

Chicago Alliance to End Homelessness

2010 Policy Priorities



A Home for Everyone

The Chicago Alliance to End Homelessness works to create, support, and sustain effective strategies to end homelessness in Chicago. The Alliance's 2010 advocacy efforts will create new resources and effective public policies and programs that advance our goal of preventing homelessness whenever possible and ensuring access to housing and services for all who need it. In collaboration with service providers, consumers, and civic and government partners, we can improve the lives of the most vulnerable individuals and families and support Chicago's groundbreaking efforts to end the tragedy of homelessness.

Federal Initiatives

Ensure HEARTH Act Implementation and HUD Policy Aligns with Local Priorities

For many years, the Alliance has been intimately involved in the reauthorization of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, the largest federal response to homelessness and the largest single source of homeless assistance funding in Chicago. The re-named Homeless Emergency Assistance and Rapid Transition to Housing (HEARTH) Act was signed into law in May 2009 and will truly transform federal homeless assistance, giving communities more efficient and effective resources with which to combat homelessness. To ensure that this unprecedented opportunity will enhance Chicago's efforts, we are working closely with our national partners and Congressional delegation to help shape the proposed regulations and influence how the HEARTH Act will be administered. The Alliance will also continue to advocate on behalf of Chicago's homeless system to make sure that the ongoing administration of U.S. Dept. of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) programs benefit our innovative local practices.

Increase Federal Resources for Homeless Services and Affordable Housing

During the FY2011 appropriations process and throughout the legislative session, the Alliance will pursue every opportunity to increase funding for and access to federal programs that support Chicago's homeless system, including:

- Increase the federal line items for HUD's McKinney-Vento homeless assistance, and supportive services within the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA).
- Develop rental housing that is affordable to extremely low-income households by capitalizing and implementing the National Housing Trust Fund.
- Ensure sufficient funding to renew all vouchers currently in use and secure additional housing choice vouchers (Section 8).
- Expand Medicaid coverage to anyone who has an income of 100% or more of the federal poverty level as part of health care reform.
- Advocate for increased resources and programs to end homelessness for special populations (including veterans and youth), while preserving existing resources for all individuals and families experiencing homelessness.
- Encourage Congress to continue investing in homelessness prevention and rapid re-housing in any economic recovery legislation passed in 2010.

State Initiative

Advocate for a Sustainable State Budget to Protect Homeless Services

Chicago's efforts to end homelessness are being put at risk by devastating cuts to Illinois' human service safety net. While grappling with current cuts ranging from 3% to 79%, Chicago's homeless system is also looking ahead to what experts are predicting will be a \$12 billion budget shortfall in FY2011 and even more drastic cuts if a solution is not found. As a member of the Responsible Budget Coalition, the Alliance will continue to be the voice for homeless services in the diverse efforts working toward a sustainable state budget and comprehensive tax reform. By coordinating research, messaging, and advocacy activities for Chicago's homeless system, we will work to ensure timely payment and to restore funding cuts for the following state programs: Homelessness Prevention, Emergency and Transitional Housing Program, Supportive Services in Supportive Housing, and Homeless Youth Services.

Local Initiatives

Maintain the Plan to End Homelessness as a City Priority

The Alliance will continue to conduct relationship-building and administrative advocacy with the Mayor's Office, the City Council, and the Department of Family and Support Services to ensure the three major tenets of the Plan to End Homelessness remain city priorities. Our goals are:

- To make sure all opportunities to create new funding for the Plan are explored, especially during the transfer of major assets.
- Federal programs administered by the city, like Homeless Prevention and Rapid Re-Housing (HPRP), are aligned with the priorities of the Plan.
- Results of the two-year independent evaluation of the Plan are used to inform service delivery, policy changes, and recommendations on how resources should be spent.

Secure a Full Count of Chicagoans in the 2010 Census

As Co-Chair of the Complete Count Committee on Special Housing for Chicago's 2010 Census efforts, the Alliance will work collaboratively with the Mayor's administration and our 84 homeless service providers to ensure that people who are experiencing homelessness are adequately counted in the 2010 Census. Full participation of all Chicagoans, regardless of housing status, is essential to our ongoing advocacy efforts, since researchers predict Illinois will lose \$12,000 in federal funds during the next ten years for *each* uncounted person.

Pursue Strategies to Prevent Institutions from Discharging Individuals into Homelessness

Since 2008, the Alliance has coordinated a Countywide Discharge Planning Committee, whose goal is to improve the practices of public and private institutions, like hospitals and jails, that often times discharge individuals into homelessness. We will continue to work with our partners to accomplish the following goals:

- Ensure an accurate count of homelessness within institutions.
- Improve access to entitlements.
- Ensure institutions retain identification cards for individuals to use upon release.

The Alliance is also participating in the creation of an alternative sentencing court for people charged with prostitution, many of whom face homelessness upon release, and will advocate that related community-based services are adequately funded and integrated into the system.