

Making McKinney-Vento Programs Work for All Homeless Persons

Community Planning and Priorities Must Drive Funding Allocations

In the mid 1990s, HUD administratively established the Continuum of Care (COC) planning process, designed to ensure that stakeholders in local communities would come together to plan for the most appropriate use of homeless assistance grant funds. Under the COC process, each community prepares a gaps and needs analysis and then prioritizes new and renewal housing and supportive service project funding requests in order to meet those local needs.

Unfortunately, in recent years, HUD has included requirements in their annual Notice of Funding Availability (NOFA) for HUD McKinney-Vento funds that have unreasonably restricted the ability of COCs to prioritize local needs. Under the new rules, communities are forced to prioritize programs serving single individuals with disabilities who meet the federal definition of “chronic” homelessness. If they do otherwise, they will lose funds – even if the local gaps and needs analysis suggests that it would be more appropriate to prioritize assistance for other populations, including many homeless families and homeless youth, or to balance the needs of all homeless populations.

We recommend that a process ensuring local planning to end homelessness be codified. Specifically, Congress should ensure that all stakeholders are required to be at the table – including groups such as domestic violence service providers and youth service providers who have often been excluded. Local planning boards would then continue to do a gaps and needs analysis, in order to determine what homeless populations are being underserved in their communities and what housing and services interventions would assist those populations. Based on this analysis communities would prioritize new and renewal housing and supportive service projects and HUD would award funding to highly ranked projects that addressed the top local needs.

Thorough Local Planning Makes National Incentives Unnecessary

Current HUD incentives, established through the NOFA process, focus on ending chronic homelessness for single adults with disabilities. We believe that using incentives to ensure that significant McKinney-Vento resources flow to national HUD priorities is contrary to the locally driven planning process that we favor. We expect that use of a comprehensive local planning process will result in HUD funding awards that will help meet the needs of all homeless populations. *Accordingly, we urge Congress to refrain from codifying an incentive program. If a national incentive program is enacted, it should consume a small fixed percentage of McKinney-Vento funds and it should reward communities that prepare comprehensive and outcome based local plans to end homelessness for all affected populations.*

HUD’s Definition of Homelessness Should Encompass All People Without Homes

The current HUD definition of homelessness is limited to people who are on the streets or who are staying in shelters. *It should be amended to include people who are forced to live in other homeless situations, including people staying with others temporarily because they have nowhere else to go (“doubled-up”), and people staying in motels due to lack of adequate alternative housing.*

Members of all populations, including families, children, youth on their own, and single adults are excluded by the current HUD definition of homelessness. The streets are untenable for families who lose their housing because living on the streets puts children at unthinkable risk – it means child welfare involvement and the separation of the family. Instead, many homeless families have no choice but to stay temporarily with other people, or in motels, often in overcrowded and unwelcoming circumstances. Youth on their own also are more likely to “couch surf” due to lack of other options. In addition, in many places across the country, there are no family or youth shelters, or those shelters are full, thus forcing families and youth into other homeless situations. For example, domestic violence shelters nationwide turn away nearly as many women as they serve. And many single adults cycle frequently between the homes of friends and relatives. Expanding HUD’s definition of homelessness would allow communities the flexibility to provide cost-effective housing and supportive services to currently underserved groups.

HUD Funding for Supportive Services Must Be Preserved

It is well established that ending homelessness requires a combination of housing and supportive services. This is why the McKinney-Vento Act has always authorized HUD to fund services, and why HUD has consistently done so. In recent years, HUD has undertaken significant efforts to fund more housing, and fewer services. *Provisions contained in S. 1801 would go too far in continuing this trend. Instead of adopting them, current law and regulations should remain in place.*

S. 1801 would allow the Government Accountability Office (GAO) to make a determination, three years after enactment, that certain federal mainstream services programs (such as the Substance Abuse and/or Mental Health Block Grants) were receiving additional funds. If that determination occurred, the HUD Secretary would have discretion to stop funding supportive services not directly tied to maintaining housing – potentially to include mental health and substance abuse services.

Additional funding for mainstream programs does not guarantee that any new funds will go to homeless persons. Therefore, it is inappropriate to condition homeless program funding for services on how mainstream programs are funded. Instead, HUD should continue its long-time commitment to funding the supportive services necessary to help end homelessness – until other federal agencies have adopted a long-term commitment to funding those services and demonstrated that they are fully accessible to homeless persons.

HUD Must Maintain Funding for All Successful Interventions to End Homelessness

HUD funds direct rental subsidies for permanent housing through two programs – Shelter Plus Care (SPC) and the Supportive Housing Program (SHP). Renewals for SPC permanent housing are funded from outside the McKinney-Vento account. SHP permanent housing renewals, however, are funded through McKinney-Vento. As HUD devotes more and more homeless assistance grant funds to permanent housing, the amount of money needed each year to renew funding for these SHP programs continues to climb. If current trends continue, within several years funding of permanent housing renewals will begin to swallow up almost all of the McKinney-Vento account. As a result, funding for essential transitional housing and supportive services will not be available.

We believe that any McKinney-Vento reauthorization legislation must address this challenge. While there are several ways to accomplish this goal, our principle is firm – HUD must increase or at minimum hold harmless funding for transitional housing, supportive services, and other interventions that are critical to ending homelessness, while also ensuring that permanent housing subsidies are renewed.

Service Providers Must Be Given Flexibility To Meet Match Requirements

S. 1801 would codify HUD's current requirement of a 25 percent cash match for almost all housing and supportive services programs funded through McKinney-Vento. The only costs excluded from the cash match requirement are operating costs for permanent supportive housing.

Ideally, service providers working to end homelessness would not be required to meet any match requirement. However, should a match be required, in-kind contributions such as mental health, substance abuse, or other supportive services are of equal or greater value than cash, and often more readily available to service providers. *In order to make the match requirement less onerous, we recommend that a service provider be allowed to satisfy it either with cash or in-kind resources. And for reasons of equity, we believe that all homeless assistance programs, including permanent supportive housing, should be subject to any required match.*

Endorsing National Organizations

Alliance for Children and Families

America's Second Harvest

Catholic Charities USA

Child Welfare League of America

Healthy Teen Network

National Association for the Education of Homeless Children & Youth

National Center on Family Homelessness

National Health Care for the Homeless Council

National Law Center on Homelessness & Poverty

National Network for Youth

National Policy and Advocacy Council on Homelessness

Stand Up For Kids

United Neighborhood Centers of America

Universal Living Wage Campaign

Volunteers of America

Western Regional Advocacy Project

Endorsing State and Local Organizations

Alabama

Health Services Center
Anniston, Alabama

First Call For Help
Gadsden, Alabama

Safeplace, Inc.
Florence, AL

Alaska

Alaska Coalition on Housing and Homelessness
Anchorage, AK

Anchorage Neighborhood Health Center
Anchorage, AK

Juneau Homeless Coalition
Juneau, AK

Arizona

Arizona Coalition to End Homelessness
Phoenix, AZ

California

Alameda County Health Care for the Homeless Program (ACHCHP)

Los Angeles Coalition to End Hunger & Homelessness

Housing Advocacy Council of Monterey County
Salinas, CA

Beyond Shelter, Inc.
Los Angeles, CA

Building Opportunities for Self-Sufficiency
Berkeley, CA

Coalition on Homelessness, San Francisco
San Francisco, CA.

Chico Community Shelter Partnership
Chico, CA

Compass Community Services
San Francisco, CA

San Francisco Network Ministries
San Francisco, CA

San Francisco SafeHouse for Women Leaving Prostitution
San Francisco, CA

Restoration Enterprises
Redding, CA

Sisters of the Road
Portland, OR

Carolyn Wade-Southard, MFT
Program Supervisor
Help+ and Rural HOMES
Supportive Housing Grants
Kern County Homeless Collaborative
Bakersfield, CA

Lutheran Social Services of Northern CA

The McKinney Contractors Association, San Francisco

San Francisco, CA

Stanislaus Housing and Support Services Collaborative
Modesto, CA

Toolworks
San Francisco, CA

Central City Hospitality House
San Francisco, CA

Diogenes Youths Services
Sacramento, CA

Davis Community Meals
Davis, CA

Placer County Continuum of Care
Placer County, CA

Yolo County Homeless Coalition
Davis, CA

The Planning Committee of the Northern/Central Valley Homeless Roundtable, a consortium of 15 Continua of Care/Communities including Central Sierra Continuum of Care (Amador, Calaveras and Tuolumne), City of Redding & Shasta County Homeless Continuum of Care, Dos Rios Continuum of Care (Glenn, Colusa, Trinity, Tehama), El Dorado, Fresno Madera Continuum of Care, Greater Chico Homeless Task Force/Butte Continuum of Care, Kern County Homeless Collaborative, Kings/Tulare Continuum of Care on Homelessness, Merced Continuum of Care Collaborative, Placer Consortium on Homelessness and Affordable Housing, Sacramento County & Cities Board on Homelessness, San Joaquin Continuum of Care, Stanislaus Housing and Support Services Collaborative, Yolo County Homeless Coalition, and the Yuba-Sutter Continuum of Care.

Florida

Big Bend Homeless Coalition
Formerly Tallahassee Coalition for the Homeless
Tallahassee, FL

Florida Keys Outreach Coalition, Inc.
Key West, Florida

The Guidance Clinic of the Middle Keys
Marathon, FL

HELPLINE, Inc
Monroe County, FL

Homeless Coalition of Hillsborough County, Inc.
Tampa, FL

Hunger and Homeless Coalition of Citrus County, Inc.
Homosassa Springs, FL

Monroe Association for Retarded Citizens, Inc.
Key West, FL

Monroe County Public Schools
Florida

Monroe County SHAL (Southernmost Homeless Assistance League)
Key West, FL

Samuel's House, Inc.
Key West, FL

Georgia

Living Room, Inc.
Atlanta, GA

Floyd County Board of Education
Rome, GA

Hawaii

Waianae Community Outreach
Waianae, Hawaii

Illinois

Economic Youth Organization, Inc.
Chicago, IL

Committee for Economic Recovery, Greater West Pullman Community
Chicago, IL

Project IRENE
Berwyn, IL

Indiana

Evansville Goodwill Industries, Inc.
Evansville, IN

Policy and Planning Council for Homeless Services
Evansville, IN

Iowa

Anawim Housing

BlackHawk-Grundy Mental Health Center

Catholic Charities, Diocese of Des Moines

Catholic Charities Social Concerns Dept., Diocese of Sioux City

Center for Siouxland, Woodbury County

Central Iowa Shelter & Services, Des Moines

Christian Worship Center/MOHM's Place, Council Bluffs

Crisis Intervention & Advocacy Center, Adel

Crisis Intervention Services, Oskaloosa

Community Investment Administration, Des Moines

Dubuque Continuum of Care

Hawthorn Hill Ministries, Des Moines

Heartland Family Services, Council Bluffs

House of Mercy, Des Moines

Iowa Coalition for Housing & the Homeless

Iowa Homeless Youth Centers

Iowa Northland Regional Housing Authority, Waterloo

Johnson County Local Homeless Coordinating Board

Linn County Local Homeless Coordinating Board

Linn County Veteran Affairs

Mental Health Association of Siouxland, Sioux City

Northern Lights Homeless Shelter, Mason City

Salvation Army Transitional Housing Program, Waterloo

Shesler Hall, Sioux City

The Christian Worship Center's Mom's Place, Council Bluffs

The Home Connection, Des Moines

Vera French Community Mental Health Center Homeless Outreach Program, Davenport

West Des Moines Human Services

Youth & Shelter Services, Inc, Boone & Story County Lighthouse Programs

Cedar Valley Friends of the Family, Waverly

City of Dubuque Housing Commission

Northeast Iowa Housing & Homeless Alliance, (Butler, Bremer, Chickasaw, Howard, Winneshiek, Almakee, Fayette, Clayton, Buchanan Counties)

Ottumwa Community Outreach Ministries, Ottumwa

Young Women's Resource Center (Des Moines)

Kentucky

Gateway Homeless Coalition
Morehead, KY

Northern Kentucky Housing and Homeless Coalition
Covington, KY

Transitions, Inc.
Bellevue, Kentucky

Louisiana

Acadiana Regional Coalition on Housing & Homelessness (ARCH)

Louisiana Advocacy Coalition for the Homeless (LACH)

HOPE for the Homeless (HOPE) – Continuum of Care for Northwest Louisiana
Centerpoint
Shreveport, LA

H.O.P.E. Ministry of Pointe Coupee, Inc.
New Roads, Louisiana

Shelter Resources, Inc. d.b.a.
Belle Reve,
New Orleans, LA

St. Mary Community Action Agency
Franklin, LA

The Outreach Center
Lafayette, LA

Urban Restoration Enhancement Corporation
Baton Rouge, LA

Maine

Bread of Life Ministries
Augusta, Maine

Homeless Voices for Justice
Portland, ME

Preble Street Consumer Advocacy Project
Portland, ME

Maryland

Public Justice Center
Baltimore, MD

Massachusetts

Community Action Agency of Somerville (CAAS)

Somerville, MA

Narrow Path Ministries
Framingham, MA

RESPOND, Inc.
Somerville, MA

Somerville Homeless Providers Group
Somerville, MA

Minnesota

ICA (Intercongregation Communities Association)
Minnetonka, MN

Minnesota Coalition for the Homeless
Minneapolis, MN

Otter Tail-Wadena Community Action Council, Inc.
New York Mills, MN

Mississippi

South Mississippi AIDS Task Force
Biloxi, MS

Nebraska

Youth Emergency Services, Inc
Omaha, NE

Nevada

Community Chest, Inc.
Virginia City, NV

New Jersey

The Apostles' House, 24 Grant St., Newark, NJ

Association for Children of New Jersey
Newark, NJ

Center for Family Services, Mother/Child Program , Woodbury

Housing & Community Development Network of NJ
Trenton, NJ

Monmouth Neighborhood Housing, Inc.
dba Manna House
Cliffwood Beach, NJ

The NJ Alliance for the Homeless, Newark, NJ

New Mexico

Albuquerque Health Care for the Homeless, Inc.
Albuquerque, NM

Cuidando los Ninos
Albuquerque, NM

New Mexico Coalition to End Homelessness

New York

Nassau-Suffolk Coalition for the Homeless
Garden City, New York

New Destiny Housing Corporation
New York, N.Y.

North Carolina

Greensboro Housing Coalition
Greensboro, NC

Ohio

Daybreak, Inc.
Dayton, OH

Miami Valley Fair Housing Center, Inc
Dayton, OH

Miami Valley Housing Opportunities
Dayton, Ohio

Oregon

Parkrose Community United Church of Christ
Portland, Oregon

Pennsylvania

Bucks County Housing Group
Wrightstown, PA

Housing Association of Delaware Valley, Philadelphia

People's Emergency Center, Philadelphia

The Salvation Army of Southeastern Pennsylvania

Women of Excellence, Inc.
Philadelphia, PA

Tennessee

Urban Housing Solutions, Inc.
Nashville, TN

Texas

Covenant House, a transitional home for women
Cleburne, Texas

Homeless Advocacy Network
Longview, TX

House the Homeless
Austin, TX

Odessa Homeless Coalition
Odessa, Texas

Texas Homeless Network
Austin, TX

United Way of Odessa
Odessa, Texas

Vermont

Burlington Homeless Alliance

Vermont Coalition to End Homelessness

Virginia

Action in Community Through Service of Prince William, Inc. (ACTS)
Dumfries, VA

Washington

Mason County Shelter
Shelton, WA

Voices for Opportunity, Income, Childcare, Education and Support
Spokane, WA

Washington State Coalition for the Homeless
Tumwater, WA

Washington, DC

Coalition for the Homeless (DC)
Washington, DC

West Virginia

Daymark
Charleston, West Virginia

Mental Health Association in the Greater Kanawha Valley, Inc.
Charleston, WV

Religious Coalition for Community Renewal
Charleston, WV

Wisconsin

Community Advocates
Milwaukee WI

Couleecap, Inc.
Westby, WI

Countryview & sky residential services
Mequon, WI

Interfaith Hospitality Network of the Madison Area
Madison, WI

Milwaukee Continuum of Care
Milwaukee, WI

Wisconsin Association for Homeless and Runaway Services
Milwaukee, WI