Research on Homelessness
Research on homelessness has come a long way. In the early to mid-1990s, research primarily focused on counting and describing the characteristics of the population. Eventually research moved on to examining administrative data to develop typologies and examine sub-populations as well as evaluate the effectiveness of different program models and interventions. More recently, random assignment and longitudinal studies have been developed to answer much more specific questions related to program design and implementation.

Homeless Assistance
The homelessness assistance system has evolved alongside the efforts on research. What started as programs providing food and shelter in the 1980s and 1990s has transformed to a community-wide focus on coordinated targeting of households to particular interventions, prioritization of permanent housing resources to those households and individuals most in need, and system-wide outcome measurement and performance improvement.

Goal of the Research Agenda
The purpose of the Research Agenda for Ending Homelessness is to better inform funders, both private and public, about research questions that will help make policy and practice more effective. The Agenda was developed under the guidance of the Alliance’s Research Council, a group of leading academic and policy researchers. The Agenda is not an exhaustive list of research questions, rather a list of prioritized questions: those that are the most pressing given the evolving nature of homelessness as a social issue and those that will answer specific policy or practice concerns.

• The Scope and Demographics of Homelessness
The ability to clearly describe the scope and characteristics of the homeless population and various subpopulations is essential to designing interventions as well as securing resources to scale. As homelessness is an evolving issue, research questions in this section will primarily focus on determining details of specific subpopulations, especially those that are newly emerging or growing.

• The Efficacy of Interventions
The varying effectiveness of interventions to end homelessness for households and individuals will help determine resource allocation and proper targeting. It is also essential to inform public and private funders of which programs provide the greatest return on investment. Research questions in this section will primarily focus in evaluation and comparison of currently utilized program models and designs.

• System Planning and Infrastructure
As communities across the country embark on system-level planning required by current federal policy, questions as to the most effective methods for creating and implementing this infrastructure will surely arise. Research questions in this section will work to answer those questions for communities.

Increasingly, the federal government invests in cost-effective and outcome-oriented programs. To date, homelessness assistance programs have been able to make the case that the federal funding they receive is effectively and efficiently serving the most vulnerable people. Moving forward, the field will have to continue to prove that interventions are ending homelessness for target populations in a cost-effective way. To do so, rigorous evaluation of program models and outcomes is required.
### The Scope and Demographics of Homelessness

#### Research Question
- What are the characteristics of unsheltered families?
- In what ways do young homeless parents differ from older homeless parents?
- What are the demographic characteristics and service needs of chronically homeless families?
- What is the rate of entry into chronic homelessness? Who becomes chronically homeless?
- What are the characteristics, including length of homelessness, of the single, non-chronically homeless population? Why did they become homeless? What is their housing and income status when they exit the homeless assistance system?
- What are the characteristics and service needs of the elderly who are homeless? What is their housing and income status when they exit the homeless assistance system?
- What are the scope and characteristics, including length of homelessness, of homeless youth? Why did they become homeless? What is their family of origin?
- What is the scope and characteristics of homeless, of homeless youth? Why did they become homeless? What is their housing and income status when they exit the homeless assistance system?
- What is the efficacy of transitional living programs and other housing interventions for youth? Are there particular subpopulations of youth that benefit from one program design more than another?

#### Research Design Elements
- Survey attached to point in time counts nationwide.
- Survey attached to point in time counts nationwide, longitudinal panel study supplemented with administrative data.
- Survey attached to point in time counts nationwide.
- Longitudinal panel study supplemented by administrative data.
- Youth point in time counts, participation of school districts in HIMS. Survey attached to point in time counts.
- Nationwide, longitudinal panel study supplemented with administrative data.
- Experimental or quasi-experimental design supplemented by cost data.
- Experimental or quasi-experimental design supplemented by cost data.
- Experimental or quasi-experimental design supplemented by cost data.

#### Practice/Policy Impacts
- Informs shelter and program policies by identifying those families opting out or being excluded from services.
- Informs scope and type of interventions and resources.
- Informs the types of interventions that should be available to chronically homeless families.
- Informs the scale and type of interventions and resources.
- Informs scope and type of interventions and resources.
- Informs the scale and type of interventions and resources targeted toward youth.
- Informs the scale and type of interventions and resources targeted toward youth.
- Informs type of interventions and resources that should be available to homeless youth.
- Informs targeting and resource allocation.
- Informs targeting and resource allocation.
- Informs targeting and resource allocation.
- Informs targeting and resource allocation.

### The Efficacy of Interventions

#### Research Question
- Is homelessness prevention a cost-effective intervention for communities? Is there a targeting mechanism that can limit resource waste?
- What is the long-term and short-term impacts of family intervention on youth experiencing homelessness?
- What are the comparative effectiveness of different models of family intervention for youth?
- What is the effectiveness of rapid re-housing (RRH) in helping recipients achieve housing stability? What types of housing do recipients of RRH obtain and how affordable is it? How long do households remain stable? What are the other positive outcomes for families and individuals?
- Is RRH a cost-effective intervention for communities? How long would households remain homeless in the absence of a rapid re-housing intervention? Is there a targeting mechanism that can limit resource waste?
- How are RRH programs designed? What is the structure, length, and size of the RRH subsidy? How much financial assistance is enough and for how long?
- What is the efficacy of transitional living programs and other housing interventions for youth? Are there particular subpopulations of youth that benefit from one program design more than another?
- Who needs permanent supportive housing (PSH) - housing and intensive services? Who needs affordable housing without the services attached to permanent supportive housing?
- What are the characteristics of individuals and families who exit PSH? How long do they stay in PSH before exiting? Where do they exit to?
- What is the difference in outcomes, costs, and turnover in project-based PSH programs versus scattered site PSH programs? How does consumer choice impact housing stability?

#### Research Design Elements
- Multisite evaluation research supplemented by administrative data, cost analysis.
- Experimental or quasi-experimental design with a cost-effectiveness analysis.
- Qualitative survey study.
- Experimental or quasi-experimental design.
- Experimental or quasi-experimental design, longitudinal tracking survey with cost analysis.
- Experimental or quasi-experimental design.
- Experimental or quasi-experimental design supplemented by cost data.
- Experimental or quasi-experimental design.
- Longitudinal tracking survey.

#### Practice/Policy Impacts
- Informs targeting and resource allocation and prioritization.
- Informs program design and resource prioritization.
- Informs program design and resource prioritization.
- Informs targeting and resource allocation.
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<th>RESEARCH QUESTION</th>
<th>RESEARCH DESIGN ELEMENTS</th>
<th>PRACTICE/POLICY IMPACTS</th>
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<tr>
<td>How do various coordinated entry systems compare in effectiveness? Do certain system components work more effectively in particular geographic and population density conditions?</td>
<td>Qualitative review and examination of outcomes</td>
<td>Informs coordinated entry design for communities across the country.</td>
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<td>How do the various assessment tools being implemented in communities impact the targeting of interventions and resources? What is the precision and applicability of the vulnerability index and/or SPDAT?</td>
<td>Qualitative review and examination of outcomes; psychometric testing.</td>
<td>Informs the implementation of targeting and assessment tools across the country.</td>
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<td>What is the impact of a progressive engagement model on households? Does it save a community or program resources?</td>
<td>Experimental or quasi-experimental design</td>
<td>Informs program design and resource allocation.</td>
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<td>What is the impact of RRH on communities? Does it reduce homelessness? Does it incentivize entry to the homeless assistance system?</td>
<td>Qualitative review and examination of outcomes; analysis of admission trends from HMIS</td>
<td>Informs system planning, resource allocation, and targeting.</td>
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<td>What is the impact of extending foster care to age 21? What is the efficacy of different short- to medium-term housing assistance models for those aging out? What are the implications for homeless youth?</td>
<td>Natural experimental design</td>
<td>Informs program design and resource prioritization.</td>
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The National Alliance to End Homelessness (Alliance) is a leading national voice on the issue of homelessness. To accomplish its mission of ending homelessness, the Alliance uses data and research to identify the nature of, and solutions to, the problem. It analyzes policy to determine how best to advance these solutions. And, it helps build the capacity of communities to implement strategies that help them end homelessness.

The Homelessness Research Institute (HRI), the research and education arm of the National Alliance to End Homelessness, works to end homelessness by building and disseminating knowledge. The goals of HRI are to build the intellectual capital around solutions to homelessness; to advance data and research to ensure that policymakers, practitioners, and the caring public have the best information about trends in homelessness and emerging solutions; and to engage the media to promote the proliferation of solid data and information on homelessness.