
NATIONAL RESEARCH AGENDA

*Priorities for Advancing Our
Understanding of Homelessness*



United States Interagency
Council on Homelessness

2012



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Introduction

Meeting the goals outlined in *Opening Doors: Federal Strategic Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness* requires targeted investments in proven solutions. Years of research and evaluation have identified several evidence-based best practices for preventing and ending homelessness, and important research continues to be conducted throughout the Federal Government and across the nation. As we strive to expand and strengthen our knowledge base, there are still many areas—particularly for homeless subgroups such as unaccompanied youth—where research is needed to inform the policy-making process as well as to better understand best practices in the field.

In late 2011, the United States Interagency Council on Homelessness (USICH, or the Council) assembled and reviewed over 200 studies on homelessness conducted between 1989 and 2011 and more than 30 additional studies by USICH member agencies that were in the implementation stage.¹ These studies were mapped against the objectives and strategies in *Opening Doors* to help identify key gaps in our knowledge base. This research agenda highlights priority topics for new research within eight key domains:

- Affordable and supportive housing
- Cost offsets/cost effectiveness
- Homeless crisis response
- Homelessness prevalence and risk and protective factors
- Improving health, well-being, and stability
- Justice linkages
- Accessing mainstream benefits
- Pathways to employment

The Council hopes that both funders and researchers will use this agenda to guide their choices about future investments in research. The research questions provided are not intended to be exhaustive, but rather illustrative. In some cases, a single study may address all of the questions posed within a topic area, while in other cases, multiple studies may be required.

Although some of the topics will require a national or multi-site study, many of the proposed topics are important for local research and can have significant impact on local policy and funding decisions. As such, the Council encourages cities and counties across the country to partner with local universities and other interested organizations to undertake research on topics of particular policy relevance to their communities and to publicize local solutions so that other communities may benefit.

¹ Abstracts and links to completed studies are available through the USICH website at www.usich.gov

Affordable and Supportive Housing

The lack of affordable housing for extremely low-income households is a primary cause of homelessness, particularly for families with children. Research has demonstrated that permanent housing subsidies significantly decrease the risk of homelessness, even for chronically homeless individuals with severe mental health issues and substance abuse disorders. Future research is needed to discover how to more effectively leverage existing affordable housing and invest in new developments to increase housing opportunities for homeless and at-risk populations.

Topic Area

Income Targeting in Federal Mainstream Affordable Housing Programs

Purpose

Poverty and persistent unemployment/underemployment are obvious risk factors for homelessness. Households that rely on public benefits such as SSI/SSDI (Supplemental Security Income/Social Security Disability Insurance) or TANF (Temporary Assistance for Needy Families) typically earn between 15 and 30 percent of area median income (AMI), placing such households at particular risk of homelessness. The purpose of this study would be to establish a baseline on the extent to which federal mainstream affordable housing programs reach extremely low-income households (those at 30 percent of AMI and below) and to learn whether these programs could be targeted more effectively to households at greatest risk of homelessness.

Research Questions

- ▶ To what extent are federal affordable housing programs targeted to extremely low-income households?
- ▶ Do state and local program administrators face barriers to deeper targeting?
- ▶ What incentives would be required to improve targeting?

Topic Area

Impact of Olmstead on Efforts to End Chronic Homelessness

Purpose

In *Olmstead v. L.C.*, 527 U.S. 581 (1999), the Supreme Court ruled that Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act prohibits the unnecessary institutionalization of persons with disabilities. In the words of the Supreme Court, services to persons with disabilities must be provided “in the most integrated setting possible.” In the decade following the ruling, rates of deinstitutionalization varied significantly from state to state, and progress was slow in some areas. In 2009, the Department of Justice launched an aggressive enforcement effort. Given the insufficient supply of permanent supportive housing throughout the country, the purpose of this research would be to monitor the impact of Olmstead-related litigation and enforcement activities on state and local efforts to end chronic homelessness.

Research Questions

- ▶ How are persons experiencing chronic homelessness treated within the parameters of Olmstead settlements (both in writing and in practice)?
- ▶ Have settlements aided efforts at ending chronic homelessness or created new challenges?
- ▶ How can states and localities implement Olmstead agreements in ways that help disabled persons experiencing homelessness obtain permanent supportive housing?

Topic Area**Permanent Supportive Housing Models****Purpose**

States' efforts to comply with *Olmstead v. L.C.*, 527 U.S. 581 (1999) may have unintended consequences on their ability to provide housing opportunities for chronically homeless and other highly vulnerable homeless individuals at scale. Although the *Olmstead* ruling requires states to serve individuals with disabilities in "the most integrated setting possible," there is still much to learn about the relative effectiveness of different models of permanent supportive housing (i.e., scattered-site, single-site, mixed-use) for homeless individuals and households with high service needs. The purpose of this research would be to advance our understanding of the advantages and disadvantages of these different housing models, taking into account participant preferences.

Research Questions

- ▶ Are there significant differences in outcomes (e.g., housing stability, health, quality of life, cost) between different permanent supportive housing models?
- ▶ Are some models more effective for certain subpopulations than others?
- ▶ How can states adapt these models in developing and implementing their *Olmstead* Plans?
- ▶ How can participant preferences best inform decisions about permanent supportive housing models?

Topic Area**Appropriateness of Housing Models for Veterans****Purpose**

The National Center on Homelessness Among Veterans is evaluating a continuum of housing models to prevent and end homelessness among Veterans. The purpose of this study would be to use a randomized control trial or long-term cohort study to evaluate the effectiveness of various housing models—transitional and permanent supportive housing—and determine how to match the housing model or approach to Veterans' needs.

Research Questions

- ▶ Which groups of homeless Veterans are best served in transitional housing (e.g., Grant and Per Diem), permanent supportive housing (e.g., HUD-VASH), intensive treatment (e.g., VA domiciliary programs), and rapid re-housing?
- ▶ What service packages and other key programmatic features optimize outcomes in these Veteran-specific interventions?

Topic Area**Effect of Public Housing Agency Administrative Policies on Homelessness****Purpose**

Public housing agencies (PHAs) are among the biggest suppliers of affordable housing in every community. In this role, they are required to establish admissions and occupancy policies that both preserve a safe and stable living environment for their tenants and ensure the financial viability of their agency. However, some of the more restrictive policies can have unintended consequences for households with extremely high service needs. The purpose of this study would be to determine if restrictive screening and termination policies by PHAs contribute to homelessness in some communities.

Research Questions

- ▶ Do strict PHA screening criteria and termination policies contribute to homelessness?
- ▶ Do screening requirements require some household members to leave so that others can become or remain housed?
- ▶ Does the adoption of PHA work requirements, income requirements, higher minimum rents, or flat rents make it more likely that extremely low-income households will lose assistance and become homeless?
- ▶ What is the cost to PHAs to evict households and reissue vouchers? Could those resources be more effectively used for housing retention assistance?
- ▶ How can PHAs amend their administrative policies to help reduce and end homelessness?

Topic Area**Addressing Homelessness Through Project-Basing of Housing Choice Vouchers****Purpose**

Current regulations allow PHAs to project-base 20 percent of their housing choice voucher allocation. The purpose of this study would be to understand the effectiveness of project-basing in expanding the stock of supportive housing for homeless households with special needs.

Research Questions

- ▶ To what extent is project-basing being used as a strategy across the country to increase the supply of permanent supportive housing?
- ▶ How many PHAs are at or near the 20 percent cap?
- ▶ What proportion of project-based units is targeted to homeless and chronically homeless individuals?
- ▶ What other populations are being prioritized?
- ▶ How many states have LIHTC (Low Income Housing Tax Credit) preferences in their qualified allocation plans for projects targeting persons experiencing homelessness, and how many have preferences for projects with committed Section 8 project-based vouchers?
- ▶ What are the challenges and benefits associated with project-basing to both PHAs and landlords?
- ▶ Would regulatory changes and/or waivers increase PHAs' ability to project-base?
- ▶ What is the average length of time a tenant stays in a project-based unit?
- ▶ What variables impact whether a tenant stays or leaves?

Topic Area**Impact of Permanent Supportive Housing on Neighborhoods****Purpose**

Research has demonstrated that permanent supportive housing can be a successful and cost effective intervention for individuals experiencing chronic homelessness. However, supportive housing developers often face siting challenges in the form of neighborhood opposition. While research has been conducted on the impact of permanent supportive housing on neighborhoods in New York City and Chicago, additional research is needed to provide broader evidence regarding the impact of supportive housing on neighborhoods in various types of communities.

Research Questions

- ▶ How have permanent supportive housing developers successfully overcome neighborhood opposition?
- ▶ What impact does permanent supportive housing have on neighborhood property values and on crime rates?
- ▶ Do variables like project design and target population influence the degree of impact?
- ▶ Are impacts different in different types of neighborhoods?
- ▶ Is opposition reduced by using scatter-site models?
- ▶ Are there proactive measures that can be taken to mitigate any potential negative impacts?



The Richardson Apartments, a 120-unit permanent supportive housing development in downtown San Francisco, has won design awards from the American Institute of Architects and the American Society of Landscape Architects

Cost Offsets/Cost-Effectiveness

Chronic homelessness is strongly associated with increased use of publicly-funded services: emergency rooms, hospitals, law enforcement, jails, and shelters. Research shows that funding these services is costly for local jurisdictions and taxpayers. Additional research is needed on cost-effective solutions to respond to homelessness.

Topic Area

Cost Offsets of Permanent Supportive Housing

Purpose

A growing body of evidence seems to support the cost effectiveness of permanent supportive housing as a solution to chronic homelessness, particularly among individuals with severe mental illness. However, most of the studies are based on convenience samples, and the studies also have varying data sources and timeframes for measuring costs which limits their comparability. Consequently, the results are highly variable and include a broad range of cost savings per person. Building on this existing body of research, the purpose of this study would be to expand and standardize methodologies to produce stronger, more reliable estimates of cost savings that better identify the systems in which the cost offsets occur so that cross-system incentives can be better aligned. Ideally, the study would help provide the evidence necessary to meet Office of Management and Budget and Congressional Budget Office criteria regarding cost offsets.

Research Questions

- ▶ How does the cost-effectiveness of permanent supportive housing vary by community?
- ▶ What are the most efficient and cost effective approaches for specific subpopulations such as Veterans?
- ▶ Is permanent supportive housing cost effective for all eligible participants or only when targeted to people experiencing chronic homelessness or people with particular conditions (e.g., chronic health conditions, chronic alcohol addiction, severe mental illness)?
- ▶ Does increased investment in some federal funding streams (e.g., HUD investment in housing) lead to savings in other federal funding streams, and if so, which investments produce cost offsets and which programs and budgets receive savings (e.g., HHS savings on Medicaid or Medicare expenditures, state budget savings on hospitalizations)?

Topic Area

Cost-Benefit Analysis of Local Criminalization Laws

Purpose

Some municipalities have instituted laws that criminalize homelessness (e.g., legislation that makes it illegal to sleep, sit, or store personal belongings in public spaces) and practice selective enforcement of more neutral laws (such as anti-loitering or open container laws) in an effort to discourage homelessness. The purpose of this research would be to critically examine the costs of these measures relative to their benefits.

Research Questions

- ▶ What impact do local criminalization laws have on reducing homelessness?
- ▶ What costs are associated with enforcement, court processing, and adjudication of these laws?
- ▶ What is the impact of the laws on individuals experiencing homelessness (e.g., criminal history, fees/fines), and how do these impacts affect future efforts to secure housing and employment?
- ▶ What are the public perceptions about the effectiveness of these laws and comprehensive solutions?

Homeless Crisis Response

Research has helped demonstrate the effectiveness of a crisis response model in ending homelessness. Models focus on preventing homelessness when possible and rapidly returning people to housing when housing loss cannot be avoided. Additional research is needed to assess how homeless service systems can allocate assistance based on need, and target resources in the most effective way possible.

Topic Area

Homelessness Prevention Targeting

Purpose

The Recovery Act-funded Homelessness Prevention and Rapid Re-Housing Program (HPRP) was the first federal program to fund homelessness prevention at scale. Experience gained from this program revealed that it is very difficult to predict which households will actually become homeless and enter shelter in the face of a housing crisis, and that there is still much to learn about the risk factors that contribute to homelessness and the protective factors that guard against it. The purpose of this study would be to establish evidence-based practices for homelessness prevention through a rigorous multi-site outcome evaluation using a quasi-experimental design.

Research Questions

- ▶ How can prevention programs identify households that would be homeless but for the assistance?
- ▶ Are there universal screening questions that could reliably identify imminently homeless households?
- ▶ How can providers determine the optimal level of financial assistance and services needed to prevent homelessness for each individual household?
- ▶ Are there households for which prevention assistance is not effective? If so, what are their characteristics?
- ▶ To what extent do neighborhood factors—unemployment, lack of affordable housing, crime, domestic violence, etc.—contribute to homelessness?
- ▶ Can prevention initiatives that target high-risk neighborhoods reduce homelessness at a community-wide level?

Topic Area

Preventing Homelessness Among Veterans Separating from Military Service

Purpose

To determine the risk factors for homelessness among Veterans and identify evidence-based practices for homeless prevention through a cohort study of Veterans separating from military service.

Research Questions

- ▶ What sentinel events—including those experienced prior to, during, and following military service—precede homelessness for Veterans?
- ▶ What are the pathways into homelessness among high-risk soldiers being discharged from military service?
- ▶ What interventions specific to subpopulation (e.g., Operation Enduring Freedom/Operation Iraqi Freedom Veterans) and event (e.g., post-deployment) efficiently and effectively prevent homelessness?
- ▶ What is the role of family and community resources in the prevention of homelessness among Veterans?

Homelessness Prevalence and Risk and Protective Factors

Improved data collection practices have led to more precise estimates of the prevalence of homelessness both on a single night and over an entire year. However, there is still a need to better understand both the prevalence of homelessness and the risk and protective factors among certain groups.

Topic Area

Homeless Youth Prevalence, Needs, and Characteristics Study

Purpose

To produce a reliable national estimate of the prevalence of unaccompanied homeless youth and their characteristics.

Research Questions

- ▶ How many unaccompanied youth experience homelessness, and what are the characteristics of this population?
- ▶ What are the primary causes, risks, and protective factors related to youth homelessness?
- ▶ Using improved data, how can better intervention models be developed to serve homeless youth based on their needs, characteristics, and service patterns?

Topic Area

Point-in-Time Count Accuracy

Purpose

The Continuum of Care (CoC) application for McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act funding requires CoCs to produce statistically reliable, unduplicated counts or estimates of homeless persons in sheltered and unsheltered locations on a single night. Capturing data on unsheltered households is particularly challenging, and many communities report extreme fluctuations from one year to the next. The purpose of this study is to assess the reliability of point-in-time (PIT) counts and understand the methodological and external factors that influence year-to-year fluctuations and trends.

Research Questions

- ▶ What methodological approaches appear to be most accurate and yield the most consistent results over time (e.g., public places versus services-based count)?
- ▶ Are different methodologies required in different geographic areas?
- ▶ What is the cost differential of the various methodologies?
- ▶ How do weather events such as heavy rainfall, snow storms, or warm spells impact results?
- ▶ Does the PIT count fail to capture seasonal variations in homelessness, particularly in northern/cold climate states?
- ▶ Is the PIT count an adequate tool for capturing subpopulation data among the unsheltered population (such as Veteran and chronic status)?
- ▶ Are there best practices that can/should be more widely adopted?
- ▶ Can PIT counts be reliably extrapolated to produce annual estimates?

Topic Area**Students Experiencing Homelessness****Purpose**

Research has demonstrated that experiencing homelessness can hinder children’s cognitive development and ability to learn. In a June 2012 report, the U.S. Department of Education (ED) reported that over 70 percent of the students identified as homeless by local education agencies were residing in “doubled-up” situations rather than in shelters, hotels/motels, or unsheltered locations. Households living in doubled-up situations are not eligible for some HUD homeless assistance programs. The purpose of this study would be to assess the housing and educational outcomes of students experiencing homelessness and to learn how schools can partner with housing and homeless service providers to improve outcomes.

Research Questions

- ▶ What portion of students experiencing homelessness and their families utilize homeless and/or subsidized housing services?
- ▶ Are challenges related to receiving housing assistance related to federal rules or local implementation of programs?
- ▶ How can schools partner with homeless and affordable housing programs to prevent homelessness for at-risk families?
- ▶ How do educational outcomes for students experiencing homelessness differ from other poor or highly mobile students?
- ▶ How can schools more effectively identify students experiencing homelessness and connect them to services?

Topic Area**Rural Homelessness****Purpose**

Homelessness in rural areas often takes different forms than in urban areas (e.g., extreme overcrowding, substandard housing) and we lack reliable estimates of the number, characteristics, and circumstances of homeless households in these areas. Expansive rural catchment areas and a lack of transportation options pose unique challenges to providers in rural areas endeavoring to provide effective and responsive services to households experiencing homelessness. Although HUD’s new Rural Housing Stability Program (authorized under the Homeless Emergency Assistance and Rapid Transition to Housing Act of 2009) acknowledges some of these realities, better data is needed to support resource requests and program planning.

Research Questions

- ▶ What is the size and scope of homelessness in rural areas?
- ▶ What are the distinct challenges posed by providing assistance to homeless and at-risk households in rural communities and how can they most effectively be addressed?

People in rural areas experiencing homelessness are often difficult to identify because they are not engaged in homeless services



Topic Area**Homeless and At-Risk Veterans****Purpose**

Veterans are more likely to experience homelessness than non-Veteran adults. Previous research—and recent improvements in data collection pertaining to homelessness among Veterans—has estimated the prevalence of homelessness and specific risk factors for homelessness in this subpopulation. Additional research is needed to determine the most predictive risk factors for homelessness and recidivism to homelessness post-intervention.

Research Questions

- ▶ What are the risk and protective factors for homelessness among Veterans and at what point are the factors experienced—before, during, or following military service?
- ▶ Which Veterans, once housed, are most susceptible to recidivism and under what circumstances?
- ▶ What are the most prevalent conditions (e.g., co-occurring mental illness and substance abuse, post-traumatic stress disorder, chronic pain) experienced by Veterans who are homeless or at risk of homelessness?

Topic Area**Doubled-Up Households****Purpose**

HUD, ED, and Census data all suggest that during the most recent economic downturn more households entered into doubled-up or shared living arrangements, but we currently lack the data needed to understand the stability of these arrangements or to determine how doubling-up relates to the risk of homelessness. The purpose of this research is to understand the number and characteristics of households living in doubled-up situations, as well as the relationship between shared households and homelessness, given the data limitations and statutory differences in how agencies define homelessness.

Research Questions

- ▶ What distinguishes doubled-up housing arrangements that are stable and voluntary from those that are tenuous and inadequate?
- ▶ Can diversion to friends and families be an effective homelessness prevention strategy? If so, for which households and under what circumstances?
- ▶ Is shared housing, including housing shared by multiple adults, a viable affordable housing strategy? If so, how could federal resources be used to support this and what are the potential costs and savings?
- ▶ How can families in tenuous or inadequate housing conditions be identified and connected to services?
- ▶ To what extent are shared housing situations a result of a lack of emergency shelter capacity (i.e., if shelter capacity were greater, would more households enter shelter versus doubled-up situations)?

More research is needed on the effect of shared living arrangements on families with children



Topic Area**Migration of People Seeking Homeless Services****Purpose**

States and communities sometimes argue that increasing housing opportunities and services will attract more homeless individuals and households. The purpose of this study would be to determine if people experiencing homelessness move in greater numbers than other populations and why they move.

Research Questions

- ▶ How often do people experiencing homelessness move across city, county, and state boundaries?
- ▶ What motivates these moves: homeless services, mainstream services, job search, weather, personal/family reasons?
- ▶ Does this migration create challenges related to the coordination and continuity of benefits and services (e.g., health care services provided by VA medical centers for Veterans experiencing homelessness)?
- ▶ What are the policy implications?

Improving Health, Well Being, and Stability

The integration of housing with health care is increasingly identified as an effective model for serving homeless and unstably housed persons with serious health problems, including people living with chronic illness and disabling conditions. Research shows that over time, housing and wrap-around services reduce HIV risk behaviors, improve health care outcomes, and reduce costly emergency service utilization. More research is needed to understand how people experiencing homelessness can access care and how that care can be effectively and affordably provided.

Topic Area**Impact of Medicaid on Homeless Populations****Purpose**

While the Affordable Care Act will reduce the number of people without health insurance by expanding eligibility for Medicaid, existing administrative data suggests much work is needed to ensure that eligible individuals enroll and that enrolled individuals actually receive needed care and services. The purpose of this study would be to identify the barriers to accessing Medicaid coverage and services, as well as practices used to overcome those barriers.

Research Questions

- ▶ What are the barriers to accessing Medicaid coverage for homeless individuals and families (after 2014)?
- ▶ Does access to Medicaid benefits increase the likelihood that an individual experiencing homelessness will obtain housing and/or health care services?
- ▶ How can homeless service providers and health care providers better collaborate to ensure clients receive needed services?

Topic Area**Relationship Between Youth Systems and Homelessness****Purpose**

Research has established that teenagers in foster care or in the juvenile justice system are at increased risk of homelessness. However, federal administrative data does not track housing stability beyond exit from those systems, and the most recent national estimates on the percentage of homeless adults with a history of involvement in foster care or the juvenile justice system are from the National Survey of Homeless Assistance Providers and Clients, which is now almost 20 years old. New research is needed to understand the connection between juvenile justice or foster care involvement and subsequent homelessness and how we can help vulnerable youth make a more successful transition to adulthood.

Research Questions

- ▶ What percentage of youth involved with the foster care- and/or juvenile justice-systems later experiences homelessness?
- ▶ How many youth experienced homelessness within 30 days of exiting the child welfare or juvenile justice systems? What are their characteristics?
- ▶ Is there a critical time period where such individuals are particularly vulnerable, or do they have increased risk levels throughout their adult lives?
- ▶ What program models and practices are most effective at stabilizing youth exiting foster care or exiting the juvenile justice system?

Topic Area**Service Utilization by Homeless Persons with Behavioral Health Problems****Purpose**

To evaluate program utilization patterns and costs of behavioral health services, and evaluate whether jurisdictions with a robust behavioral health care network produce better outcomes for people experiencing homelessness.

Research Questions

- ▶ What percentage of people experiencing homelessness have an undiagnosed or untreated behavioral health problem?
- ▶ Do homeless individuals with behavioral health problems who utilize behavioral health services achieve better health and housing outcomes than those who have untreated or undiagnosed behavioral health problems?
- ▶ Where and under what circumstances do people experiencing homelessness achieve the best outcomes?
- ▶ Are low-income adults with mental illness less likely to experience homelessness if they are connected to behavioral health services?
- ▶ What forms of primary care and behavioral health service delivery link best with housing assistance programs?
- ▶ What policies can be aligned within health programs to most effectively work with housing assistance programs?

Topic Area**Health Care Needs of Homeless and Formerly Homeless Veterans****Purpose**

Many Veterans experiencing homelessness—and accessing both the mainstream and VA homeless assistance systems—received medical and behavioral health care at VA medical centers across the country. Given the level of health services utilization among this population, research is needed to understand the role that these services play in preventing or ending homelessness among Veterans.

Research Questions

- ▶ What are the evolving care needs of formerly homeless Veterans?
- ▶ What are the care needs of subpopulations of homeless Veterans (e.g., Operation Enduring Freedom/Operation Iraqi Freedom Veterans, women)?
- ▶ What care events create specific needs among homeless Veterans (e.g., end-of-life care)?
- ▶ How can catastrophic events (e.g., suicide) be reduced among the population of Veterans who are homeless or formerly homeless?

Justice Linkages

Research has established a strong correlation between incarceration and homelessness. People experiencing homelessness are at increased risk of incarceration, and incarceration itself creates an increased risk of homelessness because of disruptions in housing and employment arrangements, inadequate discharge planning, and discrimination against returning citizens in the labor and housing markets. To break this cycle, local law enforcement agencies need to work with service providers to adopt constructive alternatives to criminalizing homelessness and correctional institutions need to improve their reentry planning to connect returning prisoners to housing and supportive services.

Topic Area**Impact of Problem-Solving Courts on Homelessness****Purpose**

Problem-solving courts, such as homelessness courts, mental health courts, and drug courts, are more vulnerable to funding cuts than traditional trial courts because of their higher evaluation and treatment expenses. There is some research to suggest that these special purpose courts produce positive outcomes, including lower rates of recidivism and increased linkages to treatment services. Additional research is needed, particularly to understand the impact of problem-solving courts on community efforts to prevent and end homelessness.

Research Questions

- ▶ Do individuals whose cases are adjudicated by a special purpose court have better long-term housing stability than those whose cases are adjudicated by the regular court system?
- ▶ Is there an empirical link between housing courts and community reductions in homelessness, particularly chronic homelessness?
- ▶ Do certain types of courts have a greater impact on homelessness than others? If so, what are their characteristics?
- ▶ For whom do problem-solving courts work best?
- ▶ Are differences in participant demographics associated with different outcomes?
- ▶ Are outcomes impacted by voluntary versus involuntary participation?

Topic Area**Prisoner Reentry****Purpose**

Individuals being discharged from prison face numerous barriers to securing housing, employment, and services, which can lead to a cycle of homelessness and incarceration at great cost to individuals and society. State budget cuts and recent court cases have led to large increases in the number of people exiting prisons, which adds increased urgency to the need for more effective reentry planning. The purpose of this research would be to better understand the impact of prison discharges on homelessness and to develop effective practices for improving successful reintegration.

Research Questions

- ▶ How can people currently in prison be better connected to housing, benefits (e.g., Medicaid and SSI), education, and job training to reduce the risk of homelessness at reentry?
- ▶ What kinds of discharge policies are effective in helping exiting prisoners secure and maintain access to stable housing?
- ▶ How are re-entry housing and employment outcomes affected by PHA screening criteria or state and local policies (e.g., restrictions on group housing, mandatory employer background checks)?
- ▶ Has HUD-VASH reduced criminal recidivism rates among Veterans with criminal histories?



Criminal recidivism rates are significantly lower for returning citizens who are able to find affordable housing

Accessing Mainstream Benefits

Mainstream entitlement programs provide necessary income support to help people experiencing or at risk of homelessness afford housing. While many people experiencing homelessness are eligible for these mainstream benefits, surprisingly few are enrolled in the full range of programs available to them. Research shows that systemic barriers—including lengthy and complex application procedures, stringent documentation requirements, myths about eligibility, and local staff capacity constraints—often prevent people experiencing homelessness from accessing the benefits for which they are eligible.

Topic Area**Accessing SSI/SSDI Benefits for People Experiencing Homelessness****Purpose**

To understand how to increase SSI/SSDI take-up rates for people experiencing homelessness and how to structure SSI/SSDI benefits to help homeless beneficiaries achieve stable housing.

Research Questions

- ▶ How many SSI/SSDI claimants and beneficiaries are people experiencing homelessness?
- ▶ What are the characteristics of homeless disability cases?
- ▶ Are there any practices that facilitate the disability determination process for claimants who are homeless?
- ▶ How does receipt of SSI/SSDI benefits impact housing status?

Pathways to Employment

Unemployment, underemployment, and low-wage employment increase the risk of homelessness for individuals and families. The recession has left many families homeless for the first time, or at risk because of unemployment or reduced wages or hours. To address this, it is necessary for both homeless and mainstream service providers to address barriers to employment for both households experiencing and at risk of homelessness.

Topic Area

Barriers to Mainstream Workforce Employment Services

Purpose

The Department of Labor's One-Stop Career Centers are the heart of the public workforce system, and the services they provide are of particular importance to low-income households. The purpose of this study would be to identify the extent to which One-Stop Career Centers are successfully reaching people experiencing homelessness and to identify best practices that can be replicated in communities across the country.

Research Questions

- ▶ Of those receiving services at One Stop Career Centers each year, what percentage are individuals with current or recent experiences of homelessness and/or unstable housing situations?
- ▶ Is there variation across communities and states? If so, why?
- ▶ What types of services are provided to these households?
- ▶ What factors impact the services that are provided?
- ▶ Does receipt of One Stop services impact future housing stability? What changes—either regulatory or administrative—would enable One Stops to better serve individuals experiencing or at risk of homelessness?

List of Abbreviations and Terms

AMI	area median income
CBO	Congressional Budget Office
CoC	Continuum of Care
ED	U.S. Department of Education
Grant and Per Diem	VA's Homeless Providers Grant and Per Diem Program
HPRP	Homelessness Prevention and Rapid Re-Housing Program
HUD	U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development
HUD-VASH	HUD-Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing program
LIHTC	low income housing tax credit
OEF	Operation Enduring Freedom, the official name for the War in Afghanistan
OIF	Operation Iraqi Freedom, the American combat mission in Iraq
OMB	Office of Management and Budget
PHA	public housing agency
PIT count	The Point-in-Time Count is a one-day, statistically reliable, unduplicated count of sheltered and unsheltered homeless individuals and families in the country.
SSI/SSDI	Supplemental Security Income/Social Security Disability Insurance
TANF	Temporary Assistance for Needy Families
VA	U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

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