

# GLOSSARY of TERMS

## CHRONIC HOMELESSNESS

Under the Department of Housing and Urban Development's definition, a chronically homeless individual is someone who has experienced homelessness for a year or longer, or who has experienced at least four episodes of homelessness in the last three years and has a disability. A family with an adult member who meets this description would also be considered chronically homeless.

## COORDINATED ASSESSMENT, COORDINATED ENTRY, OR CENTRALIZED INTAKE

A centralized or coordinated process designed to coordinate program participant intake assessment and provision of referrals. A centralized or coordinated assessment system covers the geographic area, is easily accessed by individuals and families seeking housing or services, is well advertised, and includes a comprehensive and standardized assessment tool.

## CONTINUUM OF CARE

A regional or local planning body that coordinates housing and services funding for homeless families and individuals.

## CONTINUUM OF CARE PROGRAM

The Homeless Emergency Assistance and Rapid Transition to Housing Act of 2009 (HEARTH Act) consolidated three separate homeless assistance programs administered by HUD under the McKinney Vento Homeless Assistance Act into a single grant program, the Continuum of Care program.

## DIVERSION

Diversion is a strategy that prevents homelessness by helping people, at the point they seek help from the shelter system, to identify permanent housing arrangements that are immediately available, and if necessary, connecting them with services and financial assistance to help them return to permanent housing. Examples of the type of services diversion programs provide include landlord or family mediation and financial assistance.

## EMERGENCY SHELTER

Emergency shelters address housing crises for individuals and families experiencing homelessness. These programs do not require occupants to sign leases or occupancy agreements. While the length of time households stay in emergency shelter varies, it is typically a short term model where households stay while they work on resolving their housing crisis.

## EMERGENCY SOLUTIONS GRANT (ESG)

The HEARTH Act revised the Emergency Shelter Grants Program to create the Emergency Solutions Grants (ESG) Program. The ESG program is administered by HUD, and provides funding for homelessness outreach, emergency shelter operations and supportive services, rapid re-housing, and homelessness prevention.

## FUNCTIONAL ZERO

A term that has been used informally for the Department of Veterans Affairs' goal of ending veteran homelessness. The precise definition is still a subject of debate, but it generally means that there are no

veterans living unsheltered; and that there is a system in place to find and immediately shelter any veteran who becomes homeless, and to house that veteran within 30 days. An indicator is that the number of veterans in homeless shelters is smaller than the number that the community re-houses in a typical month.

## GRANT AND PER DIEM PROGRAM (GPD)

A grant program administered by the Department of Veterans Affairs to promote the development and provision of service centers or transitional housing for veterans experiencing homelessness.

## HEARTH ACT

The HEARTH Act is the first significant reauthorization of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance programs in nearly 20 years and allocates funds to homelessness prevention, rapidly re-housing, and providing permanent supportive housing for homeless people with disabilities. It also modernized and streamlined housing and services to more efficiently meet the needs of people seeking assistance. The bill reauthorized the HUD's McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance programs, which represent the largest federal investment in preventing and ending homelessness.

## HOMELESS MANAGEMENT INFORMATION SYSTEM (HMIS)

A local information technology system used to collect client-level data and data on the provision of housing and services to homeless individuals and families and persons at risk of homelessness.

## HOUSING FIRST

Housing First is an approach to ending homelessness that centers on providing people experiencing homelessness with housing as quickly as possible - and then providing services as needed.

## HUD-VETERANS AFFAIRS SUPPORTIVE HOUSING (HUD-VASH)

This program combines Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) rental assistance for homeless Veterans with case management and clinical services provided by VA. HUD and VA award HUD-VASH vouchers based on geographic need and public housing agency (PHA) administrative performance.

## MEDICAID & MEDICARE

Medicaid is a public health insurance program jointly funded by the states and federal government that provides free or low-cost health care. Medicaid is an entitlement for eligible low-income people, families and children, pregnant women, the elderly, and people with disabilities. Eligibility varies from state to state. Medicare is the federal health insurance program for people who are 65 or older, certain younger people with disabilities, and people with End-Stage Renal Disease (permanent kidney failure requiring dialysis or a transplant, sometimes called ESRD).

## OPENING DOORS

Launched in 2010, *Federal Strategic Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness: Opening Doors* is the nation's first comprehensive strategy to prevent and end homelessness and serves as a roadmap for the 19 U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness (USICH) member agencies. The plan sets a Federal goal of ending Chronic homelessness by 2017; preventing and ending homelessness for families, youth, and children by 2020; and setting a path to end all types of homelessness.

## PERMANENT SUPPORTIVE HOUSING

Permanent housing in which supportive services are provided to assist homeless persons with a disability to live independently. Permanent Supportive Housing has proven particularly successful in for persons experiencing chronic homelessness.

## POINT-IN-TIME COUNT

A federally-mandated yearly count of homeless persons conducted by CoCs at the end of January. Communities are required to count sheltered persons every year and to count unsheltered persons every other year. These counts provide a snapshot of how many people are homeless on a single night.

## RAPID RE-HOUSING

Rapid re-housing is an intervention designed to help people to quickly exit homelessness and return to permanent housing. Rapid re-housing assistance is offered without preconditions (such as employment, income, absence of criminal record, or sobriety) and the resources and services provided are tailored to the unique needs of the household. The core components of rapid re-housing are housing identification, financial assistance for rent or move-in costs, and case management and services. Services and financial assistance in rapid re-housing are short term, typically six months or less.

## RUNAWAY AND HOMELESS YOUTH ACT (RHYA)

RHYA provides support to address youth and young adult homelessness and is administered by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). It funds three main interventions: street outreach, basic center, and transitional living. Basic Center Programs provide temporary shelter, family reunification services, counseling, food, clothing, and after-care services, while the Transitional Living Program provides longer term

housing with supportive services to homeless youth ages 16 to 21 for up to 18 months.

## RUNAWAY AND HOMELESS YOUTH MANAGEMENT INFORMATION SYSTEM (RHYSIS)

An information technology system used to collect data on youth serviced, issues affecting these youth, and the services provided by RHYA programs.

## RIGHT-SIZING

Right-sizing is a term used to define an ideal homelessness assistance system which has the right mix and amount of interventions (emergency shelter, rapid re-housing, permanent supportive housing, etc.) to house everyone who becomes homeless within 30 days.

## SUPPORTIVE SERVICES FOR VETERAN FAMILIES (SSVF) PROGRAM

A program administered by VA designed to rapidly re-house homeless Veterans and their families and prevent homelessness for those at imminent risk of homelessness due to a housing crisis.

## TEMPORARY ASSISTANCE FOR NEEDY FAMILIES (TANF)

A block grant provided to states, TANF funds monthly cash assistance payments to low-income families with children. TANF can also fund a wide range of services such as education and training, case management, job search, and counseling.

## TRANSITIONAL HOUSING

Transitional housing is designed to provide housing and appropriate supportive services to people experiencing homelessness to facilitate movement to independent living. The housing is short-term, typically less than 24 months. In addition to providing safe housing for those in need, other services are available to help participants become self-sufficient.