

GLOSSARY

Definitions & Terms

HOMELESSNESS

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) defines homelessness using four categories:

1. Literally homeless
 - a. living in places not meant for human habitation
 - b. living in shelters that provide temporary living quarters
 - c. being discharged from an institution when previously residing in one of the two previously listed situations.
2. At imminent risk of homelessness.
3. Homeless under other federal statutes, including unaccompanied youth less than 25 years old and families with children and youth.
4. Fleeing or attempting to escape domestic violence.

The U.S. Department of Education and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services have also defined homelessness. See a comparison of these definitions at:

https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/ecd/homelessness_definition.pdf

SUB-POPULATIONS

Chronic Homelessness

An individual or family with a disability or a disabling condition who has been continuously homeless for a year or more or has had at least four episodes of homelessness in the past three years, adding up to at least 12 months of homelessness.



Homeless Veterans

Individuals experiencing homelessness who have served in any branch of the U.S. military—including the Reserves and National Guard—regardless of whether they are eligible for services or benefits from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs.



Homeless Youth

Unaccompanied youth ages 12 and older (up to age 24) who are without family support and who are living in shelters, on the streets, in cars or vacant buildings, or who are “couch surfing” or living in other unstable circumstances.



Unsheltered Homelessness

Living in places not meant for human habitation, which encompasses a wide range of circumstances, including tents, cars, and RVs without connections to power or sanitation, abandoned buildings, encampments, and sleeping on sidewalks, in doorways, etc.

For more information: <https://files.hudexchange.info/resources/documents/2019-AHAR-Part-1.pdf>, pp. 2-3



SYSTEM OF CARE

Continuum of Care (CoC)

A regional or local planning body required by HUD to organize and deliver housing and services to meet the specific needs of people who are homeless as they move to stable housing and maximum self-sufficiency. CoC refers to the system coordinating programs that address and prevent homelessness within a geographical region.

The four elements that HUD identifies as necessary in a CoC are:

1. Outreach, intake, and assessment
2. Emergency shelter
3. Transitional housing with supportive services
4. Permanent and permanent supportive housing

The primary HUD funding to address homelessness is also known as Continuum of Care funding.

For more information:

<https://endhomelessness.org/resource/what-is-a-continuum-of-care/>

<https://www.hudexchange.info/programs/coc/>

Coordinated Entry System (CES)

CES is an integrated, community-wide process to provide outreach to and identify households experiencing homelessness, assess their needs, and prioritize access to programs and resources to end their homelessness. An effective coordinated entry process includes prioritization, a Housing First orientation, emergency services, standardized assessment, referral to housing, outreach, and use of HMIS.

For more information:

<https://files.hudexchange.info/resources/documents/Coordinated-Entry-Policy-Brief.pdf>

Homelessness Management Information System (HMIS)

HMIS is a computerized data collection tool designed to capture client-level and services-level information over time on the characteristics and service needs of men, women, and children experiencing homelessness. These data may be used for recordkeeping, coordinating services for households, and assessing system performance.

For more information:

<https://www.hudexchange.info/programs/hmis/>

Point-in-Time (PIT) Count

The PIT count is an estimate of the homeless population taken on a given day. Since 2005, HUD has required all CoC applicants to complete this count in the last week of January, including a street count of unsheltered persons (performed at least every other year) in addition to a count of all persons staying in emergency and transitional shelter beds (performed every year.)

For more information:

<https://endhomelessness.org/resource/what-is-a-point-in-time-count/>

INTERVENTIONS & PRACTICES

Affordable Housing

Generally defined as housing that costs no more than 30 percent of a household's income. Paying more than 30 percent of household income on housing is considered a cost burden and may impede the household's ability to afford other necessities, including food, transportation, and medical care.

For more information:

<https://www.forworkingfamilies.org/page/policy-tools-affordable-housing-dictionary>

https://www.hud.gov/program_offices/comm_planning/affordablehousing/

<https://www.usich.gov/solutions/housing/affordable-housing/>

Built for Zero

Built for Zero is an initiative coordinated by Community Solutions that works with communities toward achieving a 'functional zero' level of chronic homelessness and homelessness among veterans. Functional zero means that the experience of homelessness is rare, and when experienced, it is brief. Built for Zero initiatives are person-centered and data-driven systems that utilize by-name lists of those experiencing homelessness throughout a community. This information allows Continuum of Care organizations and other stakeholder agencies to develop individualized housing solutions and to expand housing resources to realize reductions in the number of people experiencing homelessness in that community.

For more information:

<https://community.solutions/our-solutions/built-for-zero/>

<https://community.solutions/key-definitions/>

Crisis Intervention Team (CIT)

Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) is a solution-focused response to helping people with mental illness access medical assistance rather than involvement with the criminal justice system. This practice is effective when dealing with people who experience homelessness and mental illness. The process includes representatives from law enforcement, behavioral health, and advocacy together with people living with mental health and substance abuse issues. Core components of a CIT approach include broad-based community collaboration in the program; a vibrant, responsive, and easily accessible crisis response system; first responder training using a 40-hour curriculum taught by law enforcement, behavioral health, and advocacy group representatives; behavioral staff training on the role of law enforcement and other first responders; and participation by families, consumers, and advocates in the training and programs.

For more information:

<http://www.citinternational.org/resources/Documents/CIT%20Program%20Overview.2017.pdf>

Cultural Competence

Cultural Competence is an awareness of biases, stereotypes, and assumptions that individuals working with those living in unsheltered situations may bring to their encounters and development of approaches that can improve the quality of care and assistance provided. Key points include an awareness that: homelessness for a particular individual is generally the result of a number of factors; each person's experience of homelessness may differ; differences in language and cultural beliefs need to be considered and respected; and that the goals/priorities of those experiencing homelessness may differ from those working with them to address their needs.

For more information:

<http://healthandhomelessness.weebly.com/cultural-competency.html>

<https://npin.cdc.gov/pages/cultural-competence>

Diversion

Diversion or assisted rapid resolution is aimed at keeping households from becoming homeless by providing strategies and services that permit them to stay safely in current housing or, if that is not possible, move to other housing without lapsing into homelessness. Priority is given to households who are most likely to be admitted to shelters or be unsheltered if not for this assistance.

For more information:

https://www.usich.gov/resources/uploads/asset_library/Prevention-Diversion-Rapid-Exit-July-2019.pdf

Emergency Shelter

Facilities designed to provide temporary or transitional shelter for people who experience homelessness, typically for 90 days or less. Supportive services may or may not be provided in addition to the provision of shelter. HUD encourages an average length of stay of fewer than 30 days.

Federal criteria and benchmarks for ending veteran, chronic, family, and youth homelessness

The U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness (USICH) and its participating federal agencies have developed guidance to assist communities in developing comprehensive responses to limiting homelessness among these subpopulations. Its criteria identify the elements that communities need to undertake, while its benchmarks provide measurements for communities to assess the effectiveness of their actions.

For more information:

<https://www.usich.gov/goals/what-does-ending-homelessness-mean>

First Responders

First responders have specialized training in assisting in emergency and crises. These include paramedics, emergency medical technicians, police officers, and firefighters.

Harm Reduction

Harm reduction focuses on reducing risks and negative impacts associated with substance abuse and other addictive behaviors. Interventions and policies focus on individual and community needs, including reducing injuries, preventing and treating overdoses, and minimizing the spread of diseases. Recipients of these services may be encouraged, but not required, to reduce their consumption of harmful substances. Practices may include needle exchanges and other equipment distribution programs and safe injection and utilization sites.

For more information:

<https://www.homelesshub.ca/about-homelessness/substance-use-addiction/harm-reduction>

<https://harmreduction.org/about-us/principles-of-harm-reduction/>

Healthcare for the Homeless (HCH) Program

Healthcare for the Homeless is the primary Federal funding program that supports Federally Qualified Health Centers in improving health care delivery to those who are experiencing homeless or at risk of homelessness. Healthcare for the Homeless programs are available nationwide and provide both mobile and clinic-based services and resources.

For more information:

<https://nhchc.org/>

<http://www.nachc.org/health-center-issues/special-populations/health-care-for-the-homeless/>

Housing First

Approaches to ending homelessness that center on providing people experiencing homelessness with housing as quickly as possible — and then providing services as needed. The basic underlying principle of Housing First approaches is that people are better able to move forward with their lives if they are first housed. This means eliminating or reducing the use of treatment preconditions, behavioral contingencies, and other barriers or requirements before housing or as a condition for continued tenancy in housing. Permanent supportive housing and rapid rehousing programs (see descriptions elsewhere in this glossary) both embody this approach.

For more information:

<http://endhomelessness.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/housing-first-fact-sheet.pdf>

https://www.usich.gov/resources/uploads/asset_library/evidence-behind-approaches-that-end-homelessness.pdf

<https://files.hudexchange.info/resources/documents/Housing-First-Permanent-Supportive-Housing-Brief.pdf>

Homelessness Prevention

Types of assistance aimed at helping households avoid eviction or homelessness. Activities typically include counseling and assistance in connecting households to resources and housing, in-kind emergency assistance, and/or cash assistance with housing and utility payments to prevent eviction and legal assistance in retaining current housing.

For more information on the evidence basis for homelessness prevention strategies:

<http://www.evidenceonhomelessness.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/>

[Homelessness_Prevention_Literature_Synthesis.pdf](#)

For more information:

https://www.usich.gov/resources/uploads/asset_library/Prevention-Diversion-Rapid-Exit-July-2019.pdf, pp. 14-15

Inclusive Public Space Management

Public Space Management involves addressing conflicting demands on the use of public spaces. Elements may include regulating uses, managing conflicts between uses, and coordinating interventions in the uses of public spaces. ‘Inclusive public space management involves ensuring that investments in and maintenance of these spaces are pursued in ways that are inclusive of the needs of all users, including people who are living in unsheltered situations and have no other feasible options.

For more information:

Special Topic: Inclusive Public Space Management

Law Enforcement Assisted Diversion (LEAD®)

A pre-booking diversion program to direct those arrested for low-level drug and other offenses away from prosecution and incarceration and toward intensive, trauma-informed, case management and support, often including counseling, housing, and drug treatment. LEAD programs provide law enforcement and other related agencies with an option outside of the formal criminal justice system in response to those dealing with substance abuse and mental health issues, homelessness, and extreme poverty. LEAD programs frequently engage people who are experiencing unsheltered homelessness.

For more information:

<https://www.leadbureau.org/about-lead>

<https://www.crimesolutions.gov/ProgramDetails.aspx?ID=477>

Low-Barrier Approaches

Low-barrier approaches involve minimizing the requirements placed on people who wish to utilize services, shelter, or housing. The objective with this approach is to have services “meet people where they are,” as long as this does not negatively affect other residents or staff. A low-barrier approach is consistent with a harm reduction philosophy.

For more information:

Special Topic: Low-Barrier Approaches

'Move Along' Orders

A coercive enforcement practice of requiring people who are homeless to remove themselves from sidewalks, parks, or other public places. Move-along orders are disruptive, harmful and traumatic to people who experience unsheltered homelessness and can have severe consequences that include loss of personal property and documents; decreased access to services, housing, and jobs, and increased vulnerability to violence and crime.

See Punitive Responses elsewhere in this glossary.

For more information:

<https://sociology.berkeley.edu/chris-herring-publishes-complaint-oriented-policing-american-sociological-review>

<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/0003122419872671>

Navigation Centers

Navigation Centers are a type of emergency shelter that provides temporary living facilities utilizing low-barrier approaches to individuals and families experiencing homelessness while case managers work to connect them to housing, income, public benefits, health services, and other needed assistance.

For more information:

<https://www.urban-initiatives.org/reports/defining-and-designing-navigation-centers-according-current-california-legislation>

Outreach

Outreach is an essential part of a community's response to unsheltered homelessness. Its purpose is to engage those living in unsheltered situations and assist them in connecting to resources that could help them address their needs and move back into housing. Core elements of outreach include engaging and forming relationships with people in unsheltered situations, a focus on individuals' needs, a focus on connecting people to stable housing along with needed services and supports, and an emphasis on harm reduction.

For more information:

Special Topic: Outreach

Permanent Supportive housing (PSH)

PSH is decent, safe, affordable (subsidized), community-based housing that provides occupants with the rights of tenancy and links to voluntary and flexible supports and services. PSH is designed for adults with disabilities or long histories of homelessness and should use a low-barrier approach consistent with a Housing First (see glossary entry) philosophy. The provision of PSH has been shown to be a cost-effective response to chronic homelessness, reducing public costs for hospital and shelter usage as well as for jails and prisons.

For more information:

<https://endhomelessness.org/ending-homelessness/solutions/permanent-supportive-housing/>

Problem-Oriented Policing (POP)

Problem-oriented policing is a proactive preventative approach taken by law enforcement agencies to address underlying conditions that lead to community issues, including crime and disorder. POP approaches look for new responses that focus on prevention, provide alternatives to the criminal justice system, and engage other public agencies as well as community members and the business sector in developing approaches to reduce the problems identified. A narrow definition of the problem, employment of a wide array of responses to reduce the incidence of that problem, and the use of data in problem selection, analysis, evaluation, and adjustment of approaches, are also key elements of POP.

For more information:

<https://www.crimesolutions.gov/PracticeDetails.aspx?ID=32>

<https://popcenter.asu.edu/content/what-pop>

Progressive Engagement

A nationally recognized emerging practice in addressing homelessness, progressive engagement provides customized assistance to meet a household's most critical need in attaining housing. For most households, a small amount of aid is enough to help them stabilize, but for those in greater need, more assistance can be provided, preserving the most expensive interventions for households with the most severe barriers to housing success. This flexible, individualized approach maximizes available resources by only providing intensive assistance to households who demonstrate need.

For more information:

https://safehousingpartnerships.org/sites/default/files/2017-01/2015_WhatIsProgressiveEngagement.pdf

Punitive Responses

Measures, including laws and ordinances, that officially or unofficially restrict, prohibit, or forcibly remove people from staying in parks, on sidewalks or streets, and in other public spaces, through arrests, citations, or 'move along' orders are punitive responses. The laws and ordinances in question are also referred to as "nuisance" or "quality of life" measures. Punitive responses can lead to extensive and non-productive engagement with the legal system when recipients do not show up for court appearances or fines cannot be paid, leading to warrants, ever-increasing legal fees, and incarceration. A criminal record stemming from these punitive measures creates even greater challenges for individuals in securing housing and employment.

For more information:

<https://nlchp.org/housing-not-handcuffs/>

<https://scholars.org/brief/why-there-are-better-alternatives-punitive-policies-targeting-homeless-people>

<https://www.usich.gov/solutions/criminal-justice/>

Rapid Rehousing

The core components of rapid rehousing are housing identification, rent and move-in financial assistance, and case management, with other services also available to households who have become homeless. This approach places a priority on moving a family or individual experiencing homelessness into permanent housing as quickly as possible, and then working with the household for an extended period—from several months to two years—to meet their living expenses.

For more information:

<https://www.usich.gov/solutions/housing/rapid-re-housing/>

Street Medicine

Street medicine practitioners provide direct medical care on streets and in other public settings to people living in unsheltered situations as well as other hard to reach populations. Services can include education, assistance with medication, and blood testing.

For more information:

<https://sites.usc.edu/streetmedicine/about/>

Transitional Housing

Transitional housing is a type of temporary housing with support services for homeless individuals that facilitates movement to independent living within 24 months. HUD encourages communities to reserve a limited portion of their housing inventory for transitional housing for specific subpopulations (e.g., youth or domestic violence victims) or purposes like short-term interim housing.

For more information:

<https://www.homelesshub.ca/solutions/housing-accommodation-and-supports/transitional-housing>

Physical and emotional trauma can cause ongoing stress and affect an individual's functioning and well-being. Approaching people using a trauma-informed perspective includes realizing that trauma is a wide-spread issue; responding to that knowledge by integrating knowledge about trauma into policies and approaches; recognizing signs of trauma in people encountered, and working to not retraumatize them through interaction. In practice this would involve addressing people's actual and perceived safety and security needs, providing an opportunity for individuals to express their feelings and validating those feelings, and helping them be able to predict and prepare by explaining the next steps in the process and that individual's role in that process. People experiencing homelessness usually have extensive histories of trauma, so using these practices is recommended.

For more information:

<http://www.citinternational.org/resources/Documents/Trauma%20Informed%20Policing.pdf>

<https://www.vera.org/blog/police-perspectives/building-trust-through-trauma-informed-policing>

211

211 is a confidential hotline available in some communities that provides callers with referrals to agencies and community organizations for essential community services and resources. Some 211 hotlines can also provide crisis intervention and problem-solving assistance.

SOLUTIONS BASED ON EVIDENCE

Arnold Ventures (AV) is a philanthropic organization with the mission to invest in evidence-based solutions that maximize opportunities and minimize injustice. AV supported a study to identify practices and policies that promote alternatives to using punitive and enforcement-based measures as the primary responses to unsheltered homelessness. Project investigators conducted a three-day visit in spring–summer 2019 to each of nine sites for an in-person review of community-specific initiatives. The sites represent the major regions of the U.S. and include cities of different sizes as well as rural, suburban, and tribal areas and provide an array of different socioeconomic contexts and present different local housing market configurations.