



Chicago Alliance to End Homelessness 2009 Policy Priorities

The Chicago Alliance to End Homelessness works to create, support, and sustain effective strategies to end homelessness in Chicago. Our vision is one in which all individuals and families facing homelessness in Chicago will have access to safe, decent, affordable housing and the resources and support necessary to sustain their housing. In collaboration with service providers, consumers, and other nonprofit and government partners, the Chicago Alliance's 2009 advocacy efforts will create new resources, effective public policies and programs, and innovative systems change strategies that will advance our goal of ending homelessness in Chicago.

Federal Initiatives

Reauthorize the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Grant Program

HUD's McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Program is the largest federal response to homelessness – Chicago alone receives over \$45 million annually to provide interim housing, permanent housing, and supportive services to homeless individuals and families. Reauthorization of this critical federal program will bring a host of benefits to Chicago, including an increase in prevention and permanent housing resources, an expanded chronic homeless definition to include families, and the codification of the Continuum of Care process. Building on the success of our 2008 efforts, we will advocate for the quick introduction and passage of the compromise legislation, and once passed, will influence the process of developing program regulations as necessary.

Create Sustainable Supportive Service Funding

In order to successfully implement solutions to end homelessness, Chicago must receive continuous, sustainable streams of federal resources for supportive services. The Alliance will explore all avenues for dialogue and advocacy with the federal government, including the following strategies:

- Coordinate administrative advocacy with Chicago's Department of Intergovernmental Affairs in order to influence federal priorities.
- Work with the United States Interagency Council on Homelessness (USICH) to integrate and strengthen the federal response to homelessness.
- Create a coalition with other concerned cities to advocate for additional service resources.
- Explore opportunities to integrate funding for homeless services into health care reform efforts.

Ensure Key Federal Programs Receive Adequate Funding

Due to a delay in the federal appropriations process last year, we have a unique opportunity to influence not only one, but two budget cycles (FY2009 and FY2010) in 2009. We will work to ensure appropriate funding for the federal line items supporting Chicago's homeless programs, including McKinney-Vento, the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), and Runaway and Homeless Youth (RHY) programs.

We will also advocate for stable, sustainable funding for two new programs passed in 2008 that will increase affordable housing options and prisoner re-entry services, the National Affordable Housing Trust Fund and the Second Chance Act respectively. Finally, we will urge the Obama administration and Congress to invest in key programs to prevent homelessness and refuel local efforts to end homelessness in any economic recovery legislation passed in 2009.

State Initiatives

Ensure Key State Programs Receive Adequate Funding

Despite Illinois' dismal fiscal situation, it is important to remain committed to funding key state programs that provide housing, service, and prevention resources in our fight to end homelessness. We will work to protect and, if possible, increase funding for the following state budget line items: the Emergency Food and Shelter Grant, Supportive Services in Supportive Housing, Homeless Youth Services, and Homelessness Prevention.

Develop Partnerships with State Agencies to Increase Access to Supportive Services

The Chicago Alliance has begun discussions with key state agencies to expand supportive service resources within Chicago's homeless system and will continue these efforts throughout 2009. Partnerships may include:

- Division of Mental Health to expand homeless agencies' capacity to provide mental health services.
- Division of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse to find opportunities for increased homeless-specific service funding.
- Department of Employment Security to explore tailoring employment services for the homeless population, particularly for those that do not currently benefit from state programs like youth and the elderly.

Local Initiatives

Maintain the Plan to End Homelessness as a City Priority

The Chicago Alliance will continue to conduct relationship-building and administrative advocacy with the Mayor's office, the City Council, and the new Department of Family and Support Services. We will also work to make sure the three major tenets of the Plan to End Homelessness remain city priorities by ensuring: city resources are committed to the creation of new permanent housing; all opportunities to create supportive service funding are explored, especially during the transfer of major assets; and additional homeless prevention resources are carved out after McKinney-Vento reauthorization and/or the passage of economic recovery legislation. In addition, the Chicago Alliance and its advocates will interface with the Plan Advisory Committee to explore, analyze, and resolve Plan-related issues as they arise.

Improve Discharge Planning by Public and Private Institutions

Building on the success of the 2008 Countywide Discharge Planning Forum, the Chicago Alliance will continue to coordinate the countywide discharge planning committee and its seven sub-committees. We will also research and disseminate discharge planning best practices to guide the committee's work and establish advocacy priorities and strategies to prevent institutions from discharging individuals into homelessness.