

Keys to Success: Employment and Affordable Housing

*For some people, particularly those with disabilities, homelessness is measured in years, not weeks. For these individuals, climbing back to a meaningful worklife is especially difficult. Research suggests that as many as 150,000 persons experience chronic homelessness, using a disproportionate share of costly emergency services. The good news is that **we now know what to do to help them reclaim productive lives in their communities.***

From Seattle to Burlington to Miami to Los Angeles, more than 200 communities across the country are uniting the resources of local agencies in strategic plans to end homelessness. Workforce Investment Boards (WIBs) can help by contacting and supporting the Continuums of Care (CoCs) in their community. These CoCs, sponsored by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and other Federal agencies, are targeted specifically to help individuals who have been living on the streets with a disability for at least a year or who have multiple homeless episodes. If CoCs are to help homeless people work, WIBs must become contributing partners.

Through research and experience, we have identified winning strategies to end chronic homelessness. These include the following:

- Engage local workforce development systems to address the employment needs of people who are chronically homeless.
- Build the capacity of communities to form effective partnerships to increase the number of housing units available to people who are homeless and returning to work.
- Create effective cross-systems planning among the WIBs, HUD Continuums of Care, and key service providers such as One-Stop Career Centers, mental health agencies, and substance use treatment agencies.



Access and a welcoming environment at One-Stop Career Center services are important for all customers.

- Link One-Stop Career Center services with homeless assistance and housing services, particularly supportive housing.
- Collaborate across systems to access funding streams that can be “braided” to fund employment services and supports for chronically homeless individuals.
- Measure the impact of employment and training services delivered in ways that reward performance for results.

What is a HUD Continuum of Care and why is it important to my community?

A Continuum of Care Plan is a community plan to organize and deliver housing and services to meet the specific needs of people who are homeless as they move to stable housing and maximum self-sufficiency. It includes action steps to end homelessness and prevent a return to homelessness.

Lessons Learned About Homeless Employment Services

- *A comprehensive approach is needed that includes housing and supportive services.*
- *Connecting with Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) and One-Stop Career Centers requires interventions tailored to people who are homeless and have disabilities.*
- *People follow their own return-to-work pathways.*
- *People enter low-wage jobs frequently without access to job growth or benefits.*
- *Rapid placement strategy is a good starting point.*
- *Wrap-around services and continuous support are essential.*
- *The in-house jobs in the housing industry serve as a useful step to outside employment and can be a career for some individuals.*
- *Supportive housing does stabilize peoples living circumstances and can be “vocalionalized” to create a work-encouraging atmosphere.*

Continuums (or CoCs), composed of a variety of community agencies and local government, plan services year-round to address homelessness. The planning process involves collecting data on how services are meeting the needs of homeless people, identifying the gaps in services, and prioritizing needs and strategies to address long and short-term concerns.

Local CoCs also have a critical function of determining how to finance homeless services and housing so that plans can achieve their goals. Although many of these resources come through the McKinney-Vento Act, the comprehensive needs of homeless individuals also require Continuums to seek funding or work in partnership with mainstream programs such as Medicaid, Community Development Block Grants, Mental Health Block Grants, and Workforce

Investment Boards (WIBs) and their One-Stop Career Centers.

What HUD programs target homelessness?

Several HUD programs are available to support communities in their plans to end homelessness. The following are examples.

The Supportive Housing Program (SHP)

Supportive Housing Program grants may be used to fund one or more of the following activities: acquisition or rehabilitation of a building to be used as supportive housing or to provide supportive services; new construction of a supportive housing facility; leasing a building to be used for supportive housing or services; the provision of new or increased supportive services; costs associated with the day-to-day operation of a new supportive housing project or the expanded portion of an existing project; and administrative costs.

Shelter Plus Care Program (S+C)

Shelter Plus Care Program grants may be used to provide rental assistance payments that, when combined with social services, provide supportive housing for homeless people with disabilities and their families. Shelter Plus Care funds four types of rental assistance: (1) Tenant-Based Rental Assistance (contracted directly with the low-income tenant); (2) Project-Based Rental Assistance (contracted with a building owner); (3) Sponsor-Based Rental Assistance (contracted with a nonprofit organization); and (4) SRO-based Rental Assistance (Single-room occupancy contracted with a public housing authority).

There are more than 450 Continuums of Care that apply to HUD for more than one billion dollars of assistance annually through a Notice of Funding Availability known as the SuperNofa.

Single Room Occupancy Program (SRO)

The Single Room Occupancy Program provides tenant-based rental assistance for moderate rehabilitation of buildings with single -room dwellings, designed for the use of an individual, that often do not contain food preparation or sanitary facilities. A public housing authority makes Section 8 rental assistance payments to the landlords on behalf of homeless individuals who rent the rehabilitated units. Rental assistance for SRO units is provided for a period of 10 years and supports some rehabilitation as well as the other costs of owning and maintaining the property.

Emergency Shelter Grants Program (ESG)

The Emergency Shelter Grants Program may be used to fund one or more of the following activities: the renovation/rehabilitation/conversion of buildings for use as emergency shelters; shelter operating expenses such as rent, repairs, security, fuel, equipment, insurance, utilities, food and furnishings; essential services such as those concerned with employment, health, and education of program participants; activities designed to prevent the incidence of homelessness; and administrative costs. ESG provides funds to states, territories, and qualified cities and counties.



How Can Workforce Investment Boards and One-Stop Career Centers Get Involved?

Every local homeless assistance program planning network or Continuum of Care is organized differently and offers a variety of opportunities for participating organizations. WIBs and One-Stops interested in joining local efforts to end chronic homelessness and learning how best to serve homeless individuals need to learn how the network is organized in their community and assess opportunities for getting involved. There are three easy ways to begin.

1. Contact your local HUD office

Information and assistance on local or regional Continuums of Care can be obtained by contacting the local HUD office. Contact information for local HUD offices can be found at <http://www.hud.gov/offices/cpd/about/local/index.cfm>. Within each office, the Director of the Office of Community Planning and Development (CPD), which administers the Continuum of Care process, is a good starting point.

2. Contact the agency that leads the local Continuum of Care planning process

Find out when local network meetings are held and attend them. These meetings are usually held monthly or every other month. Beginning with consistent participation at these scheduled meetings, organizations can become familiar with the local process and the basics of homeless assistance planning. Over time, the level of involvement generally increases as organizations learn more about the process and the players. Find your local contact person at <http://www.hud.gov/offices/cpd/homeless/programs/cont/coc/index.cfm>

3. Visit a supportive housing program in your community

Sometimes, if you want to really understand a community problem, you need to go out and talk with people who are trying to solve it. WIB members or One-Stop Career Center staff can directly learn about solutions by contacting a local program and planning a visit. There are 4,400 programs serving homeless people across the country. Your Continuum of Care contact can advise you about visiting a program.



Ending Chronic Homelessness Through Employment and Housing In Boston

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