

# Fact Sheet

## *Questions and Answers on Homelessness Policy and Research*

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### What is a Ten Year Plan to End Homelessness?

Updated January 2010

The problem of homelessness, many say, is unsolvable. Communities across the country have struggled with getting homeless people off the street by building shelters, transitional housing, and soup kitchens. Although these strategies help address the immediate needs of our nation's homeless people by providing food and temporary shelter, they have not been successful in decreasing homelessness, leaving communities across the country frustrated and hopeless.

#### History of the Ten Year Plan

In 2000, the National Alliance to End Homelessness released [A Plan, Not a Dream: How to End Homelessness in Ten Years](#). Drawing on research and innovative programs from around the country, the plan outlined key strategies in addressing the issue locally, which cumulatively can address the issue nationally. The plan outlined four key elements of a plan to end homelessness<sup>1</sup>:

- **Plan for outcomes.** Every jurisdiction should collect data that allows it to identify the most effective strategy for each sub-group of the homeless population and jurisdictions should bring those responsible for mainstream resources as well as resources targeted specifically to homeless people to the planning table.
- **Close the front door.** Communities should prevent homelessness by making mainstream poverty programs more accountable for outcomes of their clients.
- **Open the back door.** Communities should develop, and subsidize when needed, an adequate supply of affordable housing.
- **Build the infrastructure.** Ending homelessness can be a first step in addressing the systemic problems that lead to crisis poverty, including a shortage of affordable housing, incomes that do not pay for basic needs, and a lack of appropriate services for those that need them.

Since the release of this blueprint, the Department of Housing and Urban Development and the Bush Administration endorsed the idea of planning to end chronic homelessness in ten years, the US Interagency Council on Homelessness (USICH) challenged 100 cities to create plans to end homelessness. The momentum built across the country—to date, there are 234 completed plans to end homelessness across the country. These plans echo key strategies outlined in the Alliance's plan and represent a critical, collective effort to end homelessness nationwide. The [Homelessness Research Institute](#) at the National Alliance to End Homelessness recently completed a study evaluating the completed plans. The study, [A Shifting Focus](#), evaluates the elements and implementation of the plans.

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<sup>1</sup> National Alliance to End Homelessness. 2000. *A Plan, Not a Dream: How to End Homelessness in Ten Years*. Washington, DC: National Alliance to End Homelessness.

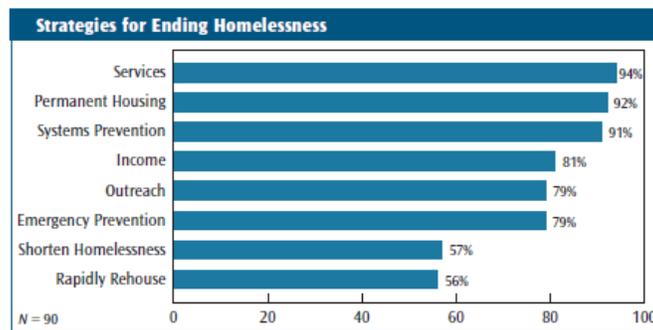
## Plan Types

A majority (63 percent) of the community plans to end homelessness target the chronic population. Many plans lay out strategies for specific subgroups of homeless people, including families, youth, veterans, and the elderly. Forty-nine percent of plans outline strategies to end family homelessness, 50 percent outline efforts to end youth homelessness, and 32 percent of plans address the housing needs of former prisoners in order to prevent them from becoming homeless.

## Primary Strategies Outlined in the Plans

Communities outlined a wide range of strategies in the plans:

- **Permanent Housing.** Almost all of the plans (89 percent) focus on permanent housing, which is considered the cornerstone to ending homelessness.
- **Systems Prevention.** A large majority of the plans (82 percent) target systems emergency prevention activities, including discharge planning from correctional facilities, foster care systems, or mental health facilities.
- **Outreach.** Outreach efforts to engage people living on the streets are outlined in 64 percent of the plans.
- **Emergency Prevention.** Many communities are including elements of emergency prevention strategies (82 percent). This includes rent, mortgage, and utility assistance, case management, landlord or lender intervention, and other strategies to prevent eviction and homelessness.
- **Rapid Re-Housing.** Newer to the scene but quickly gaining prominence is the presence of rapid re-housing strategies in these plans. Approximately 63 percent of plans include such strategies.



## Implementation and Funding Sources

The plans are a step in the right direction—a forward movement in the effort to end homelessness—but in order for a community to see real declines in the number of homeless people, it must implement its plan. Review of plans shows although plans are outlining the right strategies, they are not always setting clear numeric indicators, establishing timelines, identifying responsible bodies, and identifying funding sources for each strategy.

In *A Shifting Focus*, the Alliance has identified four elements that are critical in successful plan implementation. They include:

- Identifying a person/body responsible for implementation
- Setting numeric outcomes
- Identify a funding source
- Setting a clear implementation timeline

## Implications for Future Plans

There is much more to be done, but despite these challenges, for the first time in two decades, communities have a plan and homelessness is a problem with a clear solution. Homelessness is no longer viewed as a problem without a solution. Although community plans to end homelessness represent a collective effort, current initiatives need a stronger focus on serving families, shortening homelessness, and implementing rapid re-housing strategies, and implementation. While efforts to end homelessness require participation from local communities, the federal government can play a bigger role by increasing access to affordable housing and coordinating mainstream services, such as Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF), Medicaid, Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC), and mental health services, among others. The federal government should also increase funding to the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance programs, Section 8 Housing Choice Vouchers, Community Development Block Grants, HOME, and Low-Income Housing Tax Credit.

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*The National Alliance to End Homelessness' Fact Sheets answer common and frequently asked questions about homelessness policy and research. This series draws on the best expertise, data, and research available. For more information about homelessness, please visit [www.endhomelessness.org](http://www.endhomelessness.org).*