



**HEADING HOME:  
MINNESOTA'S PLAN  
TO PREVENT AND END  
HOMELESSNESS  
2016-2017**



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Original plan adopted by the Minnesota Interagency Council on Homelessness, December 2013  
This plan update adopted January 2016.

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## LETTER FROM GOVERNOR DAYTON

Two years ago, the Minnesota Interagency Council on Homelessness adopted a set of strategies and goals to improve housing stability for all Minnesotans. Since then, we also have invested more than \$250 million in affordable housing, leveraging millions in local, private, and federal funding. These investments include over \$71 million to projects for people experiencing homelessness, which will result in more than 650 new housing opportunities.

I am proud to report that these strategies and new investments are making a difference for Minnesotans at risk of homelessness. Since 2014, we have reduced homelessness by 10 percent statewide and 17 percent for families with children. These reductions are among the most significant decreases in United States over that period of time.

We also have strengthened our efforts to end veteran homelessness. Since 2010, we have cut homelessness among Minnesota's veteran population by 50 percent. And this year, our goal of ending veteran homelessness is within reach.

Despite this progress, we still have work to do. Our updated *Heading Home: Minnesota's Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness* report reflects the progress that's been made and identifies new and improved strategies for alleviating homelessness.

Ensuring everyone has a safe place to live will strengthen our families and communities. Evidence shows that when Minnesotans have access to affordable housing, they do better in school, stay healthier, and are more productive at work.

Working together, we can end homelessness for every Minnesotan. I look forward to working with all of you toward that end.

**Mark Dayton**  
**Governor**



## AGENCY STATEMENTS OF COMMITMENT

Every state agency has a role to play in preventing and ending homelessness. As the members of the Interagency Council on Homelessness, we commit to the following:

**Because a decent paying job is the best defense against homelessness,** we will ensure that all Minnesotans have access to a career pathway, including those at-risk of and experiencing homelessness.

**Because we know housing stability is vital for health,** we will work to reduce the structural inequities that lead to disparities in health and housing, and continue to grow and nurture thriving, healthy communities in Minnesota.

**Because improving transitions from systems of care is critical to preventing homelessness,** we will ensure that everyone exiting from prison will have access to the resources and assistance they need to achieve stable housing.

**Because homework makes no sense when you don't have a home,** we will work with school leaders, teachers and schools to recognize their role on the front lines of preventing and ending homelessness among children and youth, so that every student can succeed and thrive.

**Because we are poised to end Veteran homelessness in our state,** we will achieve and sustain an end of homelessness among Veterans.

**Because stable housing is the foundation for success,** we will engage all partners in pursuing the goal of creating 5,000 additional housing opportunities for Minnesotans experiencing or at risk of homelessness by the end of 2020.

**Because we know the impact a criminal history has on a person's ability to have financial independence and housing stability,** we will explore ways to limit the use of criminal history screening for rental application and continue to enforce "Ban the Box" for employment applications.

**Because families with children comprise over half of all those experiencing homelessness in Minnesota; and because children experiencing homelessness are particularly vulnerable,** we will ensure child welfare systems are responsive to the needs of families, children, and youth; target families vulnerable to falling into homelessness; and make resources more accessible, responsive and impactful.

**Because our higher education system has a unique role to play in identifying and responding to the needs of homeless youth and young adults,** we will work with our K-12 and postsecondary partners to effectively support students and their families who are homeless.

**Because domestic violence and homelessness are often linked,** we will commit to provide staff resources over the next two years to better align Minnesota's homeless and domestic violence systems.

**Because reliable transportation is necessary to maintain stable employment, access to childcare and other necessary resources,** we will continue to work to increase access to transportation for those experiencing housing instability.

**January 28, 2016**

**Dr. Brenda Cassellius,** Commissioner, Department of Education

**Katie Clark Sieben,** Commissioner, Department of Employment and Economic Development

**Ramona Dohman,** Commissioner, Department of Public Safety

**Dr. Edward Ehlinger,** Commissioner, Department of Health

**Kevin Lindsey,** Commissioner, Department of Human Rights

**Emily Johnson Piper,** Commissioner, Department of Human Services

**Larry Pogemiller,** Commissioner, Office of Higher Education

**Tom Roy,** Commissioner, Department of Corrections

**Larry Shellito,** Commissioner, Department of Veterans Affairs

**Mary Tingerthal,** Commissioner, Minnesota Housing

**Charlie Zelle,** Commissioner, Department of Transportation

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### **Preventing and ending homelessness in Minnesota is possible.**

Until recently, many thought of homelessness as an intractable problem: something to lament, but reluctantly accept as a feature of modern life. Today, a growing number of communities across the country have shown that **ending** homelessness is achievable. Minnesota has contributed to this progress, with one of the largest statewide decreases (17 percent) in family homelessness in a single year between 2014 and 2015 and by cutting homelessness among Veterans in half between 2010 and 2015.

These statistics and results matter: they represent lives and communities improved, and are the result of a collective effort to use every resource, every program, and every encounter more effectively so that no Minnesotan faces the most acute form of housing instability: no place to call home.

### **Minnesota can, and therefore must, do better.**

Despite quantifiable progress, homelessness is still a crisis for over 7,500 Minnesotans at any point in time, most of whom are children and their parents. Over 900 young people, including at least 145 minors, confront homelessness without their parent or guardian. More than 1,200 Minnesotans with disabilities have been homeless so long that they qualify as chronically homeless.

*Stable housing provides a critical platform for success. Without it, children, adults, families, and communities suffer.*

Minnesota has a longstanding reputation as a great place to live, get an education, work, and raise a family. Unfortunately, for the children and adults experiencing and at-risk of homelessness, this reputation does not match reality. All children need stable homes to succeed in school, develop healthy relationships with their peers and community, and eventually contribute to society as adults. All adults and families need stable homes to sustain health, employment, connection to community, and overall well-being. In short, stable housing provides a critical platform for success. Without it, children, adults, families, and communities suffer.

The Minnesota Interagency Council on Homelessness, comprising the Commissioners of 11 State agencies and Governor Mark Dayton's office, is accountable for leading the State's efforts to achieve a shared vision: **housing stability for every Minnesotan.**

In December 2013, the Council issued *Heading Home: Minnesota's Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness*, as a two-year action plan to guide the State's efforts to achieve this vision. This document is the first update to *Heading Home*; it includes revised strategies that State agencies will pursue in 2016 and 2017.

With this update, *Heading Home* is organized around eight **cross-cutting priorities** and four **population goals**. These priorities, goals, and strategies for action, are summarized in the following Plan at a Glance.

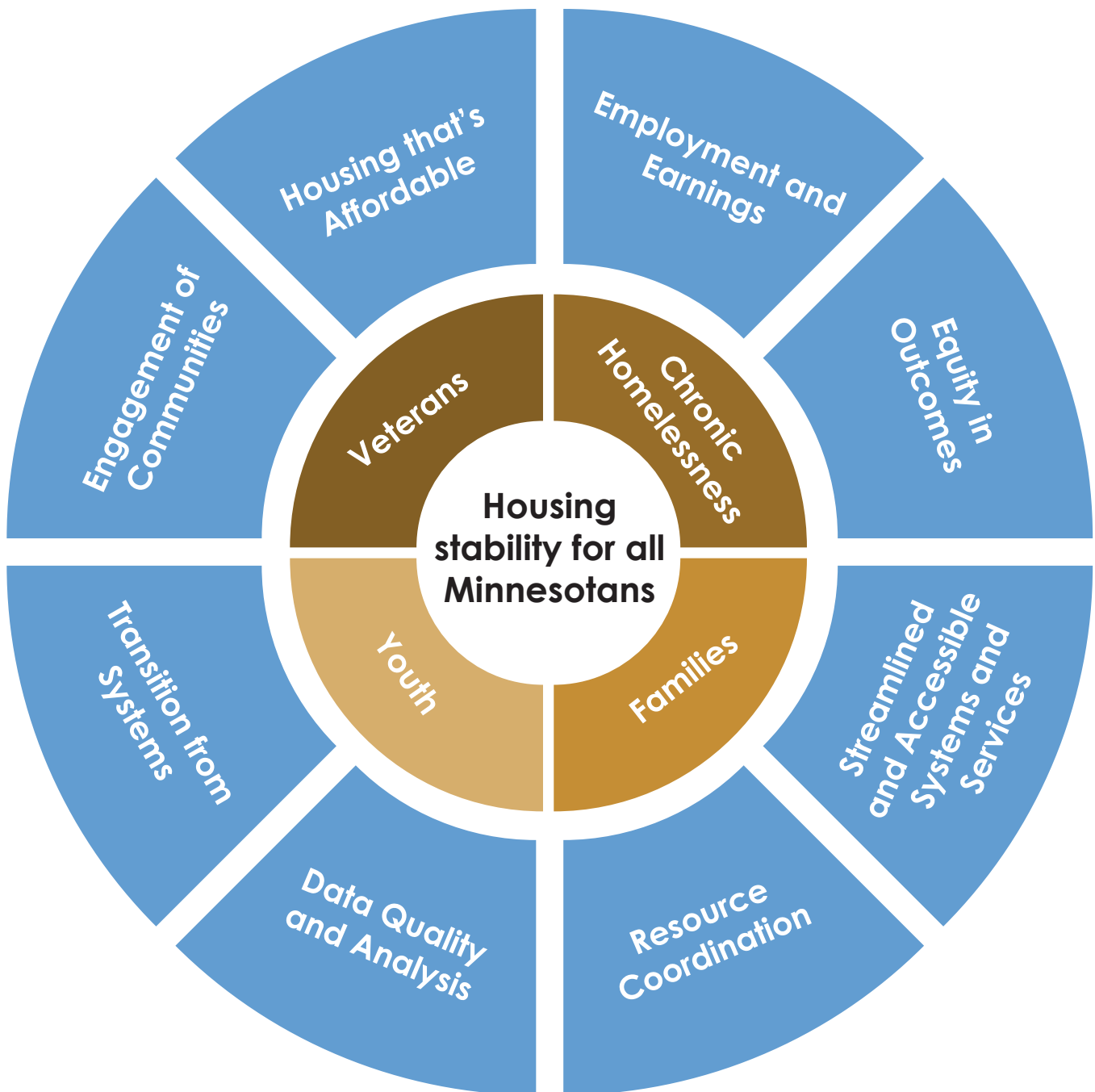
**Through collaboration among all partners, Minnesota can prevent and end homelessness.**

State government cannot end homelessness alone, so the plan identifies critical partnerships needed to achieve the goals. The plan aligns with *Opening Doors: Federal Strategic Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness* and with many local and regional plans in place throughout the state. It also relies and draws on the many contributions of Minnesota's strong private and nonprofit communities for ideas, resources, and ongoing support.

Ending homelessness does not mean that Minnesotans will never face housing instability or homelessness again. Rather, it means that every community in Minnesota will have a response to homelessness that **prevents** homelessness from occurring whenever possible, and ensures that when homelessness does occur, it is **rare**, **brief**, and **non-recurring**. With this critical goal in mind, the Minnesota Interagency Council on Homelessness commits to implementing the plan's strategies and actions, and looks forward to working in full partnership with all stakeholders to ensure that all Minnesotans have a place to call home.

## TWO-YEAR ACTION PLAN AT A GLANCE

The Minnesota Interagency Council on Homelessness has updated and adopted *Heading Home: Minnesota's Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness*. With key agency leaders, the Council's eleven commissioners have identified eight cross-cutting priorities and four population goals that state government will pursue over the next two years. State leaders look forward to working with local government, community, philanthropic, and private sector partners to implement these actions and ensure that all Minnesotans have a place to call home.





## Cross-Cutting Priorities

### 1. *Housing that's Affordable*

**Stable housing is out of reach for far too many Minnesotans, therefore we will work to...**

- Create additional housing opportunities targeted to prevent and end homelessness.
- Target households with incomes less than 30 percent of the Area Median Income (AMI).

### 2. *Employment and Earnings*

**A decent paying job is the best defense against homelessness, therefore we will work to...**

- Ensure all Minnesotans have access to a career pathway by maximizing the impact of mainstream employment and training services, and building capacity of those programs that serve individuals experiencing homelessness.
- Focus on federal program changes to increase incentives to serve populations with barriers to employment.

### 3. *Equity in Outcomes*

**Homelessness disproportionately impacts Minnesota's communities of color; American Indians; people with disabilities; and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and questioning (LGBTQ) youth, therefore we will work to...**

- Increase the cultural agility and cultural competence of State agencies in responding to homelessness.
- Ensure Minnesota's collective efforts to end homelessness are diverse, inclusive, competent and effective.
- Make equal opportunity a practice that eradicates disparities, and ensures compliance with human and civil rights law.

### 4. *Streamlined and Accessible Systems and Services*

**Food, health care, mental health and chemical health services, early childhood programs, transportation and childcare, must be easily accessible for people experiencing homelessness, therefore we will work to...**

- Align and maximize publicly-funded health, income, transportation, and social services to help families and individuals avoid homelessness.
- Better support those who are experiencing homelessness by improving connections to services and decreasing barriers to access.

### 5. *Resource Coordination*

**Resources must be used effectively to stably house and prevent homelessness for more Minnesotans, therefore we will work to...**

- Improve grant making across homeless-specific funding streams.
- Work with local communities to implement a coordinated statewide system to provide the right services at the right time for families and individuals experiencing homelessness.
- Coordinate homeless-specific state and federal legislative efforts.

### 6. *Data Quality and Analysis*

**High quality data drives better planning, policy and results, therefore we will work to...**

- Strengthen Minnesota's Homeless Management Information System (HMIS).
- Connect HMIS with other data sources that can guide program and policy development, research, and evaluation.

### 7. *Transition from Systems*

**Improving transitions from systems of care is critical to preventing homelessness, therefore we will work to...**

- Better coordinate and target existing resources to ensure consistency and effectiveness of transition services.
- Ensure that corrections and child welfare systems are responsive to the needs of individuals and will ensure necessary supports are in place to prevent homelessness upon exit from these systems.
- Have a strong understanding of the relationship between homelessness and discharge from systems.

### 8. *Engagement of Communities*

**Homelessness involves many partners who must collaborate effectively to end homelessness, therefore we will work to...**

- Engage with Tribal, county, regional, faith and community partners across the state to prevent and end homelessness at all levels.

## Population Goals

### ***1. Resolve and Prevent Future Veteran Homelessness***

**Minnesota is poised to end Veteran homelessness and the lessons learned pave the path to ending homelessness among all Minnesotans, therefore we will work to...**

- Continue actively identifying Veterans at risk of or experiencing homelessness.
- Sustain resources to prevent Veteran homelessness and to assist Veterans facing homelessness to rapidly connect with housing.
- Develop and apply best practices in targeting homeless prevention resources.
- Apply the lessons learned from ending Veteran homelessness to other populations.

### ***2. End Chronic Homelessness by the end of 2017***

**Minnesotans experiencing chronic homelessness are among our most vulnerable people and ending chronic homelessness is both compassionate and fiscally responsible, therefore we will work to...**

- End chronic homelessness in 2017, meaning that chronic homelessness is prevented wherever possible and when it occurs, it is rare, brief, and non-recurring.
- Sustain an end to chronic homelessness, and apply the lessons learned from ending chronic homelessness to other populations.

### ***3. Prevent and End Homelessness among Youth Unaccompanied by Parents or Guardians by the end of 2020***

**More than 900 young people experience homelessness in Minnesota on any given night and youth experiencing homelessness are often prey to violence and exploitation, therefore we will work to...**

- End homelessness among minors unaccompanied by their parents or guardians and youth parenting their own children in 2017.
- Increase the role and impact of youth-serving systems to support young people facing homelessness.
- Better identify and support youth facing homelessness in partnership with our local delivery systems.

### ***4. Prevent and End Homelessness among Families with Children by the end of 2020***

**Families with children comprise more than half of all people experiencing homelessness in Minnesota. Children in these families are more vulnerable to stress, depression, exposure to violence and developmental and educational delays and parents in these families are too often victims of violence and were often homeless as children themselves, therefore we will work to...**

- End homelessness among parenting youth in 2017.
- Make Minnesota's mainstream systems and prevention resources more accessible, responsive and impactful.
- Target families vulnerable to falling into homelessness.
- Better coordinate and support the identification, services and aftercare of those families who have experienced or are fleeing from violence.
- Partner with our schools to ensure every child experiencing homelessness and attending school will have help in creating a stable environment for development and learning.

## HEADING HOME: MINNESOTA'S PLAN TO PREVENT AND END HOMELESSNESS

Stable housing is out of reach for far too many Minnesotans. More than 7,500 Minnesotans experience homelessness every night, based on the statewide Point-in-Time (PIT) count conducted on January 22, 2015. While the 2015 count represents the first decrease in recent history, it also shows that many children and adults in Minnesota live without a stable foundation of housing. In addition, a much larger group of housed Minnesotans pay more than they can afford for their housing. According to U.S. Census and American Community Survey Data, over 590,000 Minnesota households paid more than 30 percent of their income for housing in 2014 and of these, over 254,000 paid more than half of their income for housing. For many of these Minnesotans, a single health, employment or transportation crisis could result in homelessness.

*Stable housing results in better educational outcomes for our children, a stronger workforce now and in the future, increased public safety, better health, reduced health care costs, and reduced disparities among communities.*

A lack of stable and affordable housing undermines Minnesota's efforts to improve educational outcomes for children, build a stronger workforce, improve health, and reduce racial and ethnic disparities. The State of Minnesota's *Heading Home* plan is a direct response to this challenge. While the full solution to homelessness and housing instability, including addressing income inequality, will require the commitment of many sectors and all levels of government, this plan focuses on strategies and actions for State agencies. These strategies set us on a path not only to **end** homelessness for more families and individuals, but also to substantially **prevent** homelessness by addressing significant barriers to maintaining housing stability.

### **The Vision: Housing Stability for All Minnesotans**

*Heading Home* advances the vision of housing stability for all Minnesotans. Housing stability means access to a safe and affordable place to live, as well as the resources and supports to maintain stable housing. Housing stability also means that people have choices in where they live, and if and when they move.

This plan focuses on solving the most egregious form of housing instability: homelessness. It recognizes that by preventing and ending homelessness, we will create a foundation for success for a broad spectrum of Minnesotans whose housing stability is continually at risk. Recognizing the importance of this vision, Minnesota's progress on ending homelessness is included in Governor Dayton's statewide dashboard of critical indicators for Minnesota.

The Minnesota Interagency Council on Homelessness, which includes the Commissioners of 11 State agencies and the Governor's office, developed and released *Heading Home* in December 2013. Over the past two years, the Council led implementation of this two-year action plan. This update releases strategies and actions for 2016 and 2017.

The *Heading Home* plan also leverages and is reinforced by the work of several other State plans and initiatives, including [Minnesota's Olmstead Plan](#), which ensures people with disabilities have access to integrated housing choices, and the [Children's Cabinet](#). For a complete list of State plans and initiatives that are aligned with *Heading Home*, please refer to the "Acknowledgments" section.

## What It Means to Prevent and End Homelessness

An end to homelessness does not mean that no one will ever experience a housing crisis again. Changing economic realities, the unpredictability of life and unsafe or unwelcoming family environments may create situations where individuals, families, or youth could experience or be at risk of homelessness. The United States Interagency Council on Homelessness (USICH) recently issued an operational definition of what it means to end homelessness. That definition is:

*An end to homelessness means that every community will have a systematic response in place that ensures homelessness is prevented whenever possible or is otherwise a rare, brief, and non-recurring experience.*

*Specifically, every community will have the capacity to:*

- *Quickly identify and engage people at-risk of and experiencing homelessness.*
- *Intervene to prevent the loss of housing and divert people from entering the homelessness services system.*
- *Provide immediate access to shelter and crisis services, without barriers to entry, while permanent stable housing and appropriate supports are being secured.*
- *When homelessness does occur, quickly connect people to housing assistance and services—tailored to their unique needs and strengths—to help them achieve and maintain stable housing.*

The Minnesota Interagency Council on Homelessness has adopted and aligned *Heading Home* with this Federal definition. Each component of this definition – that homelessness will be **prevented** whenever possible, and otherwise will be **rare, brief, and non-recurring** – is important to ensure that Minnesota's response to homelessness is sufficiently robust to achieve and sustain an end of homelessness.

## Accomplishments to Date: Highlights from the First Two Years of Heading Home

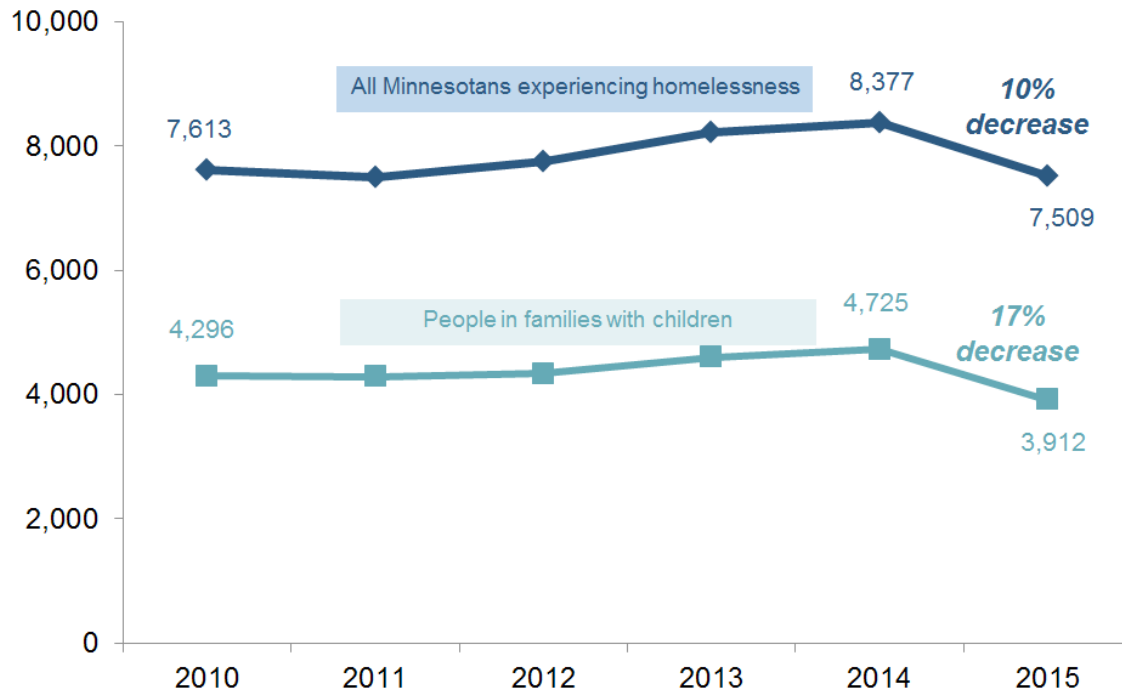
Implementing *Heading Home*'s strategies and actions for its first two years (2014 and 2015) established a strong foundation of success, partnership, and learning. Key accomplishments of the State and its many public and private partners include:

- Achieving the first decline in homelessness since 2011, including the fifth largest decrease in family homelessness nationwide.
- Investing \$110 million in bonding to create or preserve more than 4,000 units of affordable and supportive housing.
- Creating and implementing Minnesota's Homeless Veterans Registry, ensuring that the appropriate housing and services are available for every Veteran experiencing homelessness.
- Establishing a uniform and streamlined PIT count process to strengthen data on homelessness.
- Increasing resources for homeless youth and youth who are victims of sexual exploitation.
- Establishing a State plan to reduce barriers to transportation for Minnesotans facing housing instability.
- Developing consistent statewide policy and practices to guide the implementation of Coordinated Entry systems in partnership with Minnesota's 10 Continuums of Care, ensuring that people experiencing homelessness are connected with the most effective and appropriate resources.
- Setting and beginning implementation of significant reforms to Minnesota's Homeless Management Information System, needed to create the data necessary to measure progress and make informed decisions about homelessness programs and policies.
- Developing and beginning to implement Foundational Service Practices, which help organizations adapt to better serve the unique needs of people experiencing homelessness.

## Homelessness in Minnesota

The 2015 PIT count – held on January 22, 2015 – identified 7,509 Minnesotans experiencing homelessness. This represents a **10 percent decrease in all homelessness and a 17 percent decrease in homelessness among families** compared with the previous year's count. These are encouraging results, representing the first overall decrease since 2011. The PIT count also documented that homelessness among Veterans had decreased by 54 percent between 2010 and 2015. These results show that ending homelessness is possible and bolster additional efforts to prevent and end homelessness.

**2015 Point-in-Time Count of People Experiencing Homelessness**



The 2015 PIT count also helped identify areas where more work is needed:

- Unsheltered homelessness in Minnesota increased by nearly 6 percent between 2014 and 2015. Better counting, especially in Greater Minnesota, contributed to the increase and provided a more accurate understanding of the scope and distribution of unsheltered homelessness.
- A total of 942 youth under age 25 who were unaccompanied by a parent or guardian were experiencing homelessness, including 145 minors (under age 18).
- 266 youth under age 25 were experiencing homelessness while parenting children of their own, including 12 homeless parenting minors. Parenting youth had a total of 366 children with them.
- There was a 27 percent increase in the number of people experiencing chronic homelessness in Minnesota. Chronic homelessness includes individuals or families with a disability who have been homeless for at least one year or on four or more occasions in the last three years.

Reliably identifying people experiencing or at risk of homelessness poses a central challenge for efforts to prevent and end homelessness. Significantly more information about the prevalence and characteristics of people experiencing homelessness exists in Minnesota than many other states, largely because the Wilder Research Center has conducted a Statewide Survey of People Experiencing Homelessness (“the Wilder Survey”) every



three years since 1988. Many Minnesota communities and agencies have used the Wilder Survey data to inform their approaches to ending homelessness.

At the same time, communities in Minnesota and across the country have become increasingly sophisticated and consistent in how progress toward ending homelessness is documented and measured annually. On a single night in January each year, Minnesota's 10 Continuum of Care (CoC) regions conduct the PIT count of people experiencing homelessness. Volunteers and staff engage people experiencing homelessness in shelters, drop-in centers, transitional housing programs, and unsheltered locations to identify individuals and families experiencing homelessness. The count does not include people living in overcrowded or "doubled-up" settings.

Because it provides information annually and is a nationwide count, Minnesota relies on the PIT count to measure progress statewide in preventing and ending homelessness. In 2015, CoCs and the State implemented many improvements for the PIT count, including new survey tools used consistently statewide, improvements in how Veterans were identified, consistent training for volunteers, and use of data from the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS). These changes helped identify people who would not have been counted in previous years and make Minnesota's 2015 PIT count the most confident estimate of homelessness statewide yet.

Efforts to identify people experiencing homelessness will always be challenging and incomplete. While 2015's count may be the strongest yet, PIT counts always represent **minimums** for the number of Minnesotans facing homelessness at any point in time. The benefit of these counts derives from documenting trends and progress, rather than conclusively resolving the scale of the problem of homelessness in Minnesota at any point in time.

Significant disparities in the rates of homelessness for some Minnesotans are well documented, including Minnesota's populations of color and American Indians; Minnesotans with disabilities; and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and questioning (LGBTQ) youth. For example, the 2012 Wilder Survey found disparities "most prevalent among African American and American Indian populations. These disparities have been relatively consistent since the statewide study began." In the 2012 study, African Americans comprised 38 percent of all adults experiencing homelessness, but only five percent of all adult Minnesotans. American Indian adults represented 10 percent of adults facing homelessness, though only one percent of adult Minnesotans. Minnesotans with disabilities are also over-represented among those experiencing homelessness. Youth identified as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and questioning (LGBTQ) are also significantly overrepresented among youth experiencing homelessness. Local data indicate that at least 15 percent of youth experiencing homelessness identify as LGBTQ, and national research suggests that the percentage may be even higher.

*Heading Home* uses the Point-in-Time count as the primary measure of Minnesota's progress preventing and ending homelessness. The Minnesota Interagency Council on Homelessness and its member agencies will also continue to use other available data sources, including the Wilder Survey, counts of Minnesota students identified as homeless by schools and school districts over the course of a year, data from HMIS and State data systems, and other sources of information in helping to guide and shape efforts to end homelessness. Often, each data source comes with its own focus and limitations, which can include differing definitions of who is considered homeless. Using multiple sources of information when available can help corroborate findings and illuminate important subpopulations of Minnesotans facing homelessness and housing instability.

In addition, by June 2016, the Council will develop a series of implementation measures for the priorities and goals described in this plan. Where the Point-in-Time counts will serve as the measure of the overall impact of the plan, these implementation measures will be used to monitor the implementation and impact of specific strategies within the plan.

## Guiding Principles

The guiding principles in this section include the approaches, philosophies and practices that serve as the foundation for *Heading Home*. These principles help ensure that services and programs are as effective as possible. The Minnesota Interagency Council on Homelessness promotes and supports these principles, and its member agencies will offer training and technical assistance to support their implementation. In addition, these principles will be integrated into policy development, program design, case management practice, and grant making processes wherever possible.

Services and supports provided through *Heading Home* will:

- **Prioritize a person's choice.** People experiencing homelessness should be able to choose housing among a variety of housing types and models. Services and supports should be voluntary, and there should be choice in who provides them.
- **Ensure equity in outcomes,** so that outcomes from Minnesota's efforts to end homelessness reflect the disproportionality of people of color and American Indians; people with disabilities; and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and questioning (LGBTQ) youth among Minnesotans experiencing homelessness.
- **Increase the cultural agility** of State agencies, their grantees and other institutions and organizations serving people experiencing homelessness, to increase the participation of communities disproportionately impacted by homelessness in efforts to end homelessness, and create stronger linkages with these communities to shape Minnesota's response to homelessness.

*The concept of **cultural agility**, as developed by the Council for Minnesotans of African Heritage, means that an institution employs individuals and entities with cultural and linguistic competence to diversify an institution's professional base, so that the institution exhibits congruent behaviors, attitudes, and policies to work effectively in cross-cultural situations, with diverse communities, to reduce institutional bias and discrimination. "Culture" refers to integrated patterns of human behavior that includes the language, thoughts, communications, actions, customs, beliefs, values, and institutions of racial, ethnic, religious, or social groups. "Competence" implies having the capacity to function effectively as an individual and an organization within the context of the cultural beliefs, behaviors, and needs presented by consumers and their communities. Cultural agility recognizes and helps ensure that cultural competence must be standard practice and that those desiring culturally-specific services have such services available.*

- **Respect individual rights.** Each person has privacy, dignity and respect, and should be free from coercion and restraint.
- **Support community integration.** *Heading Home* aligns with Minnesota's Olmstead Plan, which upholds a legal mandate to provide community-based services to persons with disabilities.
- **Remove barriers.** The goal is helping people get housing by minimizing barriers to housing and other services.
- **Focus on individual needs.** Services should be flexible, person-centered and adapt to a person or family's needs and preferences. Persons experiencing homelessness should participate in their own housing plan.

There are a number of tools and resources available to support these guiding principles. They include **evidence-based practices** (those that show evidence of positive outcomes based on peer-reviewed randomized controlled trials or other equivalently strong methodology) and **promising practices** (those supported by current clinical wisdom, theories, and professional and expert consensus).

The approaches supported by the Minnesota Interagency Council on Homelessness to promote the guiding principles include, but are not limited to:

- **Housing First:** An approach that expedites access to housing for people experiencing homelessness, and uses housing as a platform for addressing other needs or challenges, instead of approaches which establish expectations or thresholds for housing “readiness.”
- **Permanent Supportive Housing Evidence-Based Practice:** A documented evidence-based practice that provides guidance on seven dimensions of effective Permanent Supportive Housing targeted for people with Serious Mental Illness—choice in housing and living arrangements; functional separation of housing and services; decent, safe, and affordable housing; community integration; rights of tenancy; access to housing and privacy; and flexible, voluntary, and recovery-focused services.
- **Trauma-informed care:** A strengths-based service delivery approach that recognizes the impact of trauma and promotes safety for service providers and trauma survivors, fostering survivors’ sense of control and empowerment.
- **Person-centered thinking and planning:** A set of values, skills and concrete, easy to use tools to assist people and those supporting them to understand what is important to them, how they wish to live, and how to move forward with those wishes.

In addition to these specific approaches, the Minnesota Interagency Council on Homelessness intends to promote continued innovation and development of best practice in collective efforts to end homelessness in Minnesota, to ensure that Minnesota’s efforts and resources to end homelessness achieve the greatest impact possible.

## Organization of the Plan

The ultimate objective of *Heading Home* is to prevent and end homelessness for all Minnesotans. *Heading Home* specifies eight cross-cutting priorities that impact many people experiencing homelessness and that help end homelessness for all. The eight cross-cutting priorities are as follows:

1. **Housing that’s Affordable** – Create additional affordable and supportive housing and engage public housing agencies and landlords to increase housing opportunities for people experiencing homelessness.
2. **Employment and Earnings** – Ensure that people experiencing homelessness have access to career pathways by enhancing the delivery and targeting of employment and training services; maximizing the impact of federal resources; and engaging other critical stakeholders.
3. **Equity in Outcomes** – Engage and learn from communities disproportionately impacted by homelessness and organizations serving these communities; ensure equity in housing outcomes; and increase cultural competency in housing and services.
4. **Streamlined and Accessible Systems and Services** – Leverage Medicaid, Social Security benefits, and other mainstream programs; target available resources strategically; increase access to transportation; and implement evidence-based practices.
5. **Resource Coordination** – Support establishment and implementation of Coordinated Entry systems statewide; improve homeless specific legislative coordination; and implement coordinated grant making across state-funded homelessness program.
6. **Data Quality and Analysis** – Maximize use of data to improve systems and response to people experiencing homelessness through strengthening Minnesota’s Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) and connecting HMIS to other data sources.
7. **Transitions from Systems** – Improve discharge and transition planning, coordination and handoffs to prevent homelessness and ensure people at risk of homelessness are connected to needed supports.
8. **Engagement of Communities** - Establish region-specific strategies and increase engagement with counties, tribes and communities, including their public safety bodies, and other local stakeholders.

The plan includes three different types of strategies for each cross-cutting priority:

- Using existing resources well: Each cross-cutting priority identifies strategies to help **maximize the impact of existing resources**.
- Identifying resource gaps and opportunities for increased impact: Each cross-cutting priority includes strategies intended to **evaluate opportunities and impact**.
- Identifying additional resources needed to end homelessness in Minnesota: Having maximized the impact of existing resources and identified other opportunities, each cross-cutting priority identifies strategies to **build Minnesota's capacity to prevent and end homelessness**.

As critical milestones toward ensuring housing stability for all Minnesotans, this update to the *Heading Home* plan affirms and revises the plan's goals for preventing and ending homelessness for specific populations of Minnesotans. The four population-specific goals are to:

1. **Resolve and prevent future Veteran homelessness.**
2. **End chronic homelessness by the end of 2017.**
3. **Prevent and end homelessness among youth unaccompanied by parents or guardians by the end of 2020.**
4. **Prevent and end homelessness among families with children by the end of 2020.**

These goals align with revised federal goals that reflect changes in the goal status (e.g., sustaining the end of homelessness among Veterans) and clarified definitions of specific populations (e.g., youth unaccompanied by parents or guardians, which clarifies that youth parenting children of their own are included).

The plan includes a detailed list of strategies for each of the eight cross-cutting priorities and four population goals. For each strategy, the plan defines a specific set of actions that State agencies will undertake, including the agency or agencies responsible for leading the effort and the timing for that action to occur. A list of agencies and specific State resources referenced in this plan appears on page 43.

The Council recognizes that there are other populations experiencing or at risk of homelessness where additional focus will be helpful. Over the next two years, the Council will explore and may pursue additional actions for these populations, including seniors; people with criminal histories; asylum seekers, immigrants, and migrant workers; and survivors of domestic violence.

# 1

## Cross-Cutting Priority: Housing that's Affordable

**Because stable housing is out of reach for far too many Minnesotans, the Minnesota Interagency Council on Homelessness will...**

- Engage all partners in creating 5,000 affordable and supportive housing opportunities for Minnesotans experiencing or at risk of homelessness by the end of 2020, using resources from a variety of sources including but not limited to State investments.
- Target households with incomes less than 30 percent of the Area Median Income (AMI) for these affordable and supportive housing opportunities, so that these housing opportunities are used to prevent and end homelessness and support the goals of this plan.

### Strategy 1

Engage all partners to create 5,000 additional housing opportunities from a variety of sources targeted to prevent and end homelessness, including supportive housing and housing affordable for households with incomes less than 30 percent of the Area Median Income (AMI).

Action	Lead State Agency	Timeline
a. Launch a call to action for all partners to help create additional housing opportunities, reflecting the need for significant participation of all partners to reach <i>Heading Home's</i> population goals.	MN Housing Governor's Office	January 2016
b. Identify the capital, rental assistance and supportive services needed to create 5,000 housing opportunities, including contributions from state agencies.	MN Housing DHS	March 2016
c. Advocate for increased Federal investments, including the National Housing Trust Fund, U. S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Homeless Assistance Grant funding, and other funding opportunities.	MN Housing	Ongoing



Action	Lead State Agency	Timeline
d. Implement 2015 legislative changes to Group Residential Housing (GRH) that provide quality assurance and incentives for people to work, and propose additional reforms, specifically housing assistance.	DHS	January 2017
e. Partner with public housing agencies (PHAs) and Tribal Housing Departments in communities with highest concentrations of homelessness to identify strategies to target available rental assistance and public housing and to leverage housing development opportunities.	MN Housing	March 2016
f. Assist communities in identifying incentives, such as risk mitigation funds or rent subsidy advances, to encourage landlords to house people experiencing or at risk of homelessness.	OTPEH MN Housing	Ongoing
g. Continue to refine goals for creating new housing opportunities by using new data that becomes available.	MN Housing	Ongoing

# 2

## *Cross-Cutting Priority: Employment and Earnings*

**Because a decent paying job is the best defense against homelessness, the Minnesota Interagency Council on Homelessness will...**

- Maximize the impact of current mainstream employment and training resources to the benefit of those who are at risk of or experiencing homelessness.
- Evaluate and inform new opportunities in the larger environment with a particular focus on federal program changes that effectively increase incentives to serve populations with barriers to employment.
- Build capacity of programs and systems that serve employment needs of people experiencing homelessness through strategic use of technical assistance, guidance and growth of financial resources available for employment and training services.
- Help ensure that all Minnesotans have access to a career pathway, including those at-risk of and experiencing homelessness.

### **Strategy 1**

**Maximize impact of mainstream employment and training services.**

Action	Lead State Agency	Timeline
a. Through Coordinated Entry Systems (CES), capture a basic level of information to make referrals to relevant employment and training programs, in addition to recommended housing options.	DEED DHS OTPEH	December 2016
b. Expand the use of the Council's <i>Foundational Service Practices</i> , across publicly funded workforce programs.	DEED	December 2017

## Strategy 2

### Evaluate and inform new opportunities in larger environment.

Action	Lead State Agency	Timeline
a. Include Interagency Council on Homelessness in statewide planning for implementation of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) to ensure homeless-specific strategies are incorporated.	DEED OTPEH	December 2016
b. Disseminate and educate on policy changes that will improve employment options and incentives for people with disabilities (including the Olmstead Plan and GRH reform).	OTPEH	December 2016
c. Prioritize proven practices to serving employment needs of people experiencing homelessness.	DEED	December 2017

## Strategy 3

### Build capacity of programs and systems that serve employment needs of individuals experiencing homelessness.

Action	Lead State Agency	Timeline
a. Leverage available technical assistance to grow understanding of “what works” and the resources available to serve employment needs of job seekers experiencing homelessness.	DEED DHS OTPEH	December 2016
b. Grow the resources available through use of SNAP Employment and Training 50% reimbursement option.	DHS DEED	December 2016
c. Disseminate toolkits and guidance for housing and workforce practitioners and policy makers through the Governor’s Workforce Development Board (GWDB) and others, e.g., WIOA guidance to local workforce boards on strategies to meet needs of homeless job seekers and a practitioner’s guide to the public workforce system.	DEED	December 2016
d. Improve the connection of employment and training opportunities with transitional and supportive housing to increase ability for housing participants to connect to “next step” or more independent living situations.	MN Housing DHS DEED	December 2017

## Strategy 4

### Expand on-ramps and work experience opportunities that link to career pathways.

Action	Lead State Agency	Timeline
a. Pilot career and employment “navigators” and establish services designed to connect job seekers experiencing homelessness to career pathways (as has been done in other jurisdictions).	DEED	December 2016
b. Expand work experience opportunities that include rapid attachment to employment.	DEED	December 2017

# 3

## Cross-Cutting Priority: Equity in Outcomes

**Because homelessness disproportionately impacts Minnesota’s communities of color; American Indians; people with disabilities; and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and questioning (LGBTQ) youth, the Minnesota Interagency Council on Homelessness will...**

- Increase the cultural agility and cultural competence of State agencies and their grantees in responding to homelessness.
- Ensure that outcomes achieved by State housing and employment programs achieve equitable results across all populations experiencing homelessness.
- Ensure that Minnesota's collective efforts to end homelessness are diverse, inclusive, competent and effective.
- Make equal opportunity a practice that eradicates disparities, and ensures compliance with human and civil rights law.

### Strategy 1

**Establish ongoing leadership and accountability for progress.**

Action	Lead State Agency	Timeline
a. Create an Equity Team to provide ongoing leadership and accountability for progress, with semi-annual reports to the Senior Leadership Team.	Senior Leadership Team	January 2016
b. Identify and report out specific options for increasing the focus on achieving Equity in Outcomes across all of the <i>Heading Home</i> plan's cross-cutting priorities.	Equity Team	December 2016

### Strategy 2

**Monitor equity in engagement and outcomes achieved by State homelessness programs.**

Action	Lead State Agency	Timeline
a. Establish baseline equity measures comparing housing and employment outcomes achieved through Minnesota’s homelessness programs and update and monitor these performance measures over time.	Equity Team	December 2016 and ongoing

### Strategy 3

Improve equity in access to opportunity and representation among those ending homelessness.

Action	Lead State Agency	Timeline
a. Identify potential capacity building resources for organizations from communities disproportionately impacted by homelessness, specifically intended to reach and help build the capacity of organizations that may not currently qualify or compete effectively as grantees for State programs and grants, given grant-making processes and procurement requirements.	OTPEH MN Housing DHS	June 2016
b. Convene semi-annual community roundtable discussions organized by State Councils with representatives of State homelessness programs and communities disproportionately impacted by homelessness to provide advice and guidance on <i>Heading Home's</i> progress achieving equity in outcomes.	State Councils	December 2016
c. Identify options for State homelessness programs to increase availability of culturally-specific programs serving Minnesotans from communities disproportionately impacted by homelessness.	MN Housing DHS	August 2016



# 4

## Cross-Cutting Priority: Streamlined and Accessible Systems and Services

Because food, health care, mental health and chemical health services, early childhood programs, transportation and childcare, must be easily accessible for people experiencing homelessness, the Minnesota Interagency Council on Homelessness will...

- Align and maximize publicly-funded health, income, transportation, and social services to help families and individuals avoid homelessness.
- Better support those who are experiencing homelessness by improving connections to services and decreasing barriers to access.

### Strategy 1

Align mainstream systems to better support those experiencing homelessness.

Action	Lead State Agency	Timeline
a. Identify top promising opportunities for improving mainstream systems from review conducted in 2014. Prioritize opportunities for mental health and chemical health programs for implementation in 2016-2017.	All	December 2017
b. Expand implementation of <i>Foundational Service Practices</i> to ensure mainstream systems are accessible to people experiencing homelessness.	All	Plan for expansion completed by July 2016

### Strategy 2

Maximize the use of health care funds to promote increased health through housing stability.

Action	Lead State Agency	Timeline
a. Develop policy recommendations and strategies to access Medicaid coverage for housing related activities and services for people with disabilities experiencing or at-risk of homelessness. Connect people experiencing homelessness to these and other Medicaid services to help improve housing stability.	Medicaid and Housing Supports Working Group (DHS) MN Housing	March 2016

### Strategy 3

**Improve stability for people experiencing homelessness by connecting them to federal benefits.**

Action	Lead State Agency	Timeline
a. Build statewide capacity of the SOAR (SSI/SSDI Outreach, Access and Recovery) program so that each person with a disability experiencing homelessness has access to an advocate to assist them with the Social Security Application process.	DHS	December 2017
b. Provide information and technical assistance to the Area Agencies on Aging to connect seniors experiencing homelessness to services and resources for housing.	DHS	December 2017

### Strategy 4

**Support and implement use of evidence-based practices, culturally specific strategies, and other promising approaches in mainstream systems to improve housing stability outcomes.**

Action	Lead State Agency	Timeline
a. Connect people with a disability experiencing homelessness with Mainstream Systems to explore opportunities to be in the most integrated setting of their choice.	DHS Olmstead Office OTPEH	December 2017
b. Establish best practice guidelines and provide training on trauma-informed care for domestic and sexual violence victim service providers.	DPS	December 2016

### Strategy 5

**Increase access to transportation for those experiencing housing instability.**

Action	Lead State Agency	Timeline
a. Continue to gather information on transportation barriers by adding transportation-specific questions to HMIS central intake, and analyzing the data received from the newly added transportation related questions in the 2015 Wilder survey.	MnDOT	June 2016
b. Establish policy, develop tools, and train MnDOT staff to have more effective interactions with people experiencing homelessness.	MnDOT	July 2016
c. Include strategies and actions to address transportation barriers in the five-year update to the <i>Greater Minnesota Transit Investment Plan</i> .	MnDOT	December 2016
d. Align work to address transportation barriers for those experiencing housing instability with MnDOT's work on the Olmstead Plan to "expand access to reliable, cost-effective, and accessible transportation choices that support the essential elements of life such as employment, housing, education, and social connections" to people with disabilities.	MnDOT	December 2017

# 5

## Cross-Cutting Priority: Resource Coordination

**Because resources must be used effectively to stably house and prevent homelessness for more Minnesotans, the Minnesota Interagency Council on Homelessness will...**

- Improve grant making across homeless-specific funding streams.
- Work with local communities to implement a coordinated statewide system to provide the right services at the right time for families and individuals experiencing homelessness.
- Coordinate homeless-specific State and federal legislative efforts.

### Strategy 1

**Implement coordinated grant making across State-funded homelessness programs.**

Action	Lead State Agency	Timeline
a. Refine and implement the Coordinated Grant Making Draft Action Plan which was previously established by the Resource Coordination Working Group in November 2015.	MN Housing DHS	December 2016

### Strategy 2

**Support establishment and implementation of Coordinated Entry systems statewide.**

Action	Lead State Agency	Timeline
a. Support implementation of Coordinated Entry systems in partnership with all 10 Minnesota Continuum of Care Regions across the state, identifying needed governance structure, capacity issues, and communication and coordination processes.	OTPEH MN Housing DHS	January 2016
b. Develop a plan to have a robust analysis of Coordinated Entry and HMIS data, once available, to identify needs and gaps, and to more effectively target investments.	OTPEH MN Housing DHS	December 2017

### Strategy 3

#### Improve homeless-specific legislative coordination (both State and Federal).

Action	Lead State Agency	Timeline
a. Establish and maintain a coordinated legislative agenda across all Council agencies.	OTPEH Olmstead Office	March 2016
b. Engage the Minnesota Congressional delegation in the work of the <i>Heading Home</i> plan to increase the Federal investments being made toward housing stability for all Minnesotans.	OTPEH MN Housing	January 2016

# 6

## *Cross-Cutting Priority: Data Quality and Analysis*

**Because high quality data drives better planning, policy and results, the Minnesota Interagency Council on Homelessness will...**

- Strengthen Minnesota's Homeless Management Information System (HMIS).
- Connect HMIS with other data sources that can guide program and policy development, research, and evaluation.

### **Strategy 1**

**Maximize use of data to improve systems and responses to people experiencing and at risk of homelessness.**

<b>Action</b>	<b>Lead State Agency</b>	<b>Timeline</b>
a. Continue implementing strategic reforms to Minnesota's HMIS to maximize its impact on practice, policy, and targeting of resources.	MN Housing (as HMIS Lead Agency)	Ongoing
b. Continue working with HMIS local system administrators to support access to the HMIS data needed to guide local decisions and efforts.	MN Housing (as HMIS Lead Agency)	Ongoing
c. Working with HMIS stakeholders, review and adopt a sustainable funding plan for HMIS being developed by the HMIS Advisory Task Force.	MN Housing (as HMIS Lead Agency)	August 2016
d. Analyze options and viability to add the HMIS to the data warehouse as administered by the Minnesota Department of Human Services.	DHS MN Housing (as HMIS Lead Agency)	April 2017



# 7

## Cross-Cutting Priority: Transition from Systems

**Because improving transitions from systems of care is critical to preventing homelessness, the Minnesota Interagency Council on Homelessness will...**

- Better coordinate and target existing resources to ensure consistency and effectiveness of transition services.
- Ensure that corrections and child welfare systems are responsive to the needs of individuals and will ensure necessary supports are in place to prevent homelessness upon exit from these systems.
- Have a strong understanding of the relationship between homelessness and discharge from systems.

### Strategy 1

**Establish better coordination between the three correctional delivery systems to ensure consistency and effectiveness of transition services for youth.**

**Please note: The three correctional delivery systems in Minnesota are: 1) Minnesota Department of Corrections (DOC), 2) Minnesota Community Corrections Act Counties (MACCAC), and 3) Minnesota Association of County Probation Office Counties (MACPO).**

Action	Lead State Agency	Timeline
a. Convene the three correctional delivery systems to develop recommendations on eligibility and standards for receiving transition services, and clarify responsible party in Minn. Stat., section 260B.240.	DOC	December 2016
b. Ensure successful transition from juvenile corrections placements by requiring the development of realistic and viable independent living/transition plans for all youth in juvenile justice placements.	DOC	December 2017
c. Explore data sharing options for youth involved in the juvenile justice, child welfare, and education systems to increase case coordination.	DOC DHS MDE	December 2017

## Strategy 2

### Increase effectiveness of transitional services for older minor youth.

Action	Lead State Agency	Timeline
a. Develop and enhance training and oversight efforts to make sure extended foster care is available to all eligible youth aging out of foster care, consistent with Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoption Act of 2008.	DHS	December 2016
b. Support the establishment of a committee to develop the foster child/youth bill of rights to incorporate assurances for youth before their foster care exit.	DHS	December 2017
c. Ensure consistent application of Fostering Connections and the provision of notifying youth about their rights to remain in care from age 18-21.	DHS	December 2017
d. Increase connections between juvenile justice, mental health and child protection systems in order to align efforts around transition age youth.	DHS DOC	December 2017

## Strategy 3

### Ensure that individuals being discharged from correctional facilities have necessary supports in place.

Action	Lead State Agency	Timeline
a. Enhance exit planning processes for offenders identified as homeless at time of entry or at high risk of homelessness upon exit by providing more intensive services to this population prior to release. Connect this work with the Minnesota Statewide Implementation of Recidivism Reduction (MNSIRR) which is focused initially on the highest risk offenders in the 11 most populated counties.	DOC	December 2016
b. Provide training to all staff involved in release planning activities on available programs and resources designed for individuals with disabilities and people experiencing homelessness.	DOC	December 2016

## Strategy 4

### Establish data collection to show the relationship between homelessness and discharge from correctional placements.

Action	Lead State Agency	Timeline
a. Track and report individuals who are involved in the corrections systems and are discharged into homelessness. Report on outcomes of DOC housing-targeted resources.	DOC	December 2016

# 8

## Cross-Cutting Priority: Engagement of Communities

**Because homelessness involves many partners who must collaborate effectively to end homelessness the Minnesota Interagency Council on Homelessness will...**

- Engage with Tribal, county, regional, faith and community partners across the state to prevent and end homelessness at all levels.

### Strategy 1

**Educate the public on the scope, causes, costs and solvability of homelessness.**

Actions	Lead State Agency	Timeline
a. Partner with Continuums of Care and private funders to create opportunities at the local level and statewide to educate the public on the state's efforts to prevent and end homelessness.	OTPEH	Ongoing

### Strategy 2

**Build a shared vision of Housing Stability for all Minnesotans among all 87 Minnesota County Boards of Commissioners and 11 Tribal Councils.**

Action	Lead State Agency	Timeline
a. Partner with Minnesota counties through the Association of Minnesota Counties and direct engagement of county leadership to align efforts to achieve housing stability for all Minnesotans.	OTPEH	December 2017
b. Continue partnering with Minnesota Tribes in their efforts to ensure housing stability across Tribal nations in Minnesota. Specifically, continue partnering on the work of examining and addressing barriers that prevent Tribal nations from directly accessing funding designed to end homelessness.	DHS	Ongoing

### Strategy 3

**Strengthen connections between county, state, and Tribal Governments to ensure alignment of priority and policy direction, shared resources and collaboration.**

Action	Lead State Agency	Timeline
a. Work with the DHS County Relations Director to engage and coordinate with county leadership and partners on the work of the Interagency Council.	OTPEH DHS	December 2017
b. Attend monthly MACSSA (Minnesota Association of County Social Service Administrators) meetings to exchange information and facilitate strong partnership.	OTPEH	December 2016
c. Continue building relationships with the Minnesota Association of Community Corrections Act Counties (MACCAC) and the Minnesota Association of County Probation Officers (MACPO) to better align strategies, services, data and outcomes.	DOC OTPEH	Ongoing
d. Engage and explore partnership opportunities with the Minnesota Sheriff's Association on efforts to achieve housing stability for all Minnesotans.	DOC OTPEH	December 2016
e. Explore where toolkits would be beneficial to inform and empower counties, sheriffs, local government and civic bodies on the resources and opportunities they can leverage to increase housing options in their communities and counties.	OTPEH MN Housing DHS DOC	December 2017

### Strategy 4

**Increase partnerships with regional and metro transportation bodies.**

Action	Lead State Agency	Timeline
a. Continue MnDOT's active participation in the Minnesota Council on Transportation Access (MCOTA) which includes engaging with the Regional Transportation Coordinating Councils in their work and adding a Continuum of Care employee to each Council to address barriers to transportation for those experiencing homelessness.	MnDOT	December 2017
b. Engage the Met Council (Metro Transit) in the work of <i>Heading Home</i> in efforts to reduce transportation barriers to accessing supports and resources.	OTPEH	March 2016

# 1

## *Population Goal: Resolve and Prevent Future Veteran Homelessness*

**Because Minnesota is poised to end Veteran homelessness and the lessons learned pave the path to ending homelessness among all Minnesotans, the Minnesota Interagency Council on Homelessness will...**

- Continue actively identifying Veterans at risk of or experiencing homelessness.
- Sustain resources to prevent Veteran homelessness and to assist Veterans facing homelessness to rapidly connect with housing.
- Develop and apply best practices in targeting homeless prevention resources.
- Apply the lessons learned from ending Veteran homelessness to other populations.

### **Strategy 1**

**Expand use of the [Homeless Veteran Registry](#).**

Action	Lead State Agency	Timeline
a. Expand the purpose of and partners involved in the Homeless Veteran Registry to support Veterans at risk of homelessness, clarifying the definition of "at risk."	MDVA	December 2016
b. Identify and make changes needed in the Registry to apply its approach to other populations experiencing homelessness.	MDVA	March 2016

### **Strategy 2**

**Increase identification of Veterans and rapid connections to appropriate services.**

Action	Lead State Agency	Timeline
a. Develop prevention screening questions and referral protocols for Coordinated Entry to identify and link Veterans to appropriate resources.	MDVA	January 2016
b. Scope out and evaluate implementing more effective ways to determine Veteran status from available HMIS data.	MDVA	July 2016

### Strategy 3

#### Increase impact of existing housing resources and enhance capacity.

Action	Lead State Agency	Timeline
a. Monitor improved access to landlords based on Mayoral engagement, and identify alternative or complementary strategies as needed.	MDVA	July 2016
b. Regularly convene VA and public housing agencies (PHAs) delivering HUD-VASH to identify other potential process improvements.	MDVA	December 2016
c. Add SOAR workers to MDVA's portfolio of services and promote this capacity widely.	MDVA	June 2016
d. Engage Veteran Home leadership to explore ways to increase viability of Veteran Homes, especially domiciliary beds, for Veterans with significant barriers to housing.	MDVA	December 2016

# 2

## **Population Goal: End Chronic Homelessness in 2017**

**Because Minnesotans experiencing chronic homelessness are among our most vulnerable people and because ending chronic homelessness is both compassionate and fiscally responsible, the Minnesota Interagency Council on Homelessness will...**

- End chronic homelessness in 2017, meaning that chronic homelessness is prevented wherever possible and when it occurs, it is rare, brief, and non-recurring.
- Sustain an end to chronic homelessness, and apply the lessons learned from ending chronic homelessness to other populations.

### **Strategy 1**

**Increase capacity to end chronic homelessness in 2017.**

<b>Action</b>	<b>Lead State Agency</b>	<b>Timeline</b>
a. Advocate for Federal investments to end chronic homelessness.	MN Housing	March 2016
b. Implement and pursue reforms to the Group Residential Housing (GRH) program.	DHS MN Housing	March 2016
c. Align chronic homelessness efforts with the Olmstead Plan; explore and develop joint advocacy about people with disabilities experiencing homelessness.	Olmstead Office DHS	July 2016

### **Strategy 2**

**Maximize existing resources to end chronic homelessness.**

<b>Action</b>	<b>Lead State Agency</b>	<b>Timeline</b>
a. Assess the impact of aligning Minnesota's definition of long-term homelessness with the Federal definition of chronic homelessness; and if appropriate, identify strategies (e.g., prioritization tiers) to mitigate any unintended consequences.	MN Housing DHS	September 2016



Action	Lead State Agency	Timeline
b. Develop unified guidance across State programs about targeting and prioritizing services for the most vulnerable members of eligible populations and provide this guidance to grantees and other relevant stakeholders.	DHS MN Housing	December 2016
c. Determine feasibility of establishing a person-by-person approach for ending chronic homelessness, modeled after the Homeless Veteran Registry and other successful local initiatives.	OTPEH	March 2016
d. Identify and implement approaches to “step-down” housing that will create supportive housing vacancies by moving current tenants to stable independent living.	MN Housing DHS	July 2016

### Strategy 3

#### Prevent chronic homelessness wherever possible.

Action	Lead State Agency	Timeline
a. Identify priorities for data linkages or integration (e.g., HMIS with healthcare data), as well as other strategies to identify most vulnerable populations, including Minnesotans at risk of experiencing chronic homelessness.	OTPEH MN Housing (as lead HMIS entity)	January 2017
b. Explore targeting available rapid re-housing and homeless prevention services to households with multiple episodes of homelessness who may not yet qualify as chronically homeless.	MN Housing DHS	January 2017
c. Reduce the impact of criminal histories on homelessness by exploring policy reforms and providing education and information to landlords and employers about community supervision and working with ex-offenders and supervising agents.	DOC MDHR MN Housing	July 2016
d. Enhance exit planning processes for offenders identified as homeless at time of entry or at high risk of homelessness upon exit. Connect this work with the MN Statewide Implementation of Recidivism Reduction (MNSIRR) which is focused initially on the highest risk offenders in the 11 most populated counties.	DOC	December 2016

# 3 *Population Goal: Prevent and End Homelessness among Youth Unaccompanied by Parents or Guardians in 2020*

**Because more than 900 young people experience homelessness in Minnesota on any given night and because youth experiencing homelessness are often prey to violence and exploitation, the Minnesota Interagency Council on Homelessness will...**

- End homelessness among minors unaccompanied by their parents or guardians and youth parenting their own children in 2017.
- Increase the role and impact of youth-serving systems to support young people facing homelessness.
- Better identify and support youth facing homelessness in partnership with our local delivery systems.

## **Strategy 1**

**Ensure that the child welfare system has an appropriate response for older minor youth.**

<b>Action</b>	<b>Lead State Agency</b>	<b>Timeline</b>
a. Build authority and capacity of child welfare system to assist older minors (age 15-17) who are homeless without parental care.	DHS	December 2017
b. Strengthen the appeal process for eligible youth denied services through the child protection system.	DHS	December 2017
c. Design and establish a response system to meet the specific needs of older minor youth who are homeless without parental support.	DHS	December 2017

## Strategy 2

### Increase effectiveness of transitional services for older minor youth.

Action	Lead State Agency	Timeline
a. Develop and enhance training and oversight efforts to make sure extended foster is available to all eligible youth aging out of foster care, consistent with the Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoption Act of 2008.	DHS	December 2017
b. Support the establishment of a committee to develop the foster child/youth bill of rights to incorporate assurances for youth before their foster care exit.	DHS	December 2017
c. Ensure consistent application of Fostering Connections and the provision of notifying youth about their rights to remain in care from age 18-21.	DHS	December 2017
d. Increase connections between juvenile justice, mental health and child protection systems in order to align efforts around transition age youth.	DHS DOC MDH	December 2017
e. Establish a provisional discharge option for youth who choose to leave the child welfare system that preserves their eligibility for Fostering Connections supports.	DHS	December 2017

## Strategy 3

### Increase housing options for youth.

Action	Lead State Agency	Timeline
a. Explore ways to increase support of informal housing options and youth's existing support network (such as informal host homes) by examining current funding and licensing requirements.	DHS	December 2016
b. Increase funding and support services that are available to family/kin and other natural supports that would result in youth being able to remain housed with their family/kin/natural supports.	DHS	December 2016

#### Strategy 4

**Support education systems in identifying and responding to the needs of homeless and highly mobile youth.**

Action	Lead State Agency	Timeline
a. Provide and implement consistent expectations and accountability for the McKinney-Vento school liaisons across districts.	MDE	June 2016
b. Establish regional groups of liaisons across the state to provide peer support and troubleshooting, and a venue to share best-practices and trainings.	MDE	December 2016
c. Partner with Superintendents to advance the work of the Minnesota Interagency Council on Homelessness and the important role their districts play in furthering the vision of Housing Stability for all Minnesotans.	MDE	December 2016
d. Strengthen the relationship between Early Education, K-12, and Higher Education Systems in their work with children and families experiencing homelessness.	MDE OHE	December 2017
e. Work with higher education institutions to develop a process to identify homeless students registered at their postsecondary institution, connect them to existing resources and track outcomes.	OHE	December 2016
f. To facilitate retention and completion of a certificate or degree, work with postsecondary institutions to develop policies and procedures to effectively support students who are homeless, or at risk of being homeless, while pursuing postsecondary education.	OHE	December 2017

#### Strategy 5

**Increase incomes for youth who are homeless or at-risk of homelessness.**

Action	Lead State Agency	Timeline
a. Expand connection with publicly funded workforce programs in WIOA.	DEED	June 2016
b. Ensure that state-funded job training and employment programs have realistic requirements and outcomes that reflect current job realities and the unique realities of youth who are homeless or at-risk of homelessness.	DEED	December 2016

# 4 *Population Goal: Prevent and End Homelessness among Families with Children in 2020*

**Because families with children comprise more than half of all people experiencing homelessness in Minnesota;**

**and because these children are more vulnerable to stress, depression, exposure to violence and developmental and educational delays;**

**and because parents in these families are too often victims of violence and were often homeless as children themselves, the Minnesota Interagency Council on Homelessness will...**

- End homelessness among parenting youth in 2017.
- Make Minnesota's mainstream systems and prevention resources more accessible, responsive and impactful.
- Target families vulnerable to falling into homelessness.
- Better coordinate and support the identification, services and aftercare of those families who have experienced or are fleeing from violence.
- Partner with our schools to ensure every child experiencing homelessness and attending school will have help in creating a stable environment for development and learning.

## **Strategy 1**

**Create smoother linkages between homeless prevention resources and other available supports.**

Action	Lead State Agency	Timeline
a. Streamline emergency economic assistance. Continue exploring ideas presented by the '14-'15 Emergency Assistance Work Group. Consider new opportunities as well as implementing learned lessons.	DHS MN Housing	December 2017

## Strategy 2

### Target families vulnerable to becoming homeless.

Action	Lead State Agency	Timeline
a. Explore targeting prevention dollars to prioritize families who have demonstrated housing instability within the past two years.	MN Housing	June 2016
b. Analyze where and how targeted elements of the Stable Families Initiative could be implemented in select counties across the state.	OTPEH DHS MN Housing	December 2016
c. Identify and promote best practices for the child welfare system in identifying families at risk of homelessness and protocols for referring these families to appropriate housing and service resources.	DHS	December 2016
d. Develop career pathways models for parenting youth without high school diplomas including credentialing and age-appropriate employment support.	DEED MDH	May 2017
e. Provide a three-month presumptive eligibility period for childcare benefits while verifications are secured for families experiencing homelessness.	DHS	June 2016
f. Analyze WIC data to identify areas with higher rates of reported homelessness and associated health risks among pregnant and postpartum women.	MDH	December 2016

## Strategy 3

### Make mainstream systems and resources more accessible, responsive and impactful.

Action	Lead State Agency	Timeline
a. Support the recommendations of Minnesota's Child Care Reauthorization Plan and provisions for its prioritization of homeless children and families.	DHS	June 2016
b. Increase the number of child care providers serving children and families who are homeless, taking specific state developed training designed to teach providers how best to serve the needs of these families.	DHS	December 2016
c. Increase the MFIP cash grant and maximize MFIP's impact to provide housing stability for children and families, focusing first on parenting youth.	DHS	May 2016
d. Increase access to high quality early childhood programs for children with the highest needs, specifically targeting homeless children and families.	MDE	March 2016
e. Increase resources to the Family Home Visiting Program, and ensure that staff are trained to address the unique needs of families and children experiencing homelessness, including training on trauma-informed service delivery.	MDH	June 2016

#### Strategy 4

##### Support education systems in identifying and responding to the needs of homeless and highly mobile youth.

Action	Lead State Agency	Timeline
a. Provide and implement consistent expectations and accountability for the McKinney-Vento school liaisons across districts.	MDE	June 2016
b. Establish regional groups of liaisons to provide peer support and troubleshooting, and a venue to share best-practices and trainings.	MDE	December 2016
c. Partner with Superintendents to advance the work of the Minnesota Interagency Council on Homelessness and the important role their districts play in carrying-out the vision of Housing Stability for all Minnesotans.	MDE	December 2016
d. Strengthen the relationship between Early Education, K-12, and Higher Ed Systems in their work with children and families experiencing homelessness.	MDE OHE	December 2017
e. Work with higher education institutions to develop a process to identify homeless students registered at their postsecondary institution, connect them to existing resources and track outcomes.	OHE	December 2016
f. To facilitate retention and completion of a certificate or degree, work with postsecondary institutions to develop policies and procedures to effectively support students who are homeless, or at risk of being homeless, while pursuing postsecondary education.	OHE	December 2017

#### Strategy 5

##### Better align Minnesota's homeless and domestic and sexual violence systems.

Action	Lead State Agency	Timeline
a. Leverage federal administrative funds to provide cross training and explore collaboration that establishes coordinated services, cross-referral, and increases connections between domestic and sexual violence victim service providers and the homeless and housing response system.	DPS	December 2017

#### Strategy 6

##### Focus on aftercare and transition planning for post-domestic and sexual violence shelter placement.

Action	Lead State Agency	Timeline
a. Explore coordinating access to housing resources that provides affordable housing and aftercare for individuals and families that need housing due to domestic and sexual violence.	DPS	April 2016
b. Develop standards on housing advocacy and financially support domestic violence programs to provide housing advocacy, including domestic and sexual violence victim service providers having dedicated aftercare services.	DPS	December 2016



## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The Council thanks the hundreds of stakeholders throughout Minnesota who have contributed their valuable expertise and insight to creating this plan. In preparation for this update to *Heading Home*, the Council's staff held planning and listening sessions with each State agency on the Council, Tribal leaders, service and housing providers and community partners, those who have experienced homelessness, and communities disproportionately impacted by homelessness. The Council appreciates the insights, ideas and inspirations that all of these participants have provided. The actions in this plan will continue to be refined and updated to reflect new opportunities with the State's partners and lessons learned about how to prevent and end homelessness most effectively.

A Senior Leadership Team developed the plan's objectives, strategies and actions. Collectively, this group operates or oversees most state programs that bear on any aspect of preventing and ending homelessness. They bring a wealth of experience in and outside government, practical knowledge of how programs work, and the commitment to make them work better.

In addition to the information gathered from stakeholders throughout Minnesota, the Senior Leadership Team was informed by many interrelated state initiatives during the creation of this plan. They will continue to coordinate with these efforts as they lead implementation of the Two-Year Action Plan. They include:

- Minnesota's Olmstead Plan;
- The work of the Children's Cabinet
- The Minnesota Council on Transportation Access (MCOTA)
- The Transition from Prison to Community initiative at Department of Corrections (TPC)
- The Minnesota Statewide Implementation of Recidivism Reduction (MNSIRR)
- Minnesota's Safe Harbor initiative for youth who have been sexually exploited
- The Health Equity Initiative
- Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACES) initiative at Department of Health
- State Innovation Model (SIMS) at Department of Health and Department of Human Services
- The Visible Child Initiative
- The Emerging Adult Task Force

The Senior Leadership Team and The State Director to Prevent and End Homelessness will continue to meet regularly to monitor the Plan's strategic indicators and timelines, work through interagency issues and opportunities, report on progress toward the outcome goals, and improve the Plan. They have been and will continue to be assisted by an ongoing Implementation Team of state staff professionals from all participating agencies.

Thank you to the Heading Home Minnesota Funders Collaborative and their Director, Laura Kadwell, for their partnership and support of the statewide work to prevent and end homelessness.

Thank you to the Minnesota Office to Prevent and End Homelessness for their leadership and coordination with the Interagency Council and the broader community in the implementation of *Heading Home*. Thank you, also, to the Pohlad Foundation for their in-kind staff contribution.

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### **Alignment with Opening Doors and Regional Plans**

In June 2010, USICH released *Opening Doors*, the nation's first comprehensive federal strategy to prevent and end homelessness. *Opening Doors* serves as a roadmap for coordinated joint action among the 19 United States Interagency Council member agencies, along with local and state partners in the public and private sectors. Recognizing the power of alignment between levels of government on this effort, the Minnesota Interagency Council on Homelessness intentionally aligned *Heading Home* with the goals and strategies in *Opening Doors*.

The Minnesota Interagency Council on Homelessness also recognizes that partnerships with cities, counties, and other local community stakeholders are paramount to achieving collective success. People experiencing homelessness, housing and service providers, and Continuums of Care and their staff, are vital partners in understanding the experiences of homelessness and the most effective approaches for ending it.

The Council is grateful to all partners, at both the local and federal levels, for informing and shaping this updated *Heading Home* action plan.

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## TERMS

### Abbreviations

**DEED** – Department of Employment and Economic Development  
**DHS** – Department of Human Services  
**DOC** – Department of Corrections  
**DOE** – Department of Education  
**DOH** – Department of Health  
**DPS** – Department of Public Safety  
**GRH** – Group Residential Housing  
**HUD** – U. S. Department of Housing and Urban Development  
**MACCAC** – Minnesota Association of Community Corrections Act Counties  
**MACPO** – Minnesota Association of County Probation Officers  
**MnDOT** – Minnesota Department of Transportation  
**MDVA** – Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs  
**MNSIRR** – Minnesota Statewide Implementation of Recidivism Reduction  
**MICH** – Minnesota Interagency Council on Homelessness  
**OTPEH** – Office to Prevent and End Homelessness  
**PHA** – Public Housing Agency(ies)  
**PIT** – Point-in-Time Count  
**SNAP** – Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (formerly Food Stamps)  
**SOAR** – SSI/SSDI Outreach, Access, and Recovery  
**USICH** – United States Interagency Council on Homelessness  
**WIOA** – Workforce Innovation Opportunity Act

### Glossary

#### Chronically homeless (Federal)

Individual or family who is diagnosed with a disability and (a) has been homeless (according to the Federal definition) for one year or more or (b) has been homeless on four or more occasions in the last three years.

#### Continuum of Care (CoC)

In 1995, HUD established the competitive CoC funding application process to provide resources to communities to implement community-wide, coordinated efforts for assessing and addressing the housing and service needs of individuals and families that were homeless or at risk of homelessness. The CoC is the group that takes on coordination of homeless services and homelessness prevention activities across a specified geographic area.

#### Coordinated Entry Systems

Centralized intake and program admissions within a region or community. In a coordinated system, each system entry point uses the same assessment tool and makes decisions on which programs people are referred to based on which options will be most effective to end homelessness for the specific individual or family being referred.

### **Family Home Visiting Program**

Administered by the Minnesota Department of Health, the Family Home Visiting Program is a service delivery strategy to improve the health and well-being of families. The program serves families meeting defined poverty and vulnerability guidelines. Home visits are conducted by nurses or trained home visitors.

### **Fostering Connections**

The Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act of 2008 [Public Law 110-351] ("Fostering Connections") is a federal child welfare law designed to ensure greater permanency for and improve the well-being of children and youth served by the public child welfare system. In Minnesota, regulations allow youth in foster care at age 18 the option to remain in foster care to age 21.

### **Foundational Services Practices**

A series of guiding principles adopted by the Minnesota Interagency Council on Homelessness designed to improve access to mainstream services that can help prevent or end homelessness for families and individuals.

### **Governor's Workforce Development Board**

Leaders from business, education, labor, community organizations, and state and local government appointed by the Governor to forge practical solutions to Minnesota's workforce challenges and provide leadership on initiatives that are of strategic importance to the state.

### **Homeless (Federal)**

The definition of homelessness varies across statute governing Federal programs and agencies. The definition used by HUD's Homeless Assistance Grant programs from the HEARTH Act establishes four categories of homelessness: (1) Individuals and families who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence and includes a subset for an individual who is exiting an institution where he or she resided for 90 days or less and who resided in an emergency shelter or a place not meant for human habitation immediately before entering that institution; (2) Individuals and families who will imminently lose their primary nighttime residence; (3) Unaccompanied youth and families with children and youth who are defined as homeless under other federal statutes who do not otherwise qualify as homeless under this definition; or (4) Individuals and families who are fleeing, or are attempting to flee, domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, stalking, or other dangerous or life-threatening conditions that relate to violence against the individual or a family member. A number of other Federal agencies and programs use the HEARTH Act definition. The U. S. Department of Education uses a broader definition of homelessness established in the McKinney-Vento Act, which includes children who are doubled up or living in motels or other temporary habitation.

### **Homeless (Minnesota)**

A household lacking a fixed, adequate night time residence (includes doubled up).

### **Housing stability**

Access to a safe and affordable place to live, as well as the resources and supports (if necessary) to maintain stable housing. People have choices in where they live, and if and when they move.

### **Long-Term Homelessness (Minnesota)**

Persons including individuals, unaccompanied youth, or families with children who lack a permanent place to live continuously for a year or more or at least four times in the past three years. Any period of institutionalization or incarceration shall be excluded when determining the length of time a household has been homeless. Minnesota's definition does not require that the person have a disabling condition.

### **Mainstream services**

Services and programs that are not targeted specifically to people experiencing homelessness, such as mental health services, child care assistance, employment services, Head Start, and public health programs.

### **Minnesota Correctional Delivery Systems**

The state of Minnesota has three correctional delivery systems that have different jurisdiction throughout the state. They are:

1. Minnesota Department of Corrections (DOC)
2. Minnesota Community Corrections Act Counties (MACCAC)
3. Minnesota Association of County Probation Office Counties (MACPO)

### **Olmstead**

The *Olmstead v. L.C.* decision (“Olmstead”) is a ruling of the United States Supreme Court requiring states to provide housing and services to people with disabilities in the most integrated setting appropriate to their needs. In 2013, the Governor appointed an Olmstead sub-cabinet to develop and implement a comprehensive plan supporting freedom of choice and opportunity for Minnesotans with disabilities.

### **Point-in-Time (PIT) Count**

A federally required count of sheltered and unsheltered homeless people on a single night in January. The count is required annually for those in shelter and every other year for those not in shelter. Minnesota has opted to do a complete count every year.

### **State Councils**

Councils created by the legislature to represent and advocate for Minnesota's communities of color, American Indians, women, and disability communities. Councils are represented on the Minnesota Interagency Council on Homelessness and include: Council on Asian-Pacific Minnesotans, Minnesota Council on Latino Affairs, Council for Minnesotans of African Heritage, Minnesota Indian Affairs Council, and Minnesota State Council on Disability. The Minnesota Department of Human Rights works with the councils on issues related to diversity and inclusion and encourages collaboration between the councils and other department stakeholders.

### **Supportive housing**

Combines affordable housing with services that help people who face the most complex challenges to live with stability, autonomy and dignity. Sometimes specifically described as permanent supportive housing, to note that there are no fixed time limits for tenancy and to distinguish supportive housing from transitional housing and other time-limited models. Many different models of and approaches to supportive housing exist.

### **Transitional housing**

Programs offering housing and support services, with some time limit on the duration of a resident's tenancy. Many different models of and approaches to transitional housing exist.

**Youth unaccompanied by a parent or guardian (Minnesota)**

A person 24 years of age or younger who is unaccompanied by a parent or guardian and is without shelter where appropriate care and supervision are available, whose parent or legal guardian is unable or unwilling to provide shelter and care, or who lacks a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence. Parenting youth are included.

**Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA)**

Signed the into federal law on July 22, 2014, WIOA is designed to help job seekers access employment, education, training, and support services to succeed in the labor market and to match employers with the skilled workers they need to compete in the global economy.







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