



A Call to Action for States and Communities

*"The goals and timeframes set forth in **Opening Doors** reflect the fact that ending homelessness in America must be a national priority" – President Barack Obama*

In communities across the nation, remarkable progress has been made over the last few years to prevent and end homelessness. We need to accelerate our progress to reach the goals in *Opening Doors: Federal Strategic Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness*. USICH is inviting states and communities across the country to join this national effort by: 1) Aligning with *Opening Doors*; 2) Setting targets and measuring results; 3) Acting strategically; and 4) Partnering in the national efforts to end homelessness.

Becoming an *Opening Doors* community will help your community to be recognized as a champion for your leadership in ending homelessness and will be something you can highlight as you seek to advance your goals by applying for local, state and federal programs. It is also an opportunity to be included in a feedback exchange with USICH and other signatory communities.

Align with Opening Doors

Adopt the goals of *Opening Doors*

- Finish the job of ending chronic homelessness by 2015
- Prevent and end Veterans homelessness by 2015
- Prevent and end homelessness for families, youth, and children by 2020
- Reduce all other types of homelessness

Set Targets and Measure your Results

Commit to incremental targets, measure your progress toward the goals, and implement strategies that will enable your community to achieve these goals. As has often been said, "What gets measured gets done."

- Set numeric goals for permanent housing units made available for target homeless populations
- Measure progress using the annual point-in-time data for the four population goals.
- Measure how well homeless programs help their clients become employed and access mainstream programs.



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Act Strategically

We need a sense of urgency. In this tight budget environment, community-wide and cross-government strategic planning is a pivotal step in ending homelessness and has been shown to demonstrably result in decreases in homelessness and cost savings when the plans are well-crafted and implemented. Now is the time to collaborate, invest, and act on strategies that are proven to make an impact.

Over the last decade with the support of the federal government and national advocacy organizations, local communities have made substantial advancements by developing over 300 community plans to prevent and end homelessness. Many are being implemented, others have stalled, and some communities need to reassess their approach. Communities can seize opportunity to be successful at ending and preventing homelessness by taking the following actions:

Key priorities:

- Transform homeless services to rapid response systems to focus on housing stabilization. Centralized and coordinated intake is key to making this work. Offer alternatives to shelter admission whenever possible, make shelter available, and ensure quick housing placement and housing retention.
- Implement Housing First and Rapid Re-Housing practices broadly across all homeless programs.
- Seize the opportunity created by health reform, both through expansion of Medicaid and expansion of community health centers by making sure eligible individuals and families are enrolled in Medicaid.
- Coordinate with the VA Medical Centers, as they implement the VA's 5 Year Plan to End Veterans Homelessness. The Continuum of Care, 10 Year Planning Bodies, and State Interagency Councils on Homelessness should be working hand-in-glove with the VA and their partners.
- Collaborate with Public Housing Agencies to identify how families and individuals who are homeless can be prioritized for housing.
- Commit to using data as a management tool. Review your state/community's data to identify system and program strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities for improvement.
- Work collaboratively and build relationships to streamline resources and efforts: involve health and human services, housing agencies, VA, education, corrections, law enforcement and the private sector, including business, philanthropy, faith-based and community organizations. Invest state, local, and philanthropic dollars toward strategies aligned with the strategic plan.



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Partner

As you implement strategic plans, keep lines of communication open with public officials at all levels to share what you are doing and learning. Participate in USICH-sponsored discussions with participating communities to share solutions and inform when federal policies are working and when these policies can be improved based on your experience.

Join the *Opening Doors* campaign to prevent and end homelessness

States and communities are encouraged to affiliate with *Opening Doors*:

1. Align with *Opening Doors*: Adopt the four goals in *Opening Doors*.
2. Set targets and measure results: Set incremental targets and use data to measure progress.
3. Act Strategically: Collaborate, invest, and act on strategies that are proven to make an impact.
4. Partner: Convene state and local interagency councils to coordinate activities and resources and participate with USICH and jurisdictions across the country to collaborate and succeed in ending homelessness.