



UNITED STATES INTERAGENCY COUNCIL ON HOMELESSNESS

OPENING DOORS ACROSS AMERICA

a USICH Call to Action





OPENING DOORS
**ACROSS
AMERICA**
Join the Campaign

*In the last few years, remarkable progress has been made in our commitment to prevent and end homelessness. Now, together, we need to accelerate the pace of our efforts to achieve the goals in **Opening Doors: Federal Strategic Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness.***

To increase our momentum and build strength in numbers, USICH invites states and communities to join the Opening Doors Community network. As an Opening Doors Community you can be recognized as a champion for your leadership in ending homelessness and participate in a feedback exchange with USICH and other signatory communities.

For more information visit www.usich.gov and contact the USICH regional coordinator for your region.



“The goals and timeframes set forth in Opening Doors reflect the fact that ending homelessness in America must be a national priority.”

– PRESIDENT BARACK OBAMA

Join the Opening Doors Across America campaign to prevent and end homelessness.

States and communities are encouraged to:

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

Align with *Opening Doors*

Adopt the goals of *Opening Doors*:

- ▶ Finish the job of ending chronic homelessness by 2015
- ▶ Prevent and end Veterans homelessness by 2015
- ▶ Prevent and end homelessness for families, youth, and children by 2020
- ▶ Set a path to end all types of homelessness

Set Targets and Measure Your Results

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

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

seven

KEY PRIORITIES:

Act Strategically

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

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

Partner

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

join us

USICH invites states and communities to join the national effort to prevent and end homelessness by committing to the four criteria. Once you join, your state or community will be recognized as a participating community and you will have direct access to a feedback exchange with USICH and other signatory communities. Once your state or community has adopted the four Opening Doors goals and convened your interagency council or collaborating body, you will achieve the status of an Opening Doors Community. USICH will publicly highlight the success of Opening Doors Communities.

For more information visit www.usich.gov and contact USICH at 202-708-4663.

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