

Summary of the Proceedings: A Report on the Homeless Policy Academies National Learning Meeting

Conducted October 7-8, 2004
In Washington, D.C.

Sponsored by

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development
U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
U.S. Department of Labor

Prepared by

Health Systems Research, Inc.
Washington, D.C.

Prepared under

Task Order 20
Contract No.: 282-98-0009

November 2004

Views expressed are those of the meeting participants and do not represent official positions of the Federal Government.

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Executive Summary

Introduction

Since 2001, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services in partnership with the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, and the U.S. Department of Labor sponsored five Policy Academies on chronic homelessness, two Policy Academies on homeless families and children and three mini Policy Academies on both. To date, 52 of the 56 States and Territories have participated.

Designed to help State and local policymakers improve access to mainstream services for people who are homeless, the Policy Academies objectives are to:

- Assist State and local policymakers in developing an Action Plan intended to improve access to mainstream health, human services, employment, and housing opportunities
- Create and reinforce relationships among key stakeholders
- Provide an environment conducive to the process of strategic decision-making
- Provide technical assistance to support action plan implementation.

After States and Territories had an opportunity to implement portions of their action plans and to track the outcomes, two or three members from each team were brought back to a meeting in Washington, DC, in October 2004. The objectives of the National Learning Meeting were to:

- Showcase innovative approaches that States and Territories have implemented
- Provide opportunities for peer-to-peer technical assistance
- Renew the States' and Territories' commitment to fully implementing their action plans.

The highly successful meeting included 200 participants, representing 55 of the 56 States and Territories; Federal agency partners; public and private organizations addressing homelessness; and TA contractors.

Concurrent and Regional Breakout Sessions: Challenges and Successful Strategies

In order to highlight the promising practices in the States and Territories and provide opportunities for peer-to-peer sharing, the National Learning Meeting included 16 breakout sessions featuring State and Territory presenters. Focusing on six general topics commonly identified within State and Territory action plans and follow-up outcome calls, the 90-minute breakout sessions featured brief presentations by two States or Territories to set the stage, followed by a facilitated discussion among participants about the challenges and solutions within their region. With the help of skilled facilitators and note takers, State and Territory representatives considered strategies for addressing homelessness, barriers or obstacles they encountered, breakthroughs that helped to overcome the barriers, and suggestions for what would help to move the process forward at the State and Federal levels.

The State and Territory representatives also broke into six regional groups to identify the key Federal- and State-level barriers and challenges they encountered while implementing their Policy Academy action plans. Participants considered existing solutions for addressing these barriers and developed potential new approaches for overcoming them. During the regional discussions, common themes emerged that were also emphasized throughout the concurrent sessions. The following table highlights the common topical areas, challenges, and creative strategies discussed by States and Territories in both the State-led concurrent and regional breakout sessions.

ISSUES IDENTIFIED IN THE CONCURRENT AND REGIONAL BREAKOUT SESSIONS

Increasing Coordination and Collaboration and Engaging Partners in Solutions

<i>Breakout session topic and presenting State or Territory</i>	<i>Challenges identified in concurrent and regional sessions</i>	<i>Strategies identified in concurrent and regional sessions</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creating Effective Collaboration Mechanisms (Kentucky, Nebraska) • Promoting Coordination (North Carolina, New Jersey) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Difficulty maintaining momentum due to political changes, turf issues, and budget cuts • Difficulty coordinating planning activities due to multiple plans and unique regional issues 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supporting the work of Policy Academy Teams by integrating planning activities, identifying quick successes, and using data effectively • Enhancing partnerships by reaching out to new stakeholders, tailoring the message, and exploring funding options

Increasing Access to Significant Mainstream System Resources

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accessing Mainstream Services: SSI and SSDI Eligibility and Application (Oklahoma, Washington) • Accessing Mainstream Services: Broader Access Issues (Arizona, Florida) • Expanding Mainstream Service Coverage: Medicaid (Delaware, Maine) • Expanding Mainstream Service Coverage: TANF and Other (New York, Oregon) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Difficulty negotiating eligibility restrictions; cumbersome application processes; budget shortfalls; and challenges in linking services to housing • Difficulty getting mainstream service providers to the table to address homelessness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offering presumptive eligibility and creating single application forms • Tapping into existing infrastructure (e.g., creating cooperative agreements to provide ID or working with Access to Recovery programs to provide services) • Collaborating with Departments of Employment; Veterans Affairs; Disability Services; and Corrections to coordinate services and explore funding options
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Addressing Gaps In and Supply of (Affordable) Housing

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Multiple Financing Streams (Maine, Nebraska) • Multiple Financing Streams (Massachusetts, Georgia) • Strategies for Addressing Rural Homelessness (Kansas, Kentucky) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited supply of and access to housing stock • Lack of collaboration with key stakeholders • Lack of resources to address rural housing issues • Lack of services to help maintain housing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maximizing existing and creating new housing stock through set asides and by partnering with developers; landlords; and Public Housing Authorities • Exploring funding opportunities (e.g., housing trust funds and low income tax credits)
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Prevention and Discharge Planning

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prevention Innovations (Illinois, Massachusetts) • Discharge Policies: Implementation, Challenges and Success (Colorado, Missouri) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Difficulty engaging partners • Difficulty proving effectiveness of activities • Restrictive definitions that exclude populations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creating buy-in by collecting data, highlighting outcomes, and engaging in state-wide advocacy • Preventing housing loss by linking services to housing and using bridge subsidies and flexible funds • Using requirements to create policy change
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Documenting the Problem and Integrating Data Systems

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Homeless Management Information Systems (Arkansas, New Jersey) • Informing Public Policy with Data (Arizona, Hawaii) • Data Collection (Colorado, Montana) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Difficulty documenting homelessness due to lack of data and of culturally and regionally appropriate data elements and collection tools • Difficulty utilizing, coordinating, and supporting data reporting systems 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collecting qualitative and quantitative data from various sources (including mainstream services) • Using data to identify gaps and funding strategies • Integrating data collection efforts through Homeless Management Information Systems (HMIS)
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Increasing Public Education and Awareness

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintaining Momentum (Hawaii, Maryland) • Mounting a Public Awareness Campaign (Puerto Rico, Utah) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resistance and lack of public awareness • Lack of funding 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Launching public awareness campaigns; conducting public hearings; and educating legislators • Using tax return check-offs and foundation support
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The Listening Session: What Would Help Teams Move Forward

States and Territories had a unique opportunity in the Listening Session to provide direct feedback to the Federal funding partners. All four Deputy Assistant Secretaries were in attendance to introduce themselves and their agency, listen to the points raised by the States and Territories, and then comment on their agencies' relevant activities during the closing session. For the presentation, the regional breakout session facilitators and note takers compiled a summary of the "What Would Help" notes from each regional breakout group to outline the issues that States and Territories wanted to emphasize for the Federal partners. The following section outlines the six primary themes and highlights several concrete strategies for each category.

1. Increasing collaboration among Federal, State, and Territory partners
 - Assisting States with plan implementation by sharing Policy Academy outcomes and materials; providing more guidance about how to integrate multiple plans and councils at the State level; providing funding for a staff person to coordinate plan implementation; and connecting States and Territories experiencing similar (specific) issues.
 - Increasing coordination at the Federal level by creating common data elements, funding streams, and definitions for homelessness; creating a Federal interagency strategic plan; coordinating the Interagency Council on Homelessness (ICH) and Policy Academy processes at the Federal and regional levels; and re-evaluating Federal goals in the context of lessons learned through this process.
2. Engaging partners in solutions
 - Involving additional partners such as Veterans Affairs; Social Security Administration; Department of Labor and Workforce Investment Boards (WIBs); Departments of Justice and Corrections; Governors and the National Governor's Association; Legislators; community-based organizations; and faith-based communities.
 - Maximizing peer-to-peer learning by hosting regional homeless summits to bring States and Territories together.
3. Supporting different approaches to meet varying need
 - Tailoring assistance for rural areas by conducting research to document effectiveness of rural models; regionalizing funding, planning, and delivery of services and housing; and providing resources for planning and capacity building.
 - Tailoring assistance for Territories by addressing differential funding levels; building relationships with regional Federal representatives; adding staff at the Federal level who understand the cultural, social, and political contexts; and providing funding to start programs.
4. Addressing gaps in and supply of (affordable) housing stock
 - Increasing funding for housing by providing funds for operation and supportive services, not simply housing; and investing in provider capacity to access resources and develop housing.
 - Maximizing resources by involving Public Housing Authorities (PHAs) in the change process; fully utilizing Section 8; using the Continuum of Care process as an organizing force; and integrating all HUD mainstream and homeless planning and reporting functions into one plan.
5. Increasing access to mainstream system resources
 - Enhancing coordination and instituting policy changes by creating universal application and eligibility processes for all Federal programs; expanding presumptive disability for people who are homeless; creating State and Territory mandates to set aside resources for homelessness; and mandating that publicly-funded institutions cannot discharge to homelessness (and putting funding behind the mandate).

- Expanding capacity by providing income supports and housing options for people with primary substance abuse diagnosis; instituting a Medicaid waiver to serve homeless people; providing universal health insurance coverage; and disseminating best practice models.
6. Integrating data systems and reporting requirements
- Creating uniform data collection by mandating mainstream services to collect data on housing status; enhancing compatibility of Homeless Management Information Systems (HMIS) with mainstream data systems; providing funding and staff support for HMIS; and developing performance measures to evaluate whether access to mainstream resources is increased.
 - Improving use of data as a planning tool by creating a cross-walk of all Federal programs and funding; thinking strategically about the use of technology and potential barriers; and sharing strategies for using data to identify needs, make a case, and show cost savings.

Meeting Evaluations and Recommendations

By asking participants to assess the meeting content and format and to identify their learning and intentions, the evaluations provided valuable feedback to guide future meeting development and for potential technical assistance activities. The following section highlights some of the findings.

- **Useful and effective aspects:** The format of the peer-to-peer learning sessions received the majority of positive comments from National Learning Meeting participants. State and Territory participants also reported that the regional breakout sessions provided an opportunity to discuss common barriers and solutions, helping them to recognize that their challenges were necessarily unique and that breakthroughs are possible.
- **Issues requiring more guidance or information:** States and Territories that were smaller, rural, or experiencing severe budget constraints felt that their unique issues required more attention. It was also suggested that the follow-up technical assistance available to States could be used to address some of the issues related to employment, TANF, HMIS, and prevention strategies that were specifically mentioned.
- **New ideas and future action steps:** Throughout the evaluations, attendees expressed a sense of inspiration from listening to the successful strategies endorsed by their peers. Many left with new ideas about collaboration and partnerships; data collection and integration; utilizing presumptive eligibility for SSI or SSDI; and addressing housing challenges. The majority of the priority actions identified by participants involved reinvigorating their Teams either with new members, the institution of an Interagency Council, or a renewed commitment to involve policy makers and Governors. Also mentioned was the integration of multiple State plans from Interagency Councils, Continuums of Care, or the Chronic and Families with Children Policy Academies.

Many State and Territory participants expressed a desire to continue to meet with Federal partners perhaps at Regional or State levels to discuss ways to overcome some of the challenges identified during the listening session.

Please note: The full report outlines the planning process for the National Learning Meeting and includes the detailed findings from the concurrent breakout sessions and regional breakout sessions; the presentation from the listening session; and the meeting evaluation results. Specific session presentations can be accessed on the Homeless Policy Academy Web site: www.hrsa.gov/homeless.

Chapter I: Introduction

Overview of the Policy Academy Process

Over the past three years, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) in partnership with the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), and the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) sponsored five Policy Academies on chronic homelessness, two Policy Academies on homeless families and children and three mini Policy Academies on both.

Designed to help State and local policymakers improve access to mainstream services for people who are homeless, the Policy Academies sought to achieve the following objectives:

- Assisting State and local policymakers in developing an Action Plan intended to improve access to mainstream health, human services, employment, and housing opportunities for persons who are experiencing homelessness
- Creating and reinforcing relationships among the governor's office, State legislators, key program administrators, and stakeholders from the public and private sectors
- Providing an environment conducive to the process of strategic decision-making
- Assisting State and local policymakers in identifying issues or areas of concern that may result in a formal request for technical assistance.

With the goal of creating a statewide action plan to address homelessness, each of the States and Territories sent senior-level teams to participate in the Policy Academies. These teams included senior-level policymakers (representing State Medicaid, TANF, mental health services, Head Start, substance abuse treatment, housing, employment, and Veterans services), State legislators; local, county, or city-level government representatives (i.e., mayors); regional health and human service officials (i.e., Head Start directors and Health Care for the Homeless providers); people who were formerly homeless; State or local advocates; and/or others determined by the State or Territory to be important stakeholders in policy development.

To date:

- 49 States and Territories have participated in a Homeless Policy Academy focusing on chronically homelessness individuals
- 21 States and Territories have participated in a Homeless Policy Academy focusing on homeless families with children
- 52 States and Territories have participated in a Homeless Policy Academy of any kind.

Viewed as a process rather than as a discrete event, the Policy Academy process helped teams build a common vision and set of priorities, create a statewide plan, utilize technical assistance (TA) to implement their action plan, and share challenges and lessons learned in a final meeting. Over the course of one or two years, Policy Academy Teams engaged in four distinct phases of the process, including site visits, Academy meetings, technical assistance, and a National Learning Meeting.

Site Visits. All State Teams participated in an in-State site visit prior to the Academy meeting. The site visit was a crucial first step in familiarizing the team members with the process; developing a common understanding of the issues and promising practices; developing a common vision statement and reality assessment; and building the members' ability to work as a team.

Academy Meeting. Within two to six weeks of the site visit, the team members attended a three-day Academy meeting with teams from other States. The meeting agenda featured a mix of plenary and breakout sessions with Federal and non-Federal experts or resource persons. In addition, State team sessions provided concrete blocks of time for the teams to develop their action plans with assistance from the resource persons of their choice.

The plenary and breakout sessions provided an overview of the issues and encouraged participants to explore opportunities in mainstream assistance programs such as Medicaid, TANF, Workforce Investment, and subsidized housing. Interactive sessions allowed participants to address barriers to access and to engage in a dialog with informed presenters about where and how opportunities could be identified that would contribute to a collaborative State plan for improving access.

The State team sessions provided an opportunity for Team members to spend concentrated time working on the elements of an action plan – goals, strategies, and priorities. An external facilitator worked closely with a designated Team Lead in each State to keep the sessions on track and to serve as a liaison with the Federal Planning Committee. The Teams also received on-site, hands-on technical assistance from resource people on specific topics to assist with the development of their action plans and to identify additional technical assistance needs.

By the close of the Academy, each State developed a draft action plan that identifies a vision, priorities, and specific actions they will pursue toward new policy directions and improved access to services for individuals and families with children experiencing homelessness. The plan was further developed and submitted for Federal review within three months after the Academy.

Technical Assistance. Limited resources were also available through the contract to provide technical assistance to the teams after the Policy Academy meeting to help the States and Territories in refining and implementing their Action Plans. Often critical for helping teams maintain or regain momentum or identify and adapt a strategy that their peers in other States have implemented successfully, the TA requests have included:

- Written or internet-based materials
- Telephone consultation and referrals with subcontractor
- Policy Academy Web site and bulletin board
- Specialized literature searches
- Peer-based TA with other States
- Telephone consultation with Federal representatives
- Teleconference with content experts
- On-site consultation or training
- Additional on-site facilitation of State Team.

National Learning Meeting. After States and Territories had an opportunity to implement portions of their action plans and to track the outcomes, two or three members from each team were brought back to a meeting in Washington, DC, on October 7th and 8th, 2004. The goal of this meeting was to share opportunities, challenges, and outcomes in relation to the Policy Academy process with other States and representatives of the Federal government. Two-hundred participants were in attendance, representing 55 of the 56 States and Territories; Federal agency partners; public and private organizations addressing homelessness; and technical assistance contractors.

Overview of the National Learning Meeting Planning Process

With feedback from the State Team Leads, the Federal Planning Committee identified the following objectives for the National Learning Meeting:

- Showcase innovative approaches that States and Territories have implemented
- Provide opportunities for peer-to-peer technical assistance
- Renew the States' and Territories' commitment to fully implementing their action plans.

The nature of the Policy Academy process and the goals identified by the States meant that the National Learning Meeting could not be a typical conference. Instead it required careful and creative thought on strategies for inviting States to share promising approaches; encouraging States to talk about both their challenges and successes; and helping State and Territory representatives leave with concrete ideas and tools to continue the learning and implementation process when they returned home to work with their teams. Keeping these issues in mind, the Planning Committee crafted an agenda that included:

- 16 concurrent breakout sessions on specific topics, featuring both brief presentations by States and Territories to highlight challenges and promising practices as well as facilitated discussion among the participants (described further in Chapter II)
- 6 regional breakout sessions to identify Federal- and State-level barriers, challenges, and solutions to action plan implementation (described further in Chapter III)
- A Listening Session to highlight the findings from the regional breakout sessions and provide direct feedback from the States to the Federal funding partners (described further in Chapter IV)
- Minimal plenary session time to provide context and highlight Federal initiatives.

The final National Learning Meeting agenda is included as Appendix A. The final participant list is included as Appendix B.

The following report outlines the planning process for the National Learning Meeting; the findings from the concurrent breakout sessions and regional breakout sessions; the presentation from the listening session; and the meeting evaluation results. Specific meeting presentations will be referenced throughout this report and can be accessed on the Homeless Policy Academy Web site: www.hrsa.gov/homeless.

Chapter II: Concurrent Breakout Sessions

In order to highlight the promising practices in the States and Territories and provide opportunities for peer-to-peer sharing, the National Learning Meeting included 16 breakout sessions featuring State and Territory presenters, who discussed the opportunities, challenges, and lessons learned throughout the Policy Academy process. The sessions focused on six general topics commonly identified within State and Territory action plans and outcome calls conducted by PRA with States from the first four Policy Academies. Specific sessions included:

1. Coordination and Collaboration
1.a. Creating Effective Collaboration Mechanisms (Kentucky, Nebraska)
1.b. Promoting Coordination (North Carolina, New Jersey)
2. Mainstream Services
2.a. Accessing Mainstream Services: SSI / SSDI Eligibility and Application (Oklahoma, Washington)
2.b. Accessing Mainstream Services: Broader Access Issues (Arizona, Florida)
2.c. Expanding Mainstream Service Coverage: Medicaid (Delaware, Maine)
2.d. Expanding Mainstream Service Coverage: TANF and Other (New York, Oregon)
3. Housing
3.a. Multiple Financing Streams (Maine, Nebraska)
3.b. Multiple Financing Streams (Massachusetts, Georgia)
3.c. Strategies for Addressing Rural Homelessness (Kansas, Kentucky)
4. Prevention and Discharge Planning
4.a. Prevention Innovations (Illinois, Massachusetts)
4.b. Discharge Policies / Implementation, Challenges and Success (Colorado, Missouri)
5. Data and Information Gathering
5.a. Homeless Management Information Systems (Arkansas, New Jersey)
5.b. Informing Public Policy with Data (Arizona, Hawaii)
5.c. Data Collection (Colorado, Montana)
6. Public Education and Awareness
6.a. Maintaining Momentum (Hawaii, Maryland)
6.b. Mounting a Public Awareness Campaign (Puerto Rico, Utah)

To maximize the potential of the sessions, the Subcommittee utilized the following process to select presenters and design the format and content for each session:

- The 49 States that had submitted action plans to date were asked to submit presentation proposals by July 1
- PRA/HSR reviewed the 10 submitted proposals and, due to the small number of responses, made recommendations about additional States and Territories to contact based upon information gathered through technical assistance discussions and outcome calls (that proved to be invaluable for identifying promising practices and potential presenters)
- Workgroups made up of Federal and State National Learning Meeting subcommittee members reviewed the proposals and made recommendations
- HSR/PRA convened conference calls with each workgroup to make final recommendations for breakout session format, content, and presenters

- HSR/PRA contacted State presenters and conducted joint conference calls to further develop sessions.

The 90-minute breakout sessions featured brief presentations by two States or Territories to set the stage, followed by a facilitated discussion among participants about the challenges and solutions within their region. With the help of facilitators and note takers from previous Policy Academies who are very familiar with process and specific regional issues, State and Territory representatives considered the following key issues:

1. **Strategies:** What has worked well in your State or Territory to address homelessness within the context of the Policy Academies?
2. **Barriers:** What roadblocks, obstacles, and dead ends have you encountered?
3. **Breakthroughs:** What things (e.g., resources, TA, individuals, policies, planning activities) have been critical in helping your State or Territory overcome these barriers?
4. **What Would Help:** What might be helped by dialog and offering suggestions for new strategies and approaches? How could the Federal agencies help? How can technical assistance help?

Although participants were only able to attend four breakout sessions, the agenda set aside time on several occasions to share the findings during the meeting. By posting newsprint notes from the sessions on the walls, issues and recommendations were shared during a very effective informal networking session the first evening. The findings were also incorporated into the final Listening Session summary during the second day of the meeting.

The following section summarizes the findings from the concurrent breakout sessions. Each section begins with the session overviews and presenter names for the individual sessions (e.g., Creating Effective Collaboration Mechanisms and Promoting Coordination) and concludes with a grid summarizing the common themes discussed within the topic area (e.g., Coordination and Collaboration). Specific strategies, challenges, and breakthroughs are tied to individual States or Territories whenever possible. Complete presenter contact information can be found in Appendix B. Presentations can be found on the Homeless Policy Academy Web site at www.hrsa.gov/homeless.

1. Coordination and Collaboration

1.a. Creating Effective Collaboration Mechanisms

Session Overview. This session focused on two strategies for creating mechanisms for collaboration, including using existing structures to facilitate coordination of State planning in Nebraska and integrating multiple planning into a larger planning process to maximize resources in Kentucky. The State presenters described the approach and process of collaborating on legislation in order to create an additional housing option; specific formats developed to inform policy; and how to use external influences and resources to support coordination and collaboration.

Presenters

- *Jean L. Chicoine*, Program Specialist, Health and Human Services System, Office of Economic and Family Support, Lincoln, Nebraska
- *Harry Carver*, Supportive Housing Policy Coordinator, Kentucky Housing Corporation, Frankfort, Kentucky

1.a. Promoting Coordination

Session Overview. Focusing on strategies to promote collaboration at the State level, the presenter from North Carolina described her States’ progression from an unfocused, passive approach to ending homelessness to one that is outcomes based and directive. The presenters from New Jersey discussed their States’ efforts to increase coordination among State agencies, maximize and leverage resources, and create programs to end homelessness among specific populations. Presenters discussed specific challenges such as team member turnover; lack of commitment and strategies for institutionalizing homeless policy within State government; and inadequate efforts at “making the case” with various stakeholders to expand buy-in and participation.

Presenters

- *Linda Povlich*, Senior Advisor to the Secretary, Department of Health and Human Services, Office of the Secretary, Raleigh, North Carolina
- *Deborah DeSantis*, Program Director, Corporation for Supportive Housing, Trenton, New Jersey
- *Larry Hatton*, Chief of Planning, Department of Human Services, Office of Planning and Evaluation, Trenton, New Jersey

KEY BREAKOUT SESSION THEMES: COORDINATION AND COLLABORATION
SUPPORTING THE WORK OF THE POLICY ACADEMY TEAM
Challenges <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Disruption of the Policy Academy momentum due to turnover within the Governor’s Office• Severe budget cuts that eliminate staff and support for the Interagency Council and other non-involved stakeholders (North Carolina)• Difficulty partnering with key stakeholders (e.g., State housing agency)• Incomplete planning due to lack of information on the Continuum of Care
Strategies <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Maintaining Team momentum</i> by assigning responsibilities and including follow-up on action plan activities to ensure accountability (Hawaii); by identifying the “quick successes” in their action plan and implementing them first (New Jersey)• <i>Facilitating the work of the Team</i> by utilizing videoconferencing at the university as a cheap and effective mechanism to involve team members from across the State (Nevada)• <i>Ensuring buy-in</i> by tailoring the road show about the Policy Academy to fit different audiences and by inviting Federal field representatives to help with coordination meetings (New Jersey)• BREAKTHROUGH: <i>participating in a Policy Academy</i>, with the team members’ travel covered by the Federal funding partners, helped to initiate planning activity within the State• BREAKTHROUGH: <i>using “data with an impact”</i> concerning the homeless population in one city (1,200 persons experiencing homelessness a month with an average of 2 years per person) to gain attention (North Carolina)
What Would Help <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Broad distribution of the Policy Academy systems integration and coalition building materials• Federal Interagency Council on Homelessness (ICH) funds for a coordinating staff position at the State level

(and requesting matching funds from the States would be fine)

INTEGRATING PLANNING ACTIVITIES

Challenges

- Duplicative planning efforts due to the creation of multiple collaborative councils that involve the same people and create multiple plans
- Limited progress because agencies often don't know about each other and are not sure who to invite to the planning table

Strategies

- *Building on existing structures* by capitalizing mental health reform activities and utilizing HUD's Consolidated Plan to spark activity (Nebraska)
- *Integrating all existing plans* into one Homeless Plan (Hawaii) (although the group thought that this strategy made it difficult to recognize all partners)
- **BREAKTHROUGH:** *utilizing the Homeless Management Information System to collaborate* by tracking results and evaluating program performance (Puerto Rico)
- **BREAKTHROUGH:** *securing funding to support services and research*, including a \$35 million match for youth family housing (New Jersey) and \$100,000 for State-level research in North Carolina.

What Would Help

- Models or strategies for merging multiple councils at the State level with ad hoc committees
- Improved coordination at the Federal level by asking the Interagency Council on Homelessness to participate in their own Policy Academy and to work with its Federal partners to utilize Homeless Management Information Systems as a planning, coordination, and data gathering tool across the Federal agencies, not just within HUD

BUILDING AND MAINTAINING PARTNERSHIPS

Challenges

- Difficulty involving partners because some are not aware of homeless issues, how to manage grants, or how to effectively collaborate (e.g., some faith-based communities)

Strategies

- *Building political will* by educating State Legislators on the implications of eligibility for mainstream services and by gaining in the support of two Governor appointees in Georgia to enhance the success of Shelter Plus Care and Continuum of Care.
- *Working with faith-based and interfaith groups*, including the Council of Churches (New Mexico and Rhode Island), Interfaith Hospitality Network in Upstate New York
- *Partnering with various stakeholders*, including criminal justice, community-based organizations, and other State Prevention Programs (e.g., Teen Pregnancy Prevention Programs)
- **BREAKTHROUGH:** *tying the Policy Academy work to poverty*, working collaboratively with the Interagency Council on Poverty (Oregon), and supporting Regional Summits on Poverty (Louisiana)

What Would Help

- Models or strategies for effectively engaging faith-based communities
- ICH could reach out the United Workers of America as a partner

2. Mainstream Services

2.a Accessing Mainstream Services: SSI/SSDI

Session Overview. This session focused on specific strategies that presenters had used to increase access to SSI/SSDI benefits among those who are homeless. The presenters from Washington described their States' expedited Medicaid eligibility process for those awaiting SSI/SSDI determination with a "safety net" cash grant. The presenter from Oklahoma highlighted the

development of partnerships with different agencies and advocates; inclusion of SSA staff in the application process; and a significant increase in the presumptive disability rate.

Presenters

- *Tina Shamseldin*, Taking Health Care Home Coordinator, Seattle Office of Housing, Seattle, Washington
- *Mark Dalton*, Administrator of the Belltown Community Services Office of the Washington State Department of Social and Health Services, Seattle, Washington
- *Noel Tyler*, Director of Disability Determination Division, Oklahoma Department of Rehabilitation Services, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma

2.b. Accessing Mainstream Services: Broader Issues

Session Overview. In an effort to discuss additional creative approaches to increasing access to mainstream services, this session highlighted Florida’s consolidated application process (for TANF, Food Stamps, Medicaid Refugee Cash Assistance, and Refugee Medicaid Assistance eligibility) and Arizona’s collaboration between housing and employment programs. The presenter from Florida discussed the value of the unified application, current limitations in the process (e.g., current requirement for a face-to-face interview with the applicant), and planned improvements. In addition to discussing Arizona’s collaborative efforts, the presenter from Arizona reviewed mainstream employment programs of the Department of Labor and targeted Homeless Assistance Programs of the Department of Housing and Urban Development. He also discussed how mainstream employment programs can participate in the development of local Continuum of Care planning and highlighted strategies for shared planning and resources.

Presenters

- *Tom Pierce*, Executive Director, Office on Homelessness, Department of Children and Families, Tallahassee, Florida
- *Steven Nelson*, Director of Employment Services, Pima County Community Services, Jackson Employment Center, Tucson, Arizona

2.c. Expanding Mainstream Service Coverage: Medicaid

Session Overview. This session explored how Medicaid can be used to provide services for people who are homeless, the barriers to using Medicaid to support these services, and how to overcome them. The presenter from Maine discussed their experience with the Taking Health Care Home grant, development of financial models, and service linkage from Supportive Housing Development Pipeline. She also provided an overview of ACT teams as an evidence-based practice and how States can structure Medicaid plans to support ACT service. The presenter from Delaware highlighted their experiences and best-practice models for reducing enrollment obstacles and increasing service access.

Presenters

- *Sharon Sprague*, Regional Director, Department of Behavioral and Developmental Services, Department of Health and Human Services, Augusta, Maine
- *Catherine McKay*, President and CEO, Connections Community Support Programs, Inc. and President, Homeless Planning Council of Delaware, Inc., Wilmington, Delaware

2.d. Expanding Mainstream Service Coverage: TANF and Other Services

Session Overview. This session featured two States' innovative strategies for linking mainstream services with housing, including New York's use of TANF funds to reduce the amount of time that families remain homeless by operating a system of family shelters and Oregon's Alcohol & Drug Free Housing program and other housing initiatives. The first presenter discussed trends in family homelessness in New York State; a rationale for developing family shelters; and data on the reductions in homelessness produced by family shelters. He also reviewed independent living planning and other case management practices that reduce the duration of homelessness and how TANF funds can be used to support these practices. The second presenter reviewed housing initiatives in Oregon and how they are funded.

Presenters

- *Jeff Barnes*, Director of Bureau of Shelter Services, Transitional Supports and Policy, Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance, Department of Family Assistance, Albany, New York
- *Vicki Skryha*, Housing Development Coordinator, Office of Mental Health and Addiction Services, Oregon Department of Human Service, Salem, Oregon

KEY BREAKOUT SESSION THEMES: MAINSTREAM SERVICES
ADDRESSING ELIGIBILITY AND APPLICATION ISSUES
<p>Challenges</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eligibility restrictions (e.g., people with primary diagnosis of substance abuse disorder are ineligible for SSI) • Need to simplify the application process (to increase access for clients and decrease burden on staff) yet not create technology barrier • Difficulty obtaining documentation (IDs)
<p>Strategies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Addressing eligibility restrictions</i> by offering presumptive Medicaid eligibility; utilizing the General Assistance program (GAX) to expedite Medicaid access during the SSI application process (Washington); and forming partnerships with State and local Departments of Disability Services • <i>Streamlining the application process</i> by shortening the single application form with a grant from USDA (Ohio); creating single applications for programs such as TANF, Food Stamps, Medicaid, and Refugee Assistance (Florida) • <i>Simplify the application process</i> by providing pre-screening on the Web via an eligibility survey; instituting a pre-release application process for criminal justice systems; and placing professional relations specialists liaisons with providers in the community • <i>Increasing access to IDs</i> by partnering with motor vehicles to provide free photo IDs and certifying people as homeless and using homeland security funds to provide them with IDs (Maryland) • BREAKTHROUGH: <i>creating Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs)</i> with vital statistics and social security to provide birth certificates and social security cards (Kansas)
<p>What Would Help</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Best practices from the Social Security Administration (SSA) • Primary substance abuse diagnosis eligible for SSI • On-line application signature requirements with agencies to keep signatures on file versus mailing in
INCREASING ACCESS AND CAPACITY THROUGH PARTNERSHIPS
<p>Challenges</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of services for youth aging out of foster care • Difficulty linking clients to employment programs and programs for Veterans

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Limited transportation options (especially in rural areas)
<p>Strategies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Linking youth to services</i> by creating team partnerships across systems for youth in transition and conducting adolescent transition groups (ATG's) (New Mexico) <i>Collaborating with employment programs</i> by bringing in the State economic development department to support employment opportunities; utilizing specialized one-stop centers focused on workforce development; enhancing collaborative relationships with Employment and Training Agencies (ETA) and homeless providers; and integrating the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) within the Continuum of Care
<p>What Would Help</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Housing search as a countable work activity at the Federal level Research on supporting employment efforts with families to determine if they are worth the effort
<p>EXPLORING FUNDING OPTIONS</p>
<p>Challenges</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of funding for representative payees Limited access to key mainstream programs including TANF because funds are already claimed to fill State budget holes
<p>Strategies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Partnering to cover costs</i> by looking to the Department of Corrections for staff funding to assist with the application process (Connecticut); providing Alcohol & Drug Free housing through the Offices of Mental Health and Substance Abuse that is also supported by TANF and general funds (Oregon) <i>Working within mainstream programs to link services to housing</i> by utilizing Food Stamps to cover food costs in residential housing programs (Minnesota); providing TANF bonus for housing subsidies for families seeking employment (Connecticut); using TANF funds to pay for services in family shelter systems (New York)
<p>What Would Help</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Models for involuntary representative payees State-funded representative payee programs Universal health insurance coverage

3. Housing

3.a. Utilizing Multiple Financing Streams to Expand Housing #1

Session Overview. The first session on utilizing multiple funding streams focused on how two States have used State and Federal funding streams to increase their housing stock for those who are homeless. The Maine presenter described strategies and goals for housing development as well as their multiple funding streams, including general obligation funds, housing trust funds, Continua of Care, and vouchers with services linked to them. The presenter from Nebraska discussed their process for defining their specific housing need, assessing options, researching possibilities, and making recommendations regarding creation of their rental assistance program. She highlighted their use of subcommittees to problem solve and enhancement of past committee relationships to develop funding opportunities.

Presenters

- Michael DeVos*, Director of Development, Housing Authority, Augusta, Maine
- Jean Chicoine*, Program Manager, Nebraska Homeless Assistance Program, Office of Economic and Family Support, Nebraska Health and Human Services System, Lincoln, Nebraska

3.b. Utilizing Multiple Financing Streams to Expand Housing #2

Session Overview. The second session on multiple financing streams presented strategies for blending resources, but also addressed the need for effective collaboration. The first presenter described proactive efforts by the Massachusetts Department of Mental Health to secure housing resources from external, mainstream programs that have contributed to preventing and addressing homelessness among persons with mental illness. He explained how these evolving efforts are being affected by the Policy Academy and the state's related 10-year planning process to end chronic homelessness. He also discussed the interagency efforts to foster a mutually supportive collaboration between DMH, State and local level housing agencies, and homeless advocates.

The second presenter outlined the collaborative approach used in Savannah, GA to blend funding streams from multiple sources and to encourage a policy that tears down the traditional “silo approach” to funding homeless programs in favor of programs that integrate housing dollars with service dollars. He also provided an overview of the local best-practice-to-State policy approach in GA, their planning model and structure, and desired results.

Presenters

- *Walter Jabzanka*, Director of Community Systems, Massachusetts Department of Mental Health, Boston, Massachusetts
- *Reverend Micheal Elliot*, President and Chief Executive Officer, Union Mission of Savannah, Georgia

3.c. Strategies for Addressing Rural Homelessness

Session Overview. Focusing on barriers to serving rural populations and potential solutions, this session explored strategies used by two States to address rural homelessness. The first presenter highlighted several strategies used in Kansas including tax credits and incentives for homeless set asides, and discussed the potential role for Policy Academy teams in the process. The presenter from Kentucky provided an overview of strategies including partnering with the Housing Finance Authority, tapping into various funding streams, and consolidating benefits applications.

Presenters

- *Amy Apitz*, Emergency Shelter Grant Program Manager, Department of Commerce and Housing, Housing Development Division, Topeka, Kansas
- *Natalie Hutcheson*, Director of Special Needs Outreach, Kentucky Housing Corporation, Frankfort, Kentucky

KEY BREAKOUT SESSION THEMES:

HOUSING

MAXIMIZING AND INCREASING HOUSING STOCK

Challenges

- Despite options and aggressive housing development, gaps still exists (e.g., vouchers are tough to use in tight housing markets; Project Based Section 8 takes a long time to implement; and Housing First may assume you have immediate access to available housing)
- Difficulty getting people to partner
- Fear and stigma against people within services systems (e.g., homeless, criminal justice, disability)
- Lack of collaboration with Public Housing Authorities (PHAs) and local housing authorities (e.g., resistance

to taking homeless clients and reluctance to use Section 8 or Shelter Plus Care for “Housing First”)

Strategies

- *Maximizing housing stock* by creating statewide waiting lists for Section 8 vouchers; utilizing Master Lease multiple units within buildings; and setting aside vouchers for PATH providers to distribute
- *Engaging partners in solutions* by instituting interagency agreements to set aside 2% of all new housing developments for behavioral health clients; and partnering with developers and service providers to develop a supportive housing project with detailed plans in 15 regions of the State (Kentucky)
- *Addressing stigma* by making sure success stories and voices become known; finding champions; utilizing data to show reductions in homelessness; and supporting home ownership
- *Enhancing collaboration with PHAs and local housing authorities* by creating State-wide PHAs, and working with the State finance authority to create a fund for difficult-to-house subgroups
- *Targeting resources* for housing by using Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) to fund services and planning surveys (Washington); and using real estate transfer taxes, housing tax credit set asides, housing trust funds, bonds, and Individual Development Accounts (IDAs)

What Would Help

- Advocacy for rental assistance at the State level
- Change regulations for Section 8 and Public Housing Authorities so that people with disabilities and criminal justice histories have access to housing
- Work with housing authorities to restore preferences
- Simplifying the Continuum of Care process (e.g., separating renewals from new funding)

PREVENTING HOMELESSNESS

Challenges

- Zero tolerance for discharge to homelessness is still voluntary
- Lack of health care to help sustain housing
- Lack of outreach workers who speak different languages

Strategies

- *Reaching clients at the front and back door* through outreach activities (e.g., Assertive Community Treatment Teams) and discharge planning (e.g., providing clients with ID before they leave the institution)
- *Building on reform efforts in other areas* (e.g., models within behavioral health systems that utilize regional housing coordinators and focus on housing development)
- *Linking housing to services* by layering services onto existing housing resources and working with case managers to complete service applications on line (www.statelin.org, www.egov.org)

What Would Help

- Best practices on seasonal housing since eligibility and regulations are geared to year-round housing
- Flexibility within regulations and eligibility in light of economic downturns
- Universal health care and a living wage

ADDRESSING RURAL HOMELESSNESS

Challenges

- Geographic challenges, including large areas to coordinate and cover, the seasonal and cyclical nature of rural homelessness, and transportation issues
- Lack of resources and funding to address rural homelessness

Strategies

- *Organizing interagency housing teams regionally*
- *Targeting resources* to rural areas by setting aside HOME funds and housing trust funds; providing incentives to developers to develop units; using low income tax credits and Appalachian Resource funds to develop housing; and funding rural housing specialists through the CoC Balance of State funds (Michigan)

What Would Help

- Models for addressing rural homelessness
- Convene rural States to discuss issues

- Re-think Federal programs with allocation and disbursement processes for urban areas

4. Prevention and Discharge Planning

4.a. Prevention Innovations

Session Overview. This session featured two approaches to addressing prevention, including 1) the utilization of legislation and strategies utilized by Illinois to conduct and institutionalize homeless prevention programs that benefit families and individuals; and 2) the role of discharge planning in framing preventative strategies as part of an on-going interagency approach toward ending homelessness that was led the Massachusetts Department of Mental Health. The Illinois presenters provided an overview of the Homeless Prevention legislation and program, discussion of outcomes and follow-up as an integral part of prevention, and strategies such as blending funding streams and involvement of local Continuum of Care systems to implement prevention activities. The Massachusetts presenters provided an overview of discharge planning principles and a comparison of the culture of response to homelessness from pre-discharge planning to post-discharge planning.

Presenters

- *Julie Dworkin*, Associate Director of Policy, Policy Department, Chicago Coalition for the Homeless, Chicago, Illinois
- *Brenda Hanbury*, Bureau Chief, Department of Human Services, Homeless Service and Supportive Housing, Springfield, Illinois
- *Gwendolyn Kenner-Johnson*, Associate Director, Department of Human Services, Office of Family Support Services, Human Capital Development, Chicago, Illinois
- *Joseph Finn*, Executive Director, Housing and Shelter Alliance, Boston, Massachusetts

4.b. Discharge Policies

Session Overview. Focusing on collaborative, interagency initiatives addressing discharge planning within criminal justice systems, the presenters discussed Colorado's Partnership for Active Community Engagement (PACE) and Missouri's Transition from Prison to Community Initiative (TPCI). The Colorado presenters discussed the development of PACE (an integrated treatment and jail diversion program, reduces jail use and increases sobriety, stability, and employment for the targeted population of mentally ill offenders, without increasing costs), the planning process and critical program elements. They also considered the challenges and barriers faced when attempting to implement discharge planning, as well as the key factors in the success, including multi-disciplinary and co-located teams, caring and support treatment environments, and collaborative support from key leaders. Missouri discussed the development of the TPCI through interagency committees, key components of the Initiative (e.g., assigning probation and parole officers to attend Continuum of Care meetings across the State), and plans for continuing the activities now that Federal funding has ended. They also considered efforts to incorporate other initiatives to increase the effectiveness of the TPCI, such as the case management program through the Department of Health.

Presenters

- *George Epp*, Executive Director, County Sheriffs of Colorado, Littleton, Colorado
- *Tracy D'Alanno*, Team Leader, Homeless and Special Housing Programs, Continuum of Care Coordinator, Supportive Housing and Homeless Programs, Department of Human Services, Denver, Colorado

- *Karia Basta*, Housing Director, Department of Mental Health, Alcohol and Drug Abuse, Jefferson City, Missouri
- *Rita McElhany*, Interagency Liaison for HIV/STD, Department of Health and Senior Services, Environmental Health Communicable Disease Prevention, Jefferson City, Missouri

KEY BREAKOUT SESSION THEMES: PREVENTION AND DISCHARGE PLANNING
CREATING BUY-IN
<p>Challenges</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of momentum and support for starting to collaborate • The need for a philosophical mind shift • Lack of proven methods for demonstrating effectiveness of prevention and discharge planning activities
<p>Strategies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collecting minimal data and using research to demonstrate effectiveness and using outcomes to promote program continuation • Engaging in state-wide advocacy coalitions and campaigns to prevent family homelessness, working with the media, and utilizing personal stories to keep the issue on the forefront • Building relationships with key stakeholders by reporting annually to the General Assembly (Minnesota) and meeting regularly with Mayors and Governor’s task forces
<p>What Would Help</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Models for interdepartmental plans for communication and coordination • HUD presentations about discharge planning at criminal justice conferences (e.g., National Sheriff’s Association and the American Jail Association) • National Coalition for Homeless Veterans booklet for planning for release • Consensus projects on mental illness and criminal justice created by the Council on State Governments (www.consensusproject.org)
INCREASING CAPACITY
<p>Challenges</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Volume of requests exceed available funds and options • Chronic crowding in jails; high rates of mental illness in jails • Difficulty engaging partners due to regulatory restrictions or lack of awareness of services and collaborative opportunities (e.g., Veterans Affairs and the Department of Labor)
<p>Strategies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Linking services to housing</i> to prevent housing loss through Aggressive Community Treatment (ACT) Teams, psychosocial clubs, critical and respite care for mental health and substance abuse population connected to transitional housing • <i>Engaging partners</i> to create sober housing that is organized by faith-based communities; create secure Web sites for prisoners to connect to Department of Labor employment opportunities; and assist to transitional case managers who begin working with clients who are HIV+ in prison and continue after release
ADDRESSING POLICY AND REGULATORY CHALLENGES
<p>Challenges</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inflexible and subjective policies at the State and local levels (e.g., local HUD office interpretation of regulations) • Restrictive definitions that exclude certain populations (e.g., inability of system to meet mental health needs of people who do not have diagnosis of serious mental illness)
<p>Strategies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Using McKinney discharge requirements</i> to get Departments of Corrections and Mental Health to focus on discharge planning (New Jersey) • <i>Broadly defining prevention</i> to assist with rental assistance and utilities with a 7% allowable cost for

<p>administration</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Planning strategically</i> by establishing workgroups focused on discharge into housing; creating web-based housing resources that are up to data with available affordable units; and establishing transition accountability plans, that are developed upon admission, for each individual upon release • BREAKTHROUGH: <i>passing a bill</i> that requires continuity of care for Department of Corrections releasees with mental illness
<p>What Would Help</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alcohol and drug free housing for people who need or want it as well as relapse tolerant housing • Consistency from local HUD offices when applying regulations • Opportunities to work with Public Housing Authorities (PHAs) to provide incentives to work with criminal justice populations and to try bridge subsidies and other, flexible strategies
<p>EXPLORING FUNDING OPTIONS</p>
<p>Challenges</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Funds for assistance are not matched by funds for administration and staffing • Restrictions on mainstream resources such as TANF in serving these populations • Inability to fund job skills/life skills programs due to shift of HUD Continuum of Care funds away from services
<p>Strategies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Using requirement to have a place for people</i> to go to develop State rental subsidies for mental health and developmental disabilities (Hawaii) • <i>Creating more flexibility with funds</i> including State-funded “bridge” subsidies until able to access Section 8 (Hawaii) and flexible cash funds for emergency needs such as transportation

5. Data and Information Gathering

5.a. Homeless Management Information Systems

Session Overview. The intent of this session was to outline how two States have used homeless management information systems (HMIS) to collect data and to identify needs and gaps in services. A HUD TA contractor set the stage by providing an overview of HMIS as a planning tool. The State presenters then discussed the rationale for and benefits of a State-wide HMIS collaborative. The also highlighted various planning issues and strategies for developing partnerships.

Presenters

- *Michelle Hayes*, National HMIS TA Project Director, The QED Group, Washington, District of Columbia
- *Lester Hoelwyn*, Chief Information Officer, Management Information System, Inc., Supportive Housing Network, Inc., Little Rock, Arkansas
- *Pam McCrory*, Manager of Supported Housing and Special Needs, Housing and Mortgage Finance Agency, Trenton, New Jersey

5.b. Informing Public Policy with Data

Session Overview. Highlighting different models for collecting and using data to inform public policy and to assist with Action Plan implementation, Hawaii first described a housing policy study that influenced the Governor to launch a campaign to develop affordable housing. Arizona then presented its model for program evaluation, including design, tools, pilot and lessons learned. This included a

description of the Arizona Homeless Program Evaluation project and of the State’s cost study of homeless families to help educate their ICH on the cost effectiveness of housing.

Presenters:

- *Sandra Miyoshi*, Homeless Programs Administrator, Department of Business, Economic Development and Tourism, Housing and Community Development Corporation of Hawaii, Honolulu, Hawaii
- *Charlene Moran Flaherty*, State Homeless Coordinator, Department of Economic Security, Phoenix, Arizona

5.c. Data Collection

Session Overview: The intent of this session was to help participants understand not only how to conduct a point-in-time survey, but also to highlight strategies for using the resulting survey data. Colorado first outlined a comprehensive 10-step process to conduct a point-in-time survey with examples of data results. Both presenters discussed the use of multiple data sources, how to use the data collected, and potential innovations in data collection.

Presenters

- *Tracy D’Alanno*, Team Leader, Homeless and Special Housing Programs, Continuum of Care Coordinator, Supportive Housing and Homeless Programs, Department of Human Services, Denver, Colorado
- *Sherrie Downing*, Sherrie Downing Consulting, Helena, Montana

KEY BREAKOUT SESSION THEMES: DATA AND INFORMATION GATHERING
FACILITATING THE PLANNING PROCESS
Challenges
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Difficulty getting all the critical partners to the table • Difficulty coordinating planning activities
Strategies
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Engaging partners</i> by conducting a statewide annual forum to gain broader support; involving providers and other key stakeholders in survey development; finding a neutral place to convene with a neutral facilitator (via video conferencing); and providing training for case managers on data collection • <i>Coordinating planning activities</i> by creating a matrix to cross-walk all planning activities; and creating a collaborative of 15 out of 17 local Continuum of Care to plan and buy into HIMS (New Jersey)
What Would Help
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Definition of chronic homelessness that includes families with children who are homeless • State-specific information from Continuum of Care applications from HUD • TA on process-related issues from Federal agencies • Studies of smaller communities (not just New York City and Philadelphia)
COLLECTING, INTEGRATING, AND USING DATA
Challenges
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Difficulty determining who to count (e.g., only those accessing services) • Difficulty collecting and sharing data due to reluctance to share client identified data (e.g., social security numbers for domestic violence clients and fear among undocumented workers) • Difficulty integrating data and information (e.g., data warehouse integration of other software with HMIS system software)

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Limited models for making data useful for planning and advocacy
<p>Strategies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Collecting data in multiple arenas</i> including police departments, jails, prisons, call-in centers, churches in rural areas, soup kitchens <i>Using data from multiple sources</i> including census information, employment, public education systems, and emergency medical services (particularly in rural areas); and balancing qualitative and quantitative data to put a face on the numbers <i>Making data useful</i> to the planning process by identifying gaps and potential funding strategies and to providers (e.g., 80% of the emergency shelters in Arkansas participate in HMIS) <i>Addressing confidentiality concerns within domestic violence programs</i> by using a unique client code (Maine and Rhode Island) and entering data a month later (Maine)
<p>What Would Help</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Guide to collecting local data, “do it yourself cost study guide” on the Corporation for Supportive Housing Web site (www.csh.org) HUD TA on conducting a street count that will be available on the Web soon
<p>EXPLORING FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES</p>
<p>Challenges</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of resources to operate and integrate HMIS
<p>Strategies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Cost-sharing with stakeholders</i> by funding the system through participating providers (Arkansas); utilizing State-purchased software (Service Point) and including all those receiving Federal funds in the system (Iowa); finding other users for HMIS such as the United Way (Iowa) or the Department of Education (Arkansas); working with the Emergency Shelter Grant (ESG) “Essential Services and Operations Administrative line” to connect to Continuum of Care; and tapping into philanthropic resources
<p>What Would Help</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Summary of costs from software vendors for XHMIS software to upload data from other systems to HMIS software (software available early 2005)

6. Public Education and Awareness

6.a. Maintaining Momentum

Session Overview. Highlighting the challenges of implementing policies in a turbulent environment and the role of external and internal resources in promoting policy changes, both States discussed how they have navigated changes in Administrations. Presenters provided an overview of involvement in various planning activities and associated opportunities of linking with new initiatives and incorporating new agencies and stakeholders. They also considered strategies for keeping the issue of homelessness on the minds of community leaders during periods of transition and the challenges in orienting new team members, building a sense of team, and working in climate of limited resources

Presenters

- Laura Thielen*, Project Coordinator, Health Care for the Homeless, Kalihi-Palama Health Center, Kailua, Hawaii
- Barbara DiPietro*, Special Assistant, Office of the Deputy Secretary for Public Health Services, Baltimore, Maryland
- Greg Shupe*, Director, Department of Human Resources, Office of Transitional Services, Baltimore, Maryland

- *Jeff Singer*, President and Chief Executive Officer, Health Care for the Homeless, Baltimore, Maryland

6.b. Mounting a Public Awareness Campaign

Session Overview. Focusing on two different strategies for increasing public awareness and support, the presenters from Utah first discussed use of their Homeless Trust Fund and tax check off as funding mechanisms to support the Utah Interagency Council on Homelessness’ media campaign. They highlighted the processes and lessons learned, including the involvement of the Governor; use of TV and radio; use of a professional marketing firm; and the involvement of consumers to put a face on the campaign.

The presenters from Puerto Rico outlined how the Solidarity with the Homeless movement in Puerto Rico has helped to raise awareness and encourage alliances and community planning. They discussed the various components of the movement, including the Mayoral Summit on Homelessness, Day of Solidarity with the Homeless, and events to develop planning processes for various groups year round; barriers to implementing a public awareness campaign; and the potential outcomes.

Presenters

- *Leticia Medina*, Director, Community and Economic Development, Salt Lake City, Utah
- *Lloyd Pendelton*, Director, Community and Economic Development, Homeless Task Force, Salt Lake City, Utah
- *Maria Fernanda Levis-Peralta*, Executive Director, Chana Goldstein and Samuel Levis Foundation, San Juan, Puerto Rico
- *Ivette Perez Toro*, Special Assistant on Federal Affairs, Office of the Secretary, Department of the Family, San Juan, Puerto Rico

KEY BREAKOUT SESSION THEMES: PUBLIC EDUCATION AND AWARENESS
FRAMING THE MESSAGE
<p>Challenges</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of hard data to make the case • The challenge of understanding the intended audience and tailoring the message • The need to focus on specific populations (e.g., families with children) despite a desire to address all homelessness
<p>Strategies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Creating campaigns</i> focused on solidarity and awareness, fund raising, and affordable public housing • <i>Tapping into the media</i> by utilizing TV, news, and billboards; creating specials and documentaries, and using singers and actors as spokespersons • <i>Putting a face on the issue</i> by referring to the working poor and working with consumers
<p>What would help</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Methods for communicating the humanity of homeless • Analysis and dissemination of models utilizing the key elements of effective media campaigns • Tools for mounting a media campaign (e.g., text books, materials)
ADVOCATING FOR CHANGE

<p>Challenges</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facing resistance because ending homelessness is a huge issue • Difficulty gauging and evaluating outcomes • Dealing with political turnover and the loss of key advocates
<p>Strategies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Using data to drive advocacy efforts</i> (e.g., presenting data on cost savings to Legislators) • <i>Getting government involved</i> by speaking to legislators prior to elections about key issues and forming an office of homelessness as a result of legislators initiative (Florida, Georgia) • <i>Rising above politics</i> and devising strategies to persevere such as evaluating Policy Academies to demonstrate progress and reaching out quickly to the Governor’s office and making recommendations about Team appointees
<p>What would help</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Models for evaluating effectiveness of campaigns • Funding for planning and staffing the campaign
<p>EXPLORING FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES</p>
<p>Challenges</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of public will to provide funding
<p>Strategies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Utilizing a tax return check off</i> to fund planning activities (Utah) • <i>Utilizing private foundation support</i> and assistance as a coordinating force (Puerto Rico) • BREAKTHROUGH: <i>asking coordinating agencies to contribute \$5,000 each for staff salary</i> (Virginia)
<p>ENGAGING PARTNERS IN SOLUTIONS</p>
<p>Challenges</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of momentum and support for activities • Local resistance to planning • Lack of knowledge about agencies on the ground
<p>Strategies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Coordinating the efforts</i> of Policy Academy Teams and State Interagency Councils • <i>Not just preaching to the choir but engaging new partners</i> such as housing developers, business partners, journalists, Vista/Americorps volunteers, Department of Labor, Department of Corrections, and Veterans Affairs
<p>What would help</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People to help staff campaigns (e.g., from faith-based organizations, retirees, student interns, loaned executives) • National recognition of partnering organizations like CAPs to help other States

Chapter III: Regional Breakout Sessions

On the first day of the meeting, State and Territory representatives broke into smaller, regional groups to identify the key Federal- and State-level barriers, challenges, and solutions they encountered while implementing their Policy Academy action plans. Participants considered existing solutions for addressing these barriers and developed suggestions and potential new approaches for overcoming them. Results were reported out during the Listening Session the following day, with the intent of sharing the findings with the Deputy Assistant Secretaries of the Federal funding partners as well as with the other States and Territories in attendance.

The participants were divided into five regional groupings, including the Northeast, Midwest, Southeast, Southwest, and West. Initially, Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands were placed in the Northeast region and American Samoa, Guam, and the Northern Mariana Islands were placed in the Southwestern region. But upon request from several participants, the Territory representatives met as a separate, sixth region to be able to discuss their common barriers, challenges, and solutions, which are often unique from those experienced in the mainland. The final regional groupings were as follows:

- **Region 1 (Northeast):** Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Vermont
- **Region 2 (Midwest):** Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, Ohio, South Dakota, Wisconsin
- **Region 3 (Southeast):** Alabama, Delaware, District of Columbia, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Maryland, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Virginia, West Virginia
- **Region 4 (Southwest):** Arizona, Arkansas, Louisiana, New Mexico, Oklahoma, Texas
- **Region 5 (West):** Alaska, Colorado, Hawaii, Montana, Nevada, Oregon, Utah, Washington, Wyoming
- **Region 6 (Territories):** American Samoa, Guam, Northern Mariana Islands, Puerto Rico, Virgin Islands

With the help of facilitators and note takers from previous Policy Academies who are very familiar with process and specific regional issues, State and Territory representatives considered the following key issues:

1. **Strategies:** What has worked well in your State or Territory to address homelessness within the context of the Policy Academies?
2. **Barriers:** What roadblocks, obstacles, and dead ends have you encountered?
3. **Breakthroughs:** What things (e.g., resources, TA, individuals, policies, planning activities) have been critical in helping your State/Territory overcome these barriers?
4. **What Would Help:** What might be helped by dialog and offering suggestions for new strategies and approaches? How could the Federal agencies help? How can technical assistance help?

Participants in each discussion group brought up State-specific issues, rather than region-specific issues (with the exception of the Territories in Region 6, therefore, any regional issues have been noted as such). Five common focus areas arose in each regional discussion, including:

1. Increasing Collaboration and Engaging Partners In Solutions
2. Addressing Gaps In and Supply Of (Affordable) Housing Stock
3. Increasing Access to Significant Mainstream System Resources
4. Documenting the Problem and Integrating Data Systems
5. Increasing Public Education and Awareness

The following section summarizes the key challenges and the related successful strategies and breakthroughs for each of the five areas, as identified during the regional breakout sessions. The findings have been consolidated across the Regions, but, whenever possible, the specific State, Territory, or Region responsible for the comment is referenced. A similar summary of the What Would Help items identified by the States and Territories was presented during the Listening Session on the second day of the meeting (which is included in detail in the following chapter), and has therefore not been included here. Please note that in order to highlight the key findings and promising practices, the breakout session notes have been condensed and summarized. Readers interested in further detail can find more comprehensive session notes in Appendix C.

1. Increasing Coordination and Collaboration and Engaging Partners in Solutions

COORDINATION AND COLLABORATION
CHALLENGES
<p>Difficulty implementing Policy Academy action plans and maintaining Team momentum due to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited Federal definitions of homelessness • Transitions in Team leadership and membership • Fragmented Team planning and coordination efforts • Lack of resources targeted for sustainability • Few resources and models for discharge planning
<p>Difficulty coordinating planning activities due to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Duplicative State and local planning activities • Difficulty coordinating with Federal initiatives • Issues unique to the Territories • Recognizing rural homelessness as an issue

COORDINATION AND COLLABORATION (continued)
SUCCESSFUL STRATEGIES
<p>Maintaining momentum within the Policy Academy Team and coordinating planning activities by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supporting planning and implementation efforts • Coordinating activities and maintaining momentum within the Team • Enhancing buy-in for the Policy Academy Team • Expanding the capacity of the Policy Academy Team or State Interagency Council • Expanding capacity within the Territories • BREAKTHROUGH: Asking strong State agency leaders to talk to one another
<p>Engaging partners in solutions by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building capacity through partnerships • Engaging new partners • Partnering to address discharge planning
<p>Exploring funding opportunities by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maximizing existing resources • Exploring creative funding options

Challenges: Coordination and collaboration are the core objectives of the Policy Academy Initiative, thus, the majority of the regional breakout conversations focused on the challenges to and successful strategies for increasing collaboration within the States, among the States, and between the States and the Federal government. Participants discussed challenges implementing action plans and maintaining team momentum due to limited Federal definitions of homelessness that at times exclude specific populations (e.g., the exclusion of families from “chronic homelessness”) and do not always fit the specific context of the State or Territories (e.g., if there are more families than individuals who are homeless). Transitions in team leadership and membership (often every two to four years) mean that teams may lose leaders, Team champions, partner agency staff, and the attendance and commitment of department heads (Florida, Hawaii, Louisiana, Texas). They often lack staff to manage coordination of activities; face turf issues among partner agencies (especially when money is tight) and silos in relation to funding, philosophy, and clientele; and lack models for addressing regionally-specific issues (e.g., rural homelessness). Teams also struggled with sustainability, in light of scarce resources for projects and the lack of specialized, targeted money for staff, planning, service, case management, auxiliary services, and discharge planning.

Maintaining team momentum and moving forward with action plan implementation is challenging enough, yet States and Territories are also faced with coordinating activities across planning efforts. States may be involved in multiple planning efforts that involve the same key stakeholders but are not integrated or coordinated. Participants in one region also found that local and regional Federal agency support for Policy Academy activities varied, and that Federal leaders were not always on the same page about the goals and expectations of the efforts.

Several of the Territories highlighted internal difficulties with coordinating policies and activities across the islands. They also found it difficult to identify promising practices and mentors at times, because they are often compared to or paired with other places that do not share the same understanding of the issue, social structure, population, cultural issues, and funding levels. Finally, several Territorial representatives felt they lacked support from some regional Federal representatives, were treated like stepchildren, yet were expected to perform like mainland States.

Successful Strategies: Despite these challenges, States and Territories were able to share a wide variety of successful strategies for continuing their work as a Team, coordinating planning activities, and engaging various partners in the effort. States supported their planning and implementation efforts by holding regular meetings; coordinating Web sites and other communication efforts; hosting a Policy Academy Networking Meeting to coordinate numerous planning efforts on related issues (Michigan); and coordinating resources of all invitees to focus and leverage energy —especially all Federal required planning requirements (e.g., Consolidated Plan and Continuum of Care Plan) (Region 5). States and Territories also enhanced buy-in and expanded capacity by asking State agencies to educate one another on their programs and how they impact each other (Virginia); getting local representatives from State agencies to meet with local planning teams and providers; utilizing local plans to end homelessness as tools for the larger, Statewide planning activities (Regions 4 and 5); and by capitalizing on relationships with Federal Policy Academy representatives to bring in Federal speakers and underused Federal resources (Puerto Rico). A critical breakthrough or tipping point for several States came when they asked strong State agency leaders to talk to one another to integrate State and community services (Nevada and Oregon).

One common progression in the State and Territory Teams' activities is the inclusion of additional partners and stakeholders. Teams expanded their vision and built capacity by including consumers in all phases of planning and implementation (Region 6); collaborating with TANF and Public Housing Authorities (Region 1); creating interagency working groups at State and country levels to address the needs of youth within various systems (Ohio); and opening up the training on substance abuse and mental health to a broader audience to decrease costs and promote networking (Massachusetts). Other new partners included legislators, Veterans Affairs, law enforcement, criminal justice systems, the National Homebuilders Association, VISTA, AmeriCorps, Interagency Council on Hunger and Poverty, and retired executives from nonprofit organizations (i.e., "Loan an Exec" through the Chamber of Commerce).

Partnerships are also essential for addressing discharge planning. Several States and Territories have begun to address discharge from various systems by instituting a pilot program through the Byrne (Justice) grants to fund supportive housing for heavy users of jails, shelters, and hospitals (Region 1); hiring specialists to navigate prison release issues (Minnesota); blending funding for mentally ill offenders (Kansas); partnering with child welfare agencies regarding youth aging out of the system (Ohio); and ensuring that prevention activities focus on both services and housing, especially when using Continuum of Care funds (Region 5).

Finally, any attempt to address homelessness must include successful strategies for maximizing existing resources and tapping into new ones. Several examples include using TANF money to ensure housing stability of TANF recipients (Hawaii); layering service dollars on top of housing dollars (Georgia); creating a State mandate to set aside resources for homeless programs (Region 3); earmarking taxes or other resources for special populations (Ohio); working with the State budget

office to provide direction for blended or matching or new money as incentive to support efforts addressing homelessness (Kansas); and creating a Housing Trust Fund (Louisiana).

2. Increasing Access to Significant Mainstream System Resources

MAINSTREAM SERVICES
CHALLENGES
<p>Limited funding for and access to mainstream services due to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Difficulty getting mainstream service agencies to the table • Limited access to mainstream services
SUCCESSFUL STRATEGIES
<p>Engaging partners in solutions by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Utilizing existing infrastructure and partnerships • BREAKTHROUGH: Adapting successful models
<p>Exploring funding opportunities by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maximizing existing resources • Exploring creative funding options

Challenges: Mainstream programs such as Medicaid, TANF, Veteran’s Affairs, Employment, and others are a crucial part of the effort to address homelessness. Yet participants in all regions noted that it was difficult to get mainstream service agencies to the table to address homelessness. Even when mainstream service providers did attempt to address the issue, access was often limited due to policy changes, eligibility limitations, required State matches, and a general lack of capacity.

Successful Strategies: Nonetheless, States and Territories identified creative strategies for increasing access to mainstream services by utilizing existing infrastructure and partnerships, e.g., tapping into the Access to Recovery Program to support choice in clinical substance abuse treatment and recovery support services for clients who are homeless (Connecticut). They are also adapting successful models from other locales: for example a pilot program based on the Baltimore model for SSI presumptive eligibility is now underway in Savannah, Georgia. States and Territories are also maximizing existing resources by utilizing Community Services Block Grant (discretionary State level funds) to fund anti-poverty work with community action organizations. They are exploring ways to create funding opportunities by recycling housing money for services and by reinvesting money from hospital closings to community-based residential services (Massachusetts).

3. Addressing Gaps In and Supply of (Affordable) Housing

HOUSING
CHALLENGES
<p>Limited supply of and access to housing stock due to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Difficulty accessing funding for housing • Limited supply of housing stock • Lack of housing options for specific populations • Few partnerships with key stakeholders
SUCCESSFUL STRATEGIES
<p>Exploring ways to maximize existing and create new housing stock by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expanding housing stock • Exploring creative funding options
<p>Engaging partners in solutions by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Forming partnerships • Addressing the needs of specific populations • BREAKTHROUGH: Using Supportive Housing Program TA money

Challenges: The limited supply of and access to housing stock significantly impacts the States’ and Territories’ ability to address homelessness. Meeting participants in one region had problems accessing stable funding for housing due to both annual funding cycles and limited resources for supportive services and ongoing operations. Several regions stressed the limited supply of available and affordable housing units, lack of housing subsidies, and the general mismatch between units and number of people who are homeless. Housing options for specific populations, including those with mental disabilities and youth ages 16-17, were also perceived as limited. Finally, participants in several regions noted that key stakeholders, such as the Housing Finance Authorities and the Public Housing Authorities, have not historically been active participants in planning efforts.

Successful Strategies: In order to address the gap in supply, States and Territories have been exploring ways to maximize existing housing stock in various ways, such as matching elders and those with a disability to people seeking affordable housing through the HomeShare program (Vermont) or pursuing aggressive home finding to move from motels to housing (New Jersey). They have also been exploring creative funding options, such as setting aside USP home funds for provider training and piloting a program to pool resources (Rhode Island) or setting up funds for State Special Projects of Regional and National Significance (SPRANS) that include requirements for agency collaboration (Minnesota). States and Territories have looked to form partnerships with for-profits and landlords to get people immediately into housing (Vermont), and to work with local housing option teams at the county level through the Office of Minority Health (Pennsylvania).

4. Documenting the Problem and Integrating Data Systems

DATA AND INFORMATION GATHERING
CHALLENGES
Difficulty documenting the extent and nature of homelessness due to:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of data on housing status within mainstream services • Lack of culturally and regionally appropriate data elements and collection tools
Difficulty utilizing, coordinating, and supporting data reporting systems due to:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Issues with managing large and varied data systems • Difficulty utilizing Homeless Management Information Systems (HMIS)
SUCCESSFUL STRATEGIES
Working with mainstream programs to collect data by:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Including data elements on housing within mainstream services
Integrating data collection efforts by:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Integrating efforts through HMIS • BREAKTHROUGH: Utilizing HMIS hard data to quantify the need and help with advocacy efforts

Challenges: Documenting the extent of homelessness is a crucial step in building political will and planning effectively to address homelessness, yet many States and Territories are struggling with documentation and coordination reporting systems. In particular, many participants mentioned the lack of data on housing status within mainstream services, emphasizing that many agencies may not even know if they are serving persons who are homeless, because they don't ask for housing status. They also pointed to the lack of culturally and regionally appropriate data collection elements and tools. The mismatch between HUD demographic items and HRSA demographic items (e.g., "Hispanic" as racial or ethnic choice) (New Mexico) and the inconsistencies regarding undocumented people (New Mexico, Arizona, and Texas) make documentation of the problem difficult. Participants in several regions also voiced frustration with Federal reporting requirements, that often utilize different definitions of homelessness, and with trying to implement Homeless Management Information Systems (HMIS) in spite of the lack of money for staff support (Region 6).

Successful Strategies: Nonetheless, States and Territories have been working with mainstream programs (e.g., the Community Services Block Grant in Missouri and Medicaid in West Virginia) to track housing status. They are also integrating data collection efforts through HMIS, combining data collection from multiple programs into one system, and creating a single point of intake (Missouri and Delaware). Finally, one region mentioned the ability to utilize HMIS hard data to quantify the need and help with advocacy efforts as a critical breakthrough or tipping point in their various activities to address homelessness across the State (Region 2).

5. Increasing Public Education and Awareness

PUBLIC EDUCATION AND AWARENESS
CHALLENGES
Lack of public awareness and understanding of the problem due to:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited attention to the issues • Community resistance to 501c 3's (charitable organizations) • Difficulty proving there is a homeless population
SUCCESSFUL STRATEGIES
Increasing awareness and support by:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Launching a public awareness campaign • Conducting public hearings • Hosting annual forum for legislative aides • Reframing the social services systems' perceptions

Challenges: Changing the publics' perception of homelessness is considered to be a crucial (and often first) step in addressing the issue. Yet States and Territories in several regions found it challenging to prove that there is a problem in light of status quo attitudes; a lack of public understanding about what Federal agencies and programs do; distrust about what the government is doing to address social issues in some cases; and at times, community resistance to the work that charitable organizations are doing in relation to homelessness.

Successful Strategies: Despite these challenges, some of the most creative and promising practices were identified by the States and Territories in relation to education and awareness. Strategies included a public awareness campaign that includes a Solidarity Day and a Mayor's Summit, features island-wide planning activities, and effectively taps into private foundation resources (Puerto Rico); public hearings to educate, get public buy-in, and encourage intensive media coverage (Hawaii); and an annual forum for legislative aides to discuss the planning groups' mission and concerns, orient the aides, and ask for support (Virginia). Teams also sought to reframe the social service systems' perceptions of homelessness by not labeling housing and services for homeless (Vermont) and by advocating a paradigm shift to permanent housing with intensive mobile services rather than from emergency to transitional to permanent housing (Pennsylvania).

Chapter IV: Listening Session

After careful consideration by the National Learning Meeting Subcommittee and its State and Territory Team representatives about the appropriate content and format, the Listening Session was included in the agenda as an opportunity to highlight the findings from the regional breakout sessions and to provide direct feedback from the States to the Federal funding partners. All four Deputy Assistant Secretaries were in attendance to introduce themselves and their agency, listen to the points raised by the States and Territories, and then comment on their agencies' relevant activities during the closing session.

For the presentation, the regional breakout session facilitators and note takers compiled a summary of the What Would Help sheets from each regional breakout group and from the topical concurrent breakout sessions to create a summary of the key barriers, challenges, and solutions that States and Territories wanted to highlight for the Federal partners. Great care was taken in the development of the PowerPoint presentation to capture the ideas and words of the State and Territory representatives, while also providing a framework for synthesizing and presenting the findings.

Six key areas were consistently identified throughout all the sessions and were used to both frame the discussion and the conclusions and recommendations included in this final report:

1. Increase Collaboration Among Federal and State/Territory Partners
2. Engage Partners In Solutions
3. Create and Support Different Approaches to Meet Varying Need
4. Address Gaps In and Supply Of (Affordable) Housing Stock
5. Increase Access to Significant Mainstream System Resources
6. Integrate Data Systems and Reporting Requirements

The following text, taken directly from the PowerPoint presentation on the second day of the meeting, summarizes the key areas and potential strategies for action that States and Territories would like to see at the Federal level.

1. Increase Collaboration Among Federal and State/Territory Partners

- Help States/Territories collaborate
 - Share what people have done in relation to the Policy Academy
 - Broadly distribute Policy Academy materials and promising practices regarding systems integration and coalition building
 - Hold focus groups with States and Territories to understand issues
 - Enhance coordination at the local level –provide contact information on Federal programs, who is accessing funds, create strategic plan about providing funding
 - Create a self-assessment tool about accessing resources
 - Connect with States and Territories experiencing similar (specific) issues

- Create common definitions across Federal agencies
 - Chronic homelessness (to include families)
 - Disability
 - Race and ethnicity
 - Defining people leaving institutions as homeless if they are
 - Defining affordable housing to target people in the lowest income brackets
 - Defining homelessness within cultural contexts
- Increase coordination between Interagency Council on Homelessness (ICH) and Policy Academy process at Federal and regional levels
- Provide more guidance and models about how to integrate multiple plans and councils at the State level
- Provide funding for a staff person to coordinate plan implementation (State and Territory match is okay)
- Re-evaluate Federal goals in the context of lessons learned throughout this process: Model yourselves the collaboration you suggest to us
- Create a Federal interagency strategic plan related to homelessness
- Increase collaboration among Federal, State, and Territory Partners
- Pool all Federal resources on homelessness and tie them to the approved State, Continuum of Care, or Interagency Council on Homelessness plan
- Integrate Federal funding
 - Blend funding from key federal agencies into true super NOFA
 - Better align Federal funding to match Policy Academy goals
- Involve all Federal agencies in determining and integrating data reporting requirements
- Create a more reasonable response time for grant applications and a shorter award timeframe
- Create a major focus on prevention (especially within the Continuum of Care)

2. Engage Partners in Solutions

- Understand that good theory cannot become good practice fast
- Involve additional partners
 - Veterans Affairs, Social Security Administration, Department of Labor – may be good support at Federal level but may not always translate down to local level
 - Involve Departments of Justice and Corrections and legislative people
 - Create a waiver of compliance to get the local Workforce Investment Boards (WIB) to table

- Help community-based organizations to develop diverse and sustainable funding streams
- Support strategies for engaging faith-based communities
- Work with Governors
 - Provide TA to State agencies and Governor's to help educate changing State and Territory administrations or legislatures
 - Work with the National Governor's Association to get the issue on the table
 - Enhance work at regional level to lessen the impact of changes in Governors
- Coordinate regional homeless summits to bring States and Territories together
- Disseminate materials on how to mount a public awareness campaign and measure the effectiveness

3. Support Different Approaches to Meet Varying Need

- Tailor assistance for rural areas to:
 - Conduct research to document effectiveness of rural models
 - Help with transportation
 - Regionalize funding, planning and delivery
 - Provide resources for planning and capacity building
- Tailor assistance for Territories to:
 - Address differential funding levels
 - Add senior level liaisons in Federal agencies
 - Build relationships with regional Federal representatives
 - Provide proposal support for translation and grant-writing
 - Provide funding to start programs

4. Address Gaps In and Supply Of (Affordable) Housing Stock

- Increase funding for housing for Single Room Occupancies (SROs), youth under 18, special needs including mental health, and others
- Provide funds for operation and supportive services, not simply housing
- Invest in provider capacity to access resources and develop housing
- Plan strategically for housing by integrating all HUD mainstream and homeless planning and reporting functions into one plan
- Engage Public Housing Authorities (PHAs) in the change process
 - Have HUD encourage them to be at the table
 - Reinstigate preferences for homeless

- Provide incentives for working with forensic populations, people with disabilities, people who are homeless, and the like
- Institute tighter requirements so they have to accept people
- Provide education to local PHAs to force access
- Use HOME program funds to allow PHAs to provide bridge subsidies or other innovative ideas
- Fully engage Section 8
 - Maintain or increase Section 8 as major resource for affordable housing
 - Look at improving project based Section 8
- Fully engage the Continuum of Care process
 - Use CoC as organizing force
 - Take the renewals out of the CoC and decrease reliance on competitive process

5. Increase Access to Mainstream System Resources

- Enhance coordination and institute policy changes
 - Create universal application and eligibility processes for all Federal programs using common definitions
 - Expand use and access to presumptive disability for people who are homeless
 - Create State and Territory mandates to set aside resources for homelessness
 - Forbid publicly-funded institutions from discharging to homelessness and put funding behind the mandate
 - Change the paradigm and let the funds follow the client by creating client-level adequate benefits that match housing and living costs
- Expand capacity
 - Provide income supports and housing options for people with primary substance abuse diagnosis (both substance- free and relapse tolerant)
 - Institute a Medicaid waiver to serve homeless people
 - Work with internal VA regulatory issues to broaden access
 - Disseminate SSA best practices for this population
 - Provide models for involuntary representative payees
 - Provide funds for life skills training
 - Provide universal health insurance coverage

6. Integrate Data Systems and Reporting Requirements

- Create uniform data collection across federal agencies
 - Mandate mainstream services to collect data on housing status

- Enhance compatibility of Homeless Management Information Systems (HMIS) with mainstream data systems
- Provide funding and staff support for HMIS
- Pay for translation across HMIS software packages being used within States
- Provide a cost estimate for software to interface with HMIS and other State and Federal systems
- Develop performance measures to evaluate whether access to mainstream resources is increased; do this collaboratively with States
- Create statewide data warehouses
- Improve use of data as a planning tool
 - Think strategically about the use of technology and potential barriers –internet-based SSI application is creating access; need high speed internet access for HMIS
 - Create a cross-walk of all Federal programs and funding offered by the States
 - Help States and Territories assess goals for units of affordable housing –How many units of housing it would take to end homelessness in each State and what it would cost?
 - Share strategies for using data -identifying needs, making a case, showing cost savings

Chapter V: Meeting Evaluation Summary

At the close of the meeting, participants were asked to complete an evaluation summary to provide feedback on the meeting. Of the 200 State and Territory team members and representatives from the Federal agency partners; public and private organizations addressing homelessness; and technical assistance contractors in attendance; 157 returned evaluations (78.5%). The following section summarizes the evaluation findings. The comprehensive evaluation report is included in Appendix C.

Participants were first asked to rate the following five questions concerning the National Learning Meeting objectives on a scale of one to five (1 = not at all, 3 = moderately, 5 = entirely). As evidenced below, participants particularly appreciated the peer-to-peer learning opportunities; State-led concurrent breakout sessions; innovative approaches highlighted by their peers; and the regional breakout sessions—all of which scored 4.1 or higher. The plenary sessions and opportunities to interact and provide feedback to the Federal representatives received slightly lower ratings.

1. How well did the meeting achieve the following objectives:	
A. Showcase innovative approaches that States/Territories have implemented	4.2
B. Provide opportunities for peer-to-peer technical assistance	4.5
C. Facilitate a dialogue between Federal and State collaborators regarding barriers, challenges and solutions	3.7
D. Renew the State's/Territory's commitment to fully implementing their action plans	3.7
2. To what extent did the plenary sessions contribute information that will be useful for your State's/Territory's activities?	3.5
3. To what extent did the concurrent breakout sessions contribute information that will be useful for your State's/Territory's activities?	4.3
4. To what extent did the regional breakout sessions contribute information that will be useful for your State's/Territory's activities?	4.1
5. How useful was the listening session concerning barriers, challenges, and solutions?	3.9

In an effort to both evaluate the meeting format and content and identify specific action steps that may result from the meeting, participants were then asked to provide narrative comments on five questions concerning:

1. Aspects they found to be particularly useful or effective
2. Issues that arose that required more guidance or information
3. New ideas they would take away from the meeting
4. The top action they would take based on the meeting
5. Any additional comments

6. What aspect(s) of the National Learning Meeting did you find to be particularly useful or effective (e.g., plenary sessions, facilitated breakout sessions, regional discussion group, peer-to-peer learning opportunities, etc.)?

The format of the peer-to-peer learning sessions received the majority of positive comments from National Learning Meeting participants. As the Planning Committee expected, the States were keenly interested in an interactive format that allowed them to learn from each other's experiences. The use of facilitators to guide the discussion and the question and answer session after the breakout presentations allowed for State Team members to identify best practices that they would be able to replicate. The evaluations noted that the amount of networking time, of which there was intentionally more of than in earlier Policy Academies, was very much appreciated.

To a lesser degree, participants found the Regional Sessions helpful. States reported that they valued the opportunity to discuss common barriers and solutions. Grouping States that share common traits enabled the Teams to recognize that their challenges were not necessarily unique and that breakthroughs are possible.

7. What issues came up during the National Learning Meeting that you felt you needed better guidance or information for you to address? What might help you move forward?

Comments from the States indicated that a diverse array of issues arose during the course of the National Learning Meeting, as well as during the implementation phase of their Action Plans. Collaboration, coordination, strategic planning, mainstream services, and housing were mentioned as topic areas for which States needed better guidance. Dedicated funding for a staff position to facilitate the activities of the Action Planning and implementation process was an issue common to many States. States that were smaller, rural, or experiencing severe budget constraints, felt that their "unique" issues were not adequately addressed. The follow-up technical assistance available to States could be used to address some of the issues related to employment, TANF, HMIS and prevention strategies that were specifically mentioned.

8. What new ideas did you take away from this meeting?

This question generated the greatest number of responses, indicating that many of the attendees gained ideas for new approaches to addressing homelessness in their States. In much the same way that States had different issues emerge over the course of the meeting, a variety of new ideas were identified. In the area of collaboration, coordination, and strategic planning, adding or expanding membership on State Teams was a recurrent theme. Many States wanted to work more closely with their Interagency

Councils, Departments of Corrections, and labor programs. New approaches to data collection and the enhancement of HMIS program capacity were also noted. Strategies for creating or utilizing presumptive eligibility for SSI and SSDI resonated with some participants. Creative ideas for addressing housing challenges were also prominent, including renewed relationships with Public Housing Authorities and different methods for increasing funding for housing development. Throughout the evaluations, attendees expressed a sense of inspiration from listening to the successful strategies endorsed by their peers.

9. What is the top action you will take based on this meeting?

The majority of the priority actions identified by participants involved reinvigorating their Teams, either with new members, the institution of an Interagency Council, or a renewed commitment to involve policy makers and Governors. Also mentioned was the integration of multiple State plans from Interagency Councils, Continuums or Care, or the chronic and families with children Policy Academies. A number of States were going to investigate new methods for data collection, service or funding strategies, often with the support of the technical assistance resources they learned about during the NLM.

10. Additional comments

Additional comments included general thanks for the opportunity to participate and an appreciation for the planning and execution of such an ambitious meeting. Some participants wanted even more opportunity to learn from one another during repeated or additional breakout sessions. The States noted that the ability to dialog with the Federal partners was especially worthwhile. They expressed a desire to continue to meet with Federal partners perhaps at Regional or State levels to discuss ways to overcome some of the challenges identified during the listening session. Participants recognized that collaborative action between Federal agencies as well as between Federal and State government is critical to meet the goal of increased access to services for individuals experiencing homelessness.