Homeless Policy Academy Initiative:

Final Contractor's Report

Prepared for

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

Administration for Children and Families

Health Resources and Services Administration

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Administration/ Center for Mental Health Services

April 2007

Homeless Policy Academy Initiative:
Final Contractors Report

Prepared for:

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
    Administration for Children and Families
    Health Resources and Services Administration
    Substance Abuse and Mental Health Administration/Center for Mental Health Services

Prepared by:

Health Systems Research, Inc, An Altarum Company
    Jamie Hart
    Anne Hopewell
    Naomi Tein
Policy Research Associates, Inc.
    Deborah Dennis
    Margaret Lassiter
The Technical Assistance Continuity Team
    Donna Aligata
    Martha Fleetwood
    Patrick Moynahan
    Jim Wuelfing

April 2007

Table of Contents

Acronym Glossary

Acronym	Definition
ACF	Administration for Children and Families
ACT	Assertive Community Treatment
ASPE	Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation
CCBAID	(Governor's) Commission on Community-Based Alternatives to Institutionalization for People with Disabilities
CMS	Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services
CNMI	Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands
CoC	Continuum of Care
CE	Consultative Exams
CSBG	Community Services Block Grant
DDS	Disability Determination Service
DoE	Department of Education
DOL	Department of Labor
ETA	Employment and Training Administration
HCH	Healthcare for the Homeless
HHS	Department of Health and Human Services
HMIS	Homeless Management Information Systems
HRSA	Health Resources and Services Administration
HSR	Health Systems Research, Inc., an Altarum Company
HUD	Housing and Urban Development
LCW	Learning Community Workgroup
NGA	National Governor's Association
NLM	National Learning Meeting
NRTCH	National Resource and Training Center on Homelessness
PA	Policy Academy
PAPC	Policy Academy Planning Committee
PATH	Projects for Assistance in Transition from Homelessness
PRA	Policy Research Associates, Inc.
SAMHSA/CMHS	Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration/Center for Mental Health Services
SOAR	SSI/SSDI Outreach, Access, and Recovery
SSA	Social Security Administration
SSDI	Social Security Disability Insurance
SSI	Supplemental Security Income
SSR	Stepping Stones to Recovery
SWOT	Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats
TA	Technical Assistance
TACT	Technical Assistance Continuity Team
TTT	Train-the-Trainer
USDA	United States Department of Agriculture
USICH	United States Interagency Council on Homelessness
VA	Department of Veterans Affairs

The Homeless Policy Academy Initiative Final Report: Executive Summary

The following Executive Summary provides an overview to the Final Report sections concerning the project objectives and purpose, partners, processes, and promising practices; key conclusions and recommendations; and the organization and limitations of the report.

A. The Project

No single program or system has the capacity to solve the growing and complex problem of homelessness—collaboration at the Federal, State and Territory, and local levels must occur to create true systems integration and change. The Homeless Policy Academy Initiative was designed to help State and local policymakers improve access to mainstream services for individuals and families with children who are homeless.

Policy Academy Initiative Objectives
• Assist State and local policymakers in developing an Action Plan intended to improve access to mainstream health, human services, employment, and housing opportunities
• Create and reinforce relationships among key stakeholders
• Provide an environment conducive to the process of strategic decision-making
• Provide technical assistance (TA) to support action plan implementation

Between 2001 and 2007, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services—in partnership with the U.S. Departments of Housing and Urban Development, Veterans Affairs, Labor, Education, and the U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness—dedicated a total of $4,670,869 for the Homeless Policy Academy Initiative.

There is no question that the Homeless Policy Academy Initiative has served to create momentum to address homelessness as exemplified in the multiple tangible results in all 50 States, the District of Columbia, and the Territories. As a result of participation, the majority of the Policy Academy Teams have established formal interagency planning teams, a vastly improved State infrastructure composed of critical partnerships and support, and tangible outcomes related to housing, support services, discharge planning, and data infrastructure. Systems change also occurred at the Federal level: new partners became involved in addressing homelessness; technical assistance resources were coordinated and shared across contracts; and joint funding opportunities were developed and implemented.

B. The Partners: The Role of the States, Federal Partners, and Contractors

The Homeless Policy Academy Initiative focused on fostering collaboration, enhancing partnerships, and building capacity. The Federal Partners and the Federal Policy Academy Planning Committee (PAPC) formed the core of the process of each State team and were supported and enhanced by the Contractor and Technical Assistance Continuity Team (TACT).

1. The States

States participated in the Policy Academy process for a variety of reasons—to learn how to adapt successful interventions, new approaches, and promising practices; develop a common vision/plan and integrate planning efforts; improve communication and collaboration; and increase access to resources. As active participants, they were responsible for forming representative teams, creating action plans, and reporting back to the PAPC about progress on action planning and implementation activities.

The key outcomes for the State Partners included:

- **Institutionalizing the process**, including the formal establishment of a Policy Academy Team or a State Interagency Council on Homelessness, ongoing strategic planning and review processes, support and commitment from the Governor, and funding to both support the planning work of the Team and the implementation activities

- **Creating representative teams** featuring strong and committed leadership, staff dedicated to the planning and implementation process, and individuals with the power to change policies on the teams

- **Achieving tangible outcomes** related to housing, support services, discharge planning, and data infrastructure

- **Progressing toward their goal of reducing or ending homelessness** by utilizing technical assistance to provide critical resources, connect them to promising practices, and help maintain momentum.

2. The Federal Partners

The Federal Partners created and participated in the Initiative with the hope of fostering a shared vision and the leveraging of Federal resources toward the overall objective of reducing homelessness. Guided by this objective, the interagency Federal PAPC[1] met regularly and worked with the Contractor to discuss aspects of planning for the Academy meetings, to help coordinate TA across Federal

---

[1] The PAPC consisted of: 1) **a Federal Funding Partners Workgroup**—the Department of Health and Human Services [HHS] (including Administration for Children and Families, Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation, Health Resources and Services Administration, and Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration); the Department of Housing and Urban Development [HUD] Office of Special Needs Assistance Programs; the Department of Veterans Affairs; the Department of Labor; the Department of Education; and the U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness. These agencies had overall responsibility and accountability for the project activities. 2) **Collaborating Partners**—the U.S. Departments of Agriculture and Justice, and others. These agencies brought fuller representation and knowledge to the process.

contracts, to serve as members of the Federal review teams, and to provide recommendations for moving the planning process forward.

Key outcomes for the Federal Partners included:

- **Achieving a shared vision** of leveraging resources across agencies to address homelessness by implementing the three interagency Policy Academy contracts, coordinating TA resources to assist the Policy Academy Teams, and creating a jointly-funded Chronic Homelessness Initiative which was awarded to 11 grantees[2]

- **Engaging new partners**—by expanding the vision beyond housing and health and human services—who became equally engaged in the issue and contributed valuable insight, expertise, and some additional funding

- **Creating a groundbreaking, collaborative Federal effort** that modeled at the Federal level what can be done at the State and local level to address homelessness in a coordinated and collaborative fashion and created a continuous feedback loop between the Federal agencies and the States and localities.

3. Technical Assistance Continuity Team (TACT)

The objective of the Contractors and the TACT was to maintain an ongoing relationship between the Federal partners, the technical assistance recipients (which were the State Teams), and the TA providers. The project included a prime contractor, Health Systems Research, Inc, an Altarum Company; a subcontractor, Policy Research Associates, Inc. (PRA); and a group of expert consultants—the TACT.

> "The Homeless Policy Academies and TACT's work have been a great example of how when you convene the right people, facilitate collaboration, and ground the work with practical technical help, profound science to practice outcomes can be realized."
> - TACT Member

The key outcomes for the Contractors and the TACT included:

- **Providing an objective, consistent presence** for both the States and the Federal Planning Committee, which directly helped to maintain momentum in the effort, enhance communication of needs and priorities, and disseminate knowledge and highlight promising practices across the Federal, State, and local levels.

- **Coordinating and maximizing Federal resources**—both within the contract itself and across other Federal initiatives—which decreased duplication of effort and maximized the States ability to tap into technical assistance whenever possible

- **Creating timely, relevant products** for use by the States and the Federal partners that essentially form a "how to" guide for States that are interested in adapting the promising practices and for States and Federal agencies that are potentially interested in replicating the process.

---

[2] The Chronic Homelessness Initiative was jointly-funded by HUD, SAMHSA, HRSA and the VA. The grantees were selected through an interagency Objective Review Process.

C. The Process: Project Activities, Challenges, and Lessons Learned

Based on the National Governor's Association model, the Homeless Policy Academy Initiative included activities designed to help States think about new, collaborative approaches. As a **"**results-based decision-making process"—not an event—the Initiative increased awareness of evidence-based practices, provided guidance in developing Action Plans, and provided resources and technical assistance throughout the process. Specific activities included:

```
                    ┌─────────────────────────────────┐
                    │   Pre-Academy Site Visit        │
              ┌────►│ (Application, Team Development)  │
              │     └─────────────────────────────────┘
              │                    │
              │                    ▼
              │     ┌─────────────────────────────────┐
              │  ┌─►│   Policy Academy Meetings        │
              │  │  │ (Facilitation, Expert Consultation,│
    ┌──────┐  │  │  │     Plan Development)            │
    │      │──┘  │  └─────────────────────────────────┘
    │  TA  │◄────┘               │
    │      │──┐                  ▼
    └──────┘  │  ┌─────────────────────────────────┐
         ▲    └─►│ National Learning Meeting and    │
         │       │ Learning Community Workgroups    │
         │       │(Outcomes, Expert Consultation, Peer-to-peer)│
         │       └─────────────────────────────────┘
         │                       │
         │                       ▼
         │       ┌─────────────────────────────────┐
         └──────►│ State-specific TA and TA Products│
                 │(Phone and On-site Consultation, Written and Web-│
                 │ based Materials, SOAR, Web site, listserv)│
                 └─────────────────────────────────┘
```
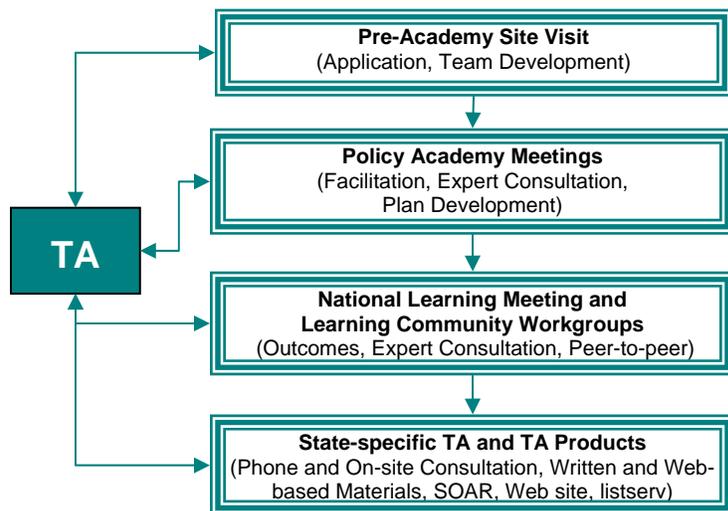
1. Pre-Academy Site Visits

Each Governor's office received an invitation to participate in the Policy Academy process and was asked to submit an application and assemble a team of senior State officials, including a representative from the Governor's office; representatives from the State's "mainstream" assistance programs; and local stakeholders, such as providers, consumers, and local government representatives. Once the teams were formed, site visits were facilitated by the Contractors and the TACT to ensure team members (some of whom had no previous knowledge of homelessness) understood the basic content-related issues, had identified barriers to the housing and service systems and opportunities for collaboration, exhibited a higher level of readiness and willingness to participate, and were able to work together better as teams.

Key outcomes from the application, team development, and site visits processes included:

- Raised awareness among Governors about the issues and in many cases created high-level buy-in for the process

- Allowed the facilitators and technical experts to assess State circumstances, assist the State Team Leads—often while on site—in ensuring appropriate team representation, and tailor the Policy Academy agendas according to identified needs.

- Ensured State Teams came to the Policy Academy meetings ready to move forward because they had spent valuable time working together, gained a common understanding of the issues, and decreased often long-standing barriers to collaboration.

2. Policy Academy Meetings

In all, more than 1,200 State participants, resources persons, and Contractors participated in the Policy Academy meetings—six regional academies focusing on chronic homelessness, three regional academies focusing on families with children who are homeless, three in-State Academies focusing on chronic homelessness, and two Pacific Basin mini-Academies focusing on both topics. The meeting agenda for all Academies featured a mix of plenary and breakout sessions with Federal and non-Federal experts/resource persons, combined with State team sessions to provide concrete blocks of time for the teams to develop their action plans with assistance from a facilitator and the resource persons of their choice.

Key outcomes from the Policy Academy meetings included:

- Provided a significant amount of time—away from home—to focus on this issue, plan strategically, and create or reinforce relationships within the State

- Provided the hands-on opportunity for States to develop an action plan with the assistance of external facilitation and on-site TA providers

- Increased the awareness of team members to Federal priorities and funding opportunities, national best and promising practices, and the valuable work of their peers.

3. National Learning Meeting (NLM) and Learning Community Workgroups (LCWs)

The NLM was held in Washington, DC, in October of 2004. The highly successful meeting included 200 participants, representing 55 of the 56 States and Territories, including the District of Columbia, Federal agency partners, public and private organizations addressing homelessness, and TA contractors. The agenda included State-led, concurrent breakout sessions on specific topics followed by facilitated discussion session; regional breakout sessions to identify Federal- and State-level barriers, challenges, and solutions; and a Listening Session to highlight the findings from the regional breakout sessions and provide direct feedback from the States to the Federal funding partners.

The Learning Community Workgroup (LCW) format was created based on feedback from the NLM that there was a desire for more peer-to-peer learning. Four topics—youth and young adults, employment, discharge planning, and data and outcome measures—were identified as common themes, challenges, and promising practices in homelessness policy and practice across States. A total of 110 State and Territory team members, representing 36 distinct States and Territories, participated in the four LCWs.

Key outcomes from the NLM and LCWs included:

- Provided an opportunity for the State and Territory teams to come together and share their experiences, challenges, successes, and lessons learned with their peers, the Federal partners, and other interested parties

- Infused new energy and ideas into State action planning and implementation activities and served as a mechanism for tracking State progress

- Led to the creation of tangible tools (e.g., PowerPoint presentations, Arizona self-sufficiency matrix) for participants to share with other team members upon returning home and for broader adaptation.

4. State-specific TA, SOAR, and TA/Knowledge Dissemination Products

Following the Policy Academies, States were required to submit a draft action plan before they could access TA. Fifty-five of the 56 States and Territories accessed some kind of follow-up TA. There were several types of TA available, including: written or web-based materials; team meeting facilitation; expert consultation on content-related issues; peer-to-peer TA; and in-State and mini-Policy Academies. The majority of requests focused on accessing mainstream resources, planning/systems change, housing, data and research, and discharge planning. In particular, an increasing number of States requested training on SSI/SSDI, which led to the creation of the SOAR Initiative. Great enthusiasm developed for this TA activity because of the possibilities of obtaining income, health care, and housing upon successful application.

Throughout this process the Contractors and the TACT developed a series of TA products to effectively share the knowledge gained throughout the Policy Academy process, including the Homeless Policy Academy Web site (www.hrsa.gov/homeless), several listservs, numerous resource binders and CDs, and a TA database.

Key outcomes from the State-specific TA and TA/knowledge dissemination products included:

- Provided external, tailored TA to individual States that was critical to the success of their action planning and implementation activities

- Created an infrastructure for providing targeted TA, maintaining momentum at the State-level, and monitoring and disseminating knowledge gained through TA with the creation of the TACT

- Created timely, relevant products and processes for use both during and after the Policy Academy Initiative ends.

D. The Promising Practices: State Activities, Challenges, and Lessons Learned

Six key organizing themes appeared repeatedly throughout the State action plans, various cross-State meetings, and requests for TA and provide a framework for discussing the State promising practices. State activities surrounding these themes included (highlights of specific State challenges and promising practices are included the table on pages x and xi, while detailed descriptions of four States – Hawaii, Indiana, Utah, and Washington, DC – are included in Appendix B):

- *Team Infrastructure and Membership*—All States created an Interagency Council on Homelessness (ICH) or other State-level collaborative body to ensure continued implementation of its plan to end homelessness. Many teams also had success in securing funding for planning and implementation activities, recruiting and sustaining strong team leads, and getting the "right" stakeholders to the table.

- *Needs Assessment and Data System Infrastructure*—Many States included data as a key priority in their plan and utilized the Policy Academy process to provide data that provided the foundation for recommendations with 10-year plans. Many teams also had success in gathering existing or collecting new data, enhancing and integrating data systems, and using data for planning and building political will.

- *Action Planning and Implementation*—52 States, Territories, and the District of Columbia developed action plans as a result of participation in the Policy Academy process. Many States were highly successful in developing and implementing their action plans due to constant monitoring and revising, efforts to integrate planning at the State and local levels, and strategies to institutionalize systems change such as interagency Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs).

- *Partnerships and Support*—All teams reported that a key outcome of the Policy Academy process was the engagement of new partners in the effort to address homelessness. Teams experienced success in building relationships with Governors and other key stakeholders, enhancing relationships with Federal agencies, and creating political will that often led to policy change.

- *Improving Access to Mainstream Resources*—Many States linked improvements in access to mainstream resources to the increased collaboration and communication across agencies created by the Policy Academy process. State activities resulted in increases in linkages between services and housing, willingness at the State level to target resources toward homelessness, housing opportunities, one-stop centers, and access to SSI/SSDI.

- *Prevention*—Most States that chose to begin implementing prevention strategies focused on developing discharge planning policies across various systems, such as hospitals, jails, and prisons. Several utilized TA to design and implement summits on discharge planning that led to the creation of tools that allow any State to pull together and go through the steps from policy to implementation.

E. The Potential: Conclusions and Recommendations

The valuable resources available to States over the course of these overlapping contracts have produced a number of key results and lessons learned. Whether at the Federal, State, or community level, a clear pattern of promising practices has emerged that is perhaps the most significant outcome of the aggregate activities conducted under these contracts. These practices can be replicated not only across future initiatives to address the challenges facing individuals and families who are homeless, but can also provide guidance to other Federal and State collaborative efforts to address other critical health and human service program needs.

As the contracts end, the majority of the Policy Academy Teams have established formal interagency planning teams, a vastly improved State infrastructure composed of critical partnerships and support, and tangible outcomes related to housing, support services, discharge planning, and data infrastructure. Overall, the process has enhanced and in some cases created an invaluable, collaborative infrastructure for addressing homelessness at the Federal, State, and local levels. Yet, as we have seen over the last seven years, it is difficult to maintain momentum in light of changing State and Federal team memberships or administrations, scarce resources, and competing priorities even for the most stable teams.

Key Lessons Learned
• Systems change is often a nonlinear, time-consuming process that requires patience and persistence • Strategic and coordinated TA resources benefit both State and Federal partners, and States benefit from a strategic "TA package" that helps to maximize resources • Effective TA must be tailored to meet States needs; therefore, it is important to have a menu of topics, formats, and experts from which to choose • Consistency is key in providing the support needed by the State and Federal partners

As outlined below, there are several potential options related to TA products, the continuation of the TACT model, expansion of the SOAR model, and multi-State meetings that could help support and enhance the valuable work that has already been accomplished with the States.

- *Continuation of TA products (or "TACT-light"):* As discussed in Chapter IV, the TA provided valuable support and connection for the State Teams. Ongoing resources for existing TA products could include maintaining and updating the Homeless Policy Academy Website (http://www.hrsa.gov/homeless) and listservs, posting resource binders on the Website and updating them annually, updating the TACT database by reconnecting with the Policy Academy team once or twice a year, and completing TACT products.

- *Continuation of the TACT model:* In order to sustain and enhance the relationships that been established with the States over the past five years, a higher level of support may be required. A second option could include work with the TACT to provide several phone contacts and one TA activity per State over a 5-year period, development of comprehensive State/Territory profiles, and regular meetings and reporting activities with a Federal interagency planning workgroup.

- *Expansion of the SOAR model:* As a focused, intensive TA Initiative, SOAR has created measurable, sustainable systems change. The Initiative could be expanded to support the existing SOAR States, include more States, or adapt the model to fit another topical focus (e.g., partnerships for youth housing).

- *Creation of Leadership Summits:* The TACT and the Contractors spent a lot of time working with State Team Leads to maintain their momentum and to follow through on plan implementation activities. The capacity of the States to continue their work in the long run could be enhanced through a series of regional, peer-focused "Leadership Summits" where the State Team Leads would come together to review and update action plans, revisit team infrastructure and membership, identify strategies for working with key stakeholders, and share lessons learned during the planning and implementation process with peers.

- *Expansion of the Learning Community Workgroups:* The LCWs were the most highly rated meeting formats throughout the contract because of the focus on topic-specific peer-to-peer learning and the smaller, more interactive setting. Expansion of the model could include a repeat of one or more of the previously conducted, follow-up work with original LCW attendees, develop LCWs on new topics, and exploration of the use of technology.

- *Institution of Annual National Learning Meeting:* Many States appreciated the opportunity to come together with their colleagues from all 56 States and Territories to discuss activities, challenges, successes, and lessons learned and suggested that meetings of this type be held every year or every other year. This would also provide the Federal partners with an opportunity to assess the States' progress.

F. Report Purpose and Organization

The purpose of this report is to provide an historical account and assessment of the process, activities, challenges, and lessons learned of the Homeless Policy Academy Initiative based upon the three contracts held by Health Systems Research, Inc., an Altarum Company, between September 2001 and March 2007. The report is organized as follows:

Report Organization
I.   *THE PROMISING PRACTICES:* State Activities, Challenges, and Lessons Learned
II.   *THE PROJECT:* Introduction and Overview of the Initiative
III. *THE PARTNERS:* The Role of the States, Federal Partners, and Contractors
IV.   *THE PROCESS:* Project Activities, Challenges, and Lessons Learned
V.   *THE POTENTIAL:* Conclusions and Recommendations

Although the Executive Summary begins with the description of the project, partners, and processes to provide an overview and summary of the project, we have chosen to begin with the promising practices in the body of the report to tell a story about the content of the meetings and TA and the systems change that occurred and continues to occur. Due in part to the fact that the Homeless Policy Academy Plans originally were intended to range from 3-5 years, many of the changes are yet to be fully measured and quantified. It is important to note that Chapters II through IV focus on the Policy Academy process and provide data including: numbers of events and participants, average evaluation scores, and project expenditures.

G. Report Limitations

Homelessness is clearly a complex issue. But the response to homelessness is also extremely complex and cannot be addressed with a one-size-fits all approach. There is no question that the Policy Academy process has created progress in every State and Territory, which has manifested in the creation or enhancement of State infrastructures to address homelessness, targeted use of data, development of action plans, creation and enhancement of collaborative relationships, improved access to mainstream resources, and development and implementation of homelessness prevention strategies. Yet States and Territories entered the Policy Academy process at various stages—from those with existing and advanced infrastructures to address homelessness to those for whom the issue was just beginning to be discussed at the State level—and faced unique internal dynamics.

These individual circumstances and experiences mean that while we are able to quantify various measurable outcomes, they are sometimes more anecdotal than representative across the board. In addition, although we can often show that if it had not been for the Policy Academy process a certain path would not have been taken, we are not always able to neatly tie the outcomes directly to a State's participation. Finally, because State plans were originally intended to address a 3-5 year timeframe, many States are currently in the midst of implementing their action plans and have not yet begun to experience intermediate- or long-term outcomes.

As highlighted in the chapters that follow, the Homeless Policy Academy Initiative created many tangible results related to increasing access to mainstream services. The majority of the Policy Academy Teams have established formal interagency planning teams, a vastly improved State infrastructure composed of critical partnerships and support, and tangible outcomes related to housing, support services, discharge planning, and data infrastructure. The Policy Academies were a critical component in beginning the process of homelessness systems change at the State level by enhancing the team members' understanding of the following issues: involving consumers in the planning and implementation process; getting "buy in" from key stakeholders and systems; enhancing collaboration and coordination; and formalizing mechanisms for addressing homelessness statewide (through the creation of an action plan and often the institutionalization of the Policy Academy Team or State Interagency Council). Systems change also occurred at the Federal level: new partners became involved in addressing homelessness; technical assistance resources were coordinated and shared across contracts; and joint funding opportunities were developed and implemented.

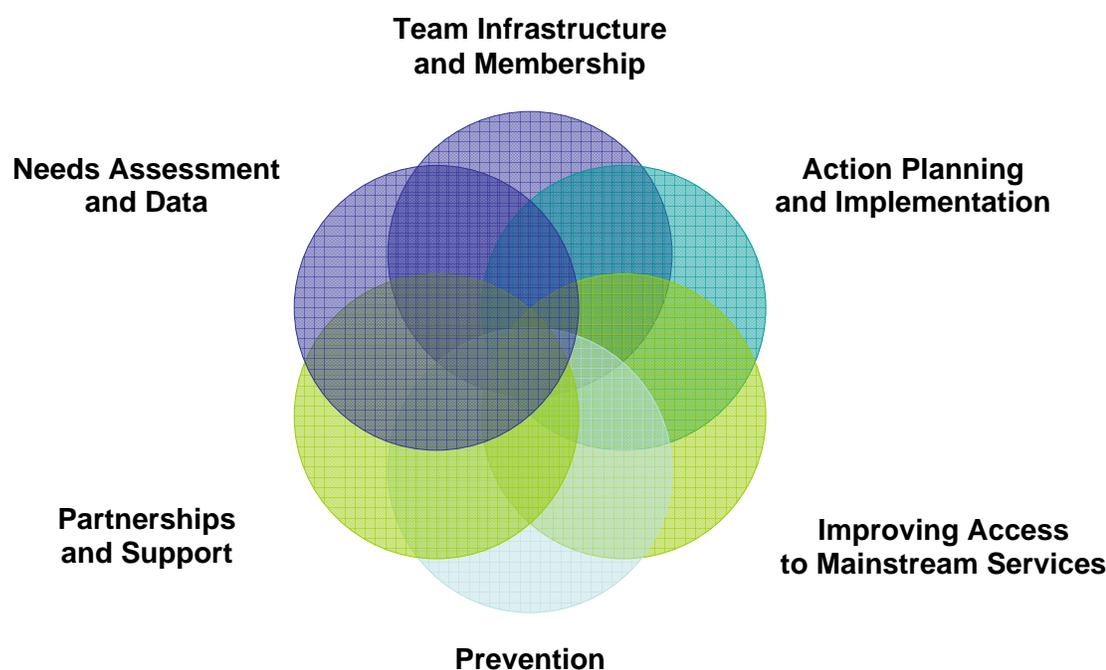| Summary of State Challenges and Promising Practices	
Challenges	**Promising Practices**
Team Infrastructure and Membership	
- Maintaining momentum for action planning and implementation - Lack of adequate staff support - Getting buy-in from other agencies - Changes in Governor or lack of political buy-in from Governor - Turnover in ICH membership, especially key champions	- Creating an Interagency Council on Homelessness (ICH) or other State-level oversight body to ensure continued implementation of its plan to end homelessness (all States) - Building on the infrastructure identified and enhanced during the Policy Academy process to maintain momentum during Hurricane Katrina (LA) - Supporting staffing for the ICH by using Volunteers In Service To America (VISTA) (AL, MT, WY), securing funds from multiple Federal agencies (NC and OR), or securing Legislative funding (VI) - Getting buy-in from the Governor, government officials, and key stakeholders (HI, PR, UT) - Ensuring key agencies are involved by identifying stakeholders and expanding membership (CO, LA, NE) - Developing and sustaining strong leadership during the plan implementation phase and/or changes in ICH membership and administration at the State level (AZ, CO, DC, HI, MT, ME, PR, UT, VI, WY)
Needs Assessment and Data System Infrastructure	
- Documenting the issues, due in part to the lack of data on housing status within mainstream services - Coordinating data systems in relation to Federal reporting requirements	- Including data as a key priority in their plans and established data working groups - Gathering existing data and collecting new relevant data by conducting targeted studies and focus groups (HI, DE), supporting data collection at the local level (MI), and maximizing Point-in-Time surveys by creating a core survey or conducting training for Continuums of Care (CoCs) (FL, NC) - Creating, enhancing, implementing, and integrating data collection systems within and across agencies by engaging mainstream partners (KS, GA, OR, UT) and utilizing Homeless Management Information Systems to inform and assess planning processes (AZ, CO, DC, NC, UT, VT) - Interpreting data to guide planning and program design by developing funding matrices and conducting cost benefit studies (AZ, CT, DE, GA, IL, ME, NC, RI, SD) - Using data to build political will by creating fact sheets, making data available online, and developing champions (GA, HI, MO, MT, UT)
Action Planning and Implementation	
- Limited resources - Creating plans that are too ambitious - Reaching consensus on common priorities and goals - Integrating various planning activities - Getting the appropriate stakeholders to the table - Ensuring local involvement	- Viewing the plans as living documents and revising them frequently as new needs were identified and as programs were implemented (MO, MT, PR) - Integrating planning processes, at times by matching TA resources with State funds to host a large-scale meeting focused on consensus across all constituencies (CA) - Translating State activities to the local level by creating local coordinating committees (MI, UT), aligning plans with local CoC plans (MO), supporting TA processes in cities and tribes to create plans (ND), and hosting statewide planning summits or Policy Academy processes at the local/jurisdictional levels (GA, PR) - Hosting "Leadership Summits" help teams expand membership, update plans, and target resources more effectively across the State (KY, OR, NC) - Institutionalizing systems change by developing Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) outlining roles and responsibilities for agency partners (CT) and creating products that make change both transparent and measurable (DC)

Summary of State Promising Practices	
Challenge	**Promising Practices**
Partnerships and Support	
- Identifying concrete ways to involve partners - Maintaining momentum - Building political will at the local and State level - Lack of awareness among policy makers, public officials, and the general public	- Numerous States said the Academy process led to stronger relationships with the Governor, and in some cases these relationships led directly into policy change (HI, MT) - Building capacity by including consumers, creating interagency working groups at State and county levels, assisting local areas in the development of action plans, bringing Continuums of Care together at meetings, and coordinating CoC reports - Engaging new partners new partners, including legislators, housing finance agencies, employment, Veterans Affairs, law enforcement, criminal justice systems, the National Homebuilders Association, VISTA, AmeriCorps, the Interagency Council on Hunger and Poverty, and retired executives from nonprofit organizations - Engaging key State agencies partners by forming partnerships across State agencies (DE, NV) and formalizing collaboration among State agencies through MOUs focusing on discharge planning (KY, ME. VI) - Building political will and creating policy change by forming policy groups (AR, RI) and supporting implementation of legislation (CA) - Increasing access to mainstream services and housing through funding from the State and nontraditional partners (UT), assisting with Governor-initiated task forces (HI), using one city as an "incubator" to begin applying some of the strategies set forth in the plan (MT), and launching a Supportive Housing Initiative that commits the State to 3,000 new units of housing with 5 years of services dollars attached (LA)
Improving Access to Mainstream Resources	
- Overextending existing mainstream resources - Addressing the "silo" mentality among agencies prior to the Policy Academy Initiative difficult to address	- Increasing access to SSI/SSDI through the SOAR TA Initiative, which has led to outcomes averaging 62 percent approval on initial applications; the involvement of local HUD CoCs and Social Security field offices as well as State agencies responsible for mental health, workforce development, corrections and disability determination services; and sustainability of SOAR at the local level by reallocating existing resources or attracting new funding (AZ, CO, CT, DC, FL, GA, HI, IN, KY, MD, MA, MI, MN, MT, NV, NJ, NC, OH, OK, OR, PA, TN, UT, VA, WA) - Creating One-stop Resource Centers to end and/or prevent homelessness among at-risk families (AZ, CO) - Focusing on affordable housing, which led to the creation of a $2 million rental assistance program for people with mental illness with extremely low incomes (NE), a $100 million bond from the Legislature to create 17,000 new affordable housing units (HI), and a supportive housing program that has created permanent supportive housing with services for 8,000 people who were homeless (IL)
Prevention	
- Conflicting regulations and laws regarding discharge across institutions - Lack of adequate housing for people exiting institutions - Lack of communication between the systems involved in discharge planning	- Implementing prevention strategies focused on developing discharge planning policies across various systems, such as hospitals, jails, and prisons - Using TA resources to begin developing plans and/or formal agreements to stop discharge into homelessness from all State-funded institutions - Creating discharge planning policies for all institutions or statewide with an implementation outline (DC, IN, PR) - Using TA to design and host summits on discharge planning with system-specific breakouts, cross-system agreements for a unified policy on discharge planning, and final reports for distribution (ME, LA, PR)

Chapter I.   The Promising Practices: State Activities, Challenges, and Lessons Learned

The States participated in the Policy Academy process with an overall goal of increasing access to mainstream services and more specifically to learn about promising practices, develop or enhance Statewide action plans, integrate current planning efforts, improve and create collaborative relationships, and create systems change. Although States entered the Policy Academy process at different levels and faced unique internal dynamics, all directly benefited from the experience.

The following section provides an overview of the activities undertaken by the State Teams, challenges they faced, the successful strategies, and lessons learned along the way. Six key organizing themes appeared repeatedly throughout the State action plans, various cross-State meetings, and requests for TA. These themes are represented in the following graphic:

Team Infrastructure and Membership

Needs Assessment and Data

Action Planning and Implementation

Partnerships and Support

Improving Access to Mainstream Services

Prevention

The summary table on the following page summarizes the specific challenges States faced within each of the organizing themes and highlights some promising practices developed as a result of participation in the Policy Academy process. The remainder of the chapter provides a more in-depth analysis of the State activities, challenges, and lessons learned.

A. Team Infrastructure and Membership

1. Summary of Activities Across States

Every State, the District of Columbia, and Territory that participated in the Homeless Policy Academy Initiative created or enhanced an Interagency Council (ICH) or other State-level oversight body to ensure continued implementation of its plan to end homelessness. In most Policy Academy plans, establishment of this type of State-level body was one of the first goals. For about half the States, the Policy Academy team became the State's ICH. In other cases, the Policy Academy team added key stakeholders that were not represented on the original team, frequently from Departments of Labor and Education, the business community, cultural organizations, and consumers. Some of these were identified during the Policy Academy planning process as necessary partners in plan implementation. In other cases, the Policy Academy team was subsumed by another, often larger, Governor-appointed council. Sometimes Policy Academy team members served on subcommittees of these larger councils. Most Interagency Councils were created by Executive Order of the Governor, sometimes in conjunction with the adoption of the State's plan to end homelessness.

2. Challenges, Opportunities, and Lessons Learned

One of the greatest challenges facing Policy Academy teams was maintaining the momentum needed to implement their plans. Finding adequate staff support, getting appropriate buy-in from other agencies, and adjusting to changes in administration and ICH membership all threatened teams' momentum.

> **Challenges to Maintaining Momentum**
> - Lack of adequate staff support
> - Getting buy-in from other agencies or upper-level management of those agencies
> - Change in Governor and/or lack of political buy-in from the Governor
> - Turn-over in ICH membership, especially key champion of the plan

States frequently mentioned that the already extensive job responsibilities of the agency staff served as a barrier to maintaining momentum. A few States were able to find funding for a dedicated staff position for the ICH and plan implementation activities, such as Florida, Missouri, North Carolina, Iowa, and Montana.

Frequently other agencies joined the newly-formed ICH at the invitation of the Governor. A new Governor could also change key membership in the State's ICH. Getting these new members up to speed on what had already been done and getting buy-in to the existing plan frequently slowed down the momentum. Delaware, Hawaii, Indiana, Maryland, New Mexico, North Dakota, and Texas all used expert facilitation to blend new teams and get buy-in for their plans.

A change in administration, and the concomitant change in priorities, often slowed momentum. In some States, lack of gubernatorial support all but stopped the process. Sometimes, a strong, committed leader or staff person of the ICH was able to maintain the necessary political buy-in to keep the process moving. Montana and the District of Columbia are examples of States that have been able to maintain their momentum despite a change in administration.

Among the lessons learned from the States' experiences in developing a sustainable oversight structure to maintain momentum is the critical role of strong leadership. Frequently this champion turned out to be the State Team Lead from the Policy Academy team, which explains

why a change in team leadership often had such an impact. There were States that had very weak Team Leads, and their progress was not as significant.

Consequently, the loss of a champion, be it staff, the Policy Academy team lead, or an ICH member, sometimes proved devastating to a State's momentum. In most instances, State efforts in plan implementation were slowed until the team re-grouped and identified a new leader (e.g. Iowa and Georgia). In some instances, all momentum ceased (e.g. Alaska and New Mexico).

Another lesson is the importance of having all pertinent systems involved in planning and implementation efforts. This was stressed during the pre-Academy site visits and many States returned home to invite other key systems, such as workforce development, education, and veterans, to join their effort.

Adequate staffing and political buy-in are both critical components to maintaining momentum. Frequently key staff can assist in maintaining momentum during a change in administration and maintain the necessary buy-in to move implementation efforts forward.

3. Specific State Highlights of Promising Practices

Maintaining momentum: Possibly the most dramatic example of impact of the Policy Academy effort is Louisiana. After the hurricanes in 2005 the Policy Academy team did not meet for a year. The team merged with the State's ICH, which allowed for greater geographic representation and the

> "The Policy Academy Process is directly responsible for the quick and effective response to [Hurricane] Katrina on behalf of historically homeless people."
> -Louisiana State Team Member

inclusion of all State agencies active in the hurricane relief effort, which was expanded to address all homeless. As the result of the Policy Academy process, the team members knew which Federal resources were available to support their efforts and shared expertise on which strategies to implement. Additionally, interagency agreements had already been forged. Policy Academy team members were key in initiating systems change in the chaos that followed Hurricane Katrina.

Staffing: Iowa, North Carolina and Oregon had multiple agencies contribute a nominal amount to support paid staff for their ICH. Montana, Alabama, and Wyoming used VISTA volunteers to help staff their ICH. In Alabama these volunteers assisted with the creation of the initial State Plan and developed a Web site. The Virgin Islands included funds for administration of its ICH in its budget, which includes support staff.

Getting buy-in: Hawaii's State Team Lead used data to get the Governor's buy-in for implementing their plan and to create the affordable housing necessary to end homelessness. Montana used data on homelessness in the State to get political buy-in to support the creation of their Council. Puerto Rico and Utah also were successful in getting support from key stakeholders and government officials.

Having the right agencies at the table: The Colorado Council has over 40 members with five active subcommittees. Such a wide membership across different State departments has provided an opportunity for collaboration across delivery systems. In Louisiana the original Policy Academy team was expanded to include representatives from key State agencies, such as Medicaid, Labor, and Addictive Disorders. Nebraska, among others, expanded their Team to ensure that the diverse geographic and cultural communities are represented.

Having strong leadership: There were several States with strong leadership throughout the Initiative that provided essential continuity and assisted in maintaining momentum. States with strong leadership included Arizona, Colorado, Hawaii, Montana, Nebraska, Puerto Rico, Utah, Virgin Islands, and Washington, DC. This type of leadership played an important role in plan implementation efforts and successes. Perhaps more importantly, this leadership was able to shepherd the State's plan through changes in ICH membership and administration at the State level.

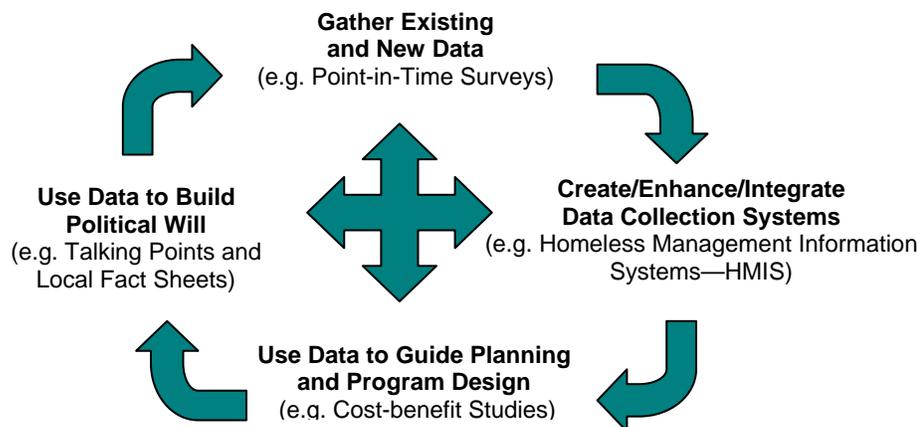## B. Needs Assessment and Data System Infrastructure

1. Summary of Activities Across States

Teams quickly realized the importance of needs assessment and data collection and integration in any successful plan to reduce or end homelessness. Many States included data as a key priority in their plans and established data working groups, many of which provided data and recommendations that provided the foundation for the recommendations included in

> "The information gained at the Data Learning Community Workgroup helped us to strategize about statewide implementation of HIMS, creating consistency in delivery of future point-in-time surveys, and the importance of early publication of statewide data to further discussion."
>
> -Alabama State Team Member

the 10-year plan. Most States also said they used the data gathered to directly inform the planning at the State level—and when data were used in an informed, strategic manner, it often led to the expansion of existing programs or the implementation of new ones. Ultimately, many States said they appreciated having the time to focus on data as a priority during the action planning process and benefited from the information on best practices and peer exchanges provided at the various Policy Academy meetings and through State-specific TA activities.

States received TA written information and on-site consultation on a variety of topics, including data systems integration, performance measure development, and HMIS. Peer-to-peer consultation was provided on data collection, research methodologies, and data management. Several States also used contract resources to assist them in conducting cost-benefit and needs assessment studies. As described in greater detail in the following sections, State activities focused on four key, often nonlinear steps:

Gather Existing and New Data
(e.g. Point-in-Time Surveys)

Create/Enhance/Integrate Data Collection Systems
(e.g. Homeless Management Information Systems—HMIS)

Use Data to Guide Planning and Program Design
(e.g. Cost-benefit Studies)

Use Data to Build Political Will
(e.g. Talking Points and Local Fact Sheets)

2. Challenges, Opportunities, and Lessons Learned

Documenting the extent of homelessness is a crucial step in building political will and planning effectively to address homelessness, yet many States and Territories are struggling with documentation and coordination of reporting systems. Geographic and cultural contexts proved critical to States' ability to collect appropriate data. Some States reported a lack of capacity in many rural areas to collect data. Several States faced the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, and in some cases a newly homeless population, many of whom were Hispanic, within areas with little Spanish language capacity among providers. Several States also pointed to the lack of culturally and regionally appropriate data collection elements and tools, including the mismatch between demographic items from one Federal agency to the next (e.g., "Hispanic" as racial or ethnic choice), inconsistencies regarding undocumented people, and very different cultural understandings of homelessness in several of the Pacific Basin jurisdictions.

Many States have also highlighted the lack of data on housing status within mainstream services, emphasizing that many agencies may not even know if they are serving persons who are homeless, because they do not ask for housing status. Collaboration can be difficult because there is typically no incentive for providers who do not receive funding from State or Federal sources. States have also voiced frustration with Federal reporting requirements. Many struggle with trying to implement Homeless Management Information Systems (HMIS).

> "It would be useful to have a multi-agency Federal policy mandating (or at least encouraging) sharing information pertinent to homeless populations. It would be useful to have clear permission to begin moving toward better data collection."
>
> - State Team Member

3. Specific State Highlights of Promising Practices

Gathering existing data and collecting new relevant data: The Policy Academy process provided the opportunity for Teams to take a step back and examine the data that were currently being collected; identify possible gaps; consider what new data should be collected; and generate ways to improve the collection, analysis, and use of findings. Some Policy Academy Teams collected new data by conducting studies to look at issues such as State housing policy in Hawaii or by conducting focus groups with consumers and front line staff in Delaware. Some States also financially supported the collection of data at the local level, as Michigan did in a local community planning RFP sent out statewide that included data as a key priority. Many Policy Academy Teams focused on conducting Point-in-Time surveys on a more consistent basis, while others sought to improve the process by developing a core survey for use statewide as in Florida, or by conducting a one-day training/facilitated planning session for the Continuum of Care throughout the State as in North Carolina. Colorado shared a comprehensive 10-step process to conduct a point-in-time survey with examples of data results during several Policy Academy meetings. As a follow up to all of these activities, several Teams mentioned that State-specific point-in-time data could prove useful to other States to provide context.

Creating, enhancing, implementing, and integrating data collection systems within and across agencies: All States involved in the Policy Academy were involved with a Homeless Management Information Systems (HMIS) at some level—from just beginning to consider implementation to looking for ways to expand and integrate long-standing systems, particularly with those of mainstream service providers. Several States suggested that although the HUD mandate requiring all CoCs to have an HMIS could at times be difficult to implement, the actual

requirement provided them with the necessary Federal support to get some State- and Federally-funded providers on board with HMIS. States nonetheless found it challenging to find funding to support HMIS and to integrate data across systems. Yet many States were creatively approaching these challenges and using HMIS to both inform and assess planning processes. Some examples of promising practices that were begun or enhanced as part of the Policy Academy process include:

- In Colorado, HMIS has been implemented across all 3 CoCs and has been fully integrated with the 211 system, which connects people with important community services and referral agencies in states and local communities as well as volunteer opportunities. They saved infrastructure costs by partnering with the United Way on system management, and have partnered with the City of Denver to help evaluate the outcomes of their 10-year plan.

- In North Carolina, ICH funds were used to support the development of a Balance of State HMIS that is now the "system of choice" in 97 of 100 counties.

- In Utah, point-in-time counts will be reconciled with HMIS reports and HMIS will be used to report monthly on the number of homeless in agencies serving people who are homeless.

- In Arizona, a self-sufficiency matrix that was created for monitoring outcomes—and highlighted at several Policy Academy meetings and State-specific TA events—has been integrated with HMIS, and is now being replicated in California and Utah and adapted in Indiana and Washington, DC.

> "All agencies case managing homeless are using [**the Arizona self-sufficiency matrix**], inputting it into the HMIS, and preparing quarterly reports to track improvements. Thanks to the PA TA for the facilitator who informed us about this model and for the peer-to-peer TA we engaged in."
> -Utah State Team Member

- In Washington DC, the existing HMIS has been used to support the ICH in developing a data-driven plan, conducting regular needs assessments, and using data to evaluate outcomes.

States were also finding creative ways to involve key partners within mainstream services. With the overarching focus on increasing access to mainstream services in mind, many Policy Academy Teams proactively pursued partners from outside of the targeted homeless system to encourage their participation in HMIS and other data sharing activities. In a resource-scarce environment, collaboration often proved difficult. Yet States developed effective strategies such as involving key stakeholders early in the planning process, providing relevant and compelling data to help all Team participants understand how homelessness affects their service populations and staff, and developing action plan priorities and strategies that cut across agencies. The benefits of such partnerships were actualized in many ways as a result of the Policy Academy process. In Oregon, the Department of Housing and Community Services expanded HMIS to include homeless, Community Services Block Grant (CSGB), food stamps, and other programs. In Utah, State Departments and agencies discharging clients from public facilities or systems now identify those who may become homeless upon discharge. And in Kansas, data was used to make a compelling case to housing authorities about changes that are needed in policies.

Interpreting data to guide planning and program design: As mentioned above, many of the Policy Academy Teams used the data collection and analysis process to directly inform the planning at the State level. In Georgia, the strategic use of data led to the expansion of existing housing and services in areas of high need, and in Illinois, it led to the implementation of new programs focusing on supportive housing and homeless prevention. States were also savvy about using the processes to assess their efforts and ensure appropriate use of resources. For example, while in the process of developing their 10-year plan, Delaware developed a funding matrix of emergency, transitional, and supportive housing programs that is now used to assess success in increasing funding for homelessness and to ensure that funding is not simply shifted from one area to another without consideration of possible impacts.

Many States were also interested in developing cost benefit studies and did so with support from the Policy Academy contract (although contract resources were used to provide expert

> "The cost-benefit technical assistance provided to the local Continuums of Care was invaluable."
> -Utah State Team Member

consultation to State Teams on how to conduct the cost benefit studies, but not used to conduct the actual study). Arizona has created a model for program evaluation, including design, tools, pilot and lessons learned. Private sector, university, Federal and State agency resources were all leveraged to assist in the development of a cost-benefit study for the Phoenix area and a second is underway in Tucson. In South Dakota, a local coalition completed study of the cost to provide services to individuals who are chronically homeless, and the State ICH is beginning to gather data related to cost of providing services across the State. In Rhode Island, combining State funds for services and United Way funds for evaluation component of a Supporting Housing Pilot has resulted in engaging the broader community in the supportive housing movement. Efforts to conduct cost benefit studies are also underway in Connecticut, Maine, and North Carolina, among other States.

Using data to build political will: One lesson learned by many States at the beginning stages of data collection and analysis was to start by using the data they already had to create fact sheets and engage champions to talk about the issue of homelessness and the commitment at the State level to address it. And among States with existing data collection and analysis systems, they sought to "make the case" among policy makers in a variety of ways. In Montana, the data and report galvanized the Lt. Governor to lead its State ICH and to send a letter—with the action plan attached—to all incoming legislators. In Georgia, the media, Governor, and mayors all use the cost benefit study as a platform to emphasize the need to address the issue and to inform policy making. In Missouri, the Team has created one-page talking points for legislators and for use at local events. In Montana, Utah, and many other States, data from homeless point-in-time surveys are available on line and used to define the homeless population by areas across the State— valuable information that can be tailored and shared with local political leaders. And Hawaii's housing policy study influenced the Governor to launch a campaign to develop affordable housing. Finally, many States also found that the best practices and research provided throughout the Policy Academy process were very helpful in the education of political and community leaders.

C. Action Planning and Implementation

1. Summary of Activities Across States

States not only wrote their plans, but continued to monitor and revise them throughout the Initiative. This process required the most effort by the Contractor and TACT, both behind the scenes through multiple planning calls and in providing on-site TA. The most successful States viewed the plans as living documents that changed frequently as new needs were identified and as programs were implemented.

In many cases, when a new Governor was elected, a new ICH was formed, or when goals were achieved, States would ask for TA to revisit their plans. Iowa, Maryland, Michigan, Nevada, and New Jersey are examples of States that revised their plan in this way and received critical TA to help maintain momentum within a new administration. And as other entities, such as counties and cities, began developing their own 10-year plans to end homelessness, many States requested assistance in integrating the State's plan (sometimes both a families and a chronic plan if the State attended both Policy Academies) with others, including Continuum of Care plans, and other local plans. This process enabled States to set goals with significant State and local buy-in, examples include California, Hawaii, Missouri, North Carolina, and Puerto Rico. By combining and integrating plans, States avoided duplication of effort as well as ensuring that all key stakeholder groups agreed with the goals and implementation strategies of its plan to end homelessness.

2. Challenges, Opportunities, and Lessons Learned

States faced numerous challenges in developing and implementing their action plans. In developing the plans, many States felt they were tempted to address everything during the Policy Academy meeting and later had to come back to set priorities and create a more feasible plan. Many also found it difficult to get all the necessary key stakeholders to the table both during the plan development and integration phases. And due to lack of awareness of the issues, turf issues, competing priorities, and geographic or cultural splits, it was often difficult to reach consensus on common priorities and goals. Leadership changes, within the Team and the administration, often meant plans were in danger of becoming dormant and required targeted efforts on the part of the State, TACT, and Contractors to resurrect. Funding was also a critical concern, as funding streams often fostered competition rather than collaboration. As States created and approved plans with extremely limited resource allocation, little implementation was able to occur.

Completing the process of integrating multiple plans often served to revive and refresh the plan and to ensure broad support for the goals and action steps of the plan. However, one of the challenges in integrating multiple plans was the conflicting priorities and goals of each plan and competing political agendas. In particular, Teams experienced challenges related to moving a State-led activity out to the local level. Some felt the lack of local involvement in the initial State team lessened the impact of the results because the local level input was needed to focus plan strategies and action steps. In some cases local communities were interested in becoming involved in the planning activities but had difficulty identifying funding for planning committee work or consultants. One State, Florida, felt a key lesson learned was to transfer the Policy Academy activities from the State to the local Continuum of Care to ensure sustainability and localized strategies.

3. Specific State Highlights of Promising Practices

Despite these challenges, many States were highly successful in developing and implementing their action plans. States used the process to create a focused vision and integrate planning activities, translate the State Policy Academy activities to the local level, bring critical players together in "Leadership Summits," and institutionalize true systems change.

Integrating planning processes: As described above, many teams used the Policy Academy process to create a focused vision and to streamline and enhance planning activities at the State level. California, in particular, used a creative model and made effective use of the opportunity for an in-State policy academy on chronic homelessness. They matched TACT resources with State funds to allow a large-scale gathering focused on consensus across all constituencies. Hundreds of potential strategies were generated, debated, and winnowed down into a workable Plan. The process educated all attendees, particularly State ICH members, at a level of detail useful to implementation. The State now has two parallel plans – one on families who are homeless and one on individual who are chronically homeless – under the Council for implementation.

> "Transition across Administrations required a sustained focus by the Federal agencies and advocates within the State, to assure a Plan was developed and supported."
> -California State Team Member

Translating State activities to the local level: Many States also focused on moving the State Policy Academy activities to the local level in a variety of ways, including a statewide Summit to review the 10-year plan and align CoCs with specific strategies to generate new housing units in Missouri; hosting a joint, Statewide planning conference and creating an RFP to assist with integration of local planning; and hosting Policy Academy meetings at the local/jurisdictional levels in Puerto Rico and Georgia. In Utah, twelve Local Homeless Coordinating Committees with a political leader as chair and a State person in attendance have been created to focus local dialogue and planning and identify potential pilot projects. In North Dakota, its Interagency Council funded a TA process to seven cities, towns, and tribes, encouraging them to write their own plans and align the plans with the State plan. Michigan, Missouri, Puerto Rico, and Utah were all working to ensure the work being done at the State level was "in sync" with local and CoC efforts across the State.

In Montana, TA was used to design an "incubator" community that would implement one program idea within the plan and to pilot test it. This methodology was repeated in Missouri. In Utah, a tool was developed to show how each locality could get a mini-ICH off the ground. They also hosted an annual summit where they unveiled a new housing project groundbreaking and showed the progress of last year's project under construction.

Hosting Leadership Summits: Several States used TA funds to bring together stakeholders at the local, State, and Federal levels in "Leadership Summits." A particularly promising practice, the Summits was designed to help teams expand membership, update plans, and target resources more effectively across the State. Kentucky conducted a very productive Summit and, as a result, developed and implemented a six-month action plan. Oregon's Summit brought together over 100 participants, including State Representatives, Mayors, city council members, county commissioners, and Federal, State, and local officials. And in North Carolina, jurisdictional leaders identified 3-5 of their plan leaders to participate in a 24 hour event focusing on lessons

learned from communities further along in implementing their plans. They also announced targeted State resources to support local efforts.

Institutionalizing systems change: Many teams also used this process to build critical partnerships, develop political will, and create true systems change. In Connecticut, the action planning process and development of MOU outlining roles and responsibilities helped each agency reach a common understanding of the problem to be solved, gain an increased familiarity with the language and cultures of other agencies, and make the necessary changes to old agency habits that once served as barriers to cooperation. In Washington, DC, "Signature Strategies" were developed to succinctly convey work that was in the process of being launched or transformed, so that change would become transparent and measurable.

In Louisiana, this systems change process helped dramatically in coordinating Federal, State, and local resources during natural disaster. Here, the Policy Academy process was seen as directly responsible for the quick and effective response to Hurricane Katrina on behalf of historically homeless people. In the midst of chaos, systems change was possible. The Policy Academy Team members knew what the solutions were that would work in Louisiana and which Federal resources would support these efforts. They were already in agreement, across departments and areas of expertise, about what strategies to implement, and were able to move these forward as part of the recovery work.

D. Partnerships and Support

1. Summary of Activities Across States

One common progression in the State and Territory Teams' activities is the inclusion of additional partners and stakeholders. Teams expanded their vision and built capacity by including consumers in all phases of planning and implementation, creating interagency working groups at State and county levels, assisting local areas in the development of action plans, and bringing CoCs together at meetings and coordinating CoC reports. States and Territories also enhanced buy-in and expanded capacity by asking State agencies to educate one another on their programs and how they impact each other, getting local representatives from State agencies to meet with local planning teams and providers, and using local plans to end homelessness as tools for the statewide planning activities.

States also brought a range of new partners to help with the plan development and implementation processes, including legislators, housing finance agencies, employment, Veterans Affairs, law enforcement, employment centers, criminal justice systems, the National Homebuilders Association, VISTA, AmeriCorps, Interagency Council on Hunger and Poverty, and retired executives from nonprofit organizations. Collaboration within the State led to increased collaboration across agencies, partnerships across housing and service entities aimed to launch new efforts, and joint funding for homeless coordinator positions and data collection efforts. Collaboration across State agencies often tended to be informal, particularly in States with smaller populations, as the same players were often at the table. Yet many States also formalized Memoranda of Understanding to

> "The Policy Academy process allowed disparate government departments to come together in a unified effort to solve a problem common to their constituents."
>
> - Washington DC Team Member

facilitate interagency collaboration, share data, address discharge planning, and develop administrative policies to address homelessness.

Many States also sought to build political will through strategic partnerships. Activities included stand-down events, formal announcement of the creations or continuation of Interagency Councils, and increased media attention to the issues of homelessness and affordable housing. In several States, the Policy Academy came at an opportune time, as some key supporters were leaving positions within State agencies or the legislatures. Numerous States said the Academy process led to stronger relationships with the Governor, and in some cases these relationships led directly into policy change. In Puerto Rico, the Governor signed an Executive Order declaring a week of solidarity with people who are homeless and hosted a reception at the Governor's mansion that created awareness among those key stakeholders that were previously difficult to access.

Finally, States maximized various Federal resources to support the work of their teams and key partners. Some States sought to tap into other Federal interagency efforts. Oregon, for example, began dialogue with the Department of Corrections and the State Veteran's Academy and engaged the local Workforce Investment Act program in the Portland Area through the HUD-DOL-VA project for the chronically homeless.

2. Challenges, Opportunities, and Lessons Learned

States readily acknowledged that few partnerships come without potential challenges. Teams recognized the critical need to involve partners in light of turnover among team members and leaders and the lack of resources and staff necessary to carry out the tasks of the Policy Academy teams and implement the action plan strategies. They also understood that tailored approaches were needed for specific partners. In some States, particularly those that had existing collaborative relationships, it made sense to involve key, high-level stakeholders in the process from the beginning to ensure buy-in. In other States, particularly those where collaborative relationships have been more difficult or where there had been significant leadership changes, it made sense to pull together the preliminary data and action plan first.

Above all, States learned that it was important to not simply give potential partners the information, but to identify clear and concrete ways for them to become involved—such as participating in topic- or strategy-specific workgroups. Without clearly identified ways to help, people sometimes assume the problem is too big and complicated to resolve. Several States also stressed the importance of paying attention to the needs and priorities of other planning efforts and blending in homeless strategies with these existing activities to create higher levels of support. In the words of one State Team Lead, "it takes talent to recognize where there is common ground."

> "The biggest barrier is waiting to make an 'ask' until there is something specific to ask *for*. Once people understand the problem, they are very willing to help. It is very important to have well-thought-out, specific ways in which they *can* help."
>
> - Montana State Team Member

States also pointed to challenges in building political will at the local and State level. In many cases, support from the Governor proved to be critical in the success of the team. Engagement of legislators could also lead to critical resources, but this was a difficult task in light of competing priorities, and only a few States accomplished this. Many States also felt partnership opportunities were affected by a lack of awareness among policy makers, public officials, and

the general public. Among State agencies, several teams felt linkages with Employment, Veteran's Affairs, and Transportation could be strengthened. Employment was seen as a critical partner, but several States felt such collaboration was difficult because of the focus on serving the business community rather than working with human services agencies. At the Federal level, State Teams appreciated the opportunities presented by the Policy Academy Initiative, and the collaborative efforts by the partner agencies. They also felt that the U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness should be held accountable for moving the Policy Academy agenda forward.

3. Specific State Highlights of Promising Practices

Despite facing challenges, there were numerous promising practices related to engaging partners among State agencies, translating the Policy Academy model to the local level, building political buy-in, and creating policy change.

Engaging key State agencies partners: State Policy Academies often focused first on forming partnerships across State agencies to decrease duplication and expand capacity. For example, Nevada forged an innovative partnership between CoCs, providers, Veterans' Integrated Service Networks, and the Workforce Investment Board. They also formed critical partnerships to achieve outcomes on discharge planning, HMIS, and CoC in rural areas across the State. Delaware also sought to expand capacity by connecting with nontraditional partners, including the Governor's Commission on Community-Based Alternatives to Institutionalization for People with Disabilities (CCBAID). CCBAID then integrated the Council's data and recommendations into their five-year Plan.

Some Teams formalized collaboration among State agencies. For example, Kentucky created an MOU that reinforced the commitment of KICH State agency participants to facilitate interagency coordination, broaden collaborative efforts, and set administrative policies to achieve the goal of ending chronic homelessness. Connecticut developed an MOU among all State partners to establish the roles, responsibilities, and commitment of each agency and to outline the collaborative funding process.

Other States focused on discharge planning (see also Section F on Prevention). As a result of the work of the Policy Academy Team in the Virgin Islands, an MOU was created to include the hospitals, Bureau of Corrections, advocacy agencies, the Departments of Justice, and Human Services to address discharge planning policy and procedures. In Maine, a formal contract between the Maine State Housing Authority and the Department of Corrections was established to deliver a Re-entry Transitional Housing Pilot intended to serve those leaving correctional facilities that are the hardest to serve (e.g., registered sex offenders and persons convicted of crimes who may not be eligible for Housing Choice Vouchers).

Building political will and creating policy change: All State Teams were involved in building political will and creating policy change—these concepts were at the very core of the Policy Academy model. Some Teams have formed policy groups, such as Housing Works in Rhode Island and the Legislative Study Task Force on Homelessness in Arkansas, to promote policy, research, and legislative change, and to expand the Teams' ability to engage staff within partner agencies. Other teams worked to help support the implementation of legislation; for instance, the California team was asked to develop an implementation mechanism for the Mental Health Services Act.

Increasing access to mainstream services and housing: Many States have increased funding dramatically for housing, services, and support of planning activities, in part due to the strategic partnerships created through the Policy Academy Initiative. For example:

- o In Utah, the Governor and Legislature have added $1 million to the State's homeless/housing fund over the last two years. For 2007, an additional $2 million is in the present budget request and it is expected to pass. In addition, the LDS Church has committed $10 million the next two years to provide housing for people who are homeless.

- o In Hawaii, in order to facilitate "Housing First" and to institute homelessness prevention, the Governor convened a task force comprised of a group of developers and representative homelessness providers to jump start the development of affordable housing for those earning 50 percent or less than the medium income. She has set the goal of 17,000 units within the next six years, with 1,800 of the units targeting people who are chronically homeless.

- o In Rhode Island, the policy group Housing Works is directly responsible for getting a $50 million dollar bond passed. They orchestrated and funded a powerful campaign that reached the public consciousness as the bond passed in every single city and town in the State.

- o Montana focused on one city, Billings, as an incubator to begin applying some of the strategies set forth in the plan. The Montana ICH met with the city and a number of community and policy leaders and held a series of facilitated community meetings that elicited opinions on the issues, obstacles, and potential solutions to homelessness. This led to the formation of the Mayor's Commission on Homelessness. In support of their efforts, Montana earned TANF bonus funds, $300,000 of which were promised to Billings to further their efforts.

Finally, several States felt that partnerships formed during the Policy Academy process were critical in creating, sustaining, and/or expanding critical cross-agency programs in relation to Hurricane Katrina. For example, Washington, DC launched a multi-service center effort to combine efforts across departments and agencies to assist newly homeless Hurricane Katrina victims who arrived in DC. The effort is now being replicated in DC for those in need without regard to cause of homelessness. Louisiana began a Supportive Housing Initiative with the support of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and Melville Charitable Trust to end homelessness for sex-offenders. The Office of Mental Health committed to retargeting some of its funding to ending homelessness, and two Social Security Administration HOPE grants were secured. The Supportive Housing Initiative commits the State to 3,000 new units of supportive housing, for which five years of services funding have been identified.

E. Improving Access to Mainstream Resources

1. Summary of Activities Across States

States were focused on increasing access to mainstream resources and to using creative ways to re-allocate existing funds or target them to homeless populations. Much of the improved access to mainstream resources came from the increased collaboration and communication across agencies that were a direct result of the Policy Academy experience. Many States reported

increased linkages between services and housing. These collaborations have also led to a willingness to find new funding for housing and services by redirecting or targeting existing resources. In Louisiana a new "no wrong door" approach to accessing its TANF program was launched through this type of collaboration.

Housing: States were very interested in the Housing First model as an identified promising or best practice. Ten States and Territories requested on-site assistance around the Housing First model. Many sought to use the model as their States' housing policy. The founder of the Pathways to Housing model in New York City provided insight on the development and management of this housing model in 5 States and Territories[3]. A team from Nevada went to San Francisco to see the Direct Access to Housing model and to talk with key stakeholders in this program's development. Puerto Rico received assistance on developing this model twice: once by staff from the Corporation for Supportive Housing and once by the director of the Direct Access to Housing model.

Towards the end of the Initiative, there was an increased interest in developing housing trust funds to support affordable housing development. New Jersey created a targeted housing trust fund to be used only for those with disabilities, including those experiencing homelessness. Arkansas received on-site TA on this topic from national experts and from those who developed the New Jersey targeted housing trust fund. Puerto Rico also developed a housing trust fund as a way to increase its affordable housing stock.

Accessing SSI/SSDI: Without question the greatest progress in improving access to a mainstream resource was made in accessing SSI/SSDI benefits with the SOAR Initiative and other trainings based on the *Stepping Stones to Recovery (SSR)* curriculum. Great enthusiasm developed for this training because of the possibilities of obtaining income, health care, and housing upon successful application. Colorado had such a long waiting list after the first *SSR* training that they used their TA funds to conduct a second and trained over 300 frontline staff before becoming a SOAR State. Two States, Utah and Louisiana, requested training on SSI/SSDI as part of a larger TA event on all mainstream resources. All States that received the *Stepping Stones to Recovery* training listed it as a best practice and one that increased their access to this critical mainstream resource. Preliminary outcomes of this new initiative are extremely promising. (See Chapter IV, Section G.)

Employment: Another strategy used by States to increase access to mainstream resources was the development of "one-stops." Modeled after Department of Labor "one-stops," Arizona, Montana, and Colorado created these resources so that those who are homeless can access an array of services in one place. During a Statewide summit on family homelessness, Colorado created one-stop family assistance centers for those families who are homeless or at risk. Policy Academy TA was used in the planning of the summit. Arizona created Family Self-Sufficiency Centers where teams do outreach and develop comprehensive housing and service plans for vulnerable families; the State also assisted Colorado in the development of their program.

Interest in employment grew as States began implementing their plans around this goal, as demonstrated by the fact that a Learning Community Workgroup focused on this area. In late 2006, Connecticut and Maine each developed pilot projects. Connecticut was looking to better integrate housing and employment. They chose Hartford and New London as pilot cities to

---

[3] AS, AZ, OK, MD, UT

implement new programs with their housing providers and one-stops. Maine created a pilot project in Bangor to strengthen existing Workforce Investment Boards to provide better access to employment for those experiencing homelessness.

2. Challenges, Opportunities, and Lessons Learned

One of the major barriers identified by the States in accessing mainstream resources was that they had already accessed most of the resources—specifically HUD and the community block grants—that were available to them. Yet States were often able to find creative ways to build upon and dedicate State and Federal funding for specific initiatives and to collaborate with existing initiatives to accomplish the goal of increasing access to mainstream services.

States reported one of the most significant impacts of the Policy Academy process was the breaking down of the "silo" mentality among agencies and increased collaboration among those agencies represented on the Policy Academy Team. Prior to the Policy Academy Initiative, there was little communication or collaboration among agencies. Most States took advantage of the increased collaboration and cooperation developed by the Policy Academy process to influence systems change, either by re-directing existing funds, developing new funding, finding ways to change regulations that made collaboration difficult, and/or increasing awareness of this issue.

As a key TA initiative focused on increasing access to mainstream services that grew out of the Policy Academy process, SOAR has resulted in a number of preliminary lessons learned, including:

- It is possible to dramatically increase access to SSI and SSDI for homeless persons through collaboration, workforce development and application of new or reallocation of existing resources.

- The SOAR TA process helps states and communities implement plans for designating direct service staff to work on all aspects of the application process with homeless applicants.

- Training or workforce development is important, but it is not enough. Expecting already overburdened direct service staff to do this without new or reallocation of existing resources results in minimal improvement of outcomes.

- Collaboration with Social Security field offices and the State Disability Determination Service (DDS) can help the application process work better by requesting designated staff to handle applications from homeless persons.

- Several state and local SOAR programs are finding ways to sustain and/or expand their efforts through funding provided by hospitals, foundations, PATH, and other private and public sources.

3. Specific State Highlights of Promising Practices

Increasing access to housing: As a primary focus in almost every action plan, access for housing is one of the key areas in which many States are reporting that participation in the

> Nebraska has increased access to affordable housing as a direct result of the Policy Academy.

Policy Academy process has either helped to enhance existing efforts or to begin new initiatives.

- Hawaii adopted the Housing First model as policy and, through the efforts of the Policy Academy team, influenced the governor to dedicate funds to create affordable housing in the State. Their legislature bonded $100 million to create 17,000 new affordable housing units and adopted the Housing First model as a result of advocacy by the State Team Lead.

- Illinois created two promising practices around housing as a result of the Policy Academy Initiative. The first is a supportive housing program, funded at $10 million, that has created permanent supportive housing with services for 8,000 people who were homeless. The second is a homelessness prevention program, funded at $11 million, to provide rent, security deposits, and utility assistance to keep people housed who are at risk of becoming homeless due to non-payment of rent or utilities.

- Nebraska developed a $2 million rental assistance program for people with mental illness with extremely low incomes. In addition the State used Shelter Plus Care funds to develop other housing opportunities.

- Louisiana created a new allocation plan for low income housing development for those receiving tax credits. In order to receive the credit, developers have to dedicate 5 percent of the new units to permanent supportive housing in the hurricane impacted areas.

- Various States have linked the dedication of resources for the development of permanent supportive housing to their action plans, including:

  o California dedicated $50 million to create 400-500 units of permanent supportive housing

  o Connecticut is in the process of developing 2000 units of permanent supportive housing and has undertaken a marketing campaign for supportive housing

  o Florida, as part of their chronic homelessness strategy to develop 6000 units of permanent supportive housing, developed 5430 units between 2001 and 2006

  o Maine dedicated more than $8 million of State funds to create 149 new units of permanent supportive housing from 2004 to 2006.

Accessing SSI/SSDI: Nashville, Tennessee, is an example of a SOAR pilot community that has accomplished a lot since starting SOAR in the summer of 2006. The Nashville Pilot Team Lead is a SOAR trainer and the director of a new SSI outreach program funded by the City of Nashville as a direct result of their participation in SOAR. The program has assisted 33 applications—97 percent of which have been approved on initial application in an average of 59 days.

> ""It is so cool to be teaching other people the new approach with the knowledge that we are helping it grow exponentially. People were taking notes and just HUNGRY for the information we were giving. I can't commend [SOAR TA] *enough* for developing this terrific curriculum and for having the vision and perseverance to make it a reality."
> - SOAR Trainer

Outcomes across reporting SOAR States range average 62 percent approval on initial applications. Oregon is piloting SOAR in three counties: Multnomah (Portland), Josephine

(Grants Pass), and Lane (Eugene). They have conducted nine trainings statewide and have implemented a tracking system that has become a model for other SOAR States. As of February 2007, Oregon had assisted 60 applications, and 67 percent had been approved. In addition, processing time was reduced from eight months to 96 days on average.

Local HUD Continuums of Care (CoC) have been key stakeholders in SOAR pilot communities. CoC lead agencies and provider agencies have been at the table at all State SOAR forums and have been targeted for trainings conducted in each State. In Ohio, for example, SOAR TA was used to create SSI outreach projects in each of ten CoCs. PATH and HCH programs in each of these areas are actively involved. The non-profit leading the State's SOAR initiative created a web-based tracking program to report on outcomes of applications statewide. The tracking program has been shared with other SOAR States and several are using it to track and report on outcomes. While it took longer to set this initiative up than States with only one or two pilot communities, the State Team Lead for Ohio's Policy Academy team sees this as a key strategy in their State's action plan to address homelessness.

Providing an example of how to blend and maximize available resources, Utah is using two DOL-funded Workforce Development staff as trainers. They have conducted eight trainings, and the trainers note that many of the things they learned through SOAR are now being implemented in the State Workforce Development Office, where staff are assisting disability applicants throughout the State—regardless of whether they are homeless or not.

Sustainability of SOAR at the local level is another lesson learned. Several pilot communities have had success using their outcomes to attract new funding to continue and expand their efforts. Kentucky's pilot in Covington included a local provider that had a focus on SSI outreach. After participating in the SOAR Forum, the program director restructured her program to implement the SOAR critical components and based on early results showing success, she convinced a local hospital to make a grant of $18,000 to cover a half-time position. A year later, the hospital has more than recovered the cost of their investment in retroactive Medicaid payments for uncompensated care used by successful SSI applicants. In Nevada, the Schwab Foundation provided a grant of $18,000 to support SOAR in Reno, one of the State's two SOAR pilot communities.

Collaboration with SSA and DDS is a key component of SOAR and there has been outstanding participation and support from SSA and DDS in every State. Three States (Montana, Virginia, and Washington) sent DDS staff to become SOAR trainers. The Policy Academy State Team Lead is a SOAR trainer for Montana.[4] She works with the State DDS director who is also a SOAR trainer. Together, they have conducted 6 trainings and assisted in seven approvals out of eight applications by the end of 2006. In Virginia, where a DDS staff person conducts SOAR trainings, four pilot communities have received approvals on 79 applications with approval rates averaging 79 percent in an average of 92 days. In Colorado, the Denver regional SSA homeless

> The training is outstanding. We met with a local mental health center yesterday and they are eager to work with the techniques in a Community Corrections project involving severely mentally ill inmates -- we worked out a pre-release agreement as a homeless prevention initiative."
>
> - Regional SSA Homeless Liaison, Denver, CO

---

[4] The Policy Academy State Team Lead became a SOAR trainer in three States: AZ, MT, and NC.

liaison became committed to engaging other States in his region to participate in SOAR. Last fall, the Denver regional commissioner sent a letter to all SSA regional commissioners in the U.S. commending SOAR and encouraging them to lend SOAR their full support.

Changes in other mainstream service systems have also resulted from participation in SOAR. Hawaii has conducted nine trainings and reports that they were successful in getting a procedural change in access to Medicaid as a result of their SOAR Forum that was held in January 2006. In New Jersey, one of the newer SOAR States, the regional Veterans Administration office created a pilot SOAR project to increase access to SSI for veterans in New Jersey. The VA supported two staff to attend the Train-the-Trainer program and plans eventually to roll SOAR out to other parts of the region. A trainer in the State of Washington has used SOAR to reach out to several Native American tribes. She recently presented on SOAR to the Colville tribe and reported, "I think I will make several trips to Nespelem to work with the tribe and coordinate a SOAR training for them. It was a great start on building a better relationship and better service to their members."

F. Prevention

1. Summary of Activities Across States

Many States identified prevention as an important strategy to end homelessness. Most States that chose to begin implementing this strategy focused on developing discharge planning policies across various systems, such as hospitals, jails, and prisons. Six States used TA resources to begin developing plans to stop discharge into homelessness from all State-funded institutions, including Indiana, Louisiana, Maine, Nevada, North Carolina, Ohio, and Puerto Rico. As part of their discharge planning efforts, Maine developed a formal contract between the State housing authority and the department of corrections for a "Re-entry Transitional Housing Pilot," which is targeted toward individuals leaving correctional facilities that are most difficult to house (e.g. sex offenders and those convicted of crimes that render them ineligible for housing vouchers). Ohio sponsored a formal partnership between the departments of development, mental health, and corrections to address clients' housing and service needs upon exiting institutions. North Carolina sent team members to Massachusetts to meet with key stakeholders who created the Massachusetts discharge policies.

2. Challenges, Opportunities, and Lessons Learned

One significant barrier to the development of discharge policies was the conflicting regulations and laws for each institution, particularly those governing correctional facilities and restrictions on housing vouchers. The second barrier was lack of adequate housing for people exiting these institutions. Another challenging aspect of this strategy was that the systems involved in discharge planning generally did not talk to each other prior to the Policy Academy process. Some agencies were reluctant to be a part of this planning and/or work with people who are homeless. As States successfully develop and implement discharge policies, there is a great need and opportunity to share their policies with other States engaging in this process.

3. Specific State Highlights of Promising Practices

Many States have developed, or are in the process of developing, discharge planning policies. For example, Washington, DC has created a "global" policy for all institutions on discharge planning, with an outline for implementation. Puerto Rico has established a strong policy that is Territory-wide, and Indiana has drafted a strong policy for all institutions.

In March 2005, Louisiana held a summit on discharge planning. Key stakeholders attended the one-day summit, which included breakout sessions for corrections, hospitals and mental health facilities, addictive disorder treatment facilities, and the foster care system. Each group looked at current assets and needs and then developed policy recommendations for that particular institution. At the conclusion of the summit, the key stakeholders agreed to the need for a unified policy on discharge planning so that no one would be discharged into homelessness. They created a report of their activities. This report has been widely circulated, along with the agenda of the meeting, to other States seeking to create their own policies around discharge planning.

The TA in support of these activities led to the creation of tools, most of which are available on the project Web site (www.hrsa.gov/homeless) that allow any State to pull together and go through the steps from policy to implementation. The process cannot be done in one day and it requires cross-system learning and staff dedicated to the task, but the tools now exist to help guide States through the process.