

# INVESTING IN SUSTAINABLE SOLUTIONS TO END HOMELESSNESS IN CALIFORNIA

A RESPONSE FROM HOMEBASE TO THE CALIFORNIA HOMELESS COORDINATING  
AND FINANCING COUNCIL’S REQUEST FOR WHITE PAPERS

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## INTRODUCTION

HomeBase is a San Francisco-based public interest nonprofit that provides technical assistance and capacity-building support. We work on the local, state, and national level to assist communities in implementing responses to prevent and end homelessness. Through our work in diverse regions across the state of California, we are uniquely positioned to give voice to the needs of local Continuums of Care (CoCs) and to advocate for the prioritization of state resources in ways that will be most impactful and effective for California to prevent

and end homelessness. This white paper response reflects feedback we have received from a number of our client communities, as well as our own experience and knowledge from over 30 years providing homeless technical assistance in California.

## SECTION 1: STRATEGIES TO MAKE THE LARGEST DIFFERENCE IN ADDRESSING GOALS

### GOAL 1: REDUCING THE TOTAL NUMBER OF INDIVIDUALS AND FAMILIES EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS IN THE STATE

#### FLEXIBLE FUNDING

The 43 CoCs in California range from large urban centers to small rural communities, covering a vast and diverse geography and populations. Each CoC operates differently in response to local circumstances, including homeless system and program capacity; access to local, State, and Federal resources; local political involvement; and characteristics and need among persons experiencing homelessness within the CoC.

Flexible funding is needed for CoCs to effectively address these diverse local circumstances and to respond to homeless program and service gaps to reduce the overall number of individuals and families experiencing homelessness.

- **Flexibility to Implement Locally-Appropriate Program and Service Models:** Our communities emphasized that not all interventions work equally in all communities. For example, a number of CoCs noted that due to high rents and low vacancy rates, rapid re-housing assistance is difficult to successfully implement because housing cannot be sustained after the subsidy expires. Other communities noted that recent State funding focused on bolstering emergency response systems does not align with current local efforts to respond to the urgent need for permanent housing. Our communities have requested increased flexibility to implement the approaches that respond to their local needs, existing efforts, and gaps in the system of care.
- **Flexibility of State Funding to Fill Gaps Left by Local and Federal Funding:** Many communities noted that increased flexibility in State funding would help them address gaps in their system of care that cannot be addressed by local or Federal funding. Many CoCs, particularly small and rural CoCs, identified a lack of local resources and capacity to fill gaps in programs and services; and while Federal funding from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) is an important resource, it often places strict limitations on eligible activities or eligible populations. Communities noted that flexible State funding can play an important role in supporting program models, supportive services, and interventions for non-prioritized populations that are needed within the community but are not currently funded through Federal programs or limited local resources.
- **Flexibility to Serve Diverse and Non-Prioritized Populations of Persons Experiencing Homelessness:** Our communities identified a number of populations

experiencing homelessness that require increased access to housing and supportive services, including:

- Seniors, particularly those who do not meet the definition of chronic homelessness, survivors of natural disasters, and those with complex health needs such as dementia;
- Persons with severe mental illness (SMI) and/or substance use disorder (SUD);
- Persons with behavioral health needs and criminal histories; and
- Persons with traumatic brain injuries (TBIs).

Our communities have found it difficult to utilize existing state, local, and federal resources to provide comprehensive housing and services for the above-listed populations because they often fall outside of funding eligibility requirements, or resource streams available to serve these populations provide for only housing and do not adequately fund supportive services. Increased flexibility in eligibility for state funding would allow communities to address locally-specific increases in persons experiencing homelessness and target populations of focus that are not often prioritized in funding opportunities but who have demonstrated significant local vulnerability and need.

In particular, nearly all of our communities noted an urgent need to provide targeted housing and resources for seniors, as this is a growing population among persons experiencing homelessness with significant and severe vulnerabilities that exacerbate the effects of homelessness on their health and well-being.

- **Flexibility to Innovate:** Our communities felt that the State is well-positioned to support innovative housing and service models that can respond to the distinct needs of California communities, citing the flexibility of the Homeless Emergency Aid Program (HEAP) and California Emergency Solutions and Housing (CESH) funding streams. Innovative service and program models that could be supported through flexible funding from the State include: establishing an affordable housing reserve; developing a housing land trust model to maintain affordable housing units in perpetuity; providing increased financial support for communities to hire housing locators; and supporting shared housing in low vacancy, high rent housing markets.

Overall, communities value the move towards more flexible funding already underway within the State, including flexibility provided through HEAP and the Community Based Transitional Housing Program. The State is uniquely positioned to help California CoCs fill existing gaps in their homeless systems of care and operate a full spectrum of homeless prevention, housing, and service interventions through flexible funding that acknowledges the diversity of communities and of experiences of homelessness across the state. This type of flexible support will allow each locality to reduce the number of individuals and families experiencing homelessness by investing in solutions based on local data, capacity, and needs.

## LOWERING BARRIERS TO FUNDING USE AND IMPLEMENTATION

Communities shared that one of the greatest obstacles to serving as many people experiencing homelessness as possible with State funding is the existence of strict funding requirements that hamper timely and robust implementation. Reducing barriers and allowing greater flexibility in meeting funding requirements, such as extending expenditure deadlines and removing match requirements, can help communities more intentionally and effectively design their solutions to homelessness to have a significant impact.

- **Need for Longer Expenditure Deadlines:** Many communities reported that expenditure deadlines of two years or less significantly limit their ability to successfully implement new programs and inhibit local innovation. For example, one community with a low-vacancy, high-cost rental market expressed a desire to pilot an extended rapid re-housing program that would allow participants to receive rental subsidies for a longer period of time. The community noted that although state funding does provide enough flexibility to support an extended assistance period, a two-year expenditure deadline makes it effectively impossible to innovate in this way.

Communities also reported that tight expenditure deadlines limit planning for grant implementation and make it difficult to use funds in a sustainable way to build out the system of care. Rather, communities feel rushed to apply for funding and implement new programs without proper time for planning and capacity building. In particular, our communities felt that they have not been able to maximize utilization of the large influx of flexible funding provided through programs such as HEAP or CESH; due to the short application deadlines, communities lack time for sufficient planning and implementation to carry out their funded activities.

Longer expenditure deadlines partnered with a robust planning period of at least 3 months would allow CoCs to bolster community buy-in and undertake project development and contracting activities without taking valuable time away from project implementation and operations. The 5-year expenditure deadline for the CESH program was identified as greatly beneficial to communities and a possible model for future funding opportunities.

- **Changes to Match Requirements:** Our communities reported that meeting match requirements for both state and federal funding sources can be difficult; this is particularly true for smaller CoCs that have limited local resources. Additionally, tight restrictions regarding what qualifies as match makes it increasingly difficult for communities to find unique sources for all ongoing funding opportunities. Our communities requested more funding opportunities that have no match requirement, such as the Community Based Transitional Housing Program, or for the State to adopt a more expansive definition of match to allow communities to utilize new and different match sources. Our communities also requested technical assistance on match to identify potential sources that are being under-utilized and help ensure they comply with match requirements.

- **Consistency and Clarity Around Reporting Requirements:** Our communities praised efforts to streamline reporting for a number of funding sources. However, they also reported that streamlining has not been applied consistently across funding sources and the requirements for some programs, such as the Whole Person Care (WPC) Pilots, are burdensome and hamper community efforts to implement the program. One community reported they were not made aware of recent reporting changes, which resulted in staff spending time and resources on adhering to reporting requirements that were no longer in place. A number of communities requested that the State align reporting requirements with evaluation efforts already underway, such as the Annual Performance Report (APR) required by HUD.

By addressing barriers to funding use created by restrictive funding requirements, CoCs would be able to more robustly plan for and implement state funding and dedicate more time, resources and capacity to reducing homelessness rather than to funding compliance efforts.

### **SUSTAINABLE FUNDING**

Our communities are greatly appreciative of the one-time funding opportunities from the State, including HEAP and No Place Like Home (NPLH), which have provided an influx of resources and opportunities for communities to address homelessness. However, our communities would like to see a continuation of these one-time awards through ongoing, sustainable funding that can support the permanent implementation of new housing, services, and capacity-building efforts.

Our communities noted that one-time funding opportunities often have the potential to support large-scale, systemic changes; however, it is difficult to implement such changes strategically when there is no assurance of future funding to sustain these gains. Many CoCs lack sufficient local resources to sustain new programs, services and staffing once one-time state funding is gone, and one-time funds do not support the CoC administration and capacity-building needs that could help the community sustain new efforts. In particular, communities reported that it does not make sense to use one-time funding to increase staffing, as those positions will have to be eliminated if ongoing funding is not attained.

Communities emphasized that one-time funding is valuable, particularly to support unique expenses such as construction and acquisition efforts, but that ongoing funding is needed to support activities such as program operations, staffing, and case management that are necessary for the effective operation of the CoC and local programs to end homelessness.

### **CAPACITY BUILDING AND ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT**

In order to best serve all individuals and families experiencing homelessness, our communities expressed a need for funding to support capacity building and administration. CoCs have noted that it is a struggle for staffing and administration to keep up with the infusion of funding for infrastructure, programs, and services. Areas where additional capacity building and administrative support from the State could make a difference for California communities include:

- **Launching programs.** Communities have struggled to get programs off the ground or have had to turn away funding opportunities because the CoC and service providers lacked the capacity to meet the demands of the new funding sources and requirements. Increased resources for administration and capacity building, including ongoing funding to support staffing, could help agencies deploy funding more quickly and efficiently, as well as sustain momentum once programs are launched.
- **Serving populations of focus.** State funding could help build the capacity of local providers to serve populations of focus for whom there are currently few or no resources. For example, a number of communities have had difficulty identifying youth-serving organizations or service providers who are able to establish or expand services in coordination with the mandate that 5% of HEAP funds be used to address youth homelessness. Capacity building support could help build local knowledge and expertise within programs on how to serve populations of focus, such as youth.
- **Maximizing utilization of funding resources.** State-funded capacity-building technical assistance such as HCD’s current technical assistance and training initiative could help communities deploy the funding they have to most effectively reduce the number of individuals and families experiencing homelessness. This type of technical assistance can also help communities determine how to best leverage one-time funding versus ongoing funding and align state, local, and federal resources to have the most significant impact on preventing and ending homelessness locally.

## AFFORDABLE HOUSING

California communities emphasized that investing in deeply subsidized affordable housing is crucial to effectively reducing individual and family homelessness across the state. State support for increasing affordable housing should include: funding for construction; deep subsidies and dedicated units for persons at 30% AMI or less; funding requirements that establish a higher percentage of affordable units set aside for persons experiencing homelessness; and the development of new mechanisms and resources to support affordable housing development and assist nonprofit developers in getting units online. We provide more detail on how the State can respond to California’s affordable housing crisis in the section, “Goal 6: Increasing the Overall Supply of Affordable Housing for Individuals and Families Experiencing Homelessness.”

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## GOAL 2: REDUCING THE NUMBER AND PROPORTION OF INDIVIDUALS AND FAMILIES EXPERIENCING UNSHELTERED HOMELESSNESS

HUD’s 2018 Annual Homeless Assessment Report (AHAR) to Congress found that nearly half of all unsheltered people in the country as of 2018 were in California (47% or 89,543 people).<sup>1</sup> The California State Association of Counties and League of California Cities released their 2018 Homelessness Task Force Report, which found that these increases in

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<sup>1</sup> U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). *The 2018 Annual Homeless Assessment Report (AHAR) to Congress, Part 1: Point-in-Time Estimates of Homelessness*. December 2018, page 17, <https://www.hudexchange.info/resources/documents/2018-AHAR-Part-1.pdf>.

homelessness are impacting all communities, including metropolitan, suburban, and rural areas, including small cities and counties, across the state.<sup>2</sup>

Through HomeBase’s evaluations of unsheltered homelessness in Santa Rosa and San Francisco, we have identified the following model to help support communities to reduce the number and proportion of individual and families experiencing unsheltered homelessness.<sup>3</sup>

<b>1</b>	<b>Location</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Know where unsheltered persons are located or where encampments have formed.</li> <li>• Establish a mechanism to track changes in the geographic location of unsheltered persons or encampments.</li> </ul>
<b>2</b>	<b>Enumeration</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Understand the scale and the scope of the community's unsheltered population.</li> <li>• Establish a mechanism to document changes in the size and/or demographics of the population.</li> </ul>
<b>3</b>	<b>Intervention</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implement interventions to address unsheltered homelessness, including outreach activities that address the immediate health and safety needs of people living unsheltered, and interventions designed to address both the immediate and long-term housing needs of unsheltered people.</li> </ul>
<b>4</b>	<b>Evaluation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evaluate the effectiveness of the interventions the community is deploying to reduce unsheltered homelessness and to resolve the housing needs of people living in encampments.</li> </ul>
<b>5</b>	<b>Iteration</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adjust the community strategy based on the results of the evaluation findings.</li> </ul>

Strategies to support this model and strengthen the ability of California communities to reduce the number and proportion of people experiencing unsheltered homelessness include increasing street outreach and engagement; supporting low-barrier models for shelter and other services; and implementing person-centered and service-focused encampment resolution processes.

### **INCREASED STREET OUTREACH AND ENGAGEMENT**

People experiencing unsheltered homelessness are often disconnected from mainstream services, as well as from their local homeless system of care.<sup>4</sup> Street outreach teams are often the first point of contact for people experiencing unsheltered homelessness; their engagement efforts are important for developing trusting relationships with people

<sup>2</sup> California State Association of Counties (CSAC) and League of California Cities. *Homelessness Task Force Report: Tools and Resources for Cities and Counties*. 2018, page 2, [https://www.ca-ilg.org/sites/main/files/homelessness\\_task\\_force\\_report.pdf](https://www.ca-ilg.org/sites/main/files/homelessness_task_force_report.pdf).

<sup>3</sup> Wigmore, Patrick, Homebase. "Designing Interventions to Address Unsheltered Homelessness," HUD Unsheltered Convening, June 29, 2018.

<sup>4</sup> Canadian Observatory on Homelessness Homeless Hub, "Outreach," 2018, accessed March 20, 2019, <https://www.homelesshub.ca/solutions/emergency-response/outreach>.

experiencing unsheltered homelessness and connecting them to programs and services through their local coordinated entry system.

## CORE COMPONENTS OF OUTREACH FOR PEOPLE EXPERIENCING UNSHELTERED HOMELESSNESS

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- **Provision of Basic Needs:** Outreach workers can help address the immediate needs of people experiencing unsheltered homelessness by providing food, water, clothing, and hygiene supplies. Outreach workers can help address the physiological and safety needs of individuals experiencing unsheltered homelessness, which builds trust and can open the door for more targeted outreach and engagement focused on making connections to shelter, housing, and other needed services.<sup>5</sup>
- **Relationship Building:** Building rapport and trust is crucial for engaging individuals experiencing unsheltered homelessness and connecting them to services.<sup>6</sup> Outreach to people who have been unsheltered for a longer time or with high needs often requires sustained and repeated contact over time to develop a relationship and address concerns related to accessing shelter, housing, or services.<sup>7</sup>
- **Housing First Approach:** The primary and ultimate goal of outreach using a Housing First approach is to provide access to affordable housing with wraparound supportive services as quickly as possible, with a particular focus on getting individuals with high needs and significant vulnerabilities into permanent housing.<sup>8</sup>
- **Health-Focused Outreach:** Health-focused outreach works to stabilize and improve health outcomes for individuals experiencing unsheltered homelessness by serving as a bridge between the individual and the primary and behavioral health resources they may need.<sup>9</sup> Goals for health-focused outreach may include ensuring access to health insurance and health care, improving access to behavioral health services, and assisting persons experiencing homelessness in accessing mainstream services, such as completing applications for disability benefits.<sup>10</sup>
- **Connected to Coordinated Entry:** HUD requires communities receiving CoC Program funding to establish a coordinated entry system.<sup>11</sup> It is important that a community's outreach efforts are linked to its coordinated entry process to ensure people experiencing unsheltered homelessness receive the same prioritization for assistance, and in the same manner, as other persons receiving assistance.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> U.S. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). "PATH Effective Services Webinar Series: Effective Clinical Services." Presentation by Christine Lavine, ACCESS Services, Inc., July 17, 2018.

<sup>6</sup> SAMHSA. *Policy Academy on Outreach and Engagement: Final Report* (unpublished). September 2018, page 9.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid. 3-6.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid. 3-6.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid. 7-8.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid. 7-8.

<sup>11</sup> 24 C.F.R. § 578.7(a)(8).

<sup>12</sup> U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. *Coordinated Entry Policy Brief*. February, 2015, page 3, <https://www.hudexchange.info/resources/documents/Coordinated-Entry-Policy-Brief.pdf>.

As there are a significant number of persons experiencing unsheltered homelessness in California, the State should invest in strategies and resources to help communities increase their outreach and engagement efforts to identify and assist people residing in unsheltered situations. Communities may need support in expanding existing outreach teams or establishing new outreach teams to ensure that outreach and engagement efforts reach the full geographic area of the CoC and that outreach workers are able to make frequent, multiple engagements with individuals once they are identified.

## UTILIZING PEERS IN OUTREACH AND ENGAGEMENT EFFORTS

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The inclusion of people with lived experiences of homelessness and/or behavioral health needs in the design and implementation of outreach teams can help strengthen relationship-building efforts with persons residing in unsheltered situations.<sup>13</sup> Individuals with lived experience have unique understanding and insight in the experience of homelessness outreach strategies for people in unsheltered situations, including where people experiencing unsheltered homelessness may be located and the methods of outreach and engagement that will be most effective with people who are hesitant to access services.<sup>14</sup>

The State can support communities in increasing their utilization of peer workers in their outreach and engagement efforts by supporting the following practices through funding and technical assistance opportunities:

- Involving peers in the design and delivery of training and services;
- Incorporating peers directly into outreach teams, including in leadership positions;
- Instituting hiring preferences for people with lived experience, including setting goals for the percentage of outreach team members with lived experience; and
- Encouraging the inclusion of peers throughout the system of care.<sup>15</sup>

## MULTIDISCIPLINARY OUTREACH TEAMS

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Clients experiencing unsheltered homelessness often have complex needs that require the knowledge and expertise of professionals across a number of fields. A multidisciplinary approach can be particularly important for people experiencing unsheltered homelessness, as it allows them to begin accessing services where they are at and on their own terms without feeling pressure to enter the homeless system of care until they are ready.<sup>16</sup>

The passage of Assembly Bill No. 210 (AB 210) in 2017, has been crucial for supporting communities in the development of multidisciplinary teams. AB 210 authorized counties to establish homeless adult and family multidisciplinary personnel teams (MDTs) to “expedite identification, assessment, and linkage” of county services to homeless households and

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<sup>13</sup> National Health Care for the Homeless Council. *Outreach & Enrollment Quick Guide: Promising Strategies for Engaging the Homeless Population*. January, 2014, page 5, <http://www.nhchc.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/outreach-enrollment-quick-guide.pdf>.

<sup>14</sup> SAMHSA. *Policy Academy on Outreach and Engagement: Final Report* (unpublished). September 2018, page 33.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.* 34.

<sup>16</sup> U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). *Veterans Homelessness Strategy and Action Plan for Greater Los Angeles: Key Strategies*. February 13, 2015, page 3, <http://www.va.gov/opa/docs/Veterans-Homelessness-Strategy-and-Action-Plan.pdf>.

allow for these teams to share confidential information about those households “for the purpose of coordinating housing and supportive services to ensure continuity of care.”<sup>17</sup>

However, California communities could use additional support from the State to implement AB 210, including:

- **Funding for the development and implementation of multidisciplinary teams.** In particular, our communities need funding to support hiring, capacity building, and training efforts to get MDTs off the ground. Targeted support for the hiring of peer workers, case managers and clinicians to staff multidisciplinary outreach teams is particularly important to help ensure that outreach and engagement efforts are effective in building service relationships and addressing the complex needs of clients.
- **Additional guidance on implementing multidisciplinary teams.** Interpretation of AB 210 has been largely left to local jurisdictions. Our communities would benefit from stronger guidance on policies and procedures for the design, implementation and operations of MDTs, as well as templates, tools, trainings, and other resources to help ensure that MDTs are designed and implemented according to best practices.

## LOW-BARRIER SHELTER AND SERVICE MODELS

HomeBase has found through our work in California and nationwide that people experiencing unsheltered homelessness are often fearful or hesitant to access traditional homeless programs and services due to real and perceived high barriers to entry. They may find it particularly difficult to enter traditional shelter and services due to limitations on access based on substance use or behavioral health challenges.<sup>18</sup> In order to decrease the number and proportion of people experiencing unsheltered homelessness, California communities need to implement low-barrier shelter and service options that are accommodating of the unique needs and challenges faced by this population. The low-barrier, high-support approach of San Francisco’s Navigation Centers provides a model for communities to engage and adapt in their own system of care, including:

- Operating with fewer rules and restrictions, focusing instead on behavioral expectations that help ensure client and staff safety;
- Accommodating clients with their partners, pets, and possessions so that they do not face separation;
- Providing flexible access to shelter and services, including extended hours of operation, arrangements for late arrivals, non-restricted meal times, and lenient curfew policies.<sup>19</sup>

Because programs that offer lower-barrier interventions require staff with greater experience to handle the complex service needs of people served, these programs can be more

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<sup>17</sup> CA Assem. Bill No. 201 (2017-2018 Reg. Sess.) [https://leginfo.ca.gov/faces/billTextClient.xhtml?bill\\_id=201720180AB210](https://leginfo.ca.gov/faces/billTextClient.xhtml?bill_id=201720180AB210).

<sup>18</sup> United States Interagency Council on Homelessness (USICH). “Key Considerations for Implementing Emergency Shelter Within an Effective Crisis Response System.” August 2017, page 5, [https://www.usich.gov/resources/uploads/asset\\_library/emergency-shelter-key-considerations.pdf](https://www.usich.gov/resources/uploads/asset_library/emergency-shelter-key-considerations.pdf).

<sup>19</sup> Ibid. 6; City and County of San Francisco, Office of the Controller, City Services Auditor. “Reinvesting in Shelter: Lessons from the Navigation Center.” August, 2016, [https://sfcontroller.org/sites/default/files/Documents/Auditing/Reinvesting%20in%20Shelter%20-%20Lessons%20from%20the%20Navigation%20Center%208.25.16\\_0.pdf](https://sfcontroller.org/sites/default/files/Documents/Auditing/Reinvesting%20in%20Shelter%20-%20Lessons%20from%20the%20Navigation%20Center%208.25.16_0.pdf).

expensive. The State can support the expansion of low-barrier programs and policies by providing funding targeted towards low-barrier interventions; continuing to offer technical assistance opportunities to help communities lower barriers to entry and implement best practices; and requiring the use of low-barrier approaches for relevant funding opportunities, a strategy the State is already using successfully in several instances.

### SERVICE-FOCUSED ENCAMPMENT RESOLUTION PROCESSES

Many communities in California are confronting a particular form of unsheltered homelessness in the growth of homeless encampments. The National Law Center for Homelessness & Poverty (NLCHP) found that “while there are reports of homeless encampments for most states in 2017, the most reports occurred in California.”<sup>20</sup> As communities attempt to address the housing, health, and safety needs of persons residing in encampments and the surrounding neighborhood, it is important that communities utilize trauma-informed, person-centered approaches to encampment resolution rather than efforts that criminalize or displace persons experiencing homelessness.

The City of Santa Rosa provides an example of a trauma-informed, person-centered encampment resolution process that prioritizes outreach and engagement for individuals residing in encampments and connects them to housing and services. The City utilizes a multidisciplinary approach, bringing together representatives from local government, public service providers, social service providers, and other community partners to collaboratively develop and implement encampment resolution strategies. This multidisciplinary task force works to support the relocation of individuals residing in encampments by engaging in assertive outreach and engagement and providing dedicated or prioritized access to low-barrier shelter, housing and service options. The goal is to connect every individual residing in the encampment with a temporary or permanent housing placement before the encampment is closed and cleared.

The State can support communities in implementing or improving their own encampment resolution process by developing guidance on multidisciplinary collaboration and coordination; providing funding opportunities for communities to develop dedicated or targeted interventions for persons residing in encampments; and supporting efforts that make encampment resolution efforts stronger, including robust outreach and engagement efforts and implementation of low-barrier models in shelters and services.

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### GOAL 3: REDUCING THE NUMBER OF INDIVIDUALS AND FAMILIES EXPERIENCING CHRONIC HOMELESSNESS

The U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness (USICH) established a goal to end chronic homelessness among people with disabilities in the 2010 Federal Strategic Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness, *Opening Doors*, and reconfirmed their commitment to this goal in the 2018 update, *Home, Together*.<sup>21</sup> The efforts of California’s communities to reduce the

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<sup>20</sup> National Law Center on Homelessness & Poverty (NLCHP). “Tent City, USA: The Growth of America’s Homeless Encampments and How Communities Are Responding.” 2017, page 96, [https://nlchp.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/Tent\\_City\\_USA\\_2017.pdf](https://nlchp.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/Tent_City_USA_2017.pdf).

<sup>21</sup> USICH. *Opening Doors: Federal Strategic Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness*, as amended in 2015. [https://www.usich.gov/resources/uploads/asset\\_library/USICH\\_OpeningDoors\\_Amendment2015\\_FINAL.pdf](https://www.usich.gov/resources/uploads/asset_library/USICH_OpeningDoors_Amendment2015_FINAL.pdf); USICH. *Home, Together: The*

number of individuals and families experiencing chronic homelessness is vital to reaching this goal at the national level: HUD's 2018 AHAR to Congress found that 37% of all individuals experiencing chronic homelessness reside in California, 87% of whom live in unsheltered situations.<sup>22</sup>

There are a number of best practices and evidence-based strategies for addressing chronic homelessness that can be supported and strengthened in California. Additionally, due to the significant overlap between people experiencing unsheltered homelessness and chronic homelessness in California, the strategies listed under Goal 2 should be considered as strategies to assist people experiencing chronic homelessness (and vice versa).

### **INCREASING AVAILABILITY AND EFFECTIVENESS OF PERMANENT SUPPORTIVE HOUSING**

Permanent supportive housing (PSH) has been proven as an effective intervention for individuals experiencing chronic homelessness to help them attain long-term housing stability, improve health conditions, and reduce utilization of costly crisis response services.<sup>23</sup> PSH is important for serving individuals experiencing chronic homelessness because it provides access to safe, long-term affordable housing with access to voluntary wraparound supportive services that can respond to a person's individualized needs.

Although numerous studies have shown that PSH is a cost-effective intervention,<sup>24</sup> many communities lack the resources to provide enough PSH units to respond to the number of individuals experiencing chronic homelessness in their jurisdiction or to provide the full range of comprehensive, wraparound services that clients may need to achieve housing and health stability. In order to reduce the number of persons experiencing chronic homelessness in California, the State can support communities in increasing the availability and effectiveness of PSH units by:

- Encouraging communities to maximize the impact of their existing and new stock of PSH units by prioritizing individuals experiencing chronic homelessness through their local coordinated entry system;
- Providing resources and support for communities to conduct a gaps analysis in order to determine PSH need based on existing units and the estimated number of persons experiencing chronic homelessness locally;
- Offering additional funding that can be used to develop new PSH units or to provide subsidies for individuals experiencing chronic homelessness; and
- Encouraging local Public Housing Agencies (PHAs) to adopt move up strategies to support households who have stabilized to transition from service-rich PSH to more conventional subsidized housing. (See "Goal 6: Increasing the Overall Supply of Affordable Housing" below for more information on move up programs.)

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Federal Strategic Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness. July 2018, [https://www.usich.gov/resources/uploads/asset\\_library/Home-Together-Federal-Strategic-Plan-to-Prevent-and-End-Homelessness.pdf](https://www.usich.gov/resources/uploads/asset_library/Home-Together-Federal-Strategic-Plan-to-Prevent-and-End-Homelessness.pdf)

<sup>22</sup> HUD. *The 2018 AHAR to Congress, Part 1: Point-in-Time Estimates of Homelessness*. December, 2018, page 66, <https://www.hudexchange.info/resources/documents/2018-AHAR-Part-1.pdf>.

<sup>23</sup> USICH. "Ending Chronic Homelessness in 2017." May 29, 2015, <https://www.usich.gov/news/ending-chronic-homelessness-in-2017/>

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

## CASE MANAGEMENT

PSH programs are intended to serve the most vulnerable clients, many of whom have experienced homelessness continuously for several years.<sup>25</sup> Many PSH residents suffer from a tri-morbidity of physical disabilities, mental disabilities and substance abuse issues. To enter PSH, clients must be documented as having a disability that would interfere with their ability to live independently but for the intensive supports they expect to receive in PSH.<sup>26</sup>

Unfortunately, a lack of resources can significantly limit the availability of services in many PSH programs. While SAMHSA's guide to PSH suggests that a ratio of 10 to 20 tenants per staff member is ideal,<sup>27</sup> the Corporation for Supportive Housing reports a typical ratio of 10 to 30 tenants per case manager,<sup>28</sup> and a recent study found that some programs have a ratios as high as 60 clients per case manager.<sup>29</sup> At these levels, clients cannot expect to be visited by their case managers more than once a week. This is not an intensive form of support, especially when it is delivered by case workers who may have little psychiatric training.

Theoretically, Medicaid and local behavioral health departments can fund some of these supports. In practice, mainstream medical providers may not have the resources to provide all of the care that PSH clients need. One particularly frustrating hurdle programs face is that clients often need psychiatric medication to stabilize to the point where they can successfully complete enrollment paperwork, but they must complete their Medicaid enrollment paperwork in order to qualify for psychiatric medication. The State can support communities in increasing the effectiveness of PSH by providing additional funding for and guidance on the provision of comprehensive, wraparound supportive services that are responsive to the health and housing needs of people experiencing chronic homelessness.

## CONTINUED EMPHASIS ON HOUSING FIRST

The Housing First approach is a critical keystone to ending homelessness. A proven best practice, Housing First strengthens client outcomes, improves stability, and enhances permanent housing exits and retention, ensuring the system of care is able to serve the most vulnerable persons with the highest needs.

Housing First is a collection of principles and practices and may be defined in multiple ways. In practice, Housing First removes barriers to housing and retention and prioritizes the most vulnerable and high-need persons for housing assistance, embodying the following overarching principles:

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<sup>25</sup> HUD. *Notice CPD-16-11: Prioritizing Persons Experiencing Chronic Homelessness and Other Vulnerable Homeless Persons in Permanent Supportive Housing*. July, 2016, <https://www.hudexchange.info/resources/documents/notice-cpd-16-11-prioritizing-persons-experiencing-chronic-homelessness-and-other-vulnerable-homeless-persons-in-psh.pdf>.

<sup>26</sup> HUD. "Verification of Disability, Appendix 6-B: Sample Verification of Disability When Eligibility for Admission or Qualification for Certain Income Deductions is Based on Disability." <https://www.hud.gov/sites/documents/90102.PDF>.

<sup>27</sup> SAMHSA. *Building Your Program: Permanent Supportive Housing*. 2010, p. 57, <https://store.samhsa.gov/system/files/sma10-4510-06-buildingyourprogram-psh.pdf>.

<sup>28</sup> Corporation for Supportive Housing. *Developing the "Support" in Supportive Housing*. 2003, p. 16, [https://www.csh.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/12/Tool\\_DevelopingSupport\\_Guide.pdf](https://www.csh.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/12/Tool_DevelopingSupport_Guide.pdf).

<sup>29</sup> Dickson-Gomez, J., Quinn, K., Bendixen, A., Johnson, A., Nowicki, K., Ko Ko, T., Galletly, C. "Identifying variability in permanent supportive housing: A comparative effectiveness approach to measuring health outcomes". *Am J Orthopsychiatry*, vol. 87, no. 4, 2017, pp. 414-424, <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5503781/>

1. Homelessness is a housing problem and should be treated as such.
2. Persons experiencing homelessness should be stabilized in permanent housing as soon as possible – and then connected to resources to sustain that housing.
3. Underlying issues that contributed to a person’s homelessness are best addressed after that person is in a stable housing environment.
4. All persons experiencing homelessness are “housing ready.”

Without clinical prerequisites like completion of a treatment course or evidence of sobriety, and with a low-threshold for entry, Housing First yields higher retention rates,<sup>30</sup> lower returns to homelessness,<sup>31</sup> and significant reductions in the use of crisis services and institutions.<sup>32</sup>

California has already made significant strides in furthering the use of Housing First principles in homeless housing and service programs through the passing of Senate Bill (SB) 1380 (Mitchell) in 2016. By requiring state programs to revise or adopt guidelines and regulations consistent with the core components of Housing First by July 2019, the State is ensuring that all state funded programs adopt the core components of Housing First, as identified in the legislation.

Many communities are incredibly supportive of the state requirement of adoption of Housing First. In fact, several have already been able to make shifts in local policy to ensure adoption of Housing First principles, including creating a clear, shared definition and vision, and articulating that vision so it may be implemented through practical application. Many communities credit the state’s requirements with finally pushing the community to accept Housing First as a community priority.

Practically, Housing First can represent a significant shift in culture and practice for many programs, requiring a deliberate implementation process and continuous course correction for successful, sustainable change. Our communities are encouraged by the efforts made by HCD to provide technical assistance and tools on the implementation of Housing First, and expressed a need for ongoing support in this area. Specifically, communities could benefit from tools or other resources to assist in incorporating Housing First best practices in the contracting process, monitoring programs for Housing First compliance, and sample policies or communication strategies to assist in ensuring community-wide prioritization of Housing First. Communities also felt that a clear statement in support of Housing First in all state funding opportunities and related materials would help advance its adoption at the local level.

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<sup>30</sup> Montgomery, A.E., Hill, L., Kane, V., & Culhane, D. “Housing Chronically Homeless Veterans: Evaluating the Efficacy of a Housing First Approach to HUD-VASH”. *Journal of Community Psychology*, vol. 41, no. 4, 2013, pp. 505-514.

<sup>31</sup> Collins, S.E., Malone, D.K., Clifasefi, S.L. “Housing Retention in Single-Site Housing First for Chronically Homeless Individuals With Severe Alcohol Problems”. *Am J Public Health*, vol. 103, no. 2, 2013, pp. S269–S274.

<sup>32</sup> Tsemberis, S., Gulcur, L., & Nakae, M. “Housing First, Consumer Choice, and Harm Reduction for Homeless Individuals with a Dual Diagnosis”. *Am. J. Public Health*, vol. 94, no. 4, 2004, pp. 651-656; Perlman, Jennifer, Parvensky, John, Colorado Coalition for the Homeless. *Denver Housing First Collaborative: Cost Benefit Analysis and Program Outcomes Report*. 2006, [https://shnny.org/uploads/Supportive\\_Housing\\_in\\_Denver.pdf](https://shnny.org/uploads/Supportive_Housing_in_Denver.pdf).

## WORKING WITH OTHER PUBLIC SYSTEMS TO REDUCE CHRONIC HOMELESSNESS

Many people who experience chronic homelessness have multiple serious and disabling health and behavioral health conditions.<sup>33</sup> Living on the streets often increases the vulnerability associated with these conditions, and many chronically homeless individuals are frequent users of public services and systems of care, such as hospitals, emergency rooms, criminal-justice interventions and behavioral-health services.

Cross-sector coordination among various systems of care can create the cohesiveness necessary to work towards an end to chronic homelessness. Often, other systems of care are responsible for the discharge of people that leave their institutions. Unfortunately, many publicly-funded institutions play a role in creating homelessness by discharging people to the streets or shelters, rather than linking them to appropriate housing and service programs. This is particularly pronounced in large, urban areas, which are typically the communities that receive the bulk of formerly-incarcerated individuals.<sup>34</sup> Helping people make successful transitions to the community as they are released from foster care, jails, prisons, and health care, mental health, or substance abuse treatment facilities requires systems to work together to ensure a continuity of care.

One of the key methods for ensuring that systems of care are aligned so that people do not become homeless is a robust discharge planning protocol. Discharge planning is a structured process that plans for the safe and successful transitioning of individuals from a state institution or other system of care through their re-entry into the community. If an individual will not have housing upon discharge from an institution, they may be eligible for housing assistance through a variety of homeless housing and service programs.

Determining what homeless housing or services may be available to an individual requires that systems of care work closely with community homeless service providers to identify available resources and help address the housing needs of people being discharged who face homelessness. One way to achieve this result is connection to local coordinated entry systems.

Coordinated entry systems prioritize assistance based on client vulnerability and severity of service needs to ensure that people who require assistance the most can receive it in a timely manner. Each community has flexibility to choose its own assessment tool make the necessary determinations regarding each client's vulnerability and needs. Assessment tools are also used to determine eligibility for various programs. Although each coordinated entry system has its own assessment tool, there is a small subset of information that every coordinated entry system needs to know about each potential client. Therefore, it is possible for discharge planners to get a jumpstart on the assessment process for clients that need to be connected to a homeless service system.

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<sup>33</sup> USICH. *Homelessness in America: Focus on Chronic Homelessness Among People With Disabilities*. Aug. 2018, [https://www.usich.gov/resources/uploads/asset\\_library/Homelessness-in-America-Focus-on-chronic.pdf](https://www.usich.gov/resources/uploads/asset_library/Homelessness-in-America-Focus-on-chronic.pdf).

<sup>34</sup> John Jay College of Criminal Justice and Fortune Society. *In Our Backyard: Overcoming Community Resistance to Reentry Housing*. 2011, [http://johnjay.jjay.cuny.edu/files/TOOL\\_KIT\\_1-NIMBY\\_FINAL.pdf](http://johnjay.jjay.cuny.edu/files/TOOL_KIT_1-NIMBY_FINAL.pdf).

Currently, no state funding is dedicated to support the development, implementation, and refinement of coordinated entry. Several communities noted that it can be a heavy lift to integrate complex systems of care with the coordinated entry process, especially if they face institutional resistance. Additional funding to support capacity building within the community could bolster its efforts in engaging with, educating, and eventually integrating other systems of care and discharge planning efforts into its coordinated entry system. While some communities are able to use CESH to support these efforts, a dedicated and continuing source of funding would greatly benefit all communities in their efforts to ensure a cohesive system of care anchored by a well-functioning coordinated entry system.

California has made strides to address concerns about individuals being discharged from hospitals into homelessness with the passage of Senate Bill (SB) 1152 in 2018. By requiring hospitals to ask patients about their housing status and, in turn, create specific plans for patients that are experiencing homelessness, the State is taking a step toward ensuring people are provided the services and housing they need after receiving medical care. However, as for any person entering the homeless system of care, there are limited resources available and wait times for certain interventions can be significant. Without adequate funding for homeless programs in the community, or a requirement for the hospitals to work with the community's coordinated entry system, it will be difficult for individuals to receive the appropriate services.

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#### GOAL 4: REDUCING THE NUMBER OF YOUTH AND YOUNG ADULTS EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS

The efforts of California's communities to reduce the number of youth experiencing homelessness is vital, as HUD's 2018 AHAR to Congress found that California has the largest number of homeless unaccompanied youth and accounts for one-third of all unaccompanied youth nationally.<sup>35</sup> Furthermore, 80% of California's unaccompanied homeless youth are staying in unsheltered situations.<sup>36</sup>

#### INNOVATIVE HOUSING MODELS: HOST HOMES AND SHARED HOUSING

Unaccompanied homeless youth are more likely to be unsheltered than other people experiencing homelessness.<sup>37</sup> Innovative housing models can be important tools for ending youth homelessness.

- **Host Homes:** Host homes offer a community-rooted, flexible and cost-effective model for providing stable housing and supports for youth.<sup>38</sup> Nationally, host home programs are being implemented to recruit, screen and train community hosts who have an available room to provide a supportive living environment for youth experiencing homelessness.

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<sup>35</sup> HUD. *The 2018 AHAR to Congress, Part 1: Point-in-Time Estimates of Homelessness*. December, 2018, page 48, <https://www.hudexchange.info/resources/documents/2018-AHAR-Part-1.pdf>.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.* 49.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.* 46.

<sup>38</sup> HUD. *Ending Youth Homelessness Guidebook Series: Promising Program Models*. 2016, p. 8, <https://www.hudexchange.info/resources/documents/Ending-Youth-Homelessness-Promising-Program-Models.pdf>.

Host home programs are also being used to target specific subpopulations of youth experiencing homelessness. San Francisco and Santa Cruz counties are leveraging Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program (YHDP) funds to create host home pilot programs to house homeless LGBTQ youth. Another Bay Area host home model targets former foster youth by assisting them in identifying family or friends to stay with and helping with rent. Western Nebraska has a rural host home program and Fairfax, Virginia has a host home program focused on utilizing Homeless Liaisons to help youth experiencing homelessness complete high school.

- **Shared Housing:** A shared housing model can expand housing options in communities with tight, high-cost housing, particularly for youth with little or no income, credit, or rental history, by providing additional security to landlords.<sup>39</sup> Palm Beach implemented a shared housing pilot as part of their 100-Day Challenge, a federally-funded initiative to accelerate efforts to prevent and end youth homelessness. Lessons learned through this experience included: respect youth choice; create a roommate matching process based on compatibility; establish strong, engaged partnerships with landlords and provide support (including financial support) to youth during tenancy.<sup>40</sup>

Shared housing is also often used by sheltered youth to find cost-effective housing. An important element of shared housing for youth experiencing homelessness is that each youth has their own lease for a room with the landlord. This model, with added supports and services, can be a mainstream housing solution for homeless youth.

## COORDINATION WITH YOUTH-SERVING SYSTEMS

HUD and the first round of YHDP recipients underscored the importance of creating partnerships between homeless, education, child-welfare, juvenile justice, health, and workforce systems to establish new strategies for collaborating to end youth homelessness.<sup>41</sup>

Nationally, communities have been focusing on strengthening collaboration between the homeless system of care and the community's existing resources. For example, youth who are involved with the child welfare and juvenile justice systems experience homelessness at a rate higher than their peers.<sup>42</sup> During a recent 100-Day Challenge, Gulf Coast, MS, was successful at connecting homeless-dedicated and mainstream service providers to develop transition plans for youth and young adults who are exiting the child welfare and juvenile justice systems into unstable housing situations.<sup>43</sup> San Francisco is using YHDP funds to

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<sup>39</sup> National Alliance to End Homelessness (NAEH). *Rapid Re-housing for Youth*. 2017, page 1, <http://endhomelessness.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/RRH4YLC-Shared-Housing-Overview.pdf>.

<sup>40</sup> Rapid Results Institute, HomeBase, A Way Home America. *100-Day Challenge Case Studies, Palm Beach, Florida: Shared Housing Model for Youth*. page 1, Available at: <https://www.hudexchange.info/resources/documents/100-Day-Challenge-Case-Study-Palm-Beach-Shared-Housing.pdf>.

<sup>41</sup> HUD, US Department of Health & Human Services (HHS), USICH. *Ending Youth Homelessness Guidebook Series: Mainstream System Collaboration*. 2016, <https://www.hudexchange.info/resources/documents/Ending-Youth-Homelessness-Mainstream-System-Collaboration.pdf>

<sup>42</sup> Coalition for Juvenile Justice. *Youth Homelessness and Juvenile Justice: Opportunities for Collaboration and Impact*. June 2016, page 1, [http://www.juvjustice.org/sites/default/files/resource-files/policy%20brief\\_FINAL\\_compressed.pdf](http://www.juvjustice.org/sites/default/files/resource-files/policy%20brief_FINAL_compressed.pdf)

<sup>43</sup> Rapid Results Institute, HomeBase, A Way Home America. *Meaningful Change in 100 Days: 2017-18 100-Day Challenges on Youth Homelessness Summary Report*. 2018, page 5, <https://www.hudexchange.info/resources/documents/100-Day-Challenge-Summary-Report-Fall-Winter-2017-2018.pdf>.

work with the juvenile justice system to find permanent housing for youth participating in San Francisco's Young Adult Court and who are experiencing homelessness.<sup>44</sup>

Partnerships with the education system can also be critical. A study of youth experiencing homelessness found that of all assessed indicators, the lack of a high school diploma or General Equivalency Diploma was the factor most strongly correlated with a risk of becoming homeless.<sup>45</sup> Consistent with this finding, the 2015 Every Student Succeeds Act added a new requirement for states to track the graduation rates for homeless students in the same way they track rates for other subpopulations of youth.<sup>46</sup> The data coming out of this tracking effort reinforces the importance of building intentional partnerships with educational institutions to further the goal of ending youth homelessness.<sup>47</sup> Santa Cruz is also piloting a program with YHPD funding to form a collaboration between homeless systems of care and the County Office of Education to identify and outreach to vulnerable transition age youth.

To build successful partnerships, homeless service systems must also help their partner mainstream systems meet their goals, whether permanency goals in child welfare, fewer detention placements in juvenile justice, graduation rates in schools, or others.<sup>48</sup> Model partnerships have worked from the beginning to identify goals, challenges and strengths of existing systems to improve outreach between community partners, increase knowledge of who each provider services and to break down silos to improve service coordination.

## SERVICE PROVIDER CAPACITY BUILDING TO SERVE YOUTH

The needs of youth are unique, and many youth experiencing homelessness tend to avoid the adult homeless system of care. Building capacity for existing providers within the homeless system of care to support youth in culturally competent ways is critical to the success of ending youth homelessness.

## INCREASE CAPACITY OF SERVICE PROVIDERS FOR YOUTH WHO ARE PREGNANT OR PARENTING

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The high percentage of youth experiencing homelessness who are pregnant or parenting stands in stark contrast to the dramatic decline in pregnancies among adolescents and young adults in the U.S. over the past two decades.<sup>49</sup> Homeless youth service providers need to develop the capacity to serve all young parents who are homeless, regardless of their gender, age or marital status.<sup>50</sup> More providers also need to support a two-generation approach to meet the needs of both young parents and their children experiencing homelessness by developing and strengthening partnerships across housing and early

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<sup>44</sup> San Francisco Department of Homelessness and Supportive Housing. *San Francisco Coordinated Community Plan to Prevent and End Youth Homelessness*, page 54, <http://hsh.sfgov.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/San-Francisco-Coordinated-Community-Plan-January-2018-Final.pdf>.

<sup>45</sup> Dworsky, A., Morton, M.H., Samuels, G.M., Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago. *Missed opportunities: Youth Homelessness in America*. 2018, page 13, [https://voicesofyouthcount.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/ChapinHall\\_VoYC\\_NationalReport\\_Final.pdf](https://voicesofyouthcount.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/ChapinHall_VoYC_NationalReport_Final.pdf).

<sup>46</sup> 20 U.S.C. § 6311(h)(1)(C)(ii) and (iii).

<sup>47</sup> Education Leads Home. *Snapshot on Student Homelessness*. 2019, [http://www.educationleadshome.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/18980\\_Civic\\_ELH\\_National\\_v3.pdf](http://www.educationleadshome.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/18980_Civic_ELH_National_v3.pdf).

<sup>48</sup> HUD. *YHDP Lessons Learned*. July 2018, <https://www.hudexchange.info/resources/documents/YHDP-Lessons-Learned.pdf>.

<sup>49</sup> Dworsky, A., Morton, M.H., Samuels, G.M., Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago. *Missed opportunities: Youth Homelessness in America*. 2018, page 3, [https://voicesofyouthcount.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/ChapinHall\\_VoYC\\_NationalReport\\_Final.pdf](https://voicesofyouthcount.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/ChapinHall_VoYC_NationalReport_Final.pdf)

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.* 13.

childhood programs and systems to obtain and sustain housing, achieve stability, ensure positive early experiences, and promote well-being for the whole family.<sup>51</sup> For example, as part of its recent 100-Day Challenge, Sacramento sought to address the lack of services for this subpopulation in their homeless community by successfully focusing on building partnerships to house youth experiencing homelessness who are pregnant or parenting.<sup>52</sup>

## UTILIZING PEERS IN OUTREACH AND ENGAGEMENT EFFORTS

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Intentional and authentic youth engagement is crucial to the success of efforts to prevent and end youth homelessness. Youth with lived experiences are resilient and able to look at issues from different perspectives. These youth often bring a driven, resourceful, and intersectional approach to homelessness solutions. The first round of YHDP recipients echoed this and consistently reported that youth with lived experience should be incorporated into efforts to serve youth experiencing homelessness and when creating new systems and programs, and advocated for paying them for their work.<sup>53</sup> Hennepin County, MN also considers this a best practice after their 100-Day Challenge, noting that authentic youth involvement in these activities provides opportunities for youth to build their resumes, share their experience with community members and provider staff, and gain knowledge and skills as decision-makers.<sup>54</sup> For example, youth action boards can serve multiple roles in a community, including empowering youth, providing opportunities to become involved in local decision-making processes, and providing opportunities for compensation.<sup>55</sup>

It's also important that subpopulations of youth experiencing homelessness connect with peers with whom they can relate and service providers that are culturally competent. Youth who belong to more than one subpopulation have significant increased vulnerability to homelessness.<sup>56</sup> It's important that safe, affirming responses and services be available to engage LGBTQ youth.<sup>57</sup> This is especially true in communities of color, as black youth who identified as LGBTQ—especially young men—had the highest rates of homelessness.<sup>58</sup>

## COORDINATED ENTRY FOR YOUTH

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Communities should consider investing in funds to support coordinated entry systems specifically for youth to standardize and streamline the process for youth to exit homelessness. Vermont, Santa Cruz, San Diego and San Francisco, CA are utilizing recent YHDP funds for this purpose. A best practice is the intervention model outlined in the Federal Strategic Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness, which recommends using evidence-based screening and assessment tools and using the information from that screening and assessment to choose evidence-based interventions that can give young people stable

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<sup>51</sup> HHS, HUD, U.S. Department of Education (DOE). *Policy Statement on Meeting the Needs of Families with Young Children Experiencing and At Risk of Homelessness*. 2016, page 3, <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/ecd/echomelessnesspolicystatement.pdf>

<sup>52</sup> 100-Day Challenge Dashboard. "100-Day Challenge | Sacramento, CA | Day 100 | Mar 6 2019, <https://public.tableau.com/views/Sacramento100-DayChallengeDashboard/SacramentoDashboard?:showVizHome=no&embed=true>

<sup>53</sup> HUD. *YHDP Lessons Learned*. July 2018, <https://www.hudexchange.info/resources/documents/YHDP-Lessons-Learned.pdf>.

<sup>54</sup> HUD. *100-Day Challenge Case Studies, Hennepin County, MN: Authentic Youth Engagement*. Page 2, <https://www.hudexchange.info/resources/documents/100-Day-Challenge-Case-Study-Hennepin-County-Authentic-Youth.pdf>.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.* 1.

<sup>56</sup> Dworsky, A., Morton, M.H., Samuels, G.M., Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago. *Missed opportunities: Youth Homelessness in America*. 2018, page 7, [https://voicesofyouthcount.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/ChapinHall\\_VoYC\\_NationalReport\\_Final.pdf](https://voicesofyouthcount.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/ChapinHall_VoYC_NationalReport_Final.pdf)

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.* 6.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.* 7.

housing, family reunification when appropriate, permanent connections, improved well-being, and opportunities for education and employment.<sup>59</sup> Another important component of a coordinated entry system for youth is to collect longer-term follow-up data on youth who exit homelessness to build better service delivery models around housing stability that also address subpopulation inequities.<sup>60</sup>

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## GOAL 5: PREVENTING INDIVIDUALS AND FAMILIES FROM ENTERING HOMELESSNESS

Reducing and ultimately ending homelessness in California requires communities across the state to develop systems of care for which the rate at which people exit homelessness exceeds the rate at which people enter. Currently, considerable resources are devoted to ensuring that programs are available to: 1) ease the crisis needs of people experiencing homelessness (i.e., emergency shelter); and 2) assist the most vulnerable people experiencing homelessness to acquire permanent housing (i.e., permanent supportive housing and rapid re-housing). While these programs are valuable, they only address one side of the equation – neither intervention slows the rate at which people enter homelessness. To reduce the number of people who experience homelessness (and therefore require intensive intervention to obtain and maintain permanent housing), additional investment is needed in homelessness prevention assistance and programs.

Assisting people to avoid homelessness altogether is simultaneously one of the most humane, cost-effective, and potentially impactful interventions that could be implemented to reduce and end homelessness in California. The indignity and marginalization that comes with falling into homelessness is deeply damaging and exacerbates the other barriers and needs that an individual or family may face. The services costs necessary to help people overcome the economic, social, mental, and physical damages caused by the experience of homelessness and place them back into housing are much higher than the costs of preventing the occurrence of homelessness in the first place. Since most households can avoid homelessness with only limited assistance, the cost savings generated by efficient homelessness prevention programs permit communities to focus other resources on long-term supports for more vulnerable persons with severe housing barriers.

### PROVIDING GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR COMMUNITY PREVENTION EFFORTS

While efforts to keep people from entering homelessness are incredibly important, many communities are still trying to understand how this type of intervention best fits into their homelessness response systems. As a provider of funding and technical assistance opportunities, the State can play a role in helping communities work within certain parameters to ensure they are moving in the right direction in their planning or implementation efforts.

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<sup>59</sup> USICH. *Opening Doors: Federal Strategic Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness*, as amended in 2015.

[https://www.usich.gov/resources/uploads/asset\\_library/USICH\\_OpeningDoors\\_Amendment2015\\_FINAL.pdf](https://www.usich.gov/resources/uploads/asset_library/USICH_OpeningDoors_Amendment2015_FINAL.pdf).

<sup>60</sup> Morton, M.H., Rice, E., Blondin, M., Hsu, H., Kull, M., Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago. *Toward a System Response to Ending Youth Homelessness: New Evidence to Help Communities Strengthen Coordinated Entry, Assessment and Support for Youth*, 2018, page 4, <https://www.chapinhall.org/wp-content/uploads/Chapin-Hall-Youth-Collaboratory-Toward-A-System-Response-To-Youth-Homele....pdf>.

## PROGRAM DESIGN

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Five basic principles should inform and support any successful design of prevention assistance:<sup>61</sup>

- **Focus on crisis resolution:** Homelessness prevention assistance should be targeted to address and resolve “crises” that could result in an individual’s or family’s homelessness. Any situation that could result in homelessness qualifies as a crisis for the person(s) experiencing it. Crisis-response efforts should include: rapid assessment and triaging based on urgency; an immediate focus on personal safety; de-escalation of the person’s emotional reaction; concrete, attainable action steps; and helping the person reclaim agency over his or her own problem-solving.
- **Incorporate client choice, respect, and empowerment:** People in crisis often feel overwhelmed by their situation. Homelessness prevention assistance must help them recover a sense of control and empowerment to proactively overcome challenges by: constantly reinforcing the client’s objectives, decisions, and preferences; consistently showing respect for their strengths; and highlighting progress made toward goals.
- **Provide the minimum assistance necessary for the shortest time possible:** Providing the minimum amount of support needed to prevent homelessness conserves limited resources and enables more people to be served. This requires programs to direct resources to persons at-risk of losing housing that would otherwise become homeless before providing non-essential assistance for other needs.
- **Maximize mainstream community resources:** Where possible, prevention programs should utilize the mainstream programs intended to be the safety net of every community rather than creating redundant services for the subpopulation of people at-risk of homelessness. This will help conserve valuable and limited resources and enable the program to serve more individuals and families at-risk of homelessness.
- **Provide the right resources to the right people at the right time:** Program designers must find the right balance between two competing realities. On one hand, the costs of assistance are typically lower when intervention occurs earlier in a housing crisis. However, research shows that most people who receive prevention assistance would not have become homeless even without assistance. On the other hand, costs increase and success rates drop with later intervention. The best-designed prevention programs strive to target people who have the highest risk of becoming homeless but who also have a good chance of remaining housed if they receive assistance.

## IDENTIFYING TARGET POPULATIONS

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Prevention assistance is appropriate for both individuals and families who are currently housed but at imminent risk of becoming homeless. People most at risk of homelessness are

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<sup>61</sup> National Alliance to End Homelessness (NAEH). *Homelessness Prevention: Designing Programs that Work*. July 2009. page 2-3, [https://b3cdn.net/naeh/e151d425e2742e3e3b\\_0rm6btoc6.pdf](https://b3cdn.net/naeh/e151d425e2742e3e3b_0rm6btoc6.pdf).

often those renting a unit and facing eviction for nonpayment of rent and/or utilities, living in housing that has been condemned or declared uninhabitable, doubled-up with friends or family or are couch-surfing, or staying in hotel or motel for which they are paying.

While prevention programs can serve all people at imminent risk of homelessness, it is important to narrow and clearly identify the target population for such assistance. Ordinarily, prevention resources are directed either to a specific:

- **Subpopulation:** One advantage of targeting prevention assistance to a specific subpopulation (e.g., youth, survivors of domestic violence, etc.) is that it can be layered onto specialized, pre-existing programs in the community that are experienced with that subpopulation, such as victim or youth service providers. This often makes identifying appropriate clients less challenging; or
- **Geographic area:** Prevention assistance can be targeted to specific counties, cities, or neighborhoods. This requires providers to have a more diverse skillset and broader array of services in order to accommodate and assist multiple subpopulations. However, one advantage of targeting prevention assistance to a geographic area rather than a subpopulation is that it reduces community duplication of services and therefore increases clarity for tenants seeking assistance.<sup>62</sup>

Whether prevention assistance is targeted to a specific subpopulation or a specific geographic area, providers must perform outreach to identify potential clients as early as possible to maximize the impact of assistance while minimizing expenditure of resources. The outreach design should account for the target population and determine which outlets will be most effective in reaching that target population. Outreach may include:<sup>63</sup>

- **Referral relationships** with food pantries, public assistance offices, subsidized housing, school social workers, crisis hotlines, police responders, clinics, recreation centers, legal aid and/or eviction courts, etc.
- **Discharge planning** for hospitals, jails, treatment programs, detox centers, etc. can incorporate referral to homelessness prevention assistance so that people do not exit these institutions onto the streets or into emergency shelter.
- **Advertising** at food pantries, check-cashing centers, religious centers, community centers, and community events.

For many communities, one of the biggest hurdles in developing a robust homelessness prevention assistance program is identifying who in their community most needs the assistance and how best to outreach to those populations. Many communities struggle with conducting effective systems gaps analyses to determine the best use of these resources, and to measure the successes of their prevention methods once they have implemented them. If the State is able to provide support through both funding and technical assistance to

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<sup>62</sup> Ibid. 4.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid. 18.

assist communities in efforts to accurately prioritize prevention and diversion resources for those persons least likely to resolve their own homelessness, it can ensure that communities are most effectively using these resources and maximize the benefit of funds dedicated to homelessness prevention.

## FLEXIBLE AND VARIED INTERVENTIONS

Well-designed homelessness prevention programs are able to offer an extensive array of interventions to help prevent people from experiencing homelessness. No single standard package of interventions is necessary or appropriate for every client. Instead, programs should tailor service plans to meet the needs, strengths, and preferences of each client. This ensures that every client receives the minimum amount of support necessary to prevent homelessness, while simultaneously conserving limited resources and maximizing the number of people that can benefit from the program.

Many communities work to provide innovative and flexible programs to meet the needs of people at risk of homelessness in their communities. However, there are some interventions that are the most successful in preventing households from entering homelessness, which should be included in any comprehensive homelessness response system.<sup>64</sup>

- **Legal rights and responsibilities:** Tenants often lack basic knowledge of their legal rights and responsibilities as leaseholders. As a result, homelessness prevention programs may offer or connect clients to: 1) *education on legal rights and responsibilities* to help prevent otherwise manageable disputes from escalating to eviction; 2) *legal counseling* to identify avenues for resolution of disputes; and/or 3) *legal representation* to assist in eviction proceedings.
- **Income support and maintenance:** Long-term housing stability requires stabilizing or increasing client income, whether through gainful employment, obtaining public benefits, or implementing tax strategies such as the Earned Income Tax Credit. As a result, prevention programs may offer or connect people to: 1) *credit repair services* to consolidate debt, negotiate lower interest rates, extend repayment schedules, prevent foreclosures, deal with collectors, and exercise consumer rights and protections; 2) *education on financial literacy and budgeting assistance* to identify and decrease other costs and ensure clients are able to maintain housing; and/or 3) *employment services* to assist people in obtaining and maintaining employment.
- **Financial assistance:** A person's inability to pay rent and/or utilities is almost always the proximate cause of their homelessness. Without access to sufficient short-term financial resources, people may lose housing, which in turn makes it difficult to obtain or maintain employment, develop positive relationships and support networks, or identify alternatives. As a result, homelessness prevention programs may offer or connect clients to: 1) *one-time assistance with rental and/or utility arrears* to address overdue rent or utility payments; 2) *rental assistance* to temporarily subsidize rental costs until the

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<sup>64</sup> Ibid. 34-51.

household is able to increase income; 3) *utility assistance* to temporarily subsidize the client's utility costs; 4) facilitate connection to all *public assistance programs* for which the client is eligible in order to maximize income; and/or 5) *assistance to maximize the use of existing household resources* through budgeting, elimination of unnecessary expenditures, and connection to support networks such as family or friends.

- **Conflict resolution:** Breakdowns in interpersonal relationships can lead to risk of homelessness. Mediation and conflict resolution services can have a considerable impact on repairing relationships. As a result, homelessness prevention programs may offer: 1) *landlord-tenant conflict resolution* to identify needed changes in behavior and assistance implementing changes to repair disputes; 2) *host-guest conflict resolution* to better enable clients to benefit from friends, family, and other support networks that may be crucial in preventing homelessness; and/or 3) *intra-household conflict resolution*, often between parents-children and spouses, to de-escalate tensions and ensure safety.
- **Relocation assistance:** The overarching goal of every homelessness prevention program should be to minimize the number of people that experience homelessness. While this often means helping a person maintain their housing, it is not always possible or appropriate. Health, safety, or preference may instead dictate that identifying an alternative housing situation is the preferable solution. As a result, homelessness prevention programs may offer: 1) *assessment of the client's housing barriers* to identify challenges in relocation; 2) *assistance identifying appropriate alternative housing* through connections to supportive and public housing, maintenance of landlord relationships, and/or advice regarding the benefits and drawbacks of each housing option; and/or 3) *financial assistance* related to obtaining new housing, including application fees, security deposits, first and last month's rent, moving costs, and/or utility costs.
- **Housing stabilization:** Once the immediate housing crisis is resolved, people may benefit from follow-up stabilization services designed to ensure the household maintains housing going forward. As a result, homelessness prevention programs may offer: 1) *home visits* that allow the program and household to maintain connection and identify issues as they emerge; 2) *landlord-tenant communication assistance* to serve as an intermediary and address issues before they become a threat to housing stability; 3) *continuing education regarding legal rights and responsibilities* to ensure understanding of expectations and rights; and/or 4) *referrals to mainstream resources*, such as health services, that can address underlying causes of the client's housing crisis.

Ensuring funding streams provide flexibility for communities to offer a variety of these services to people facing homelessness is critical to ensuring interventions are person-focused and able to quickly respond to their emergent needs. Flexible state-level funding that helps communities fill in gaps left by other funding sources, whether they be targeted federal and local homelessness funding or mainstream resources from other systems of care, is important to meet the diverse needs of people at risk of homelessness.

Additionally, and as mentioned above, many communities still struggle to objectively identify which interventions are most needed in their community and strategically target their

available resources to people at risk of homelessness. Technical assistance, tools, and other resources to help communities carry out gaps analyses and objectively measure their efforts is something that can significantly help in the effort to prevent and end homelessness throughout California.

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## **GOAL 6: INCREASING THE OVERALL SUPPLY OF AFFORDABLE HOUSING FOR INDIVIDUALS AND FAMILIES EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS**

California's Department of Housing and Community Development estimates that California's need for housing increases by about 180,000 units per year as a result of migration and natural population growth.<sup>65</sup> Since 2008, though, California has produced fewer than 80,000 units per year, creating a shortfall of 1 million homes. As a result, some families are forced to double up, triple up, or live on the street. If there are not enough homes to go around, then the inevitable result is that some will not have homes.

The dominant refrain we hear from homeless housing and service providers is that there are too few affordable units available in any given community to adequately meet the needs of the homeless population. For this to change – and it must to functionally end homelessness – the State and local communities need to consistently support ongoing efforts to increase the amount of affordable housing available to people experiencing homelessness.

### **PARTNER WITH PUBLIC HOUSING AGENCIES TO ENCOURAGE SERVING HOMELESS HOUSEHOLDS**

While federal and state targeted homeless funding provides necessary assistance to many people experiencing homelessness, they are not enough to end homelessness in themselves. The use of mainstream housing assistance programs, such as Housing Choice Vouchers and public housing units, managed by Public Housing Agencies (PHAs) throughout the country are an invaluable resource. Leveraging them to address the affordable housing issues in our communities is an essential element in the effort to end homelessness.

Although resources managed through PHAs are a crucial part of the housing spectrum, they are often disconnected from the homeless service system. They may either be uninterested in housing people experiencing homelessness, unaware of how best to do so, or concerned about the administrative burden it may place on them to target homeless households.

### **ESTABLISHING A HOMELESS PREFERENCE**

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HUD has taken significant steps to encourage PHAs to get involved in addressing the issue of homelessness by making affordable housing resources more available to this population. In particular, its Public and Indian Housing (PIH) Notice 2013-15 highlights establishing a

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<sup>65</sup> California Department of Housing and Community Development. *California's Housing Future: Challenges and Opportunities*. 2018, [http://www.hcd.ca.gov/policy-research/plans-reports/docs/SHA\\_Final\\_Combined.pdf](http://www.hcd.ca.gov/policy-research/plans-reports/docs/SHA_Final_Combined.pdf).

preference for individuals and families experiencing homelessness as a PHA's greatest tool for increasing program access, and describes the process for establishing preferences.<sup>66</sup>

PHAs currently use a variety of homeless preference systems. Because these resources are in such high demand, the waiting lists to access them can often take years. As a result, PHAs must determine how to prioritize those households for their limited resources, but they are given discretion to establish local preferences to meet the needs and priorities of their community. PHAs can prioritize people who are experiencing homeless through two ways:

- *General preference*, which is a way to order the wait list to ensure that housing resources reach specified populations ahead of other people who may also be eligible for the assistance. If the PHA has a general homeless preference, all homeless households on the waitlist would be given assistance before any non-homeless household; or
- *Limited preference*, which are often referred to as set asides. This preference type identifies a certain number of public housing units or Housing Choice Vouchers to be made available to people experiencing homelessness.

A 2014 study found that 10% of PHAs established a general preference and 9% established a limited preference for people experiencing homelessness.<sup>67</sup>

While most homeless service systems are already actively working to engage or partner with local PHAs, the State can offer support in a variety of ways. By providing flexible state funding resources to CoCs for system and strategic planning, the State can bolster the CoC's efforts to work with PHAs to dedicate resources to people experiencing homelessness. The State can also actively promote partnership of PHAs with their local CoCs by providing information or other technical assistance on the mutual benefits of such partnerships and the need for homeless preferences. They can also encourage PHA involvement in local collaborative planning efforts, such as development of the local consolidated plan, to help PHAs better assess the affordable housing needs for homeless households within their community.

## ENCOURAGING IMPLEMENTATION OF MOVING UP STRATEGIES

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Another way that PHAs can support a community's efforts to house homeless households is by adopting a moving up, or moving on, strategy. Move up strategies utilize the same methodologies described above – creating a preference to house a certain population – but instead of creating a preference for people experiencing homelessness, it creates a preference for formerly-homelessness people who currently reside in PSH. These programs target individuals and families who have been receiving CoC-funded supportive housing assistance, and who still need housing assistance, but are capable of living on their own with minimal or no services. In moving a household that no longer needs on-site services to an

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<sup>66</sup> HUD Office of Public and Indian Housing. *Notice PIH 2013-15 (HA) Guidance on housing individuals and families experiencing homelessness through the Public Housing and Housing Choice Voucher programs*. 2013. <https://www.hud.gov/sites/documents/PIH2013-15.PDF>.

<sup>67</sup> HUD Office of Policy Development and Research. *Study of PHAs Efforts to Serve People Experiencing Homelessness*. 2014. [https://www.huduser.gov/portal/publications/pha\\_homelessness.pdf](https://www.huduser.gov/portal/publications/pha_homelessness.pdf).

affordable housing unit with rental support and after care, the community is able to open up valuable supportive housing units and target people experiencing homelessness with high service needs.

The State can support communities in their partnerships to develop move up strategies in the same ways they would for creating a homeless preference, as described above.

## REUSE OF EXISTING PROPERTIES TO CREATE AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Many communities in California also have a rich resource for affordable housing in existing historic properties. Rehabilitation of older and historic buildings for affordable housing can address some of the issues that come with new construction. First, the cost of land in many California communities is already incredibly high and continues to grow. In addition, new development often occurs in areas that are not as accessible to resources that benefit lower-income residents, such as jobs, schools and public transportation.<sup>68</sup> Rehabilitation can also be more cost efficient than new construction by saving time and money typically spent on obtaining permits, approvals, and development review for new construction.<sup>69</sup>

Some California communities have come up with creative ways to reuse existing structures and repurpose them for affordable housing. Adaptive reuse provides a great benefit to its residents while also preserving a building and giving it a new purpose in the community. In addition, the repurposing of existing buildings to create affordable housing through this process tends to generate less community opposition, which can improve the building's success.<sup>70</sup> A variety of buildings or spaces, such as vacant hospitals, government buildings, hotels, or even parking lots, can be rehabilitated to create this much needed housing.

While there are several federal tax credit programs to incentivize the reuse and rehabilitation of existing properties for affordable housing,<sup>71</sup> many states across the country have also adopted historic tax credits (HTCs) to work in tandem with these federal credits. States have found that the use of these credits not only makes historic rehabilitation more financially feasible, enacting a tax credit at the state level allows the state to prioritize certain rehabilitation efforts, such as affordable housing. For example, Connecticut and Delaware offer increased HTC percentage rates for the creation of affordable housing.<sup>72</sup> To assist in the reuse of existing properties, California can consider enacting a similar HTC with an emphasis on development of affordable housing.

This sentiment that the State has an opportunity to provide assistance to encourage the development of affordable housing was echoed time and again by the communities with

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<sup>68</sup> Rypkema, Donovan, National Trust for Historic Preservation. Historic Preservation and Affordable Housing: The Missed Connection. 2002, <https://www.placeeconomics.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/placeeconomicspub2003b.pdf>.

<sup>69</sup> Levin, Matt, KQED. "5 Reasons California's Housing Costs Are So High." May 4, 2018, <https://www.kqed.org/news/11666284/5-reasons-californias-housing-costs-are-so-high>.

<sup>70</sup> Dahdouli, Ahmad, Maravilla, Juanito, Norton, Timothy, Unzetta, Charlene, Xu, Meidi, University of Southern California Sol Price School of Public Policy. *Building California's Future: Increasing the Supply of Housing to Retain California's Workforce*. 2017, page 15, <https://cfce.calchamber.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/CFCE-Building-Californias-Future-Final-Report-May-7-2017.pdf>.

<sup>71</sup> Joe, Monica, University of Washington. "Adaptive Reuse and Rehabilitation: Connecting Historic Preservation and Affordable Housing Developments in Seattle, Washington." 2015, pages 6-9, [https://digital.lib.washington.edu/researchworks/bitstream/handle/1773/34199/Joe\\_washington\\_02500\\_14677.pdf?sequence=1](https://digital.lib.washington.edu/researchworks/bitstream/handle/1773/34199/Joe_washington_02500_14677.pdf?sequence=1).

<sup>72</sup> National Trust for Historic Preservation. *State Historic Tax Credits: Maximizing Preservation, Community Revitalization, and Economic Impact*. 2018, page 6, <https://forum.savingplaces.org/HigherLogic/System/DownloadDocumentFile.ashx?DocumentFileKey=ee094e94-4dc7-db43-ae3b-9eaae3e7f179&forceDialog=0>.

which we work. They expressed concern over the time required for nonprofit developers to initiate new construction of affordable housing, which in most cases takes at least four years. In the meantime, housing prices continue to rise. Many communities noted that an investment in permanent, affordable housing options through the creative use and rehabilitation of existing properties is one way to make affordable housing available faster.

## SECTION 2: PRIORITIZING RESOURCES TO MAKE THE BIGGEST IMPACT

### QUALITY OVER QUANTITY

As noted earlier in this report, California has more people experiencing homelessness than any other state in the country.<sup>73</sup> In addition, HUD's 2018 AHAR found that 69 percent of people experiencing homelessness in California were residing in unsheltered locations. This level of visible homelessness can trigger an automatic desire to dramatically increase the volume of interventions available to people experiencing homelessness. While more housing and services are certainly needed to address this issue, creating more is not in itself enough; an emphasis on quality over quantity should be a part of any funding stream.

A focus on homeless program quality can come in several forms. One critical component is basing decision making on interventions that will yield the greatest results for people experiencing homelessness or cycling through the homeless response system. The funding should be focused on those interventions that are designed to prioritize and target those who are most vulnerable and demonstrate that they can move people out of homelessness and into housing. Many of these specific interventions are discussed above in Section 1, but the State, as a funding entity, can take additional steps to ensure that programs within those best practice models are effective in helping to end homelessness.

- **More Flexibility, but with Higher Expectations:** As noted in Section 1, Goal 1, flexible funding is a critical piece in allowing communities throughout California to address their unique needs and fill service gaps. By coupling flexibility with expectations reflecting best practices and performance data showing a real impact on addressing homelessness, the State can ensure maximum use of its resources. The State can also impose funding conditions on community coordination, such as requiring providers to receive referrals through the local coordinated entry system, to ensure that programs are targeting those homeless households who are best suited for their services.
- **Minimum Standards and Best Practices Established for Common Interventions:** Given the urgency of the problem of homelessness in many California communities, it is critical for the State to invest its resources in interventions that have the biggest impact. Setting certain minimum performance and administrative capacity requirements for funded entities is an important feature of ensuring that expended funds are used in the most effective way possible. The State can also set standards for adoption of various best practices, such as those discussed in this paper, as well as requiring resources be

<sup>73</sup> U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). *The 2018 Annual Homeless Assessment Report (AHAR) to Congress, Part 1: Point-in-Time Estimates of Homelessness*. December 2018, page 14, <https://www.hudexchange.info/resources/documents/2018-AHAR-Part-1.pdf>.

spent on efforts that match the needs or fill gaps within funded communities. In some cases, this may lead to agencies that have traditionally received money through various state programs to lose their funding. However, it is important for the State to ensure that system objectives and best practices are prioritized.

An example of a resource that can be helpful in developing such standards is the Rapid Re-housing Performance Benchmarks and Program Standards published by the National Alliance to End Homelessness.<sup>74</sup> In addition to outlining core components of a successful rapid re-housing program, it includes suggested program performance benchmarks. Setting specific standards such as these at the state level can assist the State in holding programs accountable by developing programmatic requirements for funding, setting performance goals based on community needs, and establishing benchmarks to evaluate program effectiveness.

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## IMPROVED ALIGNMENT, CLARITY AND GUIDANCE

Grant compliance is complex, especially for those communities without sufficient staffing dedicated to ensuring that all requirements are met. This is especially true when funding requirements substantially change or different funding streams have varying requirements or expectations for comparable programs. While grateful for the influx of resources, many of our communities are overwhelmed by the administrative burden that comes with managing numerous funding sources. There are several ways that the State can help communities both better manage their grants and meet their diverse needs, including:

- **Improve State Coordination Across Agencies and Operations:** The California State Auditor found that in 2017-2018, 6 separate state agencies administered 11 programs that provide direct assistance to people experiencing homelessness in California,<sup>75</sup> with several others involved in administering programs that benefited people experiencing homelessness but were not specifically geared toward that population.

While it is commendable that various state departments are making efforts to help end homelessness, many communities find that the lack of coordination between agencies to be a large hurdle to addressing homelessness locally. Communities are spending an enormous amount of time piecing together all of the various funding streams. With varying schedules, priorities, and application requirements, those responsible for leading efforts to address homelessness within a community are taking on large administrative burdens to receive the funding, often doing so with a small staff and without adequate resources to build a local infrastructure to support the work funded by the state. This is especially pronounced for one-time funding streams, with no assurance that the funding will be available in the future. The majority of our communities indicated that a consolidation and alignment of funding streams at the state level would help immensely

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<sup>74</sup> NAEH. *Performance Benchmarks and Program Standards*. 2016, <http://endhomelessness.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/Performance-Benchmarks-and-Program-Standards.pdf>.

<sup>75</sup> California State Auditor. *Homelessness in CA: Homelessness in California State Government and the Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority Need to Strengthen Their Efforts to Address Homelessness*. 2018, page 12, <https://www.auditor.ca.gov/pdfs/reports/2017-112.pdf>.

in reducing their administrative burden and freeing up capacity to focus on substantive efforts to end homelessness.

Along with coordination across agencies, communities expressed a need for increased clarity on the requirements for some of the funding streams, both before applying and after awards are announced. Without clear guidance on how certain funds can be used, they are left to make assumptions, which can lead to compliance issues. Consolidation will ideally lead to the creation of standardized policies, procedures and reporting requirements. This helps alleviate the burden for communities to navigate the complex requirements of different funding streams, which should also reduce issues with compliance.

- **Better Alignment of Funding Streams with Needs of Diverse Communities:** While it is true that the majority of people experiencing homelessness in California reside in the states' urban centers, homelessness is a statewide issue. While smaller communities recognize the need to provide ample funding and assistance to larger cities to combat this issue, many were under the impression that state funding streams were developed to specifically target urban homeless populations, which in some situations results in the funds being a poor fit for the needs of suburban or rural communities. This concern is exacerbated by the fact that smaller communities often have fewer local resources to expend on combatting homelessness.

Flexibility of funding is one of the most effective ways the State can address this concern about lack of alignment with local need. As noted in Section 1, effectiveness of interventions, even best practices, varies from community to community. There are also populations that need assistance but may not qualify for some other funding streams, especially federal funding from HUD. Building in flexibility would allow communities to fill the gap by allowing them to design and implement innovative programs that fit their unique needs.

- **Reduce Delays in Process:** Several communities specifically expressed concern over perceived delays in contracting and receiving funds awarded. These communities shared that they felt the state expectation was to get programs up and running immediately upon contracting. As a result, they took immediate action, making plans and commitments locally; however, they did not receive the funding as quickly as they had expected and ended up in a holding pattern. This resulted in extreme challenges for programs to sustain themselves while waiting for funding to be available. Some attributed this delay to a perceived breakdown in communication between State department staff administering the RFP and those that undertake contracting.

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## AFFORDABLE HOUSING

As the housing market in California continues to become harder and harder for low-income households, with low vacancy rates and extremely high rents, efforts to expand affordable housing are more important than ever. This requires both efforts to expand the supply of deeply affordable housing and to use existing affordable housing resources to combat

homelessness. For some households, access to deeply affordable housing may be the only way they can exit homelessness. Communities were concerned that while providing services such as PSH to those households who have intensive service needs is critical to ending homelessness, there is an entirely different group of people experiencing homelessness because of the lack of affordable housing. These households do not need the high level of intervention and services as are offered by PSH. Having resources to serve this population is important to help them exit homelessness and remain housed.

There are several ways that the State can ensure people experiencing homelessness are able to access affordable housing:

- **Increase Investment:** The most impactful way the State can increase access to affordable housing is by increasing its investment in its development or expansion. Even with funding targeted to creating additional affordable housing over the past few years, the current housing deficit means it will be years until adequate affordable housing is achieved. The State will need to continue to invest additional funds for affordable housing, especially for those experiencing homelessness.
- **Reduce Barriers to Entry:** One key way to ensure that those who most need affordable housing to end their homelessness is to reduce the barriers for entry into affordable housing. If homeless households otherwise meet eligibility criteria, other factors, including their homeless status, should not affect their ability to access affordable housing. This aligns with the Housing First philosophy that is discussed in Section 1. The State can ensure that not only state-funded programs follow this philosophy, but also work with developers of affordable housing to limit unnecessary barriers to entry.
- **Advocate for Policy Adjustments Within Public Housing Agencies:** One way to compliment efforts to reduce barriers to entry is by partnering with and advocating for policy adjustments with Public Housing Agencies, as described in Section 1. For many homeless individuals and families, the waitlists for public housing resources, such as Housing Choice Vouchers and public housing units, are an insurmountable hurdle. Waitlists can be years long, and often times are closed entirely, due to the overwhelming need for this resource. By advocating for homeless preferences and move up strategies within California communities, the State can ensure that these valuable resources are used to house households who cannot exit homelessness without them.

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### INVEST IN A FULL CONTINUUM OF RESOURCES AND SERVICES TO SUPPORT DIFFERENT LEVELS OF NEED

An effective crisis response system requires the right mix of interventions that matches the needs of the people experiencing homelessness in the community. These various interventions work together to ensure that homelessness is ended by placing people into permanent housing as quickly as possible. However, the level of intervention required to achieve permanent housing can vary significantly by population or household need. While communities should always focus resources on the most cost-effective and efficient strategies to re-house people experiencing homelessness, they should offer an array of

services to ensure that interventions are tailored to meet the unique needs of these households and enable them to achieve and maintain permanent housing.

One hallmark of a strong system of care is a strong system flow, or a coordinated process that moves people from homelessness to housing as quickly as possible. Systems with good flow typically have similar elements, including effective outreach efforts, sufficient prevention and diversion programs, low-barrier and housing-focused crisis beds, sufficient rapid re-housing resources to serve households who need a lighter touch of services, long-term and service-rich resources such as PSH or other affordable housing vouchers for households who require more intensive interventions to exit homelessness.

There are several ways the State can support communities in developing or maintaining a full continuum of resources to address homelessness, including:

- **Providing Funding for a Variety of Services and Population types:** While federal resources provide funding for some key interventions within a system of care, the State is in a unique position to help communities fill in gaps where federal funding may fall short. For example, several communities identified a significant gap in available services for elderly homeless individuals. They noticed a lack of care facilities for elderly people with mental illnesses, dementia, or other severe conditions that made it difficult for them to maintain housing. Even those seniors without these disabilities have their own vulnerabilities that come with older age, but there are few resources to house them.
- **Supporting Coordinated Entry System Efforts at the Community Level:** Another critical component of ensuring a diverse crisis response system operates in the most effective way is by utilizing a coordinated entry system. Coordinated entry serves as a method to align providers and resources within a system to ensure every person experiencing homelessness is helped with the most appropriate available support and in the fastest way possible. By using a standardized assessment and referral process, coordinated entry prioritizes people seeking services by their level of need and vulnerability.

Coordinated entry is a requirement of several HUD federal funding streams for homelessness, including the Continuum of Care and Emergency Solutions Grant programs. All communities that receive this funding in California should have a coordinated entry system in place. The State can support the significant efforts these communities are taking to utilize this system by encouraging state-funded programs, including mainstream resources, to participate in or work with the coordinated entry system. For coordinated entry to operate efficiently and maximize the use of resources available in a community, it is important that all housing and services for people experiencing homeless within a community are connected to, and receive referrals through, the system. Backdoors into programs defeat the purpose and can result in both longer episodes of homelessness for the most vulnerable and an inefficient use of resources.

In addition to advocating for the use of coordinated entry for all homeless assistance programs, the State has an opportunity to continue to support communities in their efforts to refine their coordinated entry implementations to ensure they best fit their changing needs. Funding coordinated entry efforts directly or providing targeted technical assistance can help bolster community capacity to strengthen their coordinated entry systems. Specifically, communities noted that bringing other systems of care into the fold of coordinated entry is a heavy lift, which they are unable to do on their own. They expressed desire for practical support and technical assistance to help bring these complex systems into compliance with coordinated entry requirements.

## SECTION 3: OTHER STRATEGIES TO CONSIDER FOR IMPROVING OUTCOMES

### ENCOURAGING REGIONAL APPROACHES TO HOMELESSNESS

The Continuum of Care (CoC) system, which is required for various federal funding streams and has been largely adopted by the State, requires only communities within CoC boundaries to work together in their efforts to prevent and end homelessness. Often, CoCs follow county boundaries, and so coordination efforts stop there. However, homelessness is not an issue that stays confined to jurisdictional borders, especially in densely-populated areas throughout the state. Not only do people experiencing homelessness travel between different cities, counties or regions, but trends in any single locality can produce a resounding ripple effect in neighboring communities. Natural disasters, costs of housing, criminalization of homelessness, encampment strategies, and local policy: the circumstances and decisions of each jurisdiction, made in isolation, dramatically affect the whole. And while many communities in California have established robust homeless response systems, due to state and federal program design, those systems generally are not coordinated beyond county lines.

For people experiencing homelessness, the lack of coordination can create a void in their safety net. There is no ability to align – or even track – the care and resources individuals receive across jurisdictions, no ability to monitor outcomes, and no ability to optimize regional resources to meet regional needs. Crossing county lines means erasure of their entire service history, losing access to the programs and providers who may have helped them in the past and the benefits and resources that supported them day-to-day.

Recognizing the reality of this situation, the State is uniquely positioned to encourage communities throughout California to develop regional responses to homelessness. We believe there are three key pieces to establishing an effective regional approach, which include:

- **Regional Data Sharing:** Communities invest substantial amounts of money in their homeless response system databases, known as Homeless Management Information Systems (HMIS). However, due to their requirement to function solely within a CoC's boundaries, they are not able to share data, even for those clients who may receive services in multiple jurisdictions. While it can be logistically difficult to share data

between HMIS systems – technological or political issues can overwhelm these efforts – it is not an impossible feat, and may be meaningfully supported by the State’s work underway to develop a state-wide data system.

Creating regional collaborations that incorporate data sharing would provide many benefits to people experiencing homelessness and the communities themselves. First, it would provide more seamless service delivery for people experiencing homelessness who naturally move across county lines. It could also bolster a region’s understanding of how homelessness works across county lines, providing a more complete picture of trends, gaps and availability of services. Ultimately, this can assist in efforts to make data-driven strategic decisions about resource allocation and coordination of care.

- **Regional Advocacy:** Many regions throughout the state are tied together not just through geography but also by economic, social, or political ties. When communities come together and take a regional approach to addressing homelessness, they are better poised to give an accurate assessment of the needs of their collective communities to help inform state-level policy. It can also help on the local level with engaging the public around working towards solutions to address homelessness in their communities. By working together across jurisdictions, local homeless service providers and public officials can increase their reach and positive impact through collaboration. Creating a unified community collaboration helps increase efficiency and effectiveness, which in turn can build greater trust and support from community members.

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## INCREASING PUBLIC AWARENESS AND ENGAGEMENT

Homelessness and affordable housing can be controversial and complicated issues for certain communities. Actively engaging the public and increasing awareness about the issues surrounding homelessness can have a large impact on the success of a community’s system of care. Providing solutions to homelessness often requires support and assistance from the full community. By raising the profile of the factors contributing to homelessness, a community can encourage its members to become invested in supporting solutions.

Public awareness can take a variety of forms. Many California communities already undertake substantial efforts to engage the public through community service days, fundraising efforts, education campaigns, or volunteer opportunities. One popular model of public outreach that is used in several California communities is Project Homeless Connect, a model created in partnership with then-Mayor of San Francisco Gavin Newsom, which brings together community volunteers with government agencies, nonprofits, and the private sector to provide a single location with comprehensive health and human services for individuals and families experiencing homelessness.

These public engagement efforts have more of an impact than solely raising awareness. Additional benefits of engaging the public include better identification of the public’s values, ideas and recommendations; improving local decision-making based on public input; faster

implementation of projects; more trust in the local process by community members; and higher rates of community participation and leadership development.<sup>76</sup>

There are several opportunities for the State to engage in both statewide public awareness and support communities in their local efforts to engage community members.

- **Public Engagement through Strategic Communication:** The State has access to an incredible amount of resources in terms of data and information from communities about the most pressing issues they face in addressing homelessness. As such, it is in a unique position to carry out statewide or regional public awareness efforts to support local communities in ending homelessness.

Using data to demonstrate the extent of homelessness is essential to combating it. As data collection becomes more sophisticated and extensive, data can provide a meaningful in-depth picture of homelessness in a community and help dispel misconceptions about people experiencing homelessness or the successes of various interventions. Using performance data can send a compelling message about the effectiveness of various programs and service models, which can help garner support for their use in a community.

The State can use the data and information it has to create dynamic public engagement throughout California. By narrowing in on various audiences or stakeholders, and identifying the community values or qualities for each, it can develop compelling public awareness campaigns to demonstrate what is at stake in the community and why the public should support efforts to end homelessness.

- **Support Capacity for Communities to Engage in Public Awareness and Outreach Efforts:** As with many other activities undertaken by those leading the work to end homelessness in their communities, staffing is stretched thin and there can be a lack of capacity to increase public awareness in engaging and impactful ways. Some communities expressed concern that their efforts to engage the public are driven by funding, such as holding public meetings solely to comply with state or federal grant requirements. Some brought up the example of a HEAP funding requirement to conduct community outreach outside of existing public meetings. The result is duplicative efforts to plan and hold public meetings. Unfortunately, interest tends to wane if community meetings are held too frequently or solely for the purpose of grant compliance, rather than tailored to the communities' needs at that particular time.

The State can assist communities in their ongoing efforts to engage the public and increase awareness about homelessness. This can be through flexible funding opportunities that support administrative and capacity building efforts in the community. Alternatively, state funding requirements for community engagement can leverage existing outreach and public engagement efforts to satisfy grant requirements. There

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<sup>76</sup> Institute for Local Government. *Engaging the Public in Planning for Housing*. [https://www.ca-ilg.org/sites/main/files/file-attachments/engaging\\_public\\_support\\_for\\_housing\\_9.8\\_0.pdf](https://www.ca-ilg.org/sites/main/files/file-attachments/engaging_public_support_for_housing_9.8_0.pdf).

may also be a need for technical assistance for communities on strategies for improving community outreach. This can take several forms, including creating communications strategies, providing the data and information communities need to effectively engage the public, or even providing resources or training modules leaders can take back to their communities to carry out outreach activities.

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## SUPPORTING SYSTEMS CHANGE

Responses to homelessness evolve over time as data provides us with more information about how to effectively intervene. As understanding of how to best address the homelessness crisis deepens, systems of care must have the flexibility to adapt so they can better serve the individuals and families experiencing homelessness within their communities. In some cases, this can be an entire paradigm shift, or a complete revisioning, of how to best rehouse people who are without housing and to do so as quickly as possible. This often needs to be accompanied by a funding realignment and a change in the available services in the community to effectively adjust the system to adapt.

A big change for many communities was the shift to a systems approach to end homelessness. This was driven in part by federal legislation that required communities to develop a truly coordinated system of care, where all parts work together toward the common goal of housing people who are homeless. Effective systems bring together seemingly discreet parts to form a harmoniously functioning and unified whole, bolstered by shared information, resources, and accountability. They operate with shared goals, shared values, and shared planning, recognizing that decisions made within one part of the system affect other parts.

Unfortunately, many communities still struggle with creating or truly implementing a cohesive system that encompasses all of the interventions necessary to respond to the varying needs of people experiencing homelessness. This can be the result of funding priorities, insufficient political will, or lack of buy-in from the community.

The State can take on important roles in supporting communities in their efforts to engage in systems change to better meet the needs of the people experiencing homelessness in their communities, and to a large extent has already done so. But additional efforts can be made to ensure that all California communities have established homeless response systems that are actively responsive to alterations in internal and external environments in order to ensure continual success in meeting ever-changing needs.

- **Provide Technical Assistance Designed to Promote the Type of System Change Required to Improve Community Responses to Homelessness:** Systems change does not happen automatically; instead it must be cultivated in an intentional and strategic manner. Communities often require support in developing a vision, analyzing gaps, building consensus, and planning for action steps. These efforts should take into account where different communities are in their work to either plan for, implement, or sustain systems change.

- **Promote Core Capacities of an Effective Homeless Response System:** Effective homeless systems have several key components that encourage collaborative efforts and a commitment to carrying out the work needed to address homelessness within a community. These elements, discussed in other portions of this paper, include system planning, written standards for assistance, coordinated entry, system-level performance measurement, and strategic resource allocation. In its policy efforts and funding opportunities, the State can promote these fundamental features to encourage communities to engage in systems change or further refine their efforts to sustain a healthy system to prevent and end homelessness.

In addition, the State has the opportunity to emphasize innovation, creativity, and integration through funding these types of efforts. In an effective homeless response system, resources should be constantly evaluated and realigned to meet new, emerging, or changing needs. Supporting communities in their efforts to quickly adapt to changes through available funding will help advance their efforts to be system-oriented.

- **Support Capacity for Communities to Engage in System Change:** Similar to the issues discussed above in this section, some communities struggle with building the capacity required to lead a sustained culture of change. Though effective systems change requires the involvement of diverse and numerous stakeholders, leadership is vital to coordinate activities, guide the conversation, and facilitate communication. However, staff in many communities are stretched too thin to dedicate the amount of time required to conduct planning, data collection, performance measurement and other activities that guide and support change. Building this capacity requires resources. By providing flexible or funding, the State can help communities build a more robust administrative infrastructure to successfully carry out and sustain systems change.

## SECTION 4: ADDITIONAL PERFORMANCE MEASURES TO CONSIDER

### RACIAL EQUITY

It is an alarming fact that people of color are dramatically overrepresented in the population of people who are experiencing homelessness. African Americans make up a significantly disproportionate percentage of the homeless population – in looking at HUD data, the National Alliance on Homelessness reported that while African Americans represent 13% of the general population in the United States, they make up more than 40% of people experiencing homelessness.<sup>77</sup> Deep disparities are found for other racial groups as well. Native Americans, Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders, and those of more than one race are represented in the population of people experiencing homelessness at over double their representation in the general population.<sup>78</sup>

<sup>77</sup> NAEH. Racial Disparities in Homelessness in the United States. 2018, <https://endhomelessness.org/resource/racial-disparities-homelessness-united-states/>.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid.

Any efforts to end homelessness must address the complex array of racial inequities that both impact responses to homelessness and cause these disparities in the homeless population. HUD has recently assessed communities applying for CoC Program funds on whether they have analyzed their data related to equity in service provision and outcomes and, if racial disparities are present, that they have taken steps to address those disparities.

Analyzing data to assess race-based overrepresentation among people experiencing homelessness can help communities reconsider inequitable policies and support efforts to more effectively end homelessness for all. One very simple measure that communities can examine to determine the scope of racial disparities is by comparing racial data collected for people experiencing homelessness to the community's census data.

For purposes of measuring performance, communities can analyze disparities in service provision, for example by analyzing outcomes by racial groups to see if the rates of successful outcomes are equitable across races and ethnicities. For example, a community may examine whether there are racial or ethnic groups who are less likely to exit to permanent housing. If 40% of people experiencing homelessness within a community are African American, it should follow that 40% of those housed through the homeless system of care are African American. If this is not the case, communities need to look closely at their system and identify where and how these racial disparities are being perpetuated. Communities should be evaluating disparities at each point in the system, from rates of coordinated entry assessments provided, scores on assessments, service referrals, and program entry, to identify areas where implicit bias and other concerns may be impacting service provision.

Only by applying this type of equity-based lens can systems truly work to end homelessness in their community.

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## HOUSING FIRST MEASURES

As mentioned in other sections of this paper, adopting Housing First principles is an important best practice in preventing and ending homelessness in any community, especially for the most vulnerable. Adherence to Housing First at the program level has an impact on many other performance indicators already under consideration by the State, especially related to decreasing the length of time an individual or family remains homeless and decreasing the number and percentage of individuals and families who exit homelessness to permanent housing destinations and return to homelessness.<sup>79</sup>

There are other metrics that can be used to determine if Housing First policies in a community are effective. A key component of Housing First is to remove unnecessary barriers to program entry, such as sobriety, income requirements, lack of a criminal record, and participation in services. As such, high rejection rates of people who meet the basic eligibility requirements for a program (i.e. those required by state or federal law) can be an indicator that Housing First principles are not being applied. As such, one measure of

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<sup>79</sup> California Homeless Coordinating and Financing Council. Request for White Papers. 2019, page 1, [https://www.bcsd.ca.gov/hcfc/documents/req\\_white\\_papers.pdf](https://www.bcsd.ca.gov/hcfc/documents/req_white_papers.pdf).

successful implementation of Housing First is a decrease in the number of persons turned away from a given program when it has capacity. Another may be decreasing the number of referrals rejected through coordinated entry for reasons other than those required by regulation.

It is also possible to evaluate Housing First by qualitative measures as well. This can be done by looking closely at a program's policies and procedures to determine if they follow the spirit of Housing First. Examples of policies that reflect a Housing First philosophy include: no requirement for detox treatment and/or days of sobriety to enter; no prohibition for program entry on the basis of mental illness diagnosis; no requirement for medication and/or treatment compliance to enter; not barring clients based on past (non-violent) rule infractions; accepts all clients regardless of sexual orientation or gender identification and follows all fair housing laws; no exclusion of persons with zero income and/or limited to no work history; and no termination of program participants for the previously listed issues nor for having low or no income, current or past substance use, history of domestic violence, failure to participate in supportive services, failure to make progress on a service plan, or criminal records (with the exceptions of restrictions imposed by federal, state or local law or ordinance).

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## MEASURES RELATED TO COORDINATED ENTRY

Coordinated entry is a critical component of creating a comprehensive and efficient homeless system of care. Similar to Housing First, an effective coordinated entry system will have a strong impact on the success of various important performance metrics, such as decreasing the length of time an individual or family remains homeless, increasing the number of successful housing placements for individuals and families experiencing homelessness, and decreasing the number and percentage of individuals and families who exit homelessness to permanent housing destinations and return to homelessness.

There are many additional ways to use data to evaluate whether a coordinated entry system is meeting expectations of effectively and efficiently assessing and referring homeless households to the most appropriate interventions. One way to measure efficiency of the system is to measure the length of time between initial contact with the coordinated entry system and assessment. Length of time between assessment and referral, time between referral and placement, and rate and length of program vacancies are also strong indicators of system efficiency.

Other metrics can look at more qualitative aspects of the system to determine its effectiveness. For example, rates of admission (or conversely, rejections) can provide information about whether the system is truly matching people with programs for which they are qualified and fit their level of need, whether programs are effectively implementing Housing First, and whether communities need to strengthen outreach practices for locating clients once they are matched to programs. Coordinated entry data can also help identify inequities in service access and provision for subpopulations, including by race, by examining whether the rates of assessment, scores, matches, and placements aligns with

the subpopulation's representation in the overall population of people experiencing homelessness.