



## Implementation of *Opening Doors*

### Background

On June 22, 2010, the United States Interagency Council on Homelessness (USICH) unveiled the nation's first-ever comprehensive federal strategic plan to prevent and end homelessness. *Opening Doors: The Federal Strategic Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness* serves as a roadmap for joint action by the 19 USICH member agencies. The Plan is focused on four key goals:

- Finish the job of ending chronic homelessness in five years;
- Prevent and end homelessness among Veterans in five years;
- Prevent and end homelessness for families, youth, and children in ten years; and
- Set a path to ending all types of homelessness.

Building off of the momentum generated across the country by the release of *Opening Doors*, USICH and its 19 member agencies have immediately turned from the development of *Opening Doors* to action. On July 7, 2010, the USICH staff met with representatives from its member agencies to discuss the implementation process and the roles of each going forward. The agency is gathering baseline data around the key measures, working with member agencies to prioritize which strategies demand action first. Collaborating with its 19 member agencies, USICH will translate the strategic plan into implementation plans.

This overview of the implementation of *Opening Doors* continues USICH's effort to promote accountability and transparency, which are two of the Administration's priorities in developing good government practices. USICH is working through all 52 strategies and four signature initiatives laid out in the Plan and is in the process of identifying with our partners what is needed for full implementation, including key milestones and deliverables. The development of the FY2012 President's Budget is under way and the implementation of *Opening Doors* is tied to this process. Member agencies are looking at the Plan's priorities as they make important budget decisions.

### USICH's Staff Member Agency Responsibilities

USICH is facilitating and overseeing the 52 strategies and 4 signature initiatives in *Opening Doors* with its 19 member agencies that have the responsibility to move the Plan forward through their mainstream and targeted programs. Achieving targeted reductions in homelessness requires a collective effort focused on solutions. *Opening Doors* is a call for collective action. No level of government can or should do this alone. Success will require the collaboration and organization of federal, state, tribal, and local governments to execute these strategies effectively. Implementation requires leadership at all levels and partnerships between the public and the private sector, building on effective partnerships where they exist, and forging new partnerships where they are needed.

USICH has divided the responsibility for being the primary liaison with its 19 member agencies among the three USICH deputy directors. Each deputy director is responsible for maintaining effective coordination and supportive relationships with their respective member agencies. Examples of the tasks the deputy directors engage with their agencies on include:

- Supporting policy decisions in their respective areas that relate to *Opening Doors*
- Seeking opportunities for new initiatives within and between agencies
- Providing linkages between the federal agencies and partners out in field
- Procuring new relationships with program staff and agency leadership for "mainstream" programs

Deputy Director for Accountability Management Jennifer Ho is the point person on issues related to health care. Jennifer is the liaison to the U.S. Departments of Health and Human Services, Education, and Agriculture, as well as the Social Security Administration. She is establishing a research office at USICH and is responsible for performance management and accountability in the implementation of the federal plan. Jennifer is focused on increasing access to mainstream assistance programs (including Medicaid, SSI/SSDI, TANF and Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Programs), and increasing the role of mainstream programs in preventing and reducing homelessness.

Deputy Director for National Programs Anthony Love is the lead on Veterans and employment issues for USICH. In this capacity, he is the liaison with the U.S. Departments of Veterans Affairs, Labor and Defense. Anthony is also responsible for coordinating the regional, state and local work of the Council, which includes overseeing the work of the Regional Coordinators.

Research Director Kristy Greenwalt is responsible for establishing and implementing a national research agenda on homelessness, as well as assessing and benchmarking progress against Opening Doors. She is the liaison with the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.

### **Responsibility for Each Strategy**

There are 52 strategies and four signature initiatives in *Opening Doors*. USICH has allocated the oversight for each strategy and initiative among its two deputy directors, research director, communications director, and other USICH staff. In their role as strategy or initiative lead, the respective staffs provides active leadership as the project manager, responsibility for the process and identifying resources, and are the point of contact with the public on the respective strategy or initiative.

Smart implementation includes prioritization. USICH recognizes that it cannot start working on all 52 strategies and four initiatives at once. The agency is in the process of prioritizing its areas of responsibilities while taking advantage of efforts already underway in its member agencies.

## DEPUTY DIRECTOR ASSIGNMENTS ON THE PLAN'S RESPECTIVE STRATEGIES

OBJECTIVES AND STRATEGIES	Jennifer Ho	Anthony Love	Kristy Greenwalt	Other USICH staff
<b>1. Promote Collaborative Leadership</b>				
a. Educate the public leaders		•		
c. Update and implement state/local plans		•		
d. Involve citizens and private sector		•		
e. Test, model interagency collaboration				
Most activities support this				
f. Reward collaborating communities				•
g. Recognize savings across partners				•
h. Engage Congressional committees				•
<i>Signature Initiative: Veterans</i>		•		
<b>2. Strengthen Capacity and Knowledge</b>				
a. Compile research			•	
b. Coordinate federal technical assistance		•		
c. More readily available info on best practices			•	
d. More readily available info on special populations			•	
e. Needs of rural and tribal communities	•			
f. Inventory federal emergency response programs		•		
g. Increase use of HMIS standard and uniform performance measures if feasible	•			
<b>3. Provide Affordable Housing</b>				
subsidies			•	•
b. Expand supply of affordable rental homes			•	•
c. Improve access to assistance			•	•
d. Increase service-enriched housing			•	•
<i>Signature Initiative: Families with Children</i>	•			

OBJECTIVES AND STRATEGIES (con'td)	Jennifer Ho	Anthony Love	Kristy Greenwalt	Other USICH Staff
<b>4. Provide Permanent Supportive Housing</b>				
a. Improve access to and use of supportive housing			•	
b. Protocols and incentives to free up units			•	
c. Expand supply of supportive housing			•	
d. Assess options for supportive housing service funding	•			
<i>Signature Initiative: Chronic Homelessness</i>	•			
<b>5. Increase Economic Security</b>				
a. Job development focus on homelessness		•		
b. Improve access to work supports	•			
c. Best practices to help people enter workforce		•		
d. Coordinate/integrate employment programs		•		
e. Increase work for Veterans		•		
<b>6. Reduce Financial Vulnerability</b>				
a. Best practices in access to income/work supports	•			
b. Improve access to income supports	•			
c. Enhance public info and call center for Veterans		•		
d. Create pathways to financial independence	•			
e. Prepare for Medicaid expansion	•			
<b>7. Integrate Health Care with Housing</b>				
a. Co-locate housing and health care	•			
b. Build upon successful service delivery models	•			
c. Evaluate effectiveness of medical home model	•			
d. Establish medical respite programs	•			
e. Increase availability of behavioral health services	•			
f. Improve access to child and family services	•			
<b>8. Advance Health and Housing Stability for Youth</b>				
a. Improve discharge planning	•			
b. Improve access for youth	•			
c. Promote targeted outreach strategies	•			
<i>Signature Initiative: Youth</i>	•			

OBJECTIVES AND STRATEGIES (con'td)	Jennifer Ho	Anthony Love	Kristy Greenwalt	Other USICH staff
<b>9. Advance Health and Housing Stability for Adults</b>				
a. Improve discharge planning		•		
b. Promote targeted outreach strategies		•		
c. Increase number of jail diversion courts		•		
d. Define approaches to reduce criminalization				•
<b>10. Transform Crisis Response Systems</b>				
a. Promote best practices in crisis response		•		
b. Use mainstream resources for housing stability	•			
c. Implementation strategies for HEARTH Act			•	
d. Ensure continuity through HPRP services			•	
e. Ensure prevention in place-based strategies		•		

### Official Member Agency Meetings

USICH has two separate official meeting groups among its agencies.

- The Council Policy Group, which consists of the point person from each agency for homelessness, meets to develop recommendations for the Full Council. Two weeks after the release of *Opening Doors*, USICH staff met with the Council Policy Group on July 7, 2010 to discuss the implementation process and the roles of each going forward.
- The Full Council consists of the relevant Cabinet Secretaries or their designees. At these meetings, they set the path of the work to be completed by USICH staff and member agencies.

The *implementation* of some of the strategies in *Opening Doors* will require the creation of federal workgroups, in addition to joining existing interagency federal workgroups and coordinating with intra-agency efforts as well.

### Commitment to Transparency

On the USICH website, a PowerPoint presentation of *Opening Doors* that has been presented across the country has been made available for public download. The agency will continue its efforts to provide as much information online in a timely fashion about the implementation of the Plan.

USICH will publish an annual report card on progress towards Plan goals and targets, and progress in implementing strategies at the federal level and across the country. There will also be an annual update to the Plan that will consider what has changed in the environment, successes, unexpected opportunities and barriers, and new research and information. Public input will be garnered. This will allow USICH and others at all levels to make adjustments as needed.

USICH's annual report to Congress enumerates people served by federal programs assisting those experiencing homelessness. The report also notes impediments to people accessing these programs and efforts made to increase

access. The report covers activities and accomplishments across all USICH agencies, as well as accomplishments by the Council.

There will be evaluations of the Signature Initiatives targeting Veterans, families with children, youth, and chronic homelessness. These evaluations will look at both improvements for people served by these initiatives and how agencies collaborate to facilitate those improvements.

### **State and Regional Engagement**

USICH's regional coordinators serve as principal representatives and points of contact for USICH in the field. These coordinators play instrumental roles in encouraging State and local coordination through such vehicles as 10-year plans, Regional and State Interagency Councils, and providing technical assistance in these and other areas as required by USICH's statute. As part of implementing and rolling out *Opening Doors*, USICH's regional coordinators are building upon their previous work in communities across the country. The regional coordinators are now engaging local and state officials, as well as other community stakeholders on *Opening Doors'* strategies and how their communities can pursue and achieve the four key goals of the Plan.

For more information on USICH's regional coordinators and their corresponding states, please visit <http://www.usich.gov/slocal/index.html>.