol)? What is the national rate of fatal overdose among people experiencing homelessness?

6. **Lessons Learned From COVID-19 Response:** New streams of funding and innovations helped stave off a tidal wave of new homelessness during the COVID-19 pandemic. It is important to learn more about how communities creatively used new resources and flexibilities to rehouse vulnerable populations and prevent new entries into homelessness. Priority research topics include:

Topic	Areas of Inquiry
<b>Flexibilities and Waivers</b>	How did federal COVID-19 flexibilities impact the equity and effectiveness of the homelessness response system? What would be the impact of extending or making regulatory relief permanent? How can government funding processes be streamlined to promote flexibility and innovation?
<b>Pandemic-Related Innovations</b>	What were the most effective innovations that emerged to address homelessness during the pandemic, including non-congregate sheltering, targeted health services, rental assistance, and eviction moratoria? What follow-up is needed to re-examine and learn from these experiences?
<b>Public Health</b>	What did we learn about community responses to homelessness when the crisis of homelessness was also framed in terms of a public health crisis and state of emergency? What could be drawn from these lessons to shape the nation’s long-term approach to ending homelessness?

## CONCLUSION

This research agenda reflects USICH’s current priorities for homelessness research, shaped extensively by public input and consultation with experts from across the field. The agenda will evolve over time as some questions are answered and new ones arise. Our hope is that this roadmap strengthens a culture of curiosity, exploration, and rigor across federal and non-federal research efforts. Our commitment is to ensure that these efforts lead to an ever-strengthening evidence base that helps more and more people avoid losing their homes, exit homelessness, and remain stably housed—until homelessness is a relic of the past.

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## APPENDIX 1: Inventory of Systemic Reviews

Aldridge, R., Story, A., Hwang, S., Nordentoft, M., et al. (2017). “Morbidity and mortality in homeless individuals, prisoners, sex workers, and individuals with substance use disorders in high-income countries: a systematic review and meta-analysis.” *The Lancet*. 391(10117):241-250.

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Darkwah, V., Yamane, H., Richter, S., Caine, V., et al. (2012). “A systematic review on the intersection of homelessness and healthcare in Canada.” *Journal of Nursing & Care*. 1(5):1-5.

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Grattan, R., Tryon, V., Lara, N., Gabrielian, S., et al. (2021). “Risk and resilience factors for youth homelessness in western countries: a systematic review.” *Psychiatric Services*. 73(4):425-438.

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## APPENDIX 2: Inventory of Learning Agendas

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National Alliance to End Homelessness (2020). *A Research Agenda for Ending Homelessness*. Available at: [2020-Research-Agenda-Final-4.21.2020.pdf \(endhomelessness.org\)](#)

True Colors United (2020). *National LGBTQ+ Youth Homelessness Research Agenda*. Available at: [LGBTQ-Youth-Homelessness-Research-Agenda- -Final.pdf \(truecolorsunited.org\)](#)

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## APPENDIX 3: Key Populations and Geographic Areas

The following table is from *All In: The Federal Strategic Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness* and can be used to ensure that the growing evidence base for what works to prevent and end homelessness includes specific populations:

Key Populations and Geographic Areas	
<p>This plan recognizes that the needs of people experiencing homelessness vary based on factors like age, location, disability, race and ethnicity; and it acknowledges that tailored guidance will be needed for key populations and geographic areas. For the purposes of this plan, this includes:</p>	
<b>Racial/Ethnic Groups (“People of Color”)</b>	<b>Subpopulations</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• American Indians and Alaska Natives</li><li>• Asian/Asian Americans</li><li>• Black/African Americans</li><li>• Hispanics/Latinos</li><li>• Multiracial people</li><li>• Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Children (younger than 12)</li><li>• Youth (age 12-17)</li><li>• Young adults (age 18-25)</li><li>• Families with minor children</li><li>• Older adults (age 55 and older)</li><li>• Single adults (age 25 to 55)</li><li>• Veterans</li></ul>
<b>Marginalized Groups</b>	<b>Geographic Areas</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Child welfare-involved families and youth</li><li>• Immigrants, refugees, and asylees</li><li>• LGBTQI+ people</li><li>• People with chronic health conditions and co-occurring disorders</li><li>• People with current or past criminal justice system involvement</li><li>• People with disabilities</li><li>• People with HIV</li><li>• People with mental health conditions</li><li>• People with substance use disorders</li><li>• Pregnant and parenting youth</li><li>• Survivors of domestic violence, stalking, sexual assault, and human trafficking</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Remote</li><li>• Rural</li><li>• Suburban</li><li>• Territory</li><li>• Tribal land/Reservation</li><li>• Urban</li></ul>



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