

# Planning Checklist

## *Ending Homelessness for People Living in Encampments: Advancing the Dialogue*



To end homelessness for everyone, we must link people experiencing unsheltered homelessness, including people sleeping and living in encampments<sup>1</sup>, with permanent housing opportunities matched with the right level of services to ensure that those housing opportunities are stable and successful. It is only through the provision of such opportunities that we can provide lasting solutions for individuals and communities. Across the country, many communities are wrestling with how to create effective solutions and provide such housing opportunities for people experiencing unsheltered homelessness. In 2015, USICH created [Ending Homelessness for People Living in Encampments: Advancing the Dialogue](#), a framework for developing local action plans. This Planning Checklist is intended as an accompaniment to that document in order to aid policy-makers, government officials, and practitioners in developing a thoughtful, coordinated, and collaborative plan to ensure that people living in encampments are linked to permanent housing. More detailed information regarding each of the actions identified here is provided within the full document.

### Prepare with Adequate Time for Planning and Implementation

When developing an action plan:

- ☑ **Determine Timing.** Articulate an action plan timeline so residents can determine their options and partners know the timeline for connecting people to housing.
- ☑ **Create Shared Purpose, Intent, and Outcomes.** Develop a common purpose and intent for all stakeholders that enhances collaborative efforts and helps partners identify resources and activities to achieve shared outcomes.
- ☑ **Develop Shared Protocols/MOU.** Create a Memorandum of Understanding that formalizes relationships among stakeholders and delineates protocols.
- ☑ **Create a Communications Plan.** Incorporate a communications strategy on how to interact with the media and respond to questions from community members.
- ☑ **Identify the Land Owner(s).** Consider the needs of the land owner and determine his/her role.
- ☑ **Assess Needs of People Living in the Encampment.** Consistently assess the needs of every person.
- ☑ **Identify Adequate Staffing and Resources.** Based on the projected need, determine how existing housing and services resources can be aligned to connect people to permanent housing.
- ☑ **Plan for Preventing Encampments from Being Recreated.** Create strategies for cleanup measures as well as how the site will be used and/or secured in the future.
- ☑ **Plan for Follow-up Contacts and Tracking Outcomes.** Include strategies for following up with people who have been assisted in order to track outcomes.
- ☑ **Standardize Future Responses.** Develop standardized approaches that incorporate law enforcement policies and agreements with housing providers.
- ☑ **Integrate with the Community's Strategic Efforts to End Homelessness.** Identify lessons that can strengthen the community's overall homelessness crisis response system.

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<sup>1</sup> USICH recognizes that different terms are used for such settings—such as “tent cities”—but has chosen to use “encampments” in this document, while encouraging communities to use whatever language works best locally.

## Collaborate Across Sectors and Systems

When developing or expanding a collaborative partnership, engage stakeholders, including:

- ☑ **People Living in Encampments.** To help understand the needs and goals of residents.
- ☑ **Continuum of Care Agencies.** To provide expertise in coordinating system-level responses.
- ☑ **Other Social Service and Healthcare Agencies.** To provide access to data, resources and expertise.
- ☑ **Community Outreach and Engagement Teams.** To help develop the best engagement strategies.
- ☑ **Law Enforcement Agencies.** To coordinate outreach and ensure the safety of all.
- ☑ **Local Government Agencies and Officials.** To help coordinate government resources and action, specifically:
  - ☑ Elected Officials
  - ☑ Planning, Parks and Recreation, and Public Works
  - ☑ Human or Social Services Departments
  - ☑ Public Health and Behavioral Health Care Departments
- ☑ **Business Leaders.** To leverage professional relationships to generate support and resources.
- ☑ **Philanthropic Organizations.** To involve private funders that have interest in ending homelessness.
- ☑ **Faith-based Organizations.** To provide volunteer and financial support.
- ☑ **Advocates.** To ensure that the voices of people in encampments are heard and raise other concerns.

## Perform Intensive and Persistent Outreach and Engagement

Implement outreach and engagement efforts throughout the process, including:

- ☑ **Identifying All Members of the Encampment By Name and Implement Ongoing Outreach.** Having a full understanding of the population is important to scale resources and tailor interventions.
- ☑ **Maintaining a Consistent Presence in the Encampment.** Devote adequate time and resources to ensure trusting relationships are being developed with residents.
- ☑ **Maintaining Honest and Transparent Communication.** Transparency about the process and timelines ensures trusting relationships are formed.
- ☑ **Identifying Leadership from within the Encampment.** Include such leaders in the process in order to better understand the needs and goals of people and to strengthen relationships.
- ☑ **Cross-Training and Sharing Information.** Sharing information among outreach teams increases success by enabling partners to develop shared responses to both crisis and non-crisis situations.
- ☑ **Linking with Housing Search Services.** Outreach workers should partner with housing navigators, housing search specialists, and landlord liaisons to help people access housing.

## Provide Low-Barrier Pathways to Permanent Housing

To provide a range of housing solutions, consider:

- ☑ **Applying Housing First Strategies and Practices.** Remove obstacles, requirements, and expectations so that people can access housing as quickly as possible.
- ☑ **Aligning Activities with the Existing Homeless Crisis Response and Coordinated Entry System.** Coordinated entry assures people are prioritized for and provided housing and services that meet their needs.
- ☑ **Offering Interim Housing Opportunities and a Clear Path to Permanent Housing.** It is important to provide immediate, interim housing without barriers to entry while permanent housing is being secured.
- ☑ **Identifying an Adequate Supply of Housing Options.** People will need access to a variety of housing options, including permanent supportive housing, rapid re-housing, and mainstream affordable housing.
- ☑ **Engaging State and Federal Partners.** Identify opportunities to align Federal, state, and local funding and programs to provide pathways to permanent housing.