



Encampments and Unsheltered Homelessness Initiative

Learning Together and Creating Solutions for Encampments and Unsheltered Homelessness

The Challenges We Face

Communities across the country are seeking housing and service solutions for people who are living unsheltered and people staying in encampments. Finding the best solutions to these challenges is especially difficult in communities with large numbers of people living unsheltered, significant encampments of people experiencing homelessness, and with high costs and low vacancy rates within their housing markets.

We must work – and learn – together to respond to these urgent local needs but we must also be careful to not repeat past mistakes of focusing only on where people can stay in the short-term without also planning for where people will live successfully for the long term.

The Partners and Our Shared Focus

The [U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness](#), the [U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development](#), and the [National Alliance to End Homelessness](#) are working together on a collaborative *Encampments and Unsheltered Homelessness Initiative* to help communities – particularly those with the largest increases in unsheltered homelessness – to innovate, to test approaches, and ultimately to implement solutions that will prove effective for reducing and ultimately ending unsheltered homelessness.

We do this work – together, and in partnership with local community and Continuum of Care leaders – knowing that the solutions are not simple and that there is no off-the-shelf playbook of proven practices. To make real progress, however, we are focused on helping communities respond to their local needs with an appropriate balance of: outreach and engagement of people in encampments or otherwise unsheltered; low barrier access to emergency shelter or crisis housing; and permanent housing solutions.

Our Collaborative Work

We will be implementing a range of strategies that will help communities drive toward lasting solutions. We're taking action in the following areas concurrently, with the intention that the work in each area will inform and shape the work in the others.



Deepening our Collective Knowledge and Strengthening the Evidence-Base: We'll be working with researchers and practitioners and analyzing data to deepen our current knowledge of the demographics, characteristics, and needs of people who are unsheltered and developing evidence regarding the strongest and best practices for linking people who are unsheltered to crisis services, permanent housing, and future opportunities.



Partnering with State and Local Officials and Policy Makers: Leaders and expert staff from USICH, HUD, and NAEH will work with state and local elected officials, policy makers, and leaders within homelessness and housing systems to help them to develop and test strategies that will lead us to the strongest approaches and solutions for unsheltered homelessness and encampments within efforts to prevent and end all homelessness.



Providing Technical Assistance to Communities: HUD is funding targeted technical assistance within several communities with large populations of people living unsheltered to support innovation, try out new approaches, develop stronger practices, and increase exits into permanent housing for people who are living in encampments or are otherwise unsheltered. Technical assistance will be tailored to each community’s specific needs and challenges, but can focus on any or all of the following areas:

- Data-sharing and data analysis to strengthen the targeting of efforts and to better project the housing and services needs that must be addressed;
- Improving outreach efforts to better engage people into housing and services options;
- Strengthening the crisis response system by implementing low-barrier, housing focused emergency shelter and crisis housing options and practices;
- Preventing entries into unsheltered homelessness through stronger discharge planning;
- Creating opportunities for increased access to affordable, permanent housing within challenging rental markets;
- Expanding the availability of rapid rehousing interventions for people exiting unsheltered homelessness and encampments;
- Developing connections to employment and career development opportunities to help increase incomes and enable people to access and sustain permanent housing; and
- Increasing rapid exits from homelessness into other stable housing arrangements, such as shared housing models, reunification with family or other supportive people, and other creative approaches to ending people’s homelessness quickly.



Sharing Tools and Information to Benefit All Communities: This effort will bring a targeted focus to a small number of communities facing some of the most significant challenges, and these communities will form a “learning collaborative” to share successes, challenges, strategies, and tools. The work with these communities will also be implemented with a purposeful focus on developing and disseminating information, tools, and guidance that will make it possible for leaders across the country to learn from these efforts and to strengthen their own practices for reducing – and ultimately ending – unsheltered homelessness and the presence of encampments in our communities.

For more information, please contact usich@usich.gov or kkenney@naeh.org or SNAPSinfo@hud.gov.