

Strategies for Addressing Homelessness Statewide

Based on excerpts from [The EveryOne Home Plan to End Homelessness: 2018 Strategic Update](http://everyonehome.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/EveryOne-Home-Strategic-Update-Report-Final.pdf)
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Prepared by EveryOne Home
For California Homelessness Coordinating and Financing Council

What are the top strategies the State of California should employ to make the largest difference in each of the goals listed below, and why?

• **Reducing the total number of individuals and families experiencing homelessness in the state**

The current pace and scale of our response to homelessness as a state is inadequate to change the trajectory of this growing problem. For example, in 2017 Alameda County saw two people becoming homeless for each person regaining permanent housing (pg. 3). To reduce homelessness, we must take steps to address the broader housing crisis, and its disproportionate impact on people of color and other vulnerable communities such as families with children, transition-age youth, veterans and persons with serious mental illness. These steps include preventing people from becoming homeless, and engaging other systems—criminal justice, child welfare, foster care, work force development, education, and healthcare— in the work of preventing homelessness. Together, these systems must repair, not perpetuate, institutional racism and other inequities. They must be shaped by and responsive to the needs of the people they serve. Most importantly, efforts to end homelessness must openly acknowledge and address these disparities and provide the resources needed to match the scale of the problem.

Homes end homelessness. According to Up for Growth, California faces a shortage of 1 million homes for extremely low-income individuals (ELI) (pg. 11). Households at 30% Area Median Income (AMI) qualify as ELI, yet 42% of adults in Alameda County's HMIS have fixed disability or retirement incomes below 11% AMI (pg. 28). Affordable housing built with State funds must have a set aside for housing people experiencing homelessness and needs the operating resources to rent to people with incomes at or below 11% AMI.

• **Reducing the number and proportion of individuals and families experiencing unsheltered homelessness**

The EveryOne Home Plan to End Homelessness firmly asserts the importance of ensuring the dignity and safety of people experiencing unsheltered homelessness. It notes that creating more shelter will do that, but increased capacity, without paths to permanent homes, will not reduce homelessness. The number of people becoming homeless will continue to be twice the number moving to a permanent home, so homelessness, including unsheltered homeless will continue to grow.

To move people off the streets and into homes, the bulk of the System's resources must go to reducing inflows—*prevention*—and increasing exits—*permanent homes*. Both must occur to successfully reduce the number of people experiencing homelessness. Preventing first time homelessness and providing adequate resources for people to obtain permanent homes are the biggest gaps in our current response to homelessness. These deficiencies cannot be remedied without public policies and investments to stabilize the rental market and increase housing stock and rental subsidies (pg. 18).

- **Reducing the number of individuals and families experiencing chronic homelessness**

Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH) is a critical and cost effective tool for reducing chronic homelessness, but not every homeless person who meets the definition of chronically homeless needs PSH. Alameda County's HMIS data indicates that 24% of households served met the definition of chronically homeless. Yet, EveryOne Home's analysis of how those households exited homeless indicates that only 16% of the homeless population needs PSH to become stably housed. The remainder of chronically homeless households could be stably housed in housing subsidized enough to make the rents affordable on a disability income (pgs. 18-19, 31). PSH is the highest cost intervention to build and operate. Identifying less expensive options for those who need the affordability, but not the intensive wrap around services is an important strategy to reducing chronic homelessness. In high-cost area like our, a significant portion of people become chronically homeless because of the length of time they are out there, not the severity of their disability.

- **Preventing individuals and families from entering homelessness**

Current prevention programs in Alameda County and much of the state are not targeted to individuals and families most likely to end up unsheltered or in emergency shelters. Research indicates that those already couch surfing/relocating where they sleep every few days and those with prior homeless episodes are most like to become homeless again. Prevention dollars need to focus on stabilizing the housing of those households. Current leaseholders are not nearly as like to end up homeless, and yet most prevent dollars are restricted to people with rental agreements (pg. 20).

- **Increasing the overall supply of affordable housing for individuals and families experiencing homelessness**

Increasing the overall supply of affordable housing will not in and of itself reduce homelessness. Rents in most affordable housing are already too high for the incomes of the majority of homeless adults to afford. The 2018 Strategic Update calls for dedicated operating subsidies and targeting requirements to ensure the housing built with public dollars is proportionally dedicated to housing people who are experiencing homelessness (pg. 28)