



Federal, State and Local Policy Priorities to End Homelessness

The following items are issues which will have a significant impact on resources available to communities as they work to end homelessness. Please note that this is not a complete list of policy initiatives impacting homeless assistance programs.

Federal Priorities *(the following list has been provided by the National Alliance to End Homelessness)*

1. Provide \$2.381 billion in FY 2014 for HUD's Homeless Assistance Grants program.

The HEARTH Act, which reauthorized HUD's Homeless Assistance Grants in 2009, changed the way program funding is allocated and created an expanded Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG) to fund rapid re-housing and homelessness prevention. The Administration's requested funding level of \$2.381 billion would provide enough funding for all Continuum of Care (CoC) renewals, significantly expand the ESG program, and provide additional funding for new CoC programs, making significant progress in mitigating the impact of previous program cuts.

2. Provide \$1.4 billion in FY 2014 for VA's targeted homeless veteran programs, including \$300 million for the Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF) program.

SSVF provides cost-effective rapid re-housing and homelessness prevention services, which have been the missing piece in VA's range of interventions. VA's requested \$1.4 billion funding level would continue to bring SSVF to scale and ensure that homeless veterans have the services they need to stay housed. This funding level is estimated to represent what is needed in the upcoming year to stay on target with VA's plan to end veteran homelessness by 2015.

3. Provide sufficient funding to renew all existing Section 8 Housing Choice Vouchers in FY 2014 and replace those lost by sequestration. In addition, provide a \$75 million set-aside for about 10,000 new HUD – VA Supportive Housing (HUD-VASH) program vouchers.

A leading contributor to homelessness is the lack of affordable housing. By providing more Housing Choice Vouchers, communities will be able to make more progress on ending homelessness. The HUD-VASH program helps veterans who are chronically homeless access permanent housing that is coupled with supportive services.

4. Replace funds to critical low-income housing and homelessness programs lost by sequestration.

Homeless assistance programs, which can reduce public costs and help people stabilize in housing, gain independence, re-enter the workforce, and create more opportunities for their children, have already gone under- or un-funded for several years. These cuts have a disproportional impact on our nation's most vulnerable people, and many communities are already seeing negative impacts that are likely to lead to increases in homelessness on the horizon. Decisions around FY 2014 funding levels offer Congress the opportunity to replace funds lost by sequestration to key federal homeless assistance and low-income housing programs.



5. Increase the capacity of the federal government to address youth homelessness.

The Administration has made a commitment to end youth homelessness by 2020; however, there is still much to be done. Runaway and Homeless Youth Act (RHYA) programs, which are critical to reconnecting youth and preventing exploitation, have gone severely underfunded for many years. The federal government must work to increase the nation's capacity to serve and protect youth at risk of or experiencing homelessness by investing in programs focusing on proven strategies, conducting research and analysis on the prevalence and incidence of youth homelessness, and ensuring that the Child Welfare system is held accountable for youth that may fall under its purview.

6. Fully fund the National Housing Trust Fund.

The National Housing Trust Fund (NHTF) was authorized to address the housing needs of extremely low income households. The NHTF is intended to be a permanent program with dedicated sources of funding, not subject to the annual appropriations process. The funds are to be distributed by formula, based on factors detailed in the statute. When funded to scale, the NHTF will close the gap between the supply of and need for affordable housing and will help end homelessness in the United States. The program is ready to be implemented as soon as Congress provides sufficient funding. There are currently legislative opportunities in the House and Senate around tax reform proposals to fund the NHTF, which Congress should work to finalize and implement.

State Priorities

1. Adopt Housing First as a State Policy.

Housing First is an evidence based best practice designed to end homelessness and support recovery by housing individuals as quickly as possible and then wrapping services around them as needed. This housing model has proven effective with a wide variety of homeless populations including chronically homeless households, families and the general homeless population. Within this model housing is not contingent upon participation in services and services provided are designed to promote housing stability. The State of New Jersey should adopt housing first as the primary housing and supportive services strategy for ending homelessness. This is a proven strategy that is not only the right thing to do but is also cost effective.

2. Create a Rapid Re-Housing rate for boards of social services

Rapid Re-Housing is an emerging strategy that has proven successful in helping communities reduce homelessness in a more cost effective way. Homeless households entering the emergency shelter and transitional housing system are provided with immediate services to connect them with permanent housing. Once housing has been located, they are provided with temporary rental assistance and short term, intensive case management to help them stabilize and maintain their housing. New Jersey is in a unique position to utilize Emergency Assistance (EA) funds to provide the intensive case management to households placed in permanent housing with Temporary Rental Assistance (TRA) creating a statewide opportunity to implement rapid re-housing. The New Jersey Department of Human Services should set a rate for case management services connected to rapid re-housing programs funded through Emergency Assistance.



Local Priorities

1. **Develop local homeless trust funds**

The State of New Jersey has passed legislation enabling counties to create local homeless trust funds for the purpose of supporting local efforts to end homelessness. The local homeless trust funds are funded through the collection of a small fee on documents recorded within the county and offer flexibility in use of the funds to support local homeless service systems. Communities that have not yet established local Homeless Trust Funds have an opportunity to expand resources available to their community by gaining Freeholder support for resolutions enacting local homeless trust funds.