

10-Year Plan Reset Committee: Key Definitions

Populations

- **Unsheltered Homeless:** Individuals and families who are homeless and sleeping outside, in vehicles, in abandoned buildings, or other places not intended for human habitation. This includes streets, sidewalks, parks, alleys, transportation depots or other parts of transportation systems, all-night commercial establishments (e.g. movie theaters, laundromats, restaurants), abandoned buildings, farm outbuildings, caves, campgrounds, vehicles, and similar places. (HUD's definition)
- **Sheltered Homeless:** All adults, children, and unaccompanied youth residing in emergency shelters and transitional housing, including domestic violence shelters, residential programs for runaway/homeless youth, and any hotel/motel/apartment voucher arrangements paid by a public/private agency because the person is homeless. (HUD's definition)
- **Doubled Up and Couch Surfing:** HUD's definition of homelessness has historically excluded people without homes who are doubled up for economic reasons with friends and relatives. The exclusion of the doubled-up population from HUD's definition has been contested by some groups. Other definitions do include this population. For example, the definition of homelessness used by the U.S. Department of Education includes the categories from the HUD definition, plus also includes, "children and youths who are sharing the housing of other persons due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or a similar reason; are living in motels, hotels, trailer parks, or camping grounds due to the lack of alternative adequate accommodations."

Recent changes in the HEARTH Act open the door to allow persons who are doubled up to meet HUD's definition of homelessness under limited circumstances if they fit one of the following criteria:

- Doubled-up and can prove that they are losing that housing within 14 days, no subsequent residence has been identified, and they lack the resources or support networks needed to obtain other permanent housing.
- Unaccompanied youth or families with children who have not had permanent housing in the past 60 days; have experienced persistent instability as measured by two moves or more in the preceding 60 days; and can be expected to continue in such status for an extended period of time due to special needs or barriers.
- Fleeing domestic violence, have no other residence, and lack the resources or support networks to obtain other permanent housing.

In order to meet these criteria, there are significant up-front documentation requirements set by HUD that will act as barriers to rapid and effective engagement of these populations. Furthermore, federal funding sources are not required to include these new categories in their eligibility guidelines. Consequently, it is anticipated that doubled-up households will have very, very limited access to federal homeless assistance resources. Other federal resources that aren't dedicated to homeless assistance (like homelessness prevention resources under the

Emergency Solutions Grant or HOME Tenant-based Rent Assistance) may be more accessible to those at-risk of becoming homeless, including doubled-up households.

- **Chronically Homeless:** HUD defines “chronically homeless” as an unaccompanied homeless individual with a disabling condition who has either been continuously homeless for a year or more OR has had at least four (4) episodes of homelessness in the past three (3) years. A disabling condition is defined as a diagnosable substance abuse disorder, serious mental illness or disability, including the co-occurrence of two or more of these conditions. In the past, couples and people in families experiencing homelessness were excluded from this classification. In 2011, HUD changed its definition to include adults in couples or families who meet the definition of chronic homelessness, along with family members living with that adult at the time of the count.

Service Types

- **Emergency Shelter:** A facility providing short-term (typically a 30-day average stay), emergency accommodation for homeless persons.
- **Hotel/ Motel Vouchers:** Vouchers used to provide temporary shelter in a hotel or motel (typically just a few days; included in the emergency shelter category in Point-in-Time homeless counts).
- **Rent or Mortgage Assistance:** Short-term financial assistance to support housing placement for people experiencing homelessness and to prevent eviction or foreclosure for low-income people at risk of becoming homeless (usually requires documentation of imminent eviction, such as a 3-day notice, and proof of no other resources).
- **Transitional Housing:** A housing program that provides temporary subsidized housing with supportive services up to two years for persons who are transitioning to community living after being homeless. Can be facility-based or “transition-in-place”. (Does not include Section 8 and HUD-subsidized housing).
- **Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH):** Long-term housing that provides supportive services for homeless persons with disabilities. The housing can be provided in one or several structures at one site, in multiple structures at scattered sites, or as tenant-based rent assistance with supportive services that follow the tenant. A more detailed definition of PSH as well as other locally-specific tools and resources can be found at <http://www.portlandonline.com/phb/index.cfm?c=43436>.

Specific Programs and Funding Streams

- **Continuum of Care:** Since 1994, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) has encouraged communities to use a coordinated housing and service delivery system called a Continuum of Care to deliver services to homeless persons. The local Portland/ Gresham/ Multnomah County Continuum of Care participates in an annual competitive national grant process (sometimes referred to as “McKinney”) to fund our local homeless services. In recent years, Continuum of Care funding has provided nearly \$10 million/year for permanent and transitional housing, outreach, and supportive services. The funding goes

directly to nonprofit providers in the community as well as to programs administered by the City, County, and Home Forward.

- **Shelter Plus Care:** The Shelter Plus Care Program (S+C) is a federal rental subsidy intended for homeless persons with chronic disabilities. S+C rental assistance is modeled on the federal Section 8 program, with tenants paying 30% of their adjusted income for rent and the rental subsidy paying the difference between the tenant's share and the base rent. The S+C program differs from Section 8, as the subsidy is provided with a requirement that social or medical services are provided (at a dollar per dollar matched value) via a partnering local health or social service agency.
- **Short Term Rent Assistance (STRA) Program:** Administered by Home Forward on behalf of Multnomah County, the cities of Portland and Gresham, and Home Forward [see http://www.homeforward.org/system/files/docs/STRA_Brochure.pdf], this program offers time-limited financial assistance to (a) enable people to move off the streets into housing, (b) to prevent homelessness by providing assistance to households at immediate risk of eviction, or (c) emergency hotel/motel vouchers for temporary shelter. Services are provided through 19 community-based nonprofits.
- **HUD-VASH Vouchers:** The HUD-Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing (HUD-VASH) helps homeless veterans find permanent supportive housing by pairing Home Forward rental vouchers with case management and clinical services provided by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). Participants pay 30% of their income to private landlords for rent and Home Forward pays the rest. Home Forward has 305 housing vouchers for use in the VASH program.

Types of Interventions

- **Homelessness Prevention:** Homelessness prevention is assistance provided to low-income households at imminent risk of homelessness in order to help them regain stability in their current permanent housing or move into other permanent housing. Prevention assistance typically includes limited rent assistance – such as paying back rent owed to the landlord – and limited services.
- **Rapid Re-Housing:** Rapid re-housing aims to quickly transition households who have become homeless due to a financial emergency or other short-term crisis back into permanent housing. Through housing relocation assistance, stabilization services, and short- and/or medium-term rent assistance, households are moved out of shelters and into housing with the expectation that they will be able to stabilize in the housing. This approach is used with the portion of the homeless population that does not require sustained financial assistance or ongoing intensive services.
- **Housing First:** A Housing First approach rests on two premises: 1) The central goal is direct placement into permanent housing for those who are currently homeless, and 2) appropriate supportive services are offered after housing placement to ensure long-term housing stability.