Strategic Plan to Respond to Homelessness in Shasta County

Investing in a Stronger Community

July 8, 2016

Strategic Planning Steering Committee

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Introduction

Vision for Success

We in Shasta County envision a homeless response system that uses our resources as effectively as possible, quickly connecting our neighbors to the services they need to regain and retain housing or never become homeless in the first place. By solving homelessness, we will meaningfully improve the quality of life and wellbeing of everyone in Shasta County.

Homelessness is an urgent problem that has long felt overwhelming in our community. As a community-wide challenge – affecting all of us in Shasta County – it requires a unified, community-wide solution. While homelessness is solvable and we know what works, we will need an assertive, effective, strategic approach to truly make headway.

Investment for Long-Term Success

Our community believes in common sense solutions that prioritize the long-term health, well-being, and safety of all persons in Shasta County. We understand that investment in the right solutions today will result in more effective use of our community's resources, and significantly fewer individuals and families experiencing homelessness in the future.

Compassionate and Respectful Systems of Care

We believe that human beings should be treated with compassion and respect. We will prioritize the dignity and quality of life of all persons, with the understanding that each individual has a unique set of strengths, experiences, and needs. A community-wide response to homelessness must actively seek the input and collaboration of homeless and formerly homeless individuals and families, as integral members of the community.

Housing for a Healthier Community

Although our community faces many challenges, together we can support our most vulnerable neighbors in becoming housed and achieving greater dignity and self-sufficiency, which lays the foundation for improved enjoyment and quality of life for all of Shasta County. With a coordinated, county-wide response, we believe that Shasta County can join regions across the state and across the country that are making meaningful progress toward the ultimate goal of ending homelessness.

Why a Strategic Plan?

With rates of homelessness on the rise in Shasta County, it is clear that the status quo is not working. Many individuals and agencies are working diligently to mitigate the impacts of homelessness and poverty on the community, but existing resources are far too few to meet the need. Yet, as history has demonstrated, the costs of doing too little are far too high.

This Strategic Plan provides an implementable structure for aligning efforts to address homelessness throughout Shasta County. This positions the community to take full advantage of existing opportunities

and to bring in new resources. Most importantly, the Plan serves as a starting point for stakeholders to work together on the steps that will lead to transformative change in solving homelessness.

The priorities set forth in this document offer a framework to achieve the community's vision of solving homelessness. In particular, the community envisions a homeless response system that:

- Demonstrates strong system-wide collaboration, with a unified approach to reach agreed-upon goals.
- Is driven by leadership at the county, city, and community level to coordinate stakeholders and dedicate resources to support an effective and sustainable system.
- Draws more federal, state, and philanthropic resources into the system and targets them efficiently on programs and services that work to significantly reduce – not just manage – homelessness.
- Develops data to understand the scope of the problem and the effectiveness of the solutions, and increase accountability for programs and stakeholders.
- Ensures all of our neighbors have access to the services they need to achieve self-sufficiency as contributing members of the community, consistent with their abilities.

This Strategic Plan is intended to be a living framework that captures the goals and strategies of the Shasta County community and supports a unified approach to achieving this collective vision. As a living document, it is expected that the Strategic Plan will be revisited regularly by a group of stakeholders invested in its implementation to evaluate progress, accountability, and opportunity on a consistent basis, and set updated benchmarks and targets.

Homelessness in Shasta County

Homelessness takes a variety of forms in Shasta County, sometimes conspicuous but often not recognizable as homelessness at all. For many living in substandard housing or below the poverty line, a single crisis – a missed paycheck, an unexpected medical or repair bill, an exploded boiler – may result in the loss of a home. Once homeless, it can be a staggering uphill battle to return to housing. The longer households remain homeless, the more difficult it is to regain a stable residence.

Others suffer from years of living outside, with a multitude of medical and behavioral health needs. Cycling through the public system – emergency rooms, substance use treatment, and jail – such individuals can be extremely expensive to the public system without a safe, secure place to stabilize.

With such diverse reasons people are homeless, there is no one-size-fits-all solution for the issue. There are, however, certain programs, services and practices that have been proven to be extremely successful in significantly reducing the impacts of homelessness on communities.

> Who is "homeless"? See **Appendix F** for the definitions of "homeless" used by:
>
> - The Department of Housing and Urban Development
> - The Shasta County Office of Education
> - The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
> - Local Shasta County homeless housing and service providers

Several interventions are already working well in Shasta County, and our system is already assisting many individuals each year to access and maintain permanent housing. For example, outreach case management supports chronically homeless individuals with significant behavioral health needs in achieving stable housing; housing programs for survivors of domestic violence are creating safe spaces for women and children fleeing abuse; and supportive housing for veterans is assisting homeless veterans in permanently moving indoors. However, while many programs and services in the county are effectively preventing and ending homelessness, and while we know what works, there are not nearly enough of these critical resources to meet the need.

Point in Time (PIT) Count

Each year, the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) requires communities to conduct a census of persons who are homeless on a single night in January. This census, or "Point in Time Count," provides a snapshot of how many people were homeless at a given time under HUD's narrow definition of "homelessness," which includes persons living in emergency shelter, transitional housing, or a place not meant for human habitation, such as on the streets or in a car.[1]

The January 26, 2016, PIT Count counted a total of 934 persons, or 0.52% of Shasta County's estimated population for 2015, who were homeless in Shasta County that night.

- 691 of these individuals were unsheltered;
- 243 were in emergency shelter or transitional housing;
- 77 are children under age 18 and 89 were transitional age youth from age 18-24;
- 198 persons were chronically homeless;[2]
- 287 have a psychiatric or emotional condition;
- 238 have a physical disability;
- 277 have experienced physical, emotional, or sexual abuse; and
- 72 are veterans of the United States Military.

Shasta County's PIT data over time suggests rates of homelessness are increasing, with an approximately 10% increase in homelessness from 2013-2016. However, because circumstances and methods of counting have changed from year to year, it is difficult to assess accurately the true extent of increase.[3]

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[1] HUD's narrow definition of homelessness does not include persons who were doubled up, couch surfing, or paying for a hotel or motel room themselves (though it does include hotels when they are paid for by a non-profit or faith-based organization). Other agencies, such as the Departments of Education use a broader definition that does include households who are doubled up. For more complete definitions of homelessness used by various agencies, see **Appendix F**.

[2] "Chronically homeless" is a term defined by HUD to include all individuals or families with a diagnosed disabling condition, who have been homeless for twelve consecutive months or four separate times in the past three years for a total of twelve months.

[3] The PIT Count in Shasta and other communities typically relies in part on teams of volunteers counting those individuals they believe to be homeless. From 2015 to 2016, for example, methods in Shasta County reportedly changed, with greater lead time in planning and greater access to more areas of the county outside Redding. The

PIT Count for Shasta County[4]

	2013	2015	2016
Total homeless persons	851	591	934
Total unsheltered	347	347	691
Total chronically homeless	199	298	198
Severely Mentally Ill	48	286	287
Veterans	203	87	72

Spotlight on Veterans

[5]Over the past 3 years, the Redding Veterans Resource Center and the US Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) have led a coordinated effort to end homelessness for veterans in Shasta County. This initiative included the development of a central master list of veterans experiencing homelessness, as well as a centralized assessment and referral system for veterans housing and services. At the same time, the Veterans Resource Center, VA, and Shasta County have collaborated to dramatically increase the availability of permanent housing with supportive services targeted to veterans experiencing homelessness. The dramatic decline in the number of veterans experiencing homelessness from the 2013 to the 2016 PIT Count demonstrates that a focused investment in housing resources and coordinated systems can have a significant impact on homelessness in Shasta County.

Veterans: Homeless Population & Housing Resources[5]

- PIT Count of Homeless Veterans
- Permanent Housing with Services for Veterans
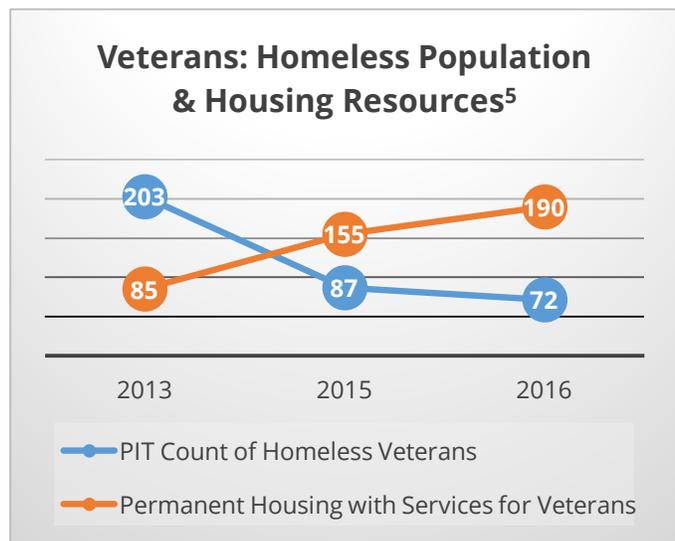
Annual Service Data

While the PIT Count provides a snapshot of homelessness at a single point in time, data from service providers offers a picture of homelessness over an annual period. The annualized number of people

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data in 2013 and 2016 suggest that the 2015 count may be incomplete. A count of unsheltered persons did not take place in 2014.

[4] Due to changes in PIT Count methodology, the questions used to collect this information may have varied from year to year.
[5] The "Permanent Housing with Services for Veterans" represented in this graph include two major sources of housing assistance for veterans: Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing (VASH), which provides long-term rental assistance through HUD's Housing Choice Voucher Program and case management through the VA, and Supportive Services for Veterans Families (SSVF), which provides short- and medium-term rental assistance and case management to rapidly re-house veterans.

who experience homelessness over the course of a year is often significantly higher than the single night of the PIT Count: in Shasta County, at least 3,100 individuals were homeless at some point in 2015.[6]

At least 726 students experienced homelessness in the 2014-15 school year.[7]

At least 177 veterans experienced homelessness in 2015.[8]

A more robust understanding of the homeless landscape in Shasta County is not yet available due to limitations in data management systems and a lack of coordination between sectors. What the data does tell us is that Shasta County has a growing homeless population, with a large number of chronically homeless persons with high needs. We also have reason to believe that the community has a significant number of other populations with specific considerations such as transitional aged youth and households fleeing domestic violence. With an effective Homeless Management Information System (HMIS), one of the priorities in this plan, Shasta County will be better able to truly understand who is becoming homeless and how to address their needs.

> **Why is homelessness so hard to measure?**
>
> - Different agencies use different definitions of homelessness.
> - Mainstream agencies, such as health and corrections systems often do not collect data specific to homelessness.
> - Lack of a robust HMIS that could centralize and coordinate data.

Community Process

This Strategic Plan is the result of nearly a year of community engagement and strategic brainstorming around homelessness in Shasta County – its causes, impacts, and potential solutions that would make sense for the Shasta community. The breadth of participation has resulted in invaluable input from an extraordinary number of diverse stakeholders to build a plan tailored to local needs.

Through a series of stakeholder feedback sessions and planning meetings, community members have evaluated evidence-based strategies and approaches successfully addressing homelessness in other communities, and identified gaps and opportunities in Shasta County – including what is currently working, what is needed in greater quantities, and what is missing.

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[6] This data is from Shasta County Health and Human Services Agency CalFresh enrollment records and includes persons who meet HUD's definition of "homeless," as well as persons who are living doubled up or couch surfing.

[7] According to data provided by the Shasta County Office of Education. See **Appendix F** for the definition of "homeless children and youths" used by the Office of Education.

[8] According to data provided by the Good News Rescue Mission. This number represents veterans who stayed in emergency shelter at the Good News Rescue Mission for at least one night in 2015.

Timeline of Community Process:

July 2015: Community Alignment Session

November 2015: Homeless Response System Analysis

January, 2016: Community Workshops

February, 2016: Consumer Focus Group

January & February, 2016: Online Feedback and Input

February to May, 2016: Key Stakeholder Meetings

June, 2016: Stakeholder Workshop
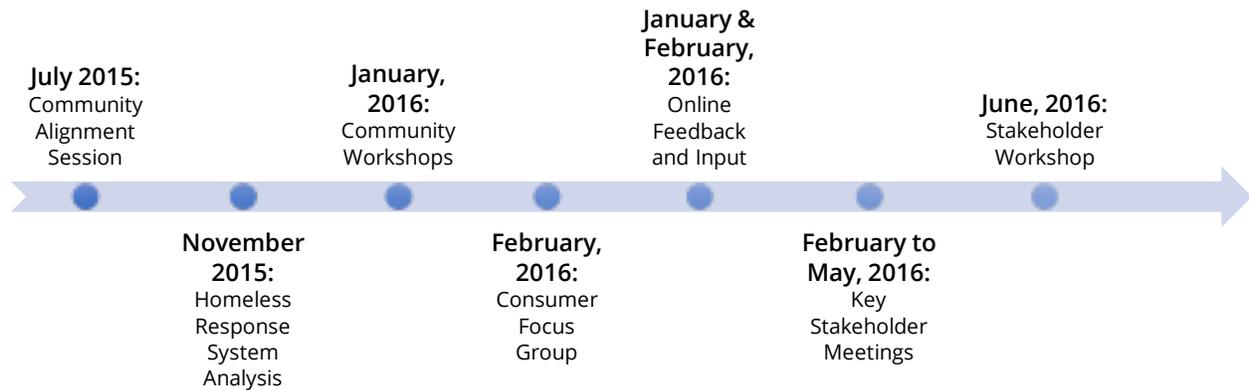
Over the course of these sessions, community feedback underscored some key, repeated themes:

The status quo around homelessness is not working, and new solutions are needed.

While motivations may differ, members of the Shasta County community want to end the impacts of homelessness on their neighborhoods and fellow community members.

Truly addressing homelessness in Shasta County will require buy-in and commitment from all community stakeholders, from elected officials to apartment landlords.

Addressing homelessness will benefit everyone, but will never happen without first investing in solutions that make sense.

We won't be able to solve the problem of homelessness unless we are aggressive about solutions, including more housing opportunities and supports to help people stay there.

Our community has many strengths that should be part of the solution.

Resources are limited, so they should be targeted to what works.

We need a system to understand the scope of the problem, measure success, and ensure accountability around what is helping us make progress and what isn't.

The ultimate goal is ending homelessness. Even if that feels impossible right now, we should strive for a system that takes us ever closer to that goal.

Federal and State Initiatives

While solving homelessness will require significant local investment, many state and federal resources are available to support development of an efficient system and expansion of effective programs. Understanding national policy around homelessness positions the community to take advantage of these resources, as well as understanding those practices and approaches that are successfully addressing homelessness across the country.

For even more in-depth information on specific initiatives, such as permanent supportive housing, rapid rehousing, coordinated entry and the HMIS, see **Appendices B-E**.

Opening Doors: The Federal Strategic Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness

In 2010, the United States Interagency Council on Homelessness (USICH) released *Opening Doors,* the first comprehensive federal strategy to end homelessness. *Opening Doors*, since updated in 2015 to reflect lessons learned, has influenced the allocation of federal spending, generated planning initiatives, and driven policy.

In particular, *Opening Doors* emphasizes evidence-based solutions like Housing First, permanent supportive housing, rapid rehousing, and cross-sectoral collaboration, and sets ambitious goals for ending homelessness:

Ending veteran homelessness by 2015

Ending chronic homelessness by 2017

Ending family and youth homelessness by 2020

While progress for each of these goals is still ongoing, the last years have brought tremendous success. So far, 24 communities and 2 states have ended veteran homelessness, many communities have made significant headway in reducing chronic homelessness, and overall homelessness has been reduced by 10%.

> Since Opening Doors was released in 2010, nationally:
>
> - Overall homelessness reduced by 10%
> - Unsheltered homelessness reduced by 25%
> - Chronic homelessness reduced by 21%
> - Veteran homelessness reduced by 33%

End Game: What Does "Ending Homelessness" Mean?

Ending homelessness does not mean that nobody ever falls into homelessness. Rather, it means that the system has an infrastructure and resources to prevent homelessness when possible and, for those families and individuals that do become homeless, to quickly and efficiently support them in a swift return to housing and self-sufficiency consistent with their abilities. Rapidly returning households to stable permanent housing significantly reduces the adverse impacts of homelessness, saving households and communities considerable cost.

Continuum of Care (CoC): Increasing HUD Funding

The CoC program is HUD's largest targeted program to support communities in addressing homelessness. The CoC is a group of stakeholders (including representatives from nonprofit homeless housing and service providers, local government, education, law enforcement, healthcare, victim services providers, business, faith community, and others) responsible for coordinating homeless services and prevention activities in a particular geographic area. In many communities where adequate resources are invested for a strong CoC, the CoC acts as the central planning body for the homeless system of care.

Through the CoC program, HUD funds evidence-based programs and key strategies such as permanent supportive housing, rapid rehousing, Housing First, and comprehensive planning activities and data collection and analysis. The FY 2015 CoC Program Competition was the most competitive ever. While many communities increased their renewable funding, others lost crucial resources. As a result, many communities are rethinking their system to better align with best practices and federal priorities.

Communities successful in increasing their funding were able to demonstrate regional commitment to ending homelessness through (1) prioritizing the most vulnerable and longest-time homeless for

services through a coordinated system, (2) effective data management to track system performance, (3) leveraging low barrier programs to get more households off the streets, and (4) investing resources in the most cost-efficient solutions. While the CoC's collaborative applicant is responsible for drafting the CoC application, collaboration by stakeholders across the entire community is critical to a successful application.

Housing First: Getting the Most Vulnerable Off the Streets

Housing First is an evidence-based methodology proven to significantly enhance outcomes around homelessness. National research and experience in diverse communities across California demonstrate that persons engaged in a Housing First program achieve self-sufficiency faster and have better outcomes, greater stability, and longer rates of housing retention than those in other programs. Housing First models also save communities many tens of thousands of dollars in costs of treatment and utilization of expensive emergency systems.

The Housing First approach reflects two central principles:

Persons experiencing homelessness should be returned to or stabilized in permanent housing as soon as possible and connected to the resources required to sustain that housing.

The underlying issues that contributed to a person's homelessness are best addressed once that person is in a stable housing environment.

> Cost savings from the Housing First approach:
>
> - Housing First programs focused on high utilizers often save well over $40,000 per person, per year.

Communities are discovering that without such an approach, crucial services are inaccessible to those who most benefit from them, leading to a vicious cycle of instability for the most vulnerable households. After many years of implementation, Housing First programs are demonstrated to be an essential tool in communities that have ended veteran homelessness and significantly reduced chronic homelessness.

Coordinated Entry: Supporting Access and Prioritization

An efficient system connects households to the right services for their needs, prioritizes resources for those who need them most, and ensures households can navigate the system and connect to crucial services quickly. Many who suffer from disabilities or behavioral health conditions may find it difficult to navigate complicated systems, and the longer a household spends on the streets, the more difficult it is to return to housing. Even the best housing and services are ineffective if the people who need those resources are unaware of them or unable to swiftly access them.

Coordinated entry, sometimes called "coordinated assessment," creates a centralized system for effectively prioritizing and matching people to the resources they need to regain housing or never become homeless in the first place. Coordinated entry is characterized by: 1) a shared system of access for all homeless housing and services; 2) standardized assessment of each household's need; and 3) a coordinated referral system for all housing and services. Instead of a siloed, first-come-first-serve approach, coordinated entry brings all resources into a single referral system to ensure that individuals showing up at any entry point (*e.g.*, different locations or agencies across Shasta County) receive the same intake assessment that will prioritize and refer them for the services that meet their level of need. Consolidating intake and assessment through coordinated entry has the potential to save significant

time and resources at the provider level. A small, dedicated coordinated entry staff can provide intake and assessment support for all providers within the system, and individual providers can spend less time on intake and assessment for persons who are not eligible, or are best served by a different provider. In addition to more efficiently connecting households to services and shortening lengths of time homeless, coordinated entry supports communities in better understanding the gaps of their system, providing a comprehensive picture of needed resources and data that can be compelling to funders.

Standardized Access	Standardized Assessment	Coordinated Referrals
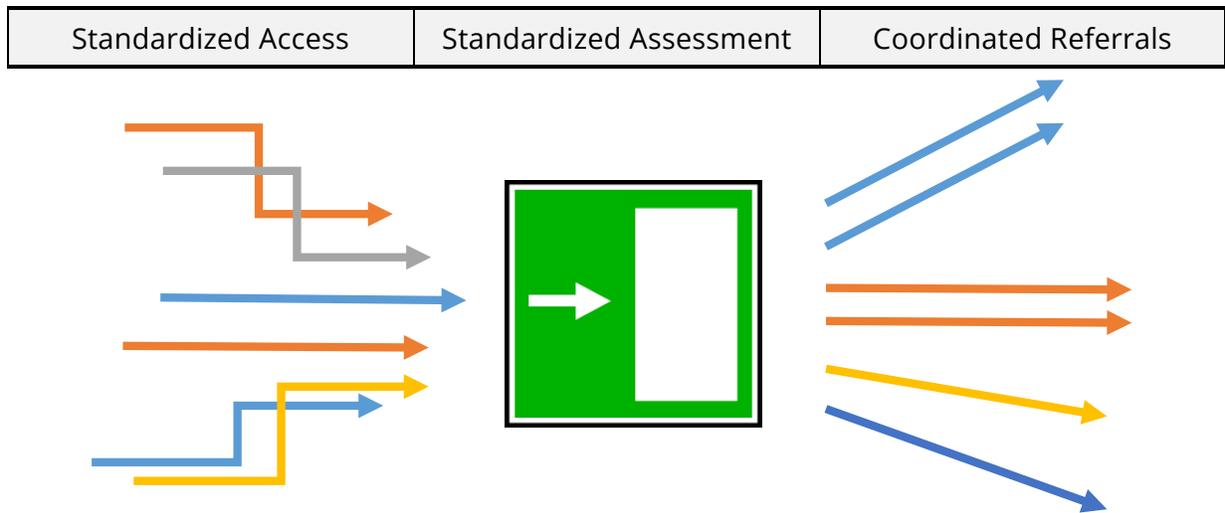
System Performance Measures: Enhancing Outcomes and Measuring Success

HUD has established a set of system performance measures to track community-wide progress in solving homelessness. A robust HMIS is an invaluable tool in supporting communities to maintain this data and report on these benchmarks, provided the HMIS is being widely used by providers across the geographic region.

HUD's System Performance Measures focus on key indicators of success in solving homelessness, including:

1. Reducing the length of time persons remain homeless
2. Lowering the rates that persons return to homelessness after exiting to permanent housing
3. Reducing the overall number of homeless persons
4. Increasing employment and income for homeless or formerly homeless persons
5. Decreasing the number of persons who become homeless for the first time
6. Increasing rates of exit to permanent housing

These measures support transparency and accountability in both individual programs and how the system works together as a whole to ensure efficient prioritization of resources, that people are being matched with the right services, and that the system is responsive and navigable for those who need it.

Responding to Homelessness: Core Strategies for Shasta County

Homelessness is a complex, multi-faceted problem requiring deliberate solutions. Solving homelessness is not instantaneous, but rather is a long process requiring ongoing community commitment to building a sustainable system.

Shasta County stakeholders have identified eleven priorities for the short and long term that will transform the impact of homelessness in Shasta County. These strategies harness Shasta County's existing strengths and focus resources on critical opportunity points that will dramatically impact homelessness in the community. Limited resources necessitate a focus on those evidence-based strategies that deliver the best outcomes for the least cost. While complete success will not happen overnight, an investment in an effective structure and these essential strategies will set a foundation for meaningful, lasting change.

Constraints on resources and capacity mean that not all priorities will be capable of immediate accomplishment. The Plan is organized to encourage initial focus on six Foundational Priorities, those core strategies that must be achieved in order to support long term success, setting the stage for tremendous impact over time.

The Six Foundational Priorities

Building the System. Communities that are making significant advances in solving homelessness have recognized that homelessness is first and foremost a housing issue, requiring housing accompanied by the services and supports necessary to support people in remaining housed. Shasta County is already implementing several housing-related interventions but they must be brought to scale to have the breadth of impact adequate to meet the scope of the problem.

> *Priority One: Increase Permanent Supportive Housing Available to Persons who Need that Level of Care*

> *Priority Two: Increase the Availability of Rapid Re-Housing Assistance to Support a Quick and Permanent Exit from Homelessness*

> *Priority Three: Engage Landlords as Partners in Solving Homelessness*

Leadership and Coordination. County-wide implementation of the community's priorities around solving homelessness requires a leadership backbone to continue fostering coordination of resources and ensure opportunities for new resources do not go untapped.

> *Priority Four: Deepen Coordination of Community Leadership around Homelessness*

Data and Prioritization. In a community with limited resources, interventions must be targeted to those who most need them, with a system that facilitates speedy and efficient access to services. A robust HMIS supports collecting and maintaining the data crucial to building efficient solutions, and an efficient Coordinated Entry system ensures the services are being matched to those with the highest priority needs. Together, these systems support creation of a coordinated infrastructure for solving homelessness.

Priority Five: Implement a Community-Wide System for Data Collection & Performance Measurement (HMIS)

Priority Six: Develop a Community-Wide System for Accessing Homeless Housing and Services (Coordinated Entry)

These six Foundational Priorities form the base that supports the community's vision of an efficient and effective system to solve homelessness in Shasta County. Together with the remaining priorities, this Strategic Plan articulates a strategy for building a strong, coordinated continuum of services to meet the needs of all persons at risk or experiencing homelessness, and addressing the impacts of homelessness on the entire Shasta County community.

Strategic Plan

SECTION ONE: Investing in a Foundation

Priority 1: Increase available permanent supportive housing resources for persons who need that level of care.

What is Permanent Supportive Housing?

Permanent supportive housing moves highly vulnerable individuals and families out of homelessness and into permanent housing, with long-term rental subsidies and supportive services to ensure that households remain stably housed and achieve as much independence as possible. This type of permanent housing is the most successful intervention for persons with disabling conditions who would not be able to maintain housing without long-term supports. Individuals and families who struggle with disabling conditions and long periods of homelessness face the highest barriers to obtaining and maintaining housing, and represent the highest costs to the community in crisis response services while living on the street. Permanent supportive housing is the most cost effective, and often the only, way to permanently end homelessness for these households.

> See **Appendix D** for more on Permanent Supportive Housing

Who is it for?

Permanent supportive housing is a path to housing stability for the sub-population of persons experiencing homelessness with the highest acuity of need and most challenging barriers to housing:

- In the 2016 PIT Count for Shasta County, 198 households, or 36% of households who completed the PIT survey, were identified as chronically homeless (homeless for at least 12 months, with a disability).
- In the 2016 PIT Count, approximately 321 individuals, or 34% of persons experiencing homelessness, reported that their disability keeps them from holding a job or maintaining housing.

What do we have?

As of June 2016, existing permanent supportive housing resources include:

- 34 permanent supportive housing beds for single adults operated by Northern Valley Catholic Social Services.
- 55 Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing (VASH) vouchers with case management, jointly administered by Shasta County, the Redding Veterans Resource Center, and the VA.
- 15 VASH vouchers with case management, jointly administered by the City of Redding, the Redding Veterans Resource Center, and the VA.
- Funding secured for a new 30-unit development for site-based permanent supportive housing for veterans in the City of Shasta Lake.
- 19 units of permanent supportive housing in the Woodlands affordable housing development, which is currently under construction and is scheduled for completion in the spring of 2017. The 55-unit development and 19 dedicated permanent supportive housing units are the result of a

collaboration between the City of Redding, Shasta County, Palm Communities, and Northern Valley Catholic Social Service.

- The Housing Authority of the City of Redding has implemented a Housing Choice Voucher waiting list preference for homeless and at-risk families through Qualified Referral Agencies, and anticipates processing 25 Housing Choice Vouchers annually through this preference.

What is our goal?

The Shasta County community will increase its permanent supportive housing inventory to meet Shasta County's need for this resource.

Key Action Steps
Align and grow resources to increase the inventory of permanent supportive housing available within Shasta County.
- Sustain a cross-sectoral Housing Task Force of key decision-makers to identify resources and develop/implement a long-term strategy to expand permanent supportive housing stock.   - Evaluate the need and feasibility for new development, set asides, and/or conversion of existing structures to permanent supportive housing.   - Secure additional funding for permanent supportive housing case management, including MediCal funds and "stretch" opportunities such as Pay for Success.   - Establish priorities within mainstream rental assistance voucher programs for persons exiting homelessness.
Expand the capacity for providing permanent supportive housing in Shasta County.
- Expand the number of agencies with staffing and capacity to manage permanent supportive housing.   - Offer community-wide shared trainings for provider staff and leadership on supportive housing best practices.   - Ensure housing stability through case management and wrap-around supportive services.   - Engage landlords as partners, to increase the supply of housing units available for persons exiting homelessness with long-term housing support (see Priority 3).
Prioritize permanent supportive housing for chronically homeless individuals and families with the highest acuity of need and highest barriers to housing.
Support expansion of a low-barrier approach to housing across the system.
Educate and engage provider executive leadership and local policy makers around low-barrier approaches to providing permanent housing.

Targets
1. By 2020, Shasta County has 200 new permanent supportive housing opportunities with wrap-around case management (new rental subsidies or physical units dedicated to people exiting homelessness).
2. By 2022, Shasta County has 100 additional permanent supportive housing opportunities with wrap-around case management (new rental subsidies or physical units dedicated to people exiting homelessness), for a total of 300 new permanent supportive housing opportunities.

Priority 2: Increase the availability of Rapid Re-Housing assistance to support a quick and permanent exit from homelessness.

What is Rapid Re-Housing?
Rapid re-housing moves families and individuals out of homelessness and directly into permanent housing situations, with the goal of reducing the time each person experiences homelessness and supporting households to achieve independence as rapidly as possible. Rapid re-housing consists of three components, tailored to each household's level of need: 1) support identifying and accessing permanent housing; 2) short- or medium-term rental assistance; and 3) case management and supportive services as needed by each household.

> See **Appendix D** for more on Rapid Re-Housing

Who is it for?
Rapid re-housing is a successful and cost-effective intervention for families and individuals that are able to achieve and maintain housing stability with only time-limited (short- or medium-term) assistance.

- In the 2016 PIT Count for Shasta County, 213 households, or 39% of all households who completed a PIT survey, were homeless for the first time.
- In the 2016 PIT Count for Shasta County, 303 households, or approximately 56% of all households who completed a PIT survey, had been homeless for a year or more.
- In the 2016 PIT Count for Shasta County, 31 households, or approximately 6% of all households who completed a PIT survey, were family households with at least one adult and one child.

What do we have?
As of June 2016, existing rapid re-housing resources include:

- Rapid re-housing support for 120 to 150 homeless veterans annually, under the Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF) program; and
- Rapid re-housing support for up to 82 CalWORKS eligible families, under the CalWORKS Housing Support Program.

What is our goal?
The Shasta County community will increase its rapid re-housing resources and capacity to administer rapid re-housing, to end homelessness quickly and permanently for individuals and families who need short- or medium-term support.

Key Action Steps
Increase the amount and accessibility of rapid re-housing assistance available, with the goal of supporting individuals and families to find housing quickly and stay housed.
- Secure additional flexible funding, either within the community or as new funding streams such as the Emergency Solutions Grants (ESG) Program, for short- and medium-term rental assistance, move-in costs, and medium-term case management.   - Ensure housing stability through case management and wrap-around supportive services at a level that meets the needs of each household receiving rapid re-housing financial assistance.   - Identify Rapid re-housing participants who would be better served by a longer-term intervention and connect them to permanent supportive housing.
Expand community capacity to provide Rapid re-housing.
- Encourage community based agencies to become rapid rehousing providers.   - Offer community-wide shared trainings for provider staff and leadership on Rapid re-housing best practices, including Housing First.   - Establish partnerships to connect Rapid re-housing participants to needed services and supports (*e.g.*, vocational training, benefits, legal services).
Increase access and availability of affordable housing for homeless persons.
- Advocate for jurisdictions to adopt new development set-asides for affordable housing.   - Identify and increase funding for repairs to substandard units as a landlord incentive.   - Engage landlords as partners, to increase the supply of housing units available for persons exiting homelessness with Rapid re-housing support (See Priority 3).

Targets
1. By 2020, the community creates 100 new rapid re-housing opportunities with wrap-around case management.
2. The number of households who experience homelessness for a year or more decreases by 30% between the 2016 PIT Count and 2022.

Priority 3: Engage landlords as partners in solving homelessness.

How Do Homeless Housing Providers Engage Landlords?

Developing relationships with landlords of market-rate housing is an effective strategy for expanding the housing stock available for both permanent supportive housing and rapid re-housing. A range of strategies have been identified to encourage landlords to partner with homeless housing providers, including financial incentives, risk mitigation pools, marketing and relationship building, and tenant education and

> See **Appendix E** for more on Landlord Engagement

supports. Selecting the right set of landlord engagement tools will increase the housing opportunities available to persons exiting homelessness.

Who is it for?
Landlord engagement identifies and secures additional permanent housing opportunities for person experiencing homelessness, including persons in need of permanent supportive housing or rapid re-housing assistance.

What do we have?
Homeless and low-income housing providers, including the Shasta County Housing Authority, Shasta County Health and Human Services Agency, City of Redding Housing and Community Development Division, the Veterans Resource Center, and Northern Valley Catholic Social Services, currently house individuals and families in market-rate housing and have relationships with landlords.

What is our goal?
The Shasta County community will expand safe and healthy housing opportunities for persons exiting homelessness by building a network of landlords who work with homeless housing providers and housing case managers.

Key Action Steps
Develop and implement a landlord engagement plan with best practice strategies tailored to landlords in Shasta County.
• Consider strategies such as protective payee service, landlord support hotline, landlord/tenant mediation program, landlord peer-to-peer education and support network. • Establish a landlord recognition program.
Create a Risk Mitigation Pool through contributions from philanthropy and other local funding sources to provide financial incentives for landlords, such as increased safety deposits.
Establish housing navigators to build inventory of participating landlords and support connecting homeless persons to housing.

Targets
1. By 2020, utilization of mainstream and homeless rental assistance vouchers (Housing Choice Vouchers, TBRA, VASH, etc) is stable at 95%.
2. By 2022, 20 additional private landlords are housing formerly homeless people.

Priority 4: Deepen coordination of community leadership around homelessness.

What Does Leadership Look Like in a Homeless System of Care?
Effective central leadership within the homeless system of care helps to set community priorities, drive accountability, and ensure continued commitment and focus on the community's goals. Many communities locate this central leadership within the HUD-mandated CoC, in the form of the CoC Executive Board and formal committee structure, as an existing focal point of coordination and collaboration. Leadership of a homeless system of care includes three key characteristics: 1) identifying and promoting the most effective strategies to address homelessness in the community, including using data to identify community needs; 2) effecting cultural and policy shifts in the broader community to support the work of the homeless system of care; and 3) facilitating coordination and collaboration among all stakeholders to implement system-wide improvements.

Who is it for?
Strong leadership is central to a system of care that supports housing stability for all persons experiencing or at risk of homelessness.

What do we have?
As of June 2016, existing leadership in the Shasta County homeless system of care includes:

- A CoC that has served as a vehicle for provider networking and peer support;
- Committed executive leadership, program directors, and management staff at numerous non-profit and faith-based service providers, public and private health care providers, public agencies, and volunteer organizations; and
- A strong core of homeless and formerly homeless advocates and representatives.

What is our goal?
The Shasta County community will expand the role of the CoC as a central policy-setting and coordinating body for the Shasta County region.

Key Action Steps
Expand the CoC as a focus of leadership, policy-setting, and coordination.
- Relocate the CoC's Collaborative Applicant and staffing, under the direction of the CoC Executive Board, into a non-profit entity.   - Develop a governance charter that defines the role of CoC Executive Board, provides for election of CoC Executive Board membership, and ensures compliance with all HUD requirements.   - Identify sustainable funding for a full-time Director or Facilitator staff position for the CoC.   - Recruit and hire a full-time Director or Facilitator for the CoC.   - Implement a committee structure to coordinate work in specific subject areas and report back to the CoC Executive Board and CoC membership, including: HMIS, Youth, Homelessness Prevention, Community Engagement, and Coordinated Entry.

• Consolidate and combine the roles of the CoC Strengthening Committee and the CoC Executive Board.
Establish a cross-sectoral strategic plan implementation committee to lead implementation of plan priorities and update plan as needed. (See **Appendix A** for More on Strategic Plan Implementation.)
• Establish a formal relationship between the implementation committee and the CoC Executive Board, with regular information sharing and reporting.
Develop procedures or structures for inclusion of homeless and formerly homeless consumers of homeless housing and services at all levels of leadership and plan implementation.

Targets
1. By the end of 2016, the Redding/Shasta County CoC has a sustainably funded, full-time Homeless Director staff position, which has been filled by a qualified individual.
2. Throughout the life of the plan, a strong consortium of community leaders continues to facilitate and lead Strategic Plan implementation, representing at a minimum the following sectors: homeless housing, shelter, and services providers; medical and behavioral health care providers; education; the business sector; the faith community; law enforcement; private businesses or foundations; and multiple local government jurisdictions.

Priority 5: Implement a community-wide system for data collection & performance measurement.

What is the Role of Data and Performance Measurement?
Community-wide data collection and analysis is foundational to effective resource allocation, system development, and program design. HMIS is a HUD-mandated data system that collects basic information from all individuals and families served by the homeless system of care. HMIS becomes one of a community's most valuable tools for responding to homelessness when the data collected is actively used to analyze both program- and system-level performance. Program-level performance measurement drives improvements in program design and service provision, while system-level monitoring and evaluation ensures the system as a whole is making strides on key objectives in ending homelessness.

Who is it for?
Data collection and performance measurement allows the community to provide the right level and type of services to persons experiencing homelessness, and improves the effectiveness of services for all persons served in the homeless system of care.

What do we have?

As of June 2016:

- The Redding/Shasta County CoC currently operates an HMIS system with limited participation by housing providers.
- A number of homeless housing and services providers operate internal data systems, with little to no cross-provider sharing of data.

What is our goal?

The Shasta County community will implement an expanded HMIS, with greater participation across the County, and will use community-wide data to inform resource allocation, new resource development, and policy priorities.

Key Action Steps
Establish an HMIS that meets identified community needs for data collection, reporting, and performance measurement.
- Conduct a community process to identify HMIS needs and recommendations.   - Identify resources, as necessary, to support an enhanced community-wide HMIS, including ongoing implementation.   - Work with existing vendor, or secure a new vendor through a Request for Proposals, to implement an HMIS that meets community needs.   - Develop privacy, security, and data quality plans to govern the operation of the HMIS, including data sharing protocols.
Encourage use of HMIS for data collection and data sharing by outreach teams and case managers.
- Implement an HMIS with mobile data entry capability.   - Incorporate standards for outreach data sharing in HMIS data sharing protocols.
Expand HMIS participation across the community, including programs that are not required to use HMIS.
Adopt community performance measures for system outcomes (*e.g.* time to housing placement, housing retention, increase in income, access to mainstream benefits).
- Establish a performance measurement workgroup to identify performance measures.   - Incorporate feedback and input of homeless and formerly homeless consumers of homeless housing and services in the performance measurement process.
Regularly report on community performance measures to the CoC Executive Board and at public forums.

Targets
1. By the end of 2017, the community has HMIS software that meets its needs.
2. By the end of 2019, the HMIS Lead operates an HMIS with participation by at least 60% of all of the homeless-dedicated beds in Shasta County that are not required to participate in HMIS as a condition of funding.

Priority 6: Develop a community-wide system for accessing homeless housing and services (Coordinated Entry).

What is coordinated entry?

The primary purpose of coordinated entry is to provide an efficient and easily accessible way for people experiencing homelessness to access the right housing and services to move beyond homelessness, while ensuring that community resources go to those persons with the highest level of need. Coordinated entry can take many forms, but successful coordinated entry systems include the following: 1) easy and well-advertised access for all persons experiencing homelessness in a geographic area; 2) a single assessment for evaluating client need and identifying the right intervention for each client; 3) a clear system of prioritization for placement in those interventions; and 4) widespread participation by homeless housing providers that accept new participants exclusively through the coordinated entry system.

> See **Appendix B** for more on Coordinated Entry Design and Implementation

Who is it for?

Coordinated entry should be a low-barrier point of entry to housing and services programs for all persons experiencing homelessness in Shasta County. While the community may start building coordinated entry by focusing on a single population, ultimately a coordinated system will be accessible and responsive to all individuals and families experiencing homelessness.

What do we have?

As of June 2016:

- Clients access homeless housing and services by directly contacting service providers and through referrals by other service providers; and
- The Shasta 2-1-1 system provides information to callers about homeless housing and services.
- Coordinated outreach, centralized by-name master list, standardized assessment, and coordinated referrals for veterans experiencing homelessness.

What is our goal?

The Shasta County community will develop a coordinated system for intake, prioritization, and referral with participation by all homeless housing and services providers.

Key Action Steps
Maintain an updated online resource directory that provides information about all services and housing programs available.
Design a community-wide intake, prioritization and referral process that connects individuals and families to the appropriate housing and/or services to meet their needs.
- Establish a coordinated entry committee to develop procedures for prioritization and community-wide buy-in.   - Select or develop a standard intake procedure and assessment for the coordinated entry system.   - Identify successful strategies and lessons learned in other similar communities, and in coordinated entry strategies for veterans already implemented in Shasta County.   - Develop policies and procedures to protect the safety and privacy of survivors of domestic violence who participate in coordinated entry.   - Start with a limited-scope pilot system, then expand the system to accommodate all populations and program types.
Establish an interagency team to coordinate a by-name list of high priority households (*e.g.*, high-need chronically homeless, veterans, etc.
Establish an infrastructure to develop the list and meet regularly to discuss.
Ensure coordinated entry is accessible and implemented across the community.
- Train emergency shelters, homeless outreach, domestic violence shelters, medical and behavioral health providers, first responders, libraries, schools, and other public services in how to refer to Coordinated Entry.   - Educate consumers and the community at large about the Coordinated Entry system and available services.

Targets
1. By the end of 2017, the community designs and begins to implement a Coordinated Entry system for homeless housing and services that meets community needs.
2. By 2020, all providers of permanent housing for homeless individuals and families within Shasta County use the Coordinated Entry system as their sole source of referrals.

SECTION TWO: Building On Success

Priority 7: Enhance engagement and support for persons living outside.

What are Outreach and Services for People Living Outside?

People living on the street and in other places not meant for human habitation face greater vulnerability to disease, injury, trauma, depression and anxiety, and disconnection from support networks and services. The core roles of outreach and services for people experiencing homelessness include meeting basic needs for food, shelter, safety, and resources; responding to immediate crises; and connecting individuals and families to appropriate services. Outreach programs seek to build relationships with people living outside, with the goal of engaging individuals and families in services that best meet their housing, health, and social needs.

Who is it for?

- In the 2016 PIT Count for Shasta County, 691 individuals, or 74% of persons experiencing homelessness, were living in an unsheltered situation.
- Of the 691 unsheltered persons in the 2016 PIT Count, 96 individuals were under 24 years of age, including youth and children in adult-led households as well as unaccompanied youth.

What do we have?

As of June 2016, existing resources for people living outside include:

- Shasta County Health and Human Services Homeless Outreach Case Management program.
- Outreach conducted by individual housing, shelter, and service providers.
- Peer outreach organized by the Good News Rescue Mission.
- Outreach to veterans experiencing homelessness, coordinated by the Redding Veterans Resources Center, with by-name master list of all homeless veterans.
- Basic-needs services (food, clothing, blankets, toiletries, referrals to other providers, etc.) offered by a range of community-based and volunteer organizations.

What is our goal?

Additional outreach resources and greater levels of coordination are needed to engage all of Shasta County's unsheltered population, particularly outreach focused on connecting unsheltered persons to permanent housing opportunities. Persons experiencing homelessness in Shasta County have identified a high-priority need for expanded access to safe and supportive places to be, including nightly emergency shelter and places to rest and access resources during the day.

Key Action Steps
Coordinate multi-disciplinary outreach teams, which include case managers, shelter staff, clinical staff, peer outreach workers, and/or law enforcement representatives, to cover known high-impact geographic areas.
- Provide regular crisis intervention trainings for all members of outreach teams, as well as training in local systems and best practices for homeless populations.   - Ensure teams have the resources to effectively connect clients to services.

Expand outreach case management to identify and engage all persons living outside.
- Increase the number of outreach case managers conducting outreach on the streets and in encampments.   - Engage and train mainstream systems - such as schools, health clinics, and law enforcement - as primary outreach contacts for persons experiencing homelessness in rural areas of the county.   - Develop youth-driven and peer-led outreach strategies to target youth experiencing homlessness.   - Develop a centralized master list of individuals who should be prioritized for housing.
Expand spaces for persons living outside to access shelter and connect with resources.
- Identify gaps in who is being served by the emergency shelter system.   - Expand low-barrier shelter options.   - Establish a resource center to provide shelter and resource connections during the day, with on-site case management and clinical staff.
Expand Shasta County's behavioral health capacity to serve homeless persons.
- Identify and mitigate barriers to accessing and utilizing mental health services.   - Establish a sobering center accessible to downtown Redding.

Targets
1. By 2020, 200 unsheltered people are assisted to a permanent housing opportunity with case management.
2. The number of unsheltered persons in Shasta County decreases by 40%, from the 2016 to the 2022 PIT count.

Priority 8: Develop a comprehensive system of homelessness prevention within a coordinated response to homelessness.

What is Homelessness Prevention?
The role of a homeless prevention system is to avoid episodes of homelessness before they occur. A coordinated system of homelessness prevention services 1) identifies and targets those most at risk of homelessness; 2) responds immediately to help households in crisis maintain their housing; and 3) as needed, connects each household to the right level and type of services to maintain housing stability. Homelessness prevention services can include short-term financial and legal supports to prevent eviction and housing loss, landlord/tenant mediation, help accessing public benefits, employment and education support services, and case management to identify additional needs.

Who is it for?

Homelessness prevention services should target households at risk of homelessness, prioritizing those most immediately and imminently at risk.

- In the 2016 PIT Count for Shasta County, 213 households, or 39% of all households who completed a PIT survey, were homeless for the first time.

What do we have?

As of June 2016, existing homelessness prevention resources include:

- Shasta 2-1-1 as a phone-based referral system for all health and social services.
- One-time financial assistance offered by a range of community organizations, including the Community Care Fund, a flexible community fund to provide one-time financial support that is funded by a collaboration of faith communities, and other public and private partners.
- Legal assistance offered by Legal Services of Northern California.

What is our goal?

The Shasta County community will strengthen its homelessness prevention system to better identify and target persons at risk of homelessness, provide coordinated and comprehensive referrals to prevention services, and expand the prevention services available.

Key Action Steps
Coordinate the homelessness prevention system and ensure agencies are able to make referrals.
- Identify organizations and programs providing homelessness prevention supports.   - Ensure that information about homelessness prevention resources, eligibility criteria, and referral processes is widely available.   - Sustain Shasta 2-1-1 as a comprehensive central referral point for homelessness prevention services by providing up-to-date information and training on available services, and how to identify persons at risk of homelessness.   - Widely market 2-1-1 as the central referral point for homelessness prevention services using existing platforms, including media, community newsletters, utility bills, and other regular mailings.
Maximize resources available to provide homelessness prevention assistance.
- Establish a flexible prevention fund to provide one-time cash assistance to address emergencies.   - Ensure that all persons in need of homelessness prevention have access to eligibility assessment for public benefits and are assisted to obtain benefits, as appropriate.   - Identify and coordinate with under-utilized mainstream resources that may be leveraged to provide homeless prevention assistance (*e.g.*, utility assistance programs, school districts).
Identify and establish strategies for reducing evictions such as an eviction risk hotline for tenants and landlords and/or a landlord/tenant mediation program.

• Leverage relationships with utility and property management companies to identify at-risk individuals and households.
Identify and advocate for change in policies (*e.g.*, utility holds) that lead to homelessness.
• Increase access to housing for individuals with criminal histories.

Targets
1. By 2019, a single access point provides rapid referrals to all homelessness prevention resources.
2. The number of people experiencing homelessness for the first time decreases by 50% from the 2016 to the 2022 PIT Count.

Priority 9: Coordinate with mainstream institutions to increase resources for persons experiencing homelessness and reduce the number of individuals falling into homelessness.

How Does a Homeless System of Care Coordinate with Mainstream Institutions?
The homeless system of care is not the only source of services and supports for persons experiencing homelessness. Mainstream institutions, such as schools, hospitals, first responders, addiction recovery centers, law enforcement, the court system, probation and parole, jails, and the faith community are key partners in identifying persons experiencing homelessness and connecting them with housing and services. National, state, and local government programs offer financial assistance and supportive services targeted to low-income populations that can help individuals and families exit homelessness and achieve financial stability and independence. By leveraging these relationships and resources, the homeless system of care solves homelessness for more people, without additional resources.

Who is it for?
- In the 2016 PIT Count for Shasta County, 77 persons experiencing homelessness were identified as children under 18, and 89 were identified as youth between the ages of 18 and 24.
- The Shasta County Office of Education reports 726 students experiencing homelessness in the 2014/2015 school year.
- In calendar year 2015, Shasta Regional Medical Center served an estimated 2,347 persons experiencing homelessness in its emergency department.
- In calendar year 2015, the Redding Police Department estimates 2,714 contacts with persons experiencing homelessness.

What do we have?
- A history of and ongoing communication and collaboration between individual homeless housing and services providers and the community's first responders, medical services, and law enforcement.

- Through a program created by the federal McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Assistance Act, public school districts in Shasta County identify and provide services to students experiencing homelessness.

What is our goal?

The Shasta County community will build collaboration between homeless and mainstream services, to ensure that no one is exiting mainstream institutions to homelessness and that all persons experiencing or exiting homelessness have access to mainstream resources that will support their housing stability.

Key Action Steps
Ensure all local institutions have the knowledge and tools to connect individuals to appropriate resources.
- Partner with school districts to develop systems and regular staff trainings to identify homeless and at-risk students and connect them to resources.   - Partner with domestic violence shelters and service providers to provide safe and appropriate homelessness prevention and re-housing support.   - Offer regular trainings for law enforcement, by homeless service providers and local experts, on how to interact with homeless individuals and families and connect them to resources.
Build partnerships and coordination with local systems (justice system, hospital system) to prevent individuals from falling into homelessness.
- Support strengthening of discharge systems in line with best practices to prevent homelessness.   - Deepen collaboration and alignment of discharging systems and the community support network.   - Implement a pilot Medical Respite program with housing case management for persons at risk of being discharged from medical care into homelessness.
Ensure 100% of individuals served through the homelessness prevention and response system are assessed for eligibility for benefits (SSI, MediCal, etc.).
Adopt SSI/SSDI Outreach, Access, and Recovery (SOAR) as a core strategy for increasing SSI/SSDI participation, and encourage all housing and services providers to have SOAR-trained staff on site.
Implement a Homeless Court, based on the Behavioral Health Court model.

Targets
1. By 2020, 100% of persons served by homeless emergency shelters, homeless housing or services, or homelessness prevention programs are assessed for eligibility for benefits.
2. By 2022, 75% of persons who are eligible for mainstream benefits are enrolled.

SECTION THREE: Cementing a Vision

Priority 10: Facilitate positive solutions-oriented thinking and reduce stigma in the community around homelessness.

Why Engage the Community?
Homelessness affects an entire community, and support from every aspect of the community plays an important role in solving homelessness. Local policy makers, community leaders, and the public at large look to the homeless response system for information that will help them understand the causes of homelessness in Shasta County, who experiences homelessness, and how the community is responding to homelessness. Armed with that understanding, all members of the community, from elected officials to neighborhood associations, can become part of the collaborative effort to build a safer, healthier, housed Shasta County.

Who is it for?
Community support for the homeless system of care lowers barriers to housing stability and improves quality of life for all persons experiencing or at risk of homelessness. Ending homelessness for as many people as possible improves the well-being and quality of life of all residents of Shasta County.

What do we have?
- Shasta County residents and community leaders demonstrate a clear interest in homelessness as a community-wide issue.
- A range of media platforms have increased coverage of homelessness in recent years, with a growing focus on community efforts to respond to homelessness.

What is our goal?
The Shasta County community will foster greater transparency and communication from the homeless response system, to engage broader community support for effective, evidence-based, and housing-oriented responses to homelessness.

Key Action Steps
Engage elected officials and high-level policy makers in committing to solve homelessness in Shasta County.
• Provide education around who is homeless is Shasta County, the causes of homelessness, what is being done in the community to solve homelessness, and national best practices.
Develop and implement a public communications plan to reach the general public.
• Identify opportunities to share success stories publicly and regularly, information about how people become homeless, and strategies in place to help people exit homelessness. • Continue to engage the media as a key partner. • Provide regular public appreciation of community partners (service providers, landlords, businesses, faith community, neighborhood associations), spotlighting positive contributions to solving homelessness.

Pro-actively address barriers that restrict increasing permanent supportive housing supply.
• Identify and address policy barriers to increasing the permanent supportive housing supply. • Build community support to preemptively address NIMBY challenges.

Targets
1. By 2017, the Strategic Plan has been endorsed by at least 10 community groups or organizations representing diverse sectors of the community, such as non-profit organizations, service providers, businesses and business associations, health care providers, government agencies, elected leadership, community organizations, faith communities and faith-based organizations.
2. Throughout the life of the Strategic Plan, it is actively used, in combination with community data and best practice evidence, to guide decision-making around community efforts to address poverty, homelessness, and quality of life issues in Shasta County.

Priority 11: Engage the business sector, the faith community, the media, and volunteers in community action to solve homelessness.

How Can the Community Participate?
The business sector, faith community, military and veteran organizations, and broader volunteer base all have the potential to contribute valuable resources and skills to a response to homelessness. Faith communities offer valuable experience with organizing community members around service and social issues, and are often already involved in community-based services and housing support. The business community can play an important role in providing employment training and opportunities, as well as a range of skills in operations, marketing, and financial management. Military and veterans organizations can leverage resources, support networks, and cultural capital to support veterans experiencing homelessness.

Who is it for?
Community resources can help solve homelessness for all types of households experiencing or at risk of homelessness. Ending homelessness for as many people as possible improves the well-being and quality of life of all residents of Shasta County.

What do we have?
- The business community, faith community, and numerous other residents of Shasta County contributed to the development of this Strategic Plan, through participation in the community strategic planning process.
- Shasta County's faith communities have implemented their own initiatives to provide housing support to those in need, including the Community Care Fund, a flexible community fund to provide one-time financial support to overcome housing barriers that is funded by a collaboration of faith communities, and other public and private partners.

What is our goal?

The Shasta County community will engage all sectors of the community as partners in the work to end homelessness, and leverage the community's existing financial and human resources to end homelessness for more people.

Key Action Steps
Create a coordinating committee for community engagement strategies, with participation by service providers, consumers, and community groups.
• Identify meaningful opportunities for public volunteers to support work in ending homelessness (*e.g.*, as volunteer housing navigators). • Identify leadership to coordinate volunteer opportunities and support recruitment, training, and monitoring.
Develop and implement peer-led education and outreach within key segments of the community (business, neighborhoods, faith community, military and veteran organizations).
Engage the business community in creating workforce development opportunities for homeless persons.

Targets
1. By 2017, community participation is coordinated through Strategic Plan Implementation committee structure.
2. By the end of 2017, at least six non-homeless focused community-based organizations or groups commit to actively participate in Strategic Plan implementation activities, including at least two faith-based organizations and at least two local business organizations.

Appendix A

Strategic Plan Implementation Recommendations

Overview

The following recommendations are based on feedback from the June 9, 2016, Strategic Planning Stakeholder Workshop and implementation processes used in other communities. While a strategic plan to address homelessness can be a powerful tool in transforming the impacts of homelessness, an effective implementation process is equally crucial in ensuring the plan's long-term utility.

Goals of effective strategic plan implementation include:

- Accountability, Transparency and Community Engagement
- Sustained Momentum and Commitment
- Structure for Implementation of Action Items
- Proactive Recognition and Response to Challenges

By accomplishing these goals, the strategic plan implementation process supports the long-term strategic investment necessary to meaningfully reduce the adverse effects of homelessness in a community.

Essential Tools for Effective Strategic Plan Implementation

The following are elements many communities have found essential to successful implementation of their strategic plans.

Establishing a Key Stakeholder Group Responsible for Implementation

Solving homelessness requires active participation and leadership across multiple systems. A Key Stakeholder team supports systems in working together synergistically and ensuring strategic alignment. Crucial elements of a strategic plan Key Stakeholder team include:

- Having the right people participating: those with the community role, knowledge, and access to the resources to turn Action Items into reality.
- Having the right number of individuals: enough to include key players, but not so many that the group cannot make decisions and move forward efficiently.
- Committing to a Key Stakeholder meeting structure that works – for example:
  - Holding regularly scheduled (*e.g.*, quarterly) Key Stakeholder meetings to identify progress and challenges around measurable goals and benchmarks
  - Establishing task forces and/or identifying individuals to take ownership of mobilizing other community members around specific goals and activities, as recommended by the CoC Strengthening Committee/CoC Executive Board
- Creating an annual implementation guide that assigns specific tasks/activities to specific individuals and establishes goals for the year in addition to the benchmarks in the plan.
- Ensuring that focus remains on the Strategic Plan and the community's enumerated priorities around solving homelessness.

Setting Goals and Structure for Community Participation

Because homelessness impacts everyone across the community, everyone can have a role in the solution. Opportunities for community-wide buy-in and participation help sustain the strategic plan and keep it relevant. This can include:

- Obtaining endorsements of the Strategic Plan from key stakeholder groups such as elected officials, commissions and committees around the county.
- Annual or bi-annual community meetings to report on progress, challenges, and next steps around the priorities in the Strategic Plan.
- Annual or bi-annual written reports that deepen the community-wide understanding of the work being done to address homelessness and successfully implement the plan.
- Ensuring opportunities for consumers and former consumers to provide feedback on Strategic Plan implementation.
- Holding annual Strategic Plan implementation workshops to develop annual implementation guides.
- Holding a Strategic Plan stakeholder workshop after the first year and annually thereafter to assess progress and update the plan consistent with changes in the community.

Appendix B

Coordinated Entry Design and Implementation

Overview

Approaches to coordinated entry vary significantly in communities across the country. While some communities rely on HMIS as a platform for hosting coordinated entry, others use separate databases or even spreadsheets to centralize placement and referrals of priority subpopulations. It is not necessary to wait for HMIS capabilities before launching a coordinated entry system.

Communities often establish a coordinated entry committee or task force to take leadership over the development and implementation of the new system. The committee may be comprised of specific individuals selected for the role or may be open to the public. Either way, opportunity for public comment and participation is key to ensuring buy-in and education to providers and consumers across the community.

Steps to Design and Launch Coordinated Entry

The following reflects feedback from Shasta County community members, as well as steps many communities take to design and implement their coordinated entry system.

Identify a Responsible Entity

While development and implementation of coordinated entry involves multiple participants, typically one agency or individual takes primary responsibility for chairing the Coordinated Entry Committee and leading implementation. This leadership may be provided by the CoC's collaborative applicant or a separate agency.

Plan the Process

Most communities design and roll out coordinated entry in stages, for example, by starting with a specific subpopulation (*e.g.*, single adults) and incorporating other populations over time through an iterative process. Others start with certain types of services (*e.g.*, permanent housing) and expand to other services, to eventually encompass all the homeless services across the geographic region.

Marketing and Community Engagement

The community has an important role in setting values and priorities for coordinated entry. National guidelines and local feedback call for a coordinated entry that is:

- Low Barrier
- Person-Centered
- Provides Fair and Equal Access
- Standardized
- Covers the Entire Geographic Area
- Integrates Prevention and Shelter Diversion
- Does Not Delay Access to Emergency Services

Additionally, there are many myths and misconceptions about coordinated entry and information often fails to get to those who most need it, such as frontline staff and consumers. Opportunities for public participation and comment, focus groups, presentations at public venues, and marketing campaigns can help get the word out about what coordinated entry is, how it works, and how to access it. Print materials, including a graphic or flowchart depicting the flow of a client through the coordinated entry process, support understanding.

Identify an Assessment Instrument

In a coordinated entry system, each household is assessed with a uniform, standardized assessment instrument to prioritize and match the household for services consistent with their needs. Instruments in various communities include pre-developed tools such as the Vulnerability Index-Service Prioritization Decision Assistance Tool (VI-SPDAT) or homegrown assessments created by the community. There may be separate assessments for single adults, families, and youth.

The tool selected must be capable of assessing and scoring the household to determine which households will have priority for scarce resources, while avoiding burdening participants with unnecessary questions. Prioritization is typically based on factors tied to a household's vulnerability and acuity of need. Often the highest scoring are referred to permanent supportive housing programs, the next highest tier referred to rapid rehousing or transitional housing programs, and the lowest tier referred to non-housing services.

- HUD has provided guidance on prioritization and coordinated entry via Notice CPD-14-012[9] and the Coordinated Entry Policy Brief.[10] In particular, HUD expects communities to prioritize for resources those with the most severe service needs and longest histories of homelessness.

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[9] Available at https://www.hudexchange.info/resource/3897/notice-cpd-14-012-prioritizing-persons-experiencing-chronic-homelessness-in-psh-and-recordkeeping-requirements/.

Establish Entry Points

Ensuring that consumers can access coordinated entry is critical to success. The community must answer two questions: Who will be authorized to administer the standardized assessment and enter the results into the system? How will the individuals administering the assessment be trained to ensure consistency and minimize the burden on the client?

During the June 9, 2016, strategic planning stakeholder workshop, participants indicated a preference for multiple entry points in Shasta County. Stakeholders expressed concern that a single entry point would not be sufficiently accessible, even if it was telephonic, but that a "no wrong door" approach would be too complicated. Use of select entry points including 2-1-1 and programs such as the HOPE Van that already work regularly with the target population, were recommended. Stakeholders also emphasized the need for integration of the coordinated entry system with outreach efforts.

Evaluation, Tracking and Monitoring

After launch, the Coordinated Entry Workgroup should continue to meet to identify barriers and challenges (such as funder contracts, inadequate entry points, incomplete participation by providers, insufficient resources, inadequate matching, etc.), and modify the system to address these issues. Focus groups with consumers and participants can deepen the system's ability to reach participants and match them to appropriate resources.

Coordinated entry can be used to identify and track gaps in the system, demonstrating where there are inadequate resources such as permanent housing stock to meet the need.

Appendix C

Homeless Management Information System (HMIS)

Overview

A variety of HMIS vendors provide software in compliance with HUD's data collection, reporting, and management requirements. Many resources are available on www.hudexchange.info/programs/hmis to support CoCs in ensuring their HMIS is compliant with technical standards. An evaluation of Shasta County's HMIS was completed in 2015 by Symmetric Solutions, Inc., that provides additional information about the current status of the system.[11]

Selecting an HMIS

Deciding which HMIS is the best fit is a community-specific inquiry. While all HMIS systems are required to have certain capabilities, there are many additional functionalities that different vendors offer. The best HMIS for a community depends on the values and goals of local stakeholders. *The HMIS is most effective when providers across the system – and not only those providers required by HUD – are participating.*

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[10] Available at https://www.hudexchange.info/resource/4427/coordinated-entry-policy-brief/.
[11] Available at http://www.norcalunitedway.org/sites/norcalunitedway.org/files/Shasta%20County%20HMIS%20REVIEW%20Final%2011_16_15.pdf.

Because such participation may be voluntary, the HMIS should be user friendly and valuable to providers to maximize participation.

Steps for HMIS Evaluation and Selection

Recommended approaches for identifying the best HMIS solution for a community can include some or all of the following steps:

- Establish an HMIS Committee to take leadership over the process
- Hold at least one community meeting with relevant stakeholders, including all providers who may participate in the HMIS, to identify desired criteria for the HMIS and/or evaluate whether the current system meets the community's needs
- If the current system does not meet needs, the criteria developed by the community can be used to develop an RFP for potential vendors
- Some communities also consider issuing an RFP for the HMIS system administrator, the person(s) responsible for local implementation (*e.g.*, training and support for local agencies, routine monitoring of data quality, formal report preparation, development of reports in response to information requests)

Identifying HMIS Requirements

Communities have various aspirations for their HMIS. The HMIS can be a powerful tool for monitoring individual program and system-wide performance, and understanding trends in homelessness and gaps in the local response. Identifying system goals is important to finding the right HMIS match. Community priorities can include, for example:

- *Workflow and Data Quality*. Some systems have built-in capabilities to help minimize data errors, including deduplication and pre-population of data fields. Providers typically find that some HMIS platforms have a more intuitive and efficient workflow than others and that a streamlined user experience is important to minimizing the burden of data entry.
- *System Performance Measurement*. Beginning in 2016, HUD is requiring CoCs to track System Performance Measures identified by HUD.[12] HMIS data can support effective monitoring required by many public and private funders, and support the system in identifying and addressing barriers to solving homelessness.
- *Supporting Client Services*. HMIS systems can include various functionalities to assist programs in tracking and serving clients. Additionally, HMIS data can support programs in monitoring and improving their performance and outcomes. To do so, data and reports must be easily accessible by programs.
- *Data Sharing and System Integration*. Communities are exploring ways to bring together data from various systems invested in addressing homelessness. Data integration can support more efficient institutional discharge processes and better identification and efficient prioritization of high utilizers of public systems. An "open HMIS" allows HMIS users across the system to share information.

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[12] An Introductory Guide to System Performance Measurement is available at https://www.hudexchange.info/resources/documents/System-Performance-Measures-Introductory-Guide.pdf.

Appendix D

Permanent Housing Models

Overview

Establishing a permanent housing system that can truly solve homelessness requires creation of housing opportunities and deepening of program capacity to maximize outcomes.

Creation of Housing Opportunities

Because housing is what ends homelessness, communities successful in solving homelessness hone in on creation of housing opportunities. A Housing Task Force can be a powerful body in mobilizing and leveraging resources. Projects such as the Woodlands that unite key funding streams like Low Income Housing Tax Credits, HUD Community Program and Development (CPD) funds, and Mental Health Service Act (MHSA) resources is critical to significantly increase housing stock. Funding the local housing trust fund, establishing policies to ensure unit set-asides for homeless persons in new developments, and landlord engagement campaigns (see **Appendix E**) can also increase housing availability.

Program Capacity

The permanent housing programs in communities that solve homelessness demonstrate certain characteristics that meaningfully reduce the impact of homelessness on the community. In particular, these programs have:

- Low barrier admission policies to "screen in rather than screen out" and engage those with the highest needs.
- Adequate supportive services to support housing retention that are voluntary, flexible and dependent on the needs of the participant.
- Program termination only in extreme situations, with supports such as flexible rent payment options, and minimal participation requirements.
- Engaging, client-centered approaches using methods such as motivational interviewing and harm reduction techniques to maximize participant engagement and effectiveness.
- Client leases for at least a year, renewable, and terminable only for cause that confer full rights and responsibilities of tenancy (required by HUD).

Characteristics of Permanent Supportive Housing and Rapid Rehousing

Permanent Supportive Housing

- Targets those, often with multiple, chronic conditions, who would be unable to sustain housing without this level of support. Requires disability – and, often, chronic homeless status – as a precondition.
- Support services are often intensive, as necessary to support the participant in stabilizing and retaining housing.
- A low barrier approach to acceptance and retention is critical to ensuring these resources effectively address homelessness in the community.
- Services are oriented to assisting program participants in obtaining and maintaining housing, and promoting the ability of tenants to live as independently as possible.

- Works with participants through a harm reduction and "stages of change" approach that reduce adverse health, social, and economic impacts.

Rapid Rehousing
- Targets households with a range of needs for services from a few months to up to two years.
- Supports clients with a flexible combination of housing subsidies and support services such as housing identification, life skills development, and stabilization support:
    o Landlord recruitment and housing location support to assist households in securing appropriate rental housing, including completing applications and negotiating lease agreements
    o Assistance to cover move-in costs, deposits and rental/utility assistance to move immediately out of homelessness
    o Supports household in addressing issues that may impede access to housing such as credit history, arrears, and legal issues
    o Monitoring of participants' housing stability and assistance with resolution of crises
- Case managers work with clients to develop and implement a plan to achieve long-term stability.
- Uses techniques such as motivational interviewing to increase client awareness of consequences and risks, and client-centered approaches to emphasize client-developed goals.
- Actively connects clients with a network of community-based resources to address the client's individual needs, including access to benefits and employment.
- Use of Progressive Engagement techniques that provides a basic level of financial and support services at the outset with ongoing monitoring/reassessment to modify the assistance as necessary.

Appendix E

Landlord Engagement

Overview

Landlords can be reluctant to rent to homeless or formerly homeless persons. Understanding and addressing landlord concerns around financial losses and administrative burdens can create partnerships that are beneficial for all concerned. The following are strategies various communities use to engage landlords as partners in solving homelessness. Success depends on working closely with landlords over time to build and sustain strong relationships, and ensuring landlords feel supported with access to assistance immediately should challenges arise.

Strategies

Community-wide strategies for landlord engagement help ensure resources such as vouchers that solve homelessness do not go to waste. A centralized landlord engagement campaign aligns resources and messaging to maximize outcomes in establishing and maintaining relationships. Such initiatives often involve a three-pronged approach: Access to Initiate Relationships, Engaging and Sustaining Relationships, and Mitigation of Risk. While many of these approaches can be implemented by individual agencies, the use of centralized Housing Navigators with strong interpersonal skills and the ability to "speak the landlord's language" can be extremely effective.

Access to Initiate Relationships
- *Establish an Outreach System.* Identify prospective landlords through research and monitoring of apartment listings and publicly available information. Ensure adequate follow-up and an appropriate balance of outreach and respect for landlords' time.
- *Develop Outreach Materials.* An effective marketing initiative and branding can turn a basic landlord solicitation effort into a community-oriented campaign for change.
- *Mobilize Community Stakeholders.* Engage landlord representatives and advocates around the social cause. Leaders in the faith community may be willing to encourage participation of landlords in their congregation. Business associations, neighborhood associations, homeless and low-income service providers, and others with vested interests in reducing homelessness are often willing to relay information through their networks.
- *Hold an Event.* A landlord appreciation celebration or neighborhood-focused forum can provide an opportunity for landlords who are successfully engaging in the program to describe their experiences and allay fears and for tenants to share how permanent housing has meaningfully impacted their lives.

Engage & Sustain
- *Flexible and Targeted Approach.* Because individual landlord motivations can vary, those engaging in direct outreach can tailor messages to their audience. A Landlord Advisory Committee can help directly address landlord concerns.
- *Directly Addressing Concerns.* Reassure landlords that it is safe and easy to rent to clients. Talking points can include:
  - <u>Regular, timely monthly rent</u>. This program is administered efficiently to ensure you receive your rent each month with no hassles. Participation can reduce vacancy and advertising costs by providing a stream of ready-to-rent tenants with long-term subsidies.
  - <u>Administrative ease</u>. Our program staff is focused on making this as easy as possible for you. We will conduct background checks and provide you with a vetted report. Of course, you will also have a chance to meet prospective tenants in person.
  - <u>Good tenant training</u>. Our clients know what it takes to be a good tenant and neighbor. We educate them on financial management, your rights and theirs, and good housekeeping.
  - <u>Support services</u>. Our clients have ongoing access to a range of wraparound supportive services to help them remain stable and you have access to their providers. Our support just begins, not ends, with the rent check.
  - <u>Risk mitigation</u>. This program is supported by several risk management initiatives, including a funding pool that will compensate you for damages, a 24-hour hotline, and a mobile maintenance team.
  - <u>Making a difference</u>. You can change people's lives by helping them get back on their feet. The community will thank you. We will get the word out because a good deed deserves to be recognized.
- *Deepen Relationships.* Landlord recognition programs (*e.g.*, thank you cards, plaques, Christmas cards, newsletter shout outs, acknowledgement of landlord partnerships in press events and

campaign materials, landlord-of-the-month campaigns, appreciation breakfasts, etc.) help landlords feel appreciated while continuing to get the word out about the program.

Mitigate Risk

- *Financial Mitigation.* A risk mitigation fund can reduce landlord fears of financial liability related to damage costs or non-payment of rent. Gratitude bonuses or double security deposits can be effective in reassuring landlords and bringing in new participants to the program. Purchasing renters' insurance for tenants and bearing responsibility for small repairs strengthens the message that the program will actively support the landlord in ensuring the client's long-term residence.
- *Relationship with Program.* The case manager should provide a contact number as part of the client's rental application if possible to demonstrate availability to address concerns and bolster the client's attractiveness as a potential tenant. Contact and accessibility between program staff and the landlord is essential.
- *Services to Bolster Support.* Landlords often appreciate access to a hotline to answer questions or address crises. Mediation services provide landlords a mechanism for resolving – or preventing – disputes without the costs and administrative burden of going to court.
- *Increase Tenant Viability.* Supporting landlords in getting to know prospective tenants can encourage landlords to participate in the program, for example:
  - o Character recommendation letters from case managers or respected third parties describing how the client has participated in specialized services or has made great strides in overcoming personal problems.
  - o Check referrals, credit history, and other assessment information to create a comprehensive character reference and background check for the landlord to evaluate.
  - o Provide landlords with opportunities to meet clients in person and ask questions.
  - o Support clients in developing personal letters to include in their applications.
  - o Establish a tenant certification program to educate clients about budgeting, tenant rights and duties, credit repair and other life skills.

Appendix F

Definitions of Homelessness

U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)

HUD administers two major federal funding streams for homeless housing and services: CoC Program and the ESG Program. HUD's definition of "homeless" focuses on persons who are "literally homeless": persons who are sleeping in places not meant for human habitation, or who are sleeping in an emergency shelter or transitional housing. This includes people who are sleeping on streets, in cars, campgrounds, parks, bus stations, and abandoned buildings and people who are using motel vouchers. It also includes people who have been institutionalized (*e.g.* staying in a hospital or jail) for a short time and were sleeping in a place not meant for human habitation before their institutionalization. Importantly, this does not include people who are doubled-up, couch surfing, or otherwise poorly housed. In addition to "literally homeless," HUD's definition includes persons who are fleeing domestic violence or human trafficking, persons who are at imminent risk of homelessness, and, under certain

circumstances, children who are considered homeless under other federal programs. The VA also uses HUD's definition in its homeless assistance programs.

Shasta County Office of Education

Under the McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Assistance and Improvements Act, the definition used by the Office of Education, "homeless children and youths" means "individuals who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence." Broader than HUD's definition, this includes all persons whom HUD defines as "literally homeless," as well as children and youth who are living doubled up (*i.e.* "sharing the housing of other persons due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or a similar reason"), living in motels and hotels, and those who are awaiting foster care placement.

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

Health centers funded by the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) use a broad definition of "homeless" similar to that commonly used in educational settings. "Homeless" is defined as "an individual who lacks housing," and includes all persons who are "literally homeless" under HUD's definition, as well as individuals and families who are living "doubled up" or staying temporarily with friends or family. The HHS definition also includes individuals who are about to be released from a hospital, prison, or jail, if they do not have housing to which they can exit.

Shasta County Homeless Response System

Providers of homeless housing and services in Shasta County employ a range of definitions of "homeless." Due to diversity of funding sources, there is no single definition used in the community to identify when an individual or family is experiencing homelessness. Each of the definitions above is used in the community, by different providers of housing and services, to establish eligibility for program participation and as the basis for service data. In addition to these definitions, many housing and service providers use other methods of defining homeless status, including formal definitions established by other funding sources, informal definitions based on a broad understanding of homelessness and unstable housing, and self-identification.

Appendix G

Acronym List

Acronym	Meaning
CoC	Continuum of Care
ESG	Emergency Solutions Grants
HMIS	Homeless Management Information System
HUD	U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development
NIMBY	"Not In My Backyard"
PIT	Point in Time
SOAR	SSI/SSDI Outreach, Access, and Recovery
SSVF	Supportive Services for Veteran Families
VA	U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
VASH	Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing