

Chicago Alliance to End Homelessness

2011 Policy Priorities



A Home for Everyone

The Chicago Alliance to End Homelessness works to create, support, and sustain effective strategies to end homelessness in Chicago. Our vision is one in which all individuals and families facing homelessness in Chicago will have access to safe, decent, affordable housing and the resources and support necessary to sustain their housing. In collaboration with service providers, consumers, and civic and government partners, our 2011 policy advocacy efforts will create new resources and effective public policy programs that support Chicago's groundbreaking efforts to end homelessness.

Federal Initiatives

Impact Implementation of the HEARTH Act

The Homeless Emergency Assistance and Rapid Transition to Housing (HEARTH) Act of 2009 truly transformed federal homelessness assistance, giving communities more efficient and effective resources with which to combat homelessness. As HUD prepares to implement HEARTH in 2011, there are still many opportunities to impact the shape and scope of this new legislation through the federal regulatory process. The Alliance will analyze draft regulations, submit commentary, and advocate with key policymakers to ensure that this unprecedented opportunity will enhance Chicago's efforts to end homelessness. The Alliance will also continue to educate local stakeholders on the HEARTH Act and its implications for Chicago, including an expansion of the definition of homelessness, in order to strengthen our community's service delivery and decision-making capacity.

Increase Federal Resources for Homeless Services and Affordable Housing

During the FY 2011 and FY 2012 appropriations processes, the Alliance will pursue every opportunity to protect and increase funding for federal programs that support Chicago's homeless system, including:

- Increase funding for HUD's McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Grants, Runaway and Homeless Youth Act programs, and supportive services within the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA).
- Advocate for new HUD/HHS collaborative vouchers under the "Housing and Services for Homeless Persons Demonstration."
- Develop rental housing that is affordable to extremely low-income households by capitalizing and implementing the National Housing Trust Fund.
- Ensure sufficient funding to renew all vouchers currently in use and secure additional housing choice vouchers (Section 8).

Participate in National Campaigns to End Homelessness for Veterans and Youth

National campaigns to end homelessness for specific populations, including veterans and youth, are underway and the Alliance is prepared to take a leadership role in 2011. President Obama has made ending veterans homelessness a top priority, prompting Congress and advocates to work together to explore legislative solutions and new resources to solve this problem. The Alliance is working at the federal level to influence policy development, as well as participating in local planning with the Veterans Administration. The Alliance is also working with national partners and key Congressional leaders to identify best practices for serving homeless youth and craft policy responses.

State Initiatives

Advocate for a Responsible State Budget to Protect Homeless Services

Chicago's efforts to end homelessness are being put at risk by devastating cuts and late payments to Illinois' human service safety net. A December 2010 statewide survey of human service providers shows that one-third of housing providers have had to close programs and over 50% have reduced their hours of operation and grew their waiting list in response to nearly \$14 million in state homeless-specific cuts. By coordinating research, messaging, and advocacy activities for Chicago's homeless system, the Chicago Alliance will work to restore funding cuts and ensure timely payment for the following state programs: Homelessness Prevention, Emergency and Transitional Housing Program, Supportive Services in Supportive Housing, and Homeless Youth Services.

Work to Prepare Illinois for Medicaid Expansion

National health care reform provides unique opportunities for the homeless system (on behalf of people experiencing homelessness who are also frequent users of health care) to work closely with the health care system. The Alliance is already working to build these connections at the state level so Illinois will be ready to take advantage of upcoming demonstration projects and to implement a massive Medicaid expansion in 2014. In 2011, we will continue to advocate for expanded health care infrastructure, increased Medicaid billing within the homeless system, and coordinated care that will benefit people experiencing homelessness.

Local Initiatives

Establish Ending Homelessness and the Creation of Affordable Housing as Priorities of the New City Administration

In 2011, the Alliance will use the unprecedented opportunity of an open mayoral election to work with all the major mayoral candidates and the new mayor and administration to ensure Chicago's continued prioritization of ending homelessness. We will convince the new mayor to endorse and champion Chicago's Plan to End Homelessness and commit to completing the Plan's goals for the creation of permanent supportive housing. We will also partner with the new administration to fund key Plan priorities, including exploring the re-allocation of current funding streams to homeless services, creating new sustainable funding for supportive services, and keeping Mayor Daley's commitment of resources.

Explore Strategies to Maintain Stimulus-Funded Prevention and Rapid Re-Housing Programming

The Homeless Prevention and Rapid Re-Housing Program of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act brought tremendous resources to Chicago's homeless system and helped thousands of people at-risk of homelessness and struggling in the economic downturn. However, the first wave of this time-limited funding will run out this year. The Alliance will advocate for potential sources of bridge funding to ensure services do not end abruptly and explore new partnerships with, for example the Chicago Housing Authority, to serve this precariously-housed population.

Pursue Strategies to Prevent Institutions from Discharging Individuals into Homelessness

The Alliance will continue to coordinate with other systems of care to prevent institutions like hospitals and prisons from discharging individuals into homelessness. Specific initiatives will include working with the Social Security Administration to improve benefit reinstatement for people who have been incarcerated; participating in the local Veteran Administration's planning to provide services to homeless veterans; and improving data collection through the bi-annual Point-in-Time Count. The Alliance will also coordinate the work of the Countywide Discharge Planning Committee that meets regularly to oversee progress, share resource information, and stay connected to discharge planning partners.

Help Implement the Recommendations of the City Task Force on Homeless Youth

The Alliance has been participating in the City Task Force on Homeless Youth, created by Mayor Richard M. Daley in 2010. Five working groups on housing, education, drop-in services, transportation, and employment were created and charged with preparing recommendations to improve city services available to unaccompanied homeless youth, ages 12 to 24. The Alliance will work with our service provider, advocacy, and city partners to implement the priority recommendations in 2011, including developing a zero tolerance policy for youth homelessness, increasing youth housing capacity, and improving access to education and training opportunities.