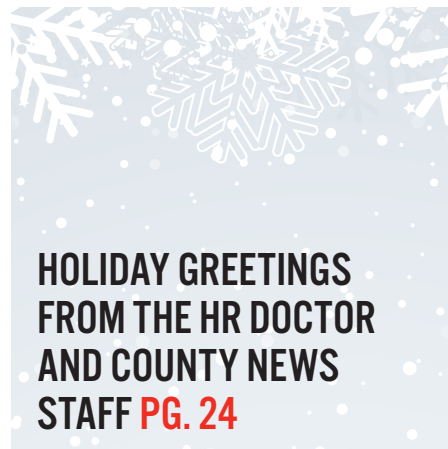




**BOARD ADOPTS MAJOR
POLICY DIRECTION FOR
2017 PG. 5**



**HOLIDAY GREETINGS
FROM THE HR DOCTOR
AND COUNTY NEWS
STAFF PG. 24**



**THE LATEST HOT TOPICS
REPORT FOCUSES ON
HOMELESSNESS PG. 7**



Shining for the holidays, the Little River County Courthouse in Arkansas, was listed on the state's Trail of Holiday Lights. Photo courtesy of Arkansas Department Parks and Tourism

NACo Board OKs FY17 budget, PTI alliance

By Beverly A. Schlotterbeck
executive editor

NACo's Board of Directors approved a \$20.7 million budget for 2017, adopted eight national policy priorities, okayed a new alliance with local government technology association, PTI, and learned about the launch of the Counties Futures Lab during their fall meeting Dec. 8-10 in Leon County, Fla. Leon County is home to the state capital at Tallahassee, Florida State Uni-

versity and not to be outdone, NACo President Bryan Desloge.

The associations's \$20.7 million budget represents an 8.9 percent growth over 2016, fueled by an expected bump in revenue from NACo's Financial Services Corporation (FSC) and investments in grants and contracts, according to NACo Executive Director Matt Chase. FSC, which accounts for 43 percent of to-

See BOARD page 2

Latest CR presents mixed outcomes for counties

Congress passed a short-term spending bill (H.R. 2028) Dec. 9 that will provide funding for the federal government through April 28, 2017.

The spending bill, also known as a continuing resolution (CR), extends the authorization of current federal spending, which was set to expire at midnight. Prior to the bill's advancing, Sen. Joe Manchin (D-W.Va.) had threatened to use procedural tactics to stall the legislation because it lacked critical funding for

retired miners whose health care and pension funds will soon become insolvent. Ultimately Manchin and his allies backed down and allowed the bill to proceed.

The CR, released on Dec. 6 following weeks of negotiations over its scope and the length of the extension, funds the federal government at FY16 levels minus a half percent across-the-board cut to stay under statutory spending

See CR FUNDING page 6

Counties Futures Lab introduced at Board meeting

From BOARD page 1

tal revenues, is projecting 7.5 percent growth in 2017 to \$9.1 million.

While membership revenues are projected to be flat with only 0.85 percent growth, the association continues to enjoy one of the highest retention rates — 98.5 percent — among national associations.

Chase also reported that NACo moved into its new space at 660 N. Capitol St., NW, Nov. 1, where it occupies 42,352 square feet and shares a first floor state-of-the-art conference center with the National League of Cities (NLC). NLC is located in the building as are several NACo affiliates and local-government-related organizations.

Construction of the new leased space was completed on time and under budget, Chase said, and NACo is projected to save \$2 million with the office relocation.

Policy Priorities

NACo's national policy efforts for FY17 will concentrate in eight areas, including a new policy priority on supporting programs that assist counties in preventing and reducing poverty.

Also on the list of national priorities are: protecting the federal-state-local partnership for Medicaid; protecting the tax-exempt status of municipal bonds; promoting county surface transportation priorities; working for a more effective definition of "Waters of the U.S."; supporting county authority to collect existing sales taxes from remote, internet sellers; promote behavioral health and criminal justice re-

form; and restoring full funding for the payments in lieu of taxes (PILT) and Secure Rural Schools (SRS) programs.

NACo's 10 policy steering committees also selected priorities for the new year. They range from promoting local law enforcement innovation from the Justice and Public Safety Steering Committee to enhancing cybersecurity measures from the Telecommunications and Technology Steering Committee.

The Counties Futures Lab

NACo is set to launch a re-branding of NACo's Research Department that will combine its ground-breaking work with the insights of leading national experts to examine and fore-

cast the trends, innovations and promises of county government.

Christened the "Counties Futures Lab," the new center's primary focus will be on pressing county governance and management issues, grounded in analytics, data and knowledge sharing. The Lab will deliver a variety of products, from research studies and analytics reports to forums in partnership with corporations, academia and philanthropic thought leaders with an emphasis on promoting the county government of the future, according to the Lab's initial proposal.

NACo President Brian Desloge and Chase will introduce the Counties Futures Lab in a January 2017 video.

Public Technology Institute (PTI)

The new partnership with the Public Technology Institute, or PTI, will broaden and strengthen NACo's capacity to provide information technology leadership and support to its members, Chase said during his presentation of the PTI association management proposal.

Under the proposal approved by the Board, PTI would be co-located within NACo's headquarters' space and contract with NACo for association management services. The agreement is set for three years.

...And in Other Action

NACo Board members had the opportunity to tour

four Leon County program sites and learn about their exceptional achievements: Apalachee Regional Park where an old landfill was developed into a national cross-country competition venue; the Kearny Center, where a public-private partnership started and maintains a state-of-the-art homeless shelter; Public Safety Center, featuring recently consolidated services; and Domi Station, a refurbished county-owned warehouse, now business incubator creating new jobs and businesses.

Board members also heard from Cissy Proctor, the state's economic opportunity director, and former U.S. Sen. Bob Graham (D-Fla.). **CN**



Cindy Bobbit, NACo Board member, reports her group's SWOT analysis of the association as (l-r) fellow Board members, Christian Leinbach, Merceria Ludgood and Daniel Troy review their notes. Also pictured (l) NACo Exec Matt Chase. Photo by Bev Schlotterbeck

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Obama signs broad, bipartisan mental health, addiction, justice bill



By Brian Bowden
associate legislative director

President Obama has signed the 21st Century Cures Act — a massive legislative package that includes provisions related to criminal justice, mental health and addiction services.

The Senate passed the mea-

sure, Dec. 7 by a 94-5 vote. The House had passed the bill earlier on Nov. 30 by a vote of 392-26.

Several key provisions in the legislation relate to county priorities, including:

Reducing the number of people with mental illness in jails: By reauthorizing the

Mentally Ill Offender Treatment and Crime Reduction Act (MIOTCRA), the bill would support local efforts to decrease mental illness in jails through a broad range of activities, including jail diversion programs, mental health

See CURES page 4

Evelyn Kolbe, veteran NACo leader, Board member, dies Nov. 20

NACo Board member and former president of the Michigan Association of Counties, Evelyn Kolbe, died Nov. 20 at her home in Hesperia, Mich. after a long battle with cancer. She was remembered as a compassionate and committed servant to the people of Oceana County and Michigan, and a stalwart NACo advocate.

“Evelyn was a very kind and compassionate woman,” said Timothy K. McGuire, who long served with Kolbe as Michigan Association of Counties’ executive director. “She was a dedicated public servant, and she took her positions on the NACo Board, MAC Board and other boards at the local level quite seriously. She was unfailingly passionate about the work she did.”

Kolbe had an extensive NACo resume. Over the past



Kolbe

nine years, she served on NACo’s Health, and Agriculture and Rural Affairs Steering committees, Programs and Services Standing Committee, Healthy Counties Initiative Advisory Board, Membership Committee, the Rural Action Caucus and the Women of NACo Leadership Network.

In 2015, Kolbe was honored

by NACo as the Recruiter of the Year for her efforts to encourage other counties to join the organization during the 2014-2015 term.

“Evelyn was a dedicated and compassionate public servant,” said state Rep. Larry Inman, who served with Kolbe on the MAC Board. “Local government was her passion, and her strong advocacy efforts made a big impact both on the Michigan Association of Counties’ Board and the National Association of Counties’ (NACo) Board. She always kept her positive attitude, even when times were tough.”

Kolbe is survived by her husband, Ed; six children, 13 grandchildren, six great-grandchildren and two sisters. **CN**

Funeral services were held Nov. 23.

Congress passes nearly \$12 billion water bill in late-night vote before adjourning for the year

By Julie Ufner
associate legislative director

President Obama is expected to sign a major water infrastructure package after the Senate voted at 1 a.m. on Dec. 10 to pass the Water Infrastructure Improvements for the Nation (WIIN) Act (S. 612). The bill passed easily by a vote of 78-21. Included in S. 612 is the Water Resources Development Act (WRDA), which both the House and Senate passed earlier this year. The Senate passed its version of WRDA on Sept. 15 by a vote of 95-3, while the House passed a slightly different version on Sept. 28 by a vote of 399-25.

A few senators, led by Sen. Barbara Boxer (D-Calif.), threatened to hold up the bill over concerns about language to address the California drought, arguing that the measure would weaken environmental protections and harm California fisheries. These members were ultimately unable to block the bill’s passage.

The final legislation authorizes 30 new infrastructure projects across the country and provides \$170 million in aid to address the drinking water crisis in Flint, Mich. It also includes language to allow EPA to approve state programs for the disposal of coal ash and addresses national drought situations, particularly in California.

With WRDA attached, the WIIN Act allows the Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) to make much-needed repairs and improvements to America’s dams, ports, waterways, flood protection and other critical water infrastructure.

In addition to authorizing new Corps projects and addressing drinking water emergencies, the WIIN Act also ensures the solvency of the Harbor Maintenance Trust

Fund, authorizes \$20 million for the Water Infrastructure Financing Innovation Act (WI-FIA), provides for the rehabilitation of high-hazard, non-federal dams and establishes a pilot program to help carry out projects that make use of dredged material.

Despite passage of the WIIN Act, Congress must still appropriate funding for most of the projects within the bill (aid for Flint, Mich. was appropriated through a separate continuing resolution earlier that night). This means that the debate over how to actually fund the package will likely fall to the next Congress along with other appropriations priorities. **CN**

For more information, contact Julie Ufner at jufner@naco.org or 202.942.4269.



SNAP/STATS

STATES WITH THE MOST STAY-AT-HOME DADS

State	Percentage
South Dakota	39%
West Virginia	30
Rhode Island	24
Alabama	23
Wisconsin	23

Source: The Huffington Post, 5/13/2015

Addiction, behavioral health aid highlight 21st Century Cures Act

From CURES page 3

courts, in-jail treatments and transitional services and crisis intervention training. Through the Stepping Up Initiative, counties are working to reduce the estimated 2 million individuals with serious mental illnesses who are admitted to 3,100 local jails each year.

Providing community-based behavioral health services: By reauthorizing the Community Mental Health Services and Substance Abuse Prevention and Treatment block grants, the bill would continue to allow counties, through 750 behavioral health authorities and community providers, to deliver direct behavioral health services to

those with mental health conditions and substance abuse disorders.

While provisions to reform the mental health system are weaker than in previous stand-alone bills, the legislation still contains some county priorities for behavioral health reform, including strengthening the behavioral health workforce and enhancing the implementation of mental health parity.

Combating the opioid epidemic: By authorizing \$1 billion over two years for state grants to supplement opioid abuse prevention and treatment activities, lawmakers have taken a significant step in efforts to end the opioid epidemic. While this is a pos-

Budget cuts have led to the loss of more than 50,000 jobs at local health departments.

itive first step, until Congress appropriates funds for these bills, local opioid programs will not receive additional federal support.

The appropriation of significant funding for local opioid programs was one of the recommendations made to federal leaders in a report recently released by NACo's Task Force on the Opioid Epidemic, jointly launched this year with the National League of Cities.

While these provisions promise to address

long-standing county priorities, NACo has concerns with how Congress plans to pay for the \$6.3 billion package.

Over half of the bill (\$3.5 billion) would be offset by future cuts to the Department of Health and Human Services Prevention and Public Health Fund (PPHF), which helps more than 1,900 county public health departments protect their residents' health and safety, and prevent the leading causes of death in their communities.

Federal investments like the PPHF are responsible for approximately one-fourth of local health departments' rev-

enue, and since 2008, budget cuts have led to the loss of more than 50,000 jobs at local health departments. NACo has long fought to protect the PPHF.

The initial draft of the bill also included the Family First Prevention Services Act (FFPSA), which was stripped from the final "Cures" package passed by the House. This language, which would have updated federal foster care requirements and introduced new federal funding for foster care prevention services, included a few provisions that concerned some NACo members. **CN**



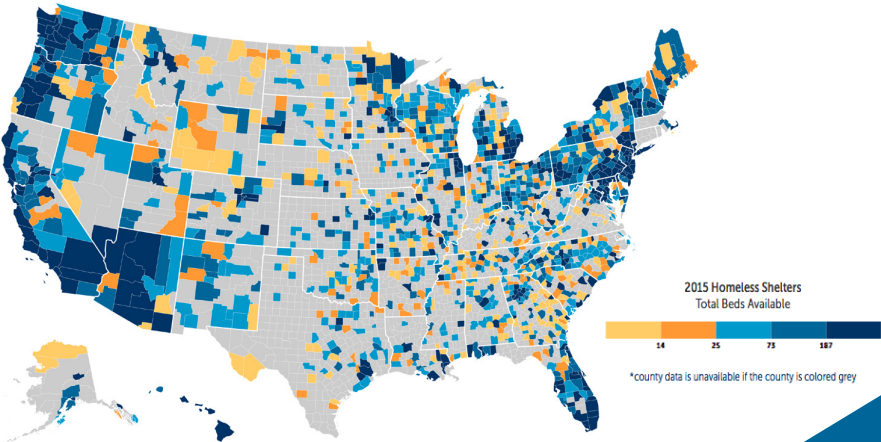
NEW IN DECEMBER FROM NACo's

COUNTY EXPLORER

50% of counties have **homeless shelters.**

11% of institutions of higher education are located in counties with 50,000 or fewer residents.

23% of all coal-fueled power plants are located in counties in Pennsylvania, Michigan, Illinois and Indiana.



Source: NACo Analysis of U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development PIT data, 2015

www.NACo.org/CountyExplorer



2016 DATA VIZ AWARD WINNER

WORD SEARCH

CRAVEN COUNTY, N.C.

LEARN MORE ABOUT THIS FEATURED COUNTY IN 'BEHIND THE SEAL?'

Created By: Charles Taylor

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R D A T T M O R E O L I V E R H O U S E
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- ATTMORE-OLIVER HOUSE** Historic home housing New Bern Historical Society

CALEB BRADHAM Invented PepsiCola at a New Bern drug store

CHERRY POINT Marine Corps Air Station

CRAPE MYRTLE Official flower of New Bern, the county seat

CROATAN Coastal National Forest

FIREMAN'S MUSEUM Located in New Bern

HAVELOCK City, home of Marine Corps Air Station Cherry Point

LENOIR Border county to the west
- MUMFEST** Annual chrysanthemum festival

PAMLICO County to the east

SWITZERLAND Immigrants from this nation named city after former Swiss capital, Bern

TRENT AND NUSE Rivers that meet at New Bern

TRYON PALACE Replica of Colonial Royal Gov. William Tryon's mansion

VANCEBORO Town, pop. @ 1,000, in the county

WILLIAM, EARL OF CRAVEN Colonial-era lord proprietor of the Carolina Province

NACo 2017 National Policy Priorities



NACo's executive committee and regional representatives approve the organization's 2017 policy priorities. Photo by Bev Schlotterbeck

Basic Principles: NACo supports federal policies and programs that equip the nation's 3,069 county governments with the resources and tools needed to effectively serve their residents. NACo works to preserve local decision-making and protect counties from unfunded mandates and preemption of local authority.

NATIONAL POLICY PRIORITIES

PROTECT THE TAX-EXEMPT STATUS OF MUNICIPAL BONDS

NACo supports preserving the federal deductibility of local property and income taxes and the tax-exempt status of municipal bonds that provide critical funding for public facilities, infrastructure and development. Provisions such as the tax exemption for municipal bond interest have been part of the federal tax code for more than 100 years, helping to efficiently and safely finance trillions of dollars in public works projects.

PROTECT THE FEDERAL-STATE-LOCAL PARTNERSHIP FOR MEDICAID

NACo supports maintaining the federal-state-local structure for financing and delivering Medicaid services. Counties continue to be concerned about measures that would limit the ability of states to direct supplemental payments to county providers, curtail the ability of counties to contribute local funds to match federal dollars or otherwise shift federal and state Medicaid costs to counties including cuts, caps or block grants. We support efforts to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of policies and operations.

PROMOTE COUNTY SURFACE TRANSPORTATION PRIORITIES

NACo will work to ensure that any transportation and infrastructure measures reflect county priorities, including allocating more funding for locally owned infrastructure, increasing local decision-making authority, prioritizing investments that increase economic development, mobility and safety. NACo will also continue

to urge Congress to resolve the long-term solvency of the Highway Trust Fund.

WORK FOR A MORE EFFECTIVE DEFINITION OF "WATERS OF THE U.S."

NACo believes that local streets, gutters and human-made ditches should be excluded from the definition of "Waters of the U.S." (WOTUS) under the federal Clean Water Act. NACo calls on Congress to require the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to withdraw the new WOTUS rule and rewrite it in consultation and collaboration with state and local governments.

SUPPORT COUNTY AUTHORITY TO COLLECT EXISTING SALES TAX

NACo supports legislation to permit the collection of existing sales and use taxes from remote sellers. The issue of collecting remote sales taxes has escalated in recent years due to the internet's growth as a retail marketplace. As a result, state and local governments have lost billions in uncollect-

ed sales taxes, and Main Street businesses find themselves at a significant competitive disadvantage to online merchants. This disadvantage is amplified because online merchants and their customers use local infrastructure and services without contributing to their provision.

SUPPORT POLICIES TO PROMOTE BEHAVIORAL HEALTH AND CRIMINAL JUSTICE REFORM

NACo supports measures that enhance the ability of counties to prevent and treat mental illness and substance abuse disorders. NACo also supports programs and legislation to reduce mental illness in jails and provide appropriate treatment to those in custody, while protecting overall public safety.

SUPPORT THE PAYMENT IN LIEU OF TAXES (PILT) AND SECURE RURAL SCHOOLS (SRS) PROGRAMS

NACo supports restoring full mandatory funding for the Payments in Lieu of Taxes (PILT) program, which compensates counties for tax-exempt federal

land within their boundaries. NACo also supports extending the Secure Rural Schools (SRS) program as a transitional funding mechanism until the federal government fully implements a sustainable long-term forest management program with adequate revenue sharing for forest counties and schools.

SUPPORT PROGRAMS THAT ASSIST COUNTIES TO PREVENT AND REDUCE POVERTY

NACo supports federal investments and strategies that focus on serving those most in need and address the root causes of poverty. Because counties are responsible to maintain the local social safety net and are mandated to provide indigent care, NACo supports fully funding programs that assist those most in need and maintain the maximum amount of efficiency and flexibility possible at the local level. Key federal programs that assist counties in tackling poverty include the Social Services Block Grant, the Community Services Block Grant and the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families program. **CN**

CR authorizes funding to fight opioid epidemic

From CR FUNDING page 1

caps. Congress included funding levels for some programs above the standard prorated amounts in the CR. These increased funding levels, also known as “anomalies,” enable agencies to commit to long-term projects or to fund other urgent priorities.

In a win for counties, the CR provides \$500 million in FY17 funds for state and local efforts to combat the opioid epidemic. This funding was authorized in the recently passed 21st Century Cures Act (H.R. 34) and would be made avail-

able through grants from the Department of Health and Human Services.

In NACo’s report on the opioid epidemic, published jointly with the National League of Cities in November, NACo called for significant federal funding to augment local efforts to end the opioid epidemic. A joint letter was sent to congressional leaders on Dec. 8 calling for urgent appropriation of such funds.

Also important for counties, the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program will receive an additional \$1.8 billion in new CDBG disaster

assistance to states for recovery and rebuilding efforts for individuals with homes damaged by severe weather events.

The CR also maintains FY16 level funding for key rural housing and infrastructure assistance programs including \$1.25 billion for rural water and waste program loans, as well as \$24 billion in loan authority for the Single Family Housing guaranteed loan program.

These programs provide assistance to rural communities for basic infrastructure improvements, as well as direct assistance to low-income rural

families that have limited options for purchasing a home due to their geographic location.

Although the CR does not include increased funding to provide the \$480 million necessary to fully fund the Payments in Lieu of Taxes (PILT) program in FY17, the bill does extend funding for PILT at FY16 levels.

This allows the Interior Department to conduct data calls and gather the information it needs to calculate PILT payments under the statutory formula in preparation for an on-time 2017 payment. However, Congress must act to pass FY17 appropriations legislation that includes funding for PILT at the \$480 million level in order to ensure counties receive full PILT payments.

The CR also does not include language to reauthorize the Secure Rural Schools (SRS) program retroactively for FY16 or into the future. The SRS program expired in September 2015, and counties received their last authorized SRS payments in early 2016. If Congress fails to act, counties will revert to 25 percent forest revenue-sharing payments based on annual timber receipts, rather than payments under the SRS program. The last time Congress failed to reauthorize the SRS program, counties faced, on average, an 80 percent cut in federal forest payments to counties and schools.

The CR contains \$170 million to help communities like Flint, Mich. that have contaminated drinking water systems.

The funding includes grants for infrastructure improvements, lead poisoning prevention care and a lead-exposure registry.

The CR also provides \$20 million for the Water Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act (WIFIA) which would provide low-interest loans for large water and wastewater projects. **CN**



**CRAVEN
COUNTY, N.C.**

Introduced in: 1981

Craven County, originally included as a precinct of Bath County, was established in its present form in 1712 and named for William, Earl of Craven, who lived from 1606–1697. New Bern became its county seat in 1722, and was also the capital of the colony and first state capital until 1794.

Craven County



The official Craven County seal was designed, using the coat-of-arms of the Earl, which is also the coat-of-arms of his nephew, William, Lord Craven, who succeeded him as Lord Proprietor of Carolina.

The motto on the seal, “*Virtus in Actione Consistit*” translates to “Virtue Consists in Action.”

**Would you like to
see your county’s
seal featured?**

Contact
Charlie Ban at
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PUBLIC NOTICE

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To submit a proposal or learn more, please visit www.electrifyamerica.com.

CountyNews

HOT topics

HOMELESSNESS

HUD Sec. Castro sees big picture pg. 11

Counties share what works pg. 18

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION *of* COUNTIES

DECEMBER 19, 2016

A HOME FOR THE HOLIDAYS, ALL YEAR LONG

Counties make strides in battling homelessness

Image By Ken Steinhardt,
The Orange County Register

WANTED: A PLACE TO CALL HOME

Ending homelessness takes slow and steady progress

By Charles Taylor
senior staff writer

Last year this time, hundreds of vulnerable residents in Milwaukee County, Wis. spent their holidays in shelters or on the streets.

This year, according to County Executive Chris Abele, almost 200 of those people have a place of their own, thanks to the county Housing Division's initiative to end chronic homelessness.

At the White House last month, Abele and other local elected officials from around the country shared with each other "what's working" in their communities to alleviate

homelessness.

"The people I talked to share my enthusiasm for providing resources ... that embrace human dignity and diversity," he told *County News*.

Through coordinated federal, state and local efforts, homelessness is abating. But Mikkel Beckmen, director of Hennepin County, Minn.'s Office to End Homelessness, lays some of the blame for past increases on old federal policy, "the disinvestment in public housing and some of the programs that make housing more affordable for low-income renters."

Nationwide, on a single night in January 2015, some 565,000 Americans were homeless — sleeping outside, in shelters or in transitional housing, according to the National Alliance to End Homelessness. But that number has been decreasing steadily — if slowly — over the past several years. The national rate of homelessness in 2015 fell to 17.7 people per 10,000 in the general population from 18.3 in 2014.

One major success story of rehousing the homeless has been the elimination of veteran homelessness in several counties and cities across the country. In January, there were just under 40,000 homeless veterans reported nationwide, according to the National Coalition for Homeless Veterans. In 2010, there were 76,329. To date, three states and 33 communities have declared an end to veteran homelessness.

Vincent Weston bounced from shelter to shelter for much of 2015. Kicked out of his father's house over a family dispute, he spent some of that time living on the streets of Hackensack, N.J., in Bergen County. "I really didn't let nothing get me down," he said, "because I kind of figured that there's got to be a better way." An Army veteran, he was fortunate to find himself an apartment, with the aid of the county's Division of Veterans Services.

In June, Terrebonne Parish, La. became the second jurisdiction in the state to effectively quash homelessness. Having hit "functional zero," Parish President Gordon Dove pledged to keep homelessness among veterans "rare, brief and non-recurring."

While the needs of the homeless sub-populations may differ, there is one model that is succeeding where others have failed or had only modest success, and that's "housing first." It's a strategy that works for the vast majority of homeless populations, experts say.

"Our Housing Division launched Housing First in Milwaukee last July with a goal to house 300 individuals by 2018," Abele said. "This initiative focuses on the housing first concept — that a homeless individual or family's first and primary need is to obtain stable housing. Other issues that affect

the household are addressed once housing is obtained. National data shows this model provides very successful outcomes and dramatically reduces public service costs."

Under the housing first model, issues such as an individual's drug or alcohol abuse or unemployment are subsequently addressed with supportive, safety net services.

"And here in Milwaukee, it's working," Abele said. Since launching the "ending chronic homelessness," initiative in July 2015, 170 chronically homeless people have found homes through housing first.

Ninety-nine percent of those individuals have remained in stable housing, and all are participating in voluntary case management services, he added.

Milwaukee County has almost 1 million residents — the kind of big-city population that many associate with homelessness. But suburban and rural counties are not immune to the problem.

The Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) estimates that of the more than half-a-million people who were homeless on any given night in 2015, 78,085 of them lived in rural areas.

Of those, 42 percent were people in families, while 11.6 percent were chronically homeless individuals.

Those data are likely an underestimate, according to a Housing Assistance Coalition report released earlier this year — since homeless censuses don't count low-income people who are "doubled up" with other families or are in substandard housing. And the unsheltered homeless in rural America may be less likely to live on the streets.

In 2010, the Obama Administration launched Opening Doors, the first-ever federal strategic plan to prevent and end homelessness. Since then, overall homelessness is down by 10 percent, HUD Secretary Julian Castro said.

"We now know that ending homelessness is no longer a pipe dream. It's achievable — and communities around the country have stepped up to prove it," he said. "This has been made possible through unprecedented partnerships at the federal, state and local level as well as with the business community, non-profits and philanthropy.

"On the issue of homelessness, it could be easy for a local official to not put it at the top of the priority list," Castro said.


"But I've seen so many leaders step up to the challenge of ending homelessness — and the folks that put in the effort and follow best practices have often seen tremendous progress that benefits their entire community." 



Photo courtesy of
Voice of OC

Leon County, Fla. homeless shelter leads by innovation, example

By Jack Peterson
associate legislative director

Just a half-mile down the road from the Leon County, Fla. jail sits a homeless shelter. On one brisk December night, nearly 380 people slept within the walls of the Kearney Center, a number that Center Chief Operating Officer Monique Ellsworth describes as “not even close to capacity.” The center operates 24/7, 365 days a year as part of a public-private partnership between the county, the city of Tallahassee and several foundations and nonprofits.

Since April 2015, the Kearney Center has focused on serving its residents in new, collaborative ways. With the jail nearby, where inmates are often released at 12:01 a.m. with nowhere to go, is just one example of their novel approach to combating homelessness.

Innovation at Kearney starts with the

building itself. There are “flex rooms” in both the men’s and women’s wings of the shelter, which allow residents who need time to themselves, or are experiencing trauma, or, as a family, need a little extra space. “Gathering” rooms are also located on each wing where residents can attend classes, watch TV, read or come together as a community.

One of the smallest — but perhaps most important — rooms is also the first of its kind: a heating room. By reaching temperatures over 160 degrees Fahrenheit, the room exterminates any pests that might have hitched a ride, including, and especially, bed bugs.

Since opening, the center has had only four bed bug sightings, and a partnership with a local pest control company provides immediate resolution for these tiny crises.

The Kearney Center stands as much more than a simple shelter with a new


building. More than 40 different community partners visit the shelter each week to help meet the needs of residents — whom they refer to as “clients” — giving them access to employment services, substance abuse programs, mental health counseling and GED classes, as well as connecting them with a variety of county services departments.

Kearney Center clients can sign up for meetings with different departments or organizations, and some meeting rooms are designed to simulate the look and feel of interviews.

“We’ve learned that homeless individuals are rarely homeless just for one reason,” noted Chuck White, who oversees partnerships with agencies and external organizations. “The wrap-around services provided at Kearney pull from different sectors, break down silos, and meet as many needs of the clients as possible,” he said. Ellsworth is more di-

rect about the need for establishing relationships within the community: “This simply isn’t possible without our community partnerships.”

In assisting their clients, the center can point to one significant example of success and hope: the center itself. During construction, the center employed 28 homeless persons, 22 of whom are still in permanent housing. The kitchen gives residents the opportunity to work and train in food preparation, even allowing them to earn certifications. Clients of the center are responsible for cleaning the facilities on a rotating schedule.

“Our communities are ultimately defined by how we treat the least among us,” White said. At the Kearney Center, every day is an opportunity to help its clients move forward from a moment of desperation, with the very walls of the building serving as a symbol of hope and possibility. 



NACo Board members learn more about the Kearney Center in one of its “Gathering Rooms,” during a tour of Leon County’s state-of-the-art homeless shelter. Photo courtesy of Leon County, Fla.

FACES OF HOMELESSNESS:

By Charles Taylor
senior staff writer

In 7th grade, Cynthia Castillon was a straight-A student. That was before being expelled for bringing drugs to school. If only that were the worst of her problems.

The journey from honor student to sleeping behind a San Diego County church would trace the arc of her bouts with homelessness between 2004 and 2008. Her drug and alcohol abuse led her on a downward spiral that would take years to reverse.

Dennis Clark found himself in an Arlington County, Va. shelter after his taxi-driving income was decimated by competing ride-hailing services. In better times, he was able to afford motel rooms, or he couch surfed with relatives.

"I've driven a cab for over 20 years, and Uber has really killed our business," he said. "I had run out of relatives to live with, and I ended up having to suck up my pride and come to the shelter."

For Castillon and Clark, homelessness — for varying periods of time — was a waypoint to permanent housing, thanks to services provided by their respective counties.

Castillon's drug use — meth, "anything I could get my hands on" — continued through high school. After graduating, she made a failed attempt at college, but the lure of drugs and drink proved too strong to resist.

Pregnant at 19, she had her first child. The father was "into drugs," and they would have a second baby before he split, leaving her with two small girls whom her parents would eventually care for.

"I ended up homeless in the streets of East County San Diego," she recalled. "I remember sleeping behind a church in a sleeping bag, and I would wake up Sunday morning ... and I could see people coming to the church and just tried to pull that sleeping bag up a little bit over my head so they wouldn't be able to completely see me back there lying down."

For a time, she lived in a park with other homeless people. She and a new boyfriend would break into abandoned buildings "just to have somewhere that was dry to sleep at night."

"It was just one thing after another," she said, "but unfortunately, I was still heavy into my drug use." By this time, she was seeing a different guy, who would father her third child — a boy.

At that point, Castillon was sober, but her baby's father wasn't. Luckily — if you can call it luck — it was his insobriety that helped to turn her life around.

One night, her boyfriend — while intoxicated — was going to drive Castillon to her mother's house but changed course with no explanation. "No, you're drunk," she protested, "I'm not going to drive with you." But she acquiesced.

At a stoplight, Castillon opened the door and tried to make a run for it; that's when her boyfriend grabbed her by her coat and drove off.

"Being dragged from a moving vehicle and you're pregnant, and this other person who's supposed to care has no regard for you whatsoever. And that was kind of just my 'aha' moment," she said.

"It was at that point realized I'm going to either end up dead or in jail or something. So I did what I thought was my only choice, I went home to my parents, who were always more than willing to help me out and do whatever I needed to do — but they wanted me to do it the right way, and I wasn't ready prior to that."

So, here she was — a single mother of three "with no kind of work history," student loans from her brief fling with college in default. "It was just really hard to kind of see myself being able to do anything for these three kids that I had," she said, "let alone have a career."

On her parents' advice, Castillon sought help from San Diego County's Health and Human Services Agency.

That's how she learned about the welfare-to-work program that allowed her to go back to school and earn two associates degrees — one in behavioral science, the other in social work.

Soon she was offered an internship in San Jose City College's mental health systems program. When paid position opened up — just week into her internship — she was offered a case manager job.

"I was like, 'Cool,' so I started on as an intern; a week later I was a case manager and now," she said. "it's almost four years later, I'm lead supervising counselor, and I'm really at a completely different spot than I was eight years ago."

At age 34, she's preparing to go back to school for a bachelor's degree in social work. She got married about three years ago to a man with a steady job, and they have a fourth child.

"I was completely able to turn my life around, and a lot of it had to do with just the services that the county provides,"

Castillon said. "As a single mom of four... I didn't know what to do, where to start. So it was really awesome."


Meanwhile back in Virginia, Dennis Clark no longer lives in motels or a shelter. He has his own one-bedroom apartment thanks to A-SPAN (formerly known as Arlington Street People Assistance Network), which the county helps to fund.

Because of his age, 60, and his low income, Clark qualifies for a rent subsidy. He pays the balance from his earnings as a cabbie. "There was a time I didn't need any subsidy; I paid my way," he said.

"My family came from North Carolina in the '50s and we were always, even to this day, hardworking people who pay our own way, but life throws you a curve sometimes."

Thanks to A-SPAN and Arlington County, Clark has a home and his dignity.

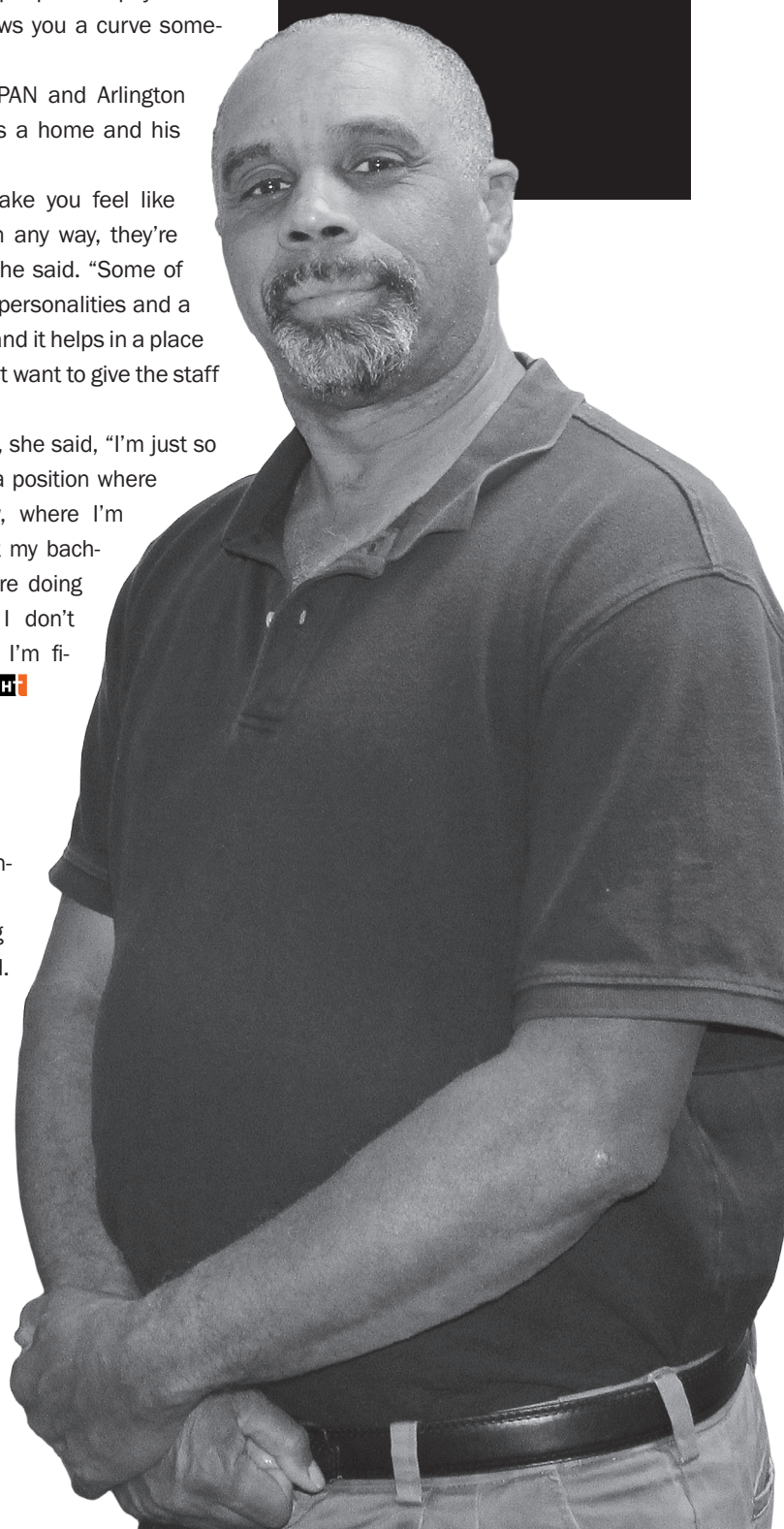
"They don't make you feel like you're belittled in any way, they're always positive," he said. "Some of them have great personalities and a sense of humor, and it helps in a place like that, and I just want to give the staff an A+ rating."

As for Castillon, she said, "I'm just so grateful to be in a position where I'm at right now, where I'm going back to get my bachelor's, the kids are doing okay in school. I don't have any wants; I'm financially stable." 

Dennis Clark found himself in an Arlington County, Va. shelter after his taxi-driving income collapsed.

Photo courtesy of A-SPAN

Homeless
no more



HOMELESSNESS: the view from

Department of Housing
and Urban Development
Secretary **Julian Castro**

How successful has HUD and the Administration been in achieving the goals set for ending homelessness?

Since 2010, when the president launched Opening Doors, the first-ever federal strategic plan to prevent and end homelessness, we've made historic progress. Among veterans alone, we've reduced homelessness by nearly half in that time.

Overall homelessness is down by more than 10 percent during the Obama Administration. We're very proud of what we've been able to accomplish. While we're clear-eyed about the work that's still ahead, I believe we are on the right track.

What roles do counties and other local governments play in achievement of the goals for "ending homelessness"?

This unprecedented progress would not be possible without the dedication of local leaders. That's where the rubber meets the road. As a former mayor, I appreciate the demands on local governments to deliver results for the people they serve.

On the issue of homelessness, it could be easy for a local official to not put it at the top of the priority list. But I've seen so many leaders step up to the challenge of ending homelessness — and the folks that put in the effort and follow best practices have often seen tremendous progress that benefits their entire community.

And counties feel the pressures that homelessness puts on their own health and human services programs. Aligning county-led programs with efforts to identify, prevent and end homelessness makes sense and works better.

What are the key strategies, partnerships and services to help improve outcomes for homeless populations?

"Housing First" has been critical to the success of communities across the nation. The old-school model for ending homelessness tells us that we must require a person experiencing homeless-

ness to solve their personal challenges first — like getting sober, for example — before they'll be offered housing. For most folks, that's just not a successful approach. It's easier to tackle other problems once you've got a safe, stable place to call home. That's the Housing First model in action.

It has been a highly effective strategy among folks who are experiencing chronic homelessness and have higher service needs as well as for families with children who are having their first housing crisis.

In the effort to end veteran homelessness specifically, we've also had a great amount of success with the HUD-Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing (HUD-VASH) program. It's a joint HUD-VA offering that pairs HUD rental assistance in the form of a voucher with the supportive services provided by a VA medical center. The HUD-VASH program has helped more than 117,000 veterans.

When a state or local government claims to have ended homelessness for a certain population, what does this really mean?

For the three states and 33 communities that have already achieved an effective end to veteran homelessness, it means they've put a system in place to ensure homelessness is prevented wherever possible. If it can't be prevented, they can ensure it is a rare, brief and one-time experience. What it doesn't mean is that there will never be another veteran who experiences homelessness in their community. We know there will always be folks at risk of experiencing homelessness for a number of reasons, whether it's a bad turn in the economy, health issue or an unexpected life event.



Julian Castro

Department of Housing and Urban Development Secretary

Overall homelessness is down by more than 10 percent during the Obama Administration.

That's why we need to keep building on our momentum and put strong response systems in place in every community.

What are the key takeaways thus far from the "ending homelessness" initiative?

We now know that ending homelessness is no longer a pipe dream. It's achievable — and communities around the country have stepped up to prove it. This has been made possible through unprecedented partnerships at the federal, state and local level as well as with the business community, nonprofits and philanthropy. It's also required a significant investment from Congress that we have seen for veterans.

What we need going forward is that same level of partnership, investment and energy to be focused on making the same progress with families, youth and


the chronically homeless as we've seen among veterans.

The good news is that ending homelessness is not a partisan issue. We all have a vested interest in solving this challenge and strengthening our communities. That gives me hope that this great work that was really catalyzed during the Obama Administration will carry on in the future.

What are HUD and other agency partners doing to ensure the positive outcomes for homeless populations including veterans, families and youth continue beyond the Obama Administration?

Under the president's Opening Doors plan, HUD will continue to work strategically with the U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness (USICH) to coordinate the 19 different federal agencies that work to prevent and end homelessness.

One of the key factors in our progress so far is the work of USICH. It's broken down silos that too often prevented natural partnerships at the federal level and it's made it possible to coordinate this highly effective national effort.

Next October, USICH is facing a sunset deadline. I've been a strong proponent of an extension of its mandate and will continue to advocate for the Council to lead this effort beyond the Obama Administration. If we want to continue making a positive impact for the folks who are facing homelessness in our nation, we need to leave a strong system in place to carry on this work in the years to come. 

FAST TAKES

HUD'S HOMELESS HELP AT HOME

To learn more about HUD programs to help the homeless, including which HUD programs operate in your area, visit <https://www.hudexchange.info/homelessness-assistance/>.

Housing homeless vets yields strategy to end all homelessness

By Baylee Crone
executive director National Coalition
for Homeless Veterans

In August 2016, the annual Point-in-Time (PIT) count showed us that veteran homelessness has dropped nearly 50 percent since 2010. This means that, across the country on a given night, fewer than 40,000 veterans were experiencing homelessness.

Veteran homelessness dropped precipitously in the last year (a 17.3 percent decrease from 2015), with large decreases in the numbers of unsheltered veterans sleeping on our nation's streets. At the National Coalition for Homeless Veterans (NCHV), we hailed this progress as an indication that investments in ending veteran homelessness were working, but that we still had a lot of work to do, and we need all hands on deck.

For over 26 years, NCHV has been the only national agency solely dedicated to ending and preventing homelessness for those who served our country. Across the country, our community organizations

and partners are stepping in with a hand up to good jobs, safe homes and opportunities for real connection for the most vulnerable veterans.

NCHV offers community education, advocacy and direct technical assistance to service providers in our network and works closely with our member organizations and corporate, nonprofit and government partners on the national, state and local levels.

Each year, NCHV eagerly awaits the results of the PIT count — it serves as an annual checkup, a guidepost to analyze efforts in our shared goal to end homelessness for each veteran experiencing it. Are we still making progress?

The momentum now is on the side of rapid change, and we are closer than ever to achieving our mission of effectively ending veteran homelessness in every community. This change happens on the local level, with local county officials playing a critical role in marshalling resources and facilitating coordination.

Every year, NCHV supports more than 9,000 organizations working tirelessly to

transform the lives of individual veterans and to build the systems that respond to their changing needs. Communities that have built these systems have reached a “functional end” to veteran homelessness, meaning that the local community is able to rapidly assist every veteran experiencing homelessness in that community so homelessness is brief, rare and nonrecurring.

So far, 33 local jurisdictions and three states have reached a functional end to veteran homelessness. In Montgomery County, Md. partners announced a functional end to veteran homelessness in December 2015 after committing to a multi-year effort to prioritize veterans in affordable housing. The county set clear goals with specific targets, communicated their progress with the wider community on a regular basis, and, critically, had dedicated county-level staff to oversee and manage this effort.

In early 2015, Flagler County, Fla. reached a functional end to veteran homelessness by thinking outside the box. They used a “battle buddy” and other peer support models to support veterans navigat-

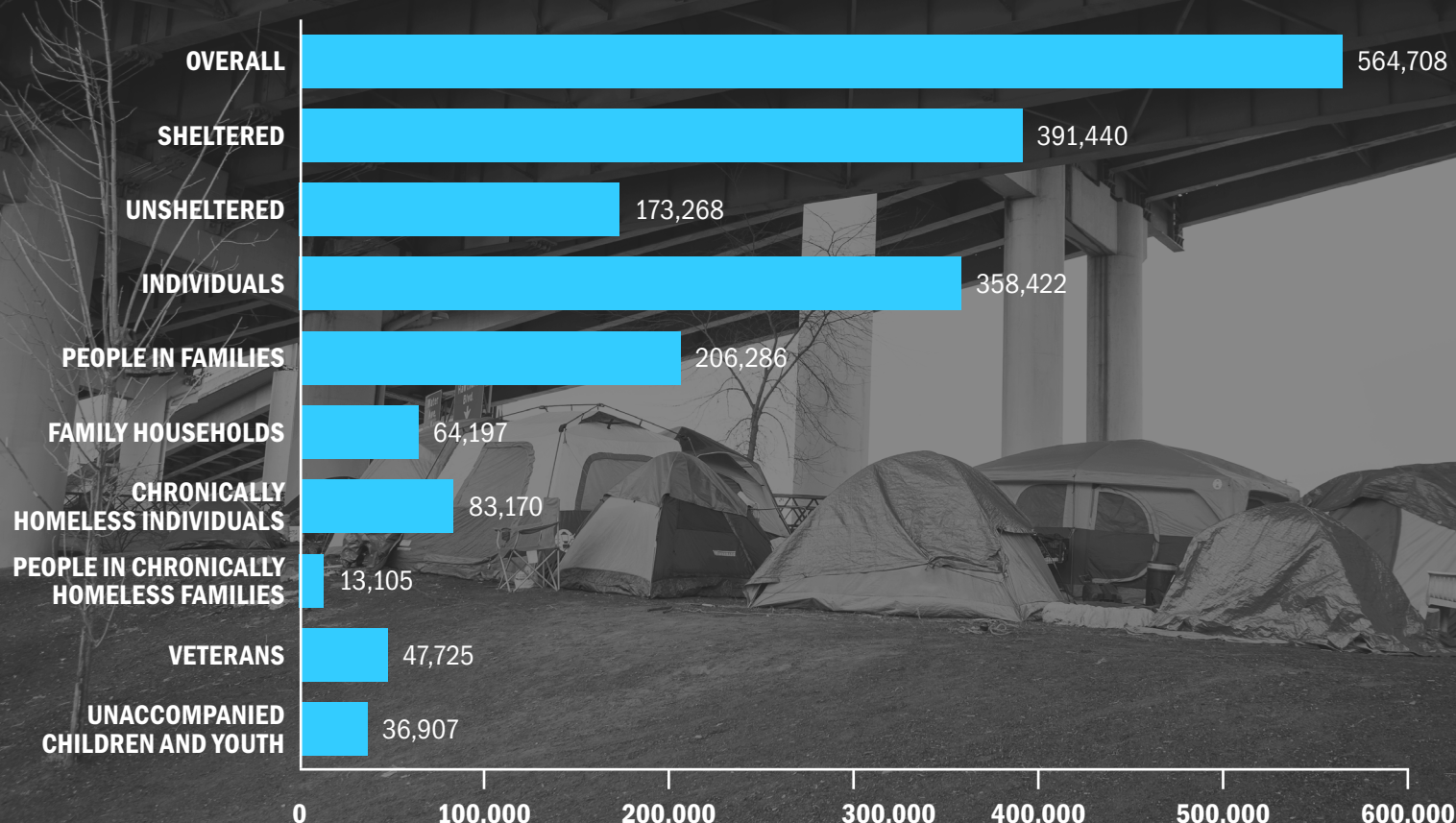
ing the housing process and developed a coordinated list of veterans, by name, so no veterans fell through the cracks.

In Minnesota, the Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs dedicated staff to the effort, a needed step to get all partners at the same table to build out an operations system that rapidly increased permanent housing placements.

As NCHV has grown and developed in this effort, it has learned that the collective effort to end homelessness for veterans has begun to set up models for change to end all homelessness. NCHV's network of community agencies and local advocates can serve a vital role in supporting local county officials looking to identify gaps in services and to build common community goals. And they need your help to end and maintain an end to all homelessness, including veteran homelessness, across the country. **Hi**

To learn more about NCHV and its network of community agencies, visit www.nchv.org or call 202.546.1969.

BREAKDOWN OF HOMELESSNESS POPULATIONS, 2015



Source: *The State of Homelessness in America - 2016*, The National Alliance to End Homelessness

Outreach worker links isolated homeless with county resources



Rusty Walking Eagle (right) with Jeff, a homeless man with whom he developed a bond.
Photo by Charlie Ban

By Charlie Ban
senior staff writer

Jeff has been living in the woods of Fairfax County, Va. for a few years. He likes it there, prefers the solitude, the quiet. The 36-year-old Alexandria, Va. native doesn't keep many friends or keep in touch with his family right now, but he makes an exception for Rusty Walking Eagle.

Rusty is an outreach staffer for the county's Projects for Assistance in Transition from Homelessness program through the Community Services Board, and he treks out to meet with Jeff and other homeless adults living throughout the suburban county, across the Potomac River from Washington, D.C. Once they establish relationships, he convinces them to come to the nearby Gartlan Behavioral Health Center, which plays host, twice a week, to a drop-in day center where homeless adults get food, do laundry, talk to caseworkers and pick up supplies and maybe think about housing.

"Once you get that trust and start developing that trust, then the doors start opening up. Now they're starting to talk," Rusty said.

Though Fairfax had the second highest median income in the country according to the 2015 American Community Survey, its six homeless shelters are full.

"Many are surprised to hear that we even have a homeless population in our community," said Dean Klein, director of the county's Office to Prevent and End Homelessness. Oftentimes they're not

visible or people aren't looking in the woods or looking in places where they might see them."

Mike Suppa, Rusty's supervisor at the CSB, said his interpersonal skills and empathy are perfect for his role.


"We're looking for people to connect with people who are homeless. This is a population that is very isolated, that has been overlooked or really has been challenged," he said. "We want to engage with people, build trust with people and get them to the point where they're accepting help. They'll be more willing to go to housing or get the services they need."

Rusty enjoys the challenge in figuring out how to reach people and earn their trust.

"A lot of the people are so mentally challenged that they won't accept the help; that's one of the most challenging things," he said. "I'll keep trying, though. It doesn't mean I'm going to quit. I'll continue to engage that individual any time I see them. I'll continue to offer them food, snacks or some water."

He's won Jeff over with talk of Virginia Tech football or Jeff's love of reading and writing. And he helps calm Jeff's nervous energy.

"He talks to me a lot, gets me to think about stuff before I do it. He's really good company," Jeff said.

"He makes me feel like there's hope in life." 

Learn more about Rusty Walking Eagle in a video online at www.countynews.org.



TERMS TO KNOW

Federal Categories of Homelessness

There are four, federally defined categories under which individuals and families might qualify as homeless:

1. Literally homeless
2. Imminent risk of homelessness
3. Homeless under other federal statutes, and
4. Fleeing or attempting to flee domestic violence.

Home Emergency Shelter

Short-term shelter from the elements, with food and medical attention provided.

A total of 1,536 counties have at least one emergency shelter bed.

Rapid Re-housing

Rapid re-housing is an intervention, informed by a "Housing First" approach that is a critical part of a community's effective homeless crisis response system. Rapid re-housing quickly connects families and individuals experiencing homelessness to permanent housing through a tailored package of assistance that may include the use of time-limited financial assistance and targeted supportive services.

Rapid re-housing capacity is expanding dramatically. According to the National Alliance to End Homelessness, the latest available figures as of 2015 show a one-year increase (2014–2015) of 59.6 percent and a 204 percent increase 2013–2015.

Transitional Housing

HUD defines the term transitional housing as "a project that is designed to provide housing and appropriate supportive services to homeless per-

sons to facilitate movement to independent living. The housing is short-term, typically less than 24 months. In addition to providing safe housing for those in need, other services are available to help participants become self-sufficient.

A shift away from Transitional Housing began to be seen in 2013.

Permanent Supportive Housing

According to the U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness, supportive housing is an evidence-based housing intervention that combines non-time-limited affordable housing assistance with wrap-around supportive services for people experiencing homelessness, as well as other people with disabilities.

Functional Zero

A term most associated with measuring homelessness among veterans. At any point in time, the number of veterans experiencing sheltered and unsheltered homelessness in a community will be no greater than the average monthly housing placement rate for veterans experiencing homelessness in that community.

In other words, a community that reaches functional zero never has more veterans experiencing homelessness than it can house in an average month.

Affordable Housing (HUD definition)

Housing that costs no more than 30 percent of a family's income. HUD defines anyone paying more than 30 percent for housing as "cost burdened."



Best Practices from NACo Achievement Award Winners

The Danray Home

Henrico County, Va.

In November 2013, Henrico Area Mental Health & Developmental Services created a new level of residential programming for people with serious and persistent mental illness. The Danray Home provides housing and support to five adult male clients who have expressed an interest in living independently, but who currently lack the skills and abilities to manage without the support of staff.

The unusual component of this program involves the staffing levels: Rather than having staff present 24 hours a day, seven days a week, staff is present at critical points throughout the day to provide support and education. These critical points typically occur early in the morning when residents are waking and again in the evening when residents are settling in for the night. Staff focus on teaching skills related to medication management, cooking, budgeting and housework.

During other parts of the day residents live independently giving them an opportunity to practice the skills they are learning. The primary objectives of this program are to increase residents' independent living skills and to encourage integration into the larger community. This new level of residential support has resulted in decreased operating costs, and more importantly, improved outcomes for residents of The Danray House.

Homeless Outreach Support Team (HOST)

San Bernardino County, Calif.

HOST (Homeless Outreach Support Team) is an outreach-based program providing services in the field to get chronically homeless individuals with mental illness into permanent supportive housing. HOST collaborates with the Sheriff's Homeless Outreach Proactive Enforcement (HOPE) team to conduct outreach events, go out into the field, and engage the most difficult and hard to reach clients. HOST staff works with qualified individuals to complete the necessary applications and assessments in the field and, upon receipt of housing voucher, will assist the individual to locate and move into housing.

HOST continues to offer recovery-based wrap-around case management services to the individual to assist them to recov-

er, gain wellness and reintegrate into the community with the ultimate goal of independence and self-sufficiency.

Homeless Resource Center

Palm Beach County, Fla.

To affirm the need for and demonstrate its own commitment and leadership in ending homelessness, the Palm Beach County Board of Commissioners established the Palm Beach County Homeless Advisory Board. This board was chartered with the task of preparing and overseeing the implementation of the 10-Year Plan to End Homelessness in Palm Beach County.

The combined efforts of the board, community representatives and formerly homeless individuals led to adoption of the 10-Year Plan by the County Board in September 2008.

A Homeless Resource Center is one of the action steps identified in the 10-Year Plan to address centralizing and streamlining entry into the homeless service delivery system. On July 2, 2012, The county opened its first Homeless Resource Center — the Senator Philip D. Lewis Center. This Homeless Resource Center serves as the county's central point of access for homeless services.

At the Lewis Center, in 90 days or less, homeless individuals and families receive high-quality services from a team of community partners, to return them to a self-sufficient lifestyle. The services are provided under contract/agreement with the county, in conjunction with county staff, under the seamless umbrella of the center.

Housing Stabilization Program

Boulder County, Colo.

The Housing Stabilization Program (HSP) is a short to medium-term (one to 12 months) rental assistance program for households experiencing temporary housing instability. Administered by Boulder County's Department of Housing and Human Services, in partnership with a network of seven community based organizations (CBO), HSP provides financial assistance and case management services throughout Boulder County. The program's primary goal is to reduce the number of evictions, housing crises and homelessness in the community. Its secondary goal of is to work collaboratively

with the child welfare agency to support its clients' housing needs. The HSP's case management model includes standardized assessments, enrollment in financial stability classes, access to job readiness training tracks and linkage to resources to return households to self-sufficiency. The HSP has strengthened community connections and the safety net by pushing assistance and service delivery out to the community partner level. Since launching in 2011, it has assisted more than 1,000 households with their household stability needs.

Homeless Prevention Project

Mobile County, Ala.

In November 2011, Mobile County allocated Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds to Legal Services Alabama to hire a Homelessness Prevention Project (HPP) attorney to provide free civil legal services to the underserved areas in Mobile County. In 2013, CDBG funds expanded services and targeted representation of domestic violence victims.

The HPP addresses civil legal issues that cause homelessness. The targeted clients are those experiencing problems with homelessness which include housing (evictions, warranty of habitability and other landlord-tenant issues), consumer (wage garnishments, debt collection defense and bankruptcy), family law (domestic abuse, divorce and custody) and public benefit cases (disability and unemployment compensation denials, and food stamps). The project identifies people on the verge of becoming homeless and takes necessary steps to keep them in their homes. This "front end" assistance greatly benefits those in poverty.

A Plan to Eliminate Homelessness for Families with Children

San Diego County, Calif.

A special local preference for homeless families for the Housing Choice Voucher Rental Assistance Program — commonly referred to as "Section 8" — is helping to break the cycle of homelessness for families with children, who have already graduated from a federally funded transitional housing program.

In just three years, the program reduced the number of homeless families


with children on the street from 193 to zero in the county area. The San Diego County Department of Housing and Community Development, serving as the county's housing authority, created the program which gives those families access to permanent affordable housing. Historically, homeless families with children "graduating" from transitional housing programs have often returned to the streets due to a lack of permanent affordable housing. This process has created a cycle of homelessness, placing children in vulnerable and unhealthy environments and creating an additional burden on the already limited supply of shelter beds available to the homeless. Housing these families opens up beds and resources in regional shelters for other homeless people and increases the effectiveness of the region's limited resources.

Homeless Data Tracking

Palm Beach County, Fla.

The Point-in-Time (PIT) count is a one-day, statistically reliable, unduplicated count of sheltered and unsheltered homeless individuals and families in a community. Historically, homeless PIT counts are completed on paper, transferred onto a spreadsheet and analyzed. Data is then compiled for the required federal and state reports. The entire process is time consuming and extremely labor intensive.

A cross-department project team composed of staff from Palm Beach County Human Services and Information Support Services was formed in the summer of 2012 to address the count process. The result was the development of a web-based application and process redesign for conducting a homeless PIT count. The app also provides a way to track and oversee volunteers and meeting attendance, as well as adapt to any type of survey that requires staff participation to facilitate completion by the desired population.

This team effort yielded a process that will allow the community to gather homeless count statistics much more efficiently and to release results much sooner in the process. This application streamlines data collection, improves the data quality, facilitates reporting, enhances overall staff productivity and could be replicated in other counties. 

HEALTH FAIR WELCOMES SANTA CLARA COUNTY'S HOMELESS

By Janice Rombeck
Santa Clara County, Calif.

More than 300 uninsured, low-income and homeless men and women in Santa Clara County, Calif. streamed through a jam-packed community room on a crisp fall day to receive what most of us take for granted — haircuts, warm clothing and health check-ups.

The fifth annual free Downtown Health Fair on Oct 21, at the Cathedral Basilica St. Joseph in San Jose, was organized by the staff of Santa Clara County Board of Supervisors President Dave Cortese and the Cathedral, with the help of dozens of local agencies, nonprofits, community organizations and other service providers.

The one-stop collaboration provided flu shots; glucose, cholesterol, hepatitis C and HIV screenings; and blood pressure tests and dental exams. Guests are referred to follow-up visits to clinics or treated by doctors on site.

Participants were also treated to lunch, foot baths, hair washes and haircuts, warm clothing and socks and shoes. A mobile unit provided showers, and a non-profit group took studio-quality portraits for the guests to take away with them. This year, they also had the opportunity to register to vote.

As guests visited the dozens of tables with information, they made important connections to services that they might not have known about but are eligible for, including disability benefits, Cal-



A shampoo and haircut were among the amenities offered to the Health Fair guests. Photos courtesy of Santa Clara County, Calif.

WORKs (employment help), CalFresh (food stamps), Medi-Cal (the state's Medicaid), Covered California and legal services. In most cases, guests could sign up on the spot.


By the most recent homeless count, a point-in-time census and survey taken in 2015, there are 6,500 homeless people in Santa Clara County on any given night, and more than two-thirds had been homeless for more than a year. Persistent homelessness can lead to serious health conditions and diseases — hypertension, heart disease, poor circulation, depression and mental illness.

The Health Fair is just one event in the county's campaign to end homelessness. Last year, a Housing Task Force, whose members represented diverse interests and backgrounds, came together to recommend short- and long-term solutions to end homelessness, and, with the City of San Jose, the county launched



About 300 low-income, uninsured and homeless residents of Santa Clara County receive free health checkups.

All the Way Home, a campaign to house homeless veterans.

But the Health Fair remains a real-life reminder of why we do what we do and a very real picture of who we serve. 

If you want more information on Santa Clara County's Downtown Health Fair, please call the Office of Supervisor Dave Cortese at 408.299.5030 or email dave.cortese@bos.sccgov.org.

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Homelessness Prevention Status: 114th Congress offers little progress; federal programs continue assistance

Although more than 300 bills relating to homelessness were introduced in the 114th Congress over the last two years, only 13 were signed into law by President Obama. Of these 13, most focused on reducing or eliminating homelessness among veterans' — a topic that has received much attention from local leaders across the country, as well as from within the White House.

One exception, however, was P.L. 114-22, the Justice for Victims of Trafficking Act of 2015. Officially signed into law by President Obama on May 29, 2015, this law includes victims of human or sex trafficking within the criteria for awarding grants for services to runaway and homeless youth.

Despite scant congressional activity, there remain many existing federal programs that local governments can tap to assist individuals and families who need housing support.

Some of these programs help counties treat the symptoms of homelessness: Health Care for the Homeless — through the Department of Health and Human Services' (HHS) Health Resources Services Administration — provides primary care and substance abuse treatment for homeless individuals; Runaway and Homeless Youth Programs — through HHS' Administration for Children and Families — help transitional and homeless youth for up to 21 months. Federal programs such as HHS' Community Services Block Grant and Social Services Block Grant can be used, as well, to support social services directed towards homeless individuals and families, and the children of homeless families are prioritized for enrollment in Head Start programs.

In addition to treating the symptoms, there are dozens more federal programs that address the primary roadblock facing homeless individuals and families and help them find temporary and permanent housing.

Most of these are operated through the Department of Housing and Urban Development, and many are accessible to local governments. These programs target a wide variety of individuals and include:

- **Housing Choice Voucher Assistance Programs**, which provide Section 8 and other vouchers to low-income families, disabled individuals (Section 811) and seniors (Section 202) for rent subsidized homes and apartments

- **HUD Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing (HUD-VASH)**, a joint initiative



Source: *The State of Homelessness in America - 2016*, The National Alliance to End Homelessness

Despite scant congressional activity, there remain many existing federal programs that local governments can tap to assist individuals and families who need housing support.

between HUD and VA to provide housing choice vouchers and case management and outreach to homeless veterans

- **Continuum of Care (CoC) Program**, which provides funding to nonprofits, and state and local governments to quickly re-house homeless individuals and families while minimizing trauma and dislocation impacts

- **Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG) Program**, which provides funding for street outreach, quality of emergency shelters, operation of such shelters, essential services to residents, rapid re-housing of homeless individuals and families, and homelessness prevention

- **Rural Housing Stability Assistance Program**, which provides funding in rural areas to improve housing situations for homeless; stabilize housing for individuals and families that are at risk of becoming homeless; and improve the ability of

lowest-income residents to afford stable housing

- **The Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program (YHDP)**, a new initiative that will fund up to 10 communities (including four rural ones), to implement new and innovative project models to reduce the number of youth experiencing homelessness

- **The Community Development Block Grant (CDBG)**, which provide formula grants to state and local governments for community development needs, can be used to provide both transitional and permanent housing as well as supportive services to families or individuals experiencing homelessness, and

- **The HOME Investment Partnerships Program**, which provides formula grants to states and local governments to create affordable housing opportunities, can be used to fund a wide range

of activities that build, buy or rehabilitate affordable housing for rent or homeownership or provide direct rental assistance to low-income people.

In addition to HHS and HUD, the Department of Justice (DOJ) is also involved in efforts to prevent and end homelessness, with a focus on individuals returning to communities after incarceration.

In June, DOJ partnered with HUD to announce awardees under the Pay for Success Permanent Supportive Housing Demonstration, which tests cost-effective and housing-focused ways to help persons cycling between the criminal justice and homeless service systems. The program is part of a broader Obama Administration effort to "reduce barriers facing justice-involved individuals who are trying to put their lives back on track, including barriers to housing."

Awardees announced in June include several local governments: Los Angeles County, Lane County, Ore., Pima County, Ariz., Montgomery and Prince George's counties in Maryland, Travis County, Texas and Matanuska-Susitna Borough, Alaska.

Associate Legislative Directors Daria Daniel, Jack Peterson and Hadi Sedigh contributed to this report.

Q & A with homeless advocate Nan Roman

Nan Roman

National Alliance to End homelessness

Nan Roman is the executive director of the National Alliance to End Homelessness, a non-partisan, nationwide federation of public, private and nonprofit organizations with a network of more than 10,000 partners devoted to ending homelessness. To learn more, visit www.endhomelessness.org.

There seem to be several definitions of homelessness. How would you define it?

The National Alliance to End Homelessness generally uses the definition established by the departments of Housing and Urban Development and Veterans Affairs which states that an individual is homeless if he or she lives in an emergency shelter, transitional housing program, safe haven, or a place not meant for human habitation, such as a car, abandoned buildings or on the street.

It also includes people who are staying temporarily with someone else (doubled-up, couch-surfing) but have to leave imminently. We use definitions from other departments when they are relevant to their programs or for general information, but most often we focus on the HUD-VA definition.

Has the face of homelessness changed over the past 20 years?

There have been some changes in the various subpopulations in the past 20 years. Chronic homelessness — long-term homelessness among people with disabilities — has gone down. Veteran homelessness has gone down. This is due to concentrated efforts to attack these problems, ramped-up resources and tremendous innovation at the local level.

Although homelessness is a complicat-



Nan Roman

ed problem — low incomes, high housing costs, disability, domestic violence, family conflict, health, and so many other factors play a role — it is important to remember that people who have a home are not homeless. Our work at the alliance is all about identifying and sharing strategies that will bring us, as a nation, closer to this simple solution of getting people into housing and ending their homelessness.

Do different populations — veterans, women, victims of domestic violence, for example — have different housing needs?

Different populations may need different types of housing interventions or different levels of housing assistance. For example, people with serious disabilities who are homeless for long periods of time need longer-term rental assistance, whereas many families and individuals who are homeless briefly for economic reasons may only need short-term help paying for housing.

Youth who are homeless might benefit from “host homes,” in which they live with a family; while survivors of domestic violence may require a safe and confidential

place to stay in the short run and possible help relocating to housing in a different jurisdiction.

And although housing does end homelessness for everyone, many people also need services to stabilize their housing. Families may need home visiting and child care support. Veterans may need treatment or employment assistance. People with illness need connection to treatment and support.

What’s the most surprising fact about homelessness?

I don’t know about surprising but something that most people may not know is that we know how to end homelessness. We know what programs work to get people back into housing. For veterans, where investments for housing have been greater, dozens of places have already ended homelessness, using this know-how.

Another fact people may not recognize is that widespread homelessness hasn’t always been a problem in our country. Before the 1980s, homelessness was infrequent and usually very brief. When a family or individual experienced a crisis and lost their housing, they could quickly find another place to live: communities had enough affordable housing available for rent. Today, the supply of affordable housing is dwindling. Runaway rent increases are far outpacing the slow, stagnant growth in wages and the distance between the two is growing into a worrisome gap that is threatening the housing stability of more and more Americans.

What federal policies — if any — hamper efforts to serve the homeless population?

The major federal policy that affects homelessness is the lack of affordable housing. The federal housing support programs for low-income people do not receive nearly enough money — they are only available to about one-quarter of the people who need them, and the rest go without. Homeless people may have all sorts of problems, but if they are housed they are no longer homeless.

The market does not create or provide housing that is affordable to people who are poor — living at 30 percent of the area median income or below — in any community in the U.S. This results in too many people spending well over half of their incomes for rent. Any crisis — the loss of a job, an illness, a move away from their support system — can catapult them into homelessness. Three times more people need housing assistance than get it, and this failure to support people causes too many to become homeless.

Is it likely there will always be some percentage of the population who chose to remain unsheltered?

In some places, the number of unsheltered homeless is expanding rapidly. On a single night in January 2016, there were 176,357 people living outside. That is an increase of nearly 2 percent from last year. There are a lot of factors that go into that number. Some of these individuals do choose to live outside and remain outside of the system. For others, it’s the only option if they choose to not seek temporary emergency shelter — and that’s a choice that they could be making based on a variety of factors. And in some communities there is not nearly enough capacity to shelter all homeless people.

Every day, in cities across the nation, there are outreach workers who go out into communities and encourage people on the street to come inside but many refuse. For some, avoiding shelters is related to a mental illness, for others it might be well-founded fear, since shelters are not always safe places.

High barriers to access a shelter can also be a deterrent. These barriers are requirements that must be met in order to utilize services — requirements like sobriety, a curfew or even having a photo ID. In some cases for families, being unsheltered might be the only option if they want to stay together or don’t want to leave a pet behind.

These are all factors that play into the unsheltered number but are also factors we can mitigate in order to help the most people possible.

What’s the biggest myth about the homeless?

There are several assumptions that people make about homelessness that turn out not to be true.

One myth is that homeless people are all single adults who are homeless for years on end and live in shelters or sleep on the streets. There are certainly some people who fit that description, most of whom have severe disabilities that require treatment. But nearly a third of people who are homeless live in families; and most single adults are homeless only briefly before getting back into housing.

Another myth is that before homeless people can get back into housing they need to resolve any problems they may have. If they’re unemployed, they need to get a job. If they have a substance abuse disorder they need to get clean and sober. If they have a mental illness, they need to complete treatment. In fact, it turns out that

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More than emergency shelter: Counties take different paths to address homelessness

By Charlie Ban
senior staff writer

The quickest way to end homelessness is to provide housing.

It's simple, but the economics are the hard part — the sum of funding, program support and available housing.

Rapid re-housing, now considered the model program by the Department of Housing and Urban Development, tries to limit the amount of time in temporary shelter and quickly get homeless families and individuals back into permanent, or at least long-term shelter.

Mercer County, N.J. was one of the 15 communities to receive a federal Homeless Prevention and Rapid Re-housing Grant to fund a rapid re-housing program in 2008.

The program is rooted in the “housing first” philosophy, which hinges on taking care of immediate shelter needs and then addressing substance abuse and job stability later. Mercer County covers six months of rent and expenses for privately owned rental housing to give recipients a chance to build their savings and, with good execution, stay in that house.

“We don't allow them to get an apartment they can't sustainably afford,” said Marygrace Billek, director of human services for Mercer County. “And we open up resources like a food pantry so any income they have can go toward building savings.”

Mercer County's earlier system moved families to transitional housing — with a heavy emphasis on social service delivery — from the shelter, almost like social promotion in schools. It was slow and expensive and not as efficient, as Billek found out. And now HUD doesn't pay for transitional housing.

“We looked (in 2008) at what we were doing and realized we weren't ending homelessness, we were managing it,” she said. “We had set up a process so that people would go from emergency shelter to transitional housing and sometimes to permanent housing. If you stuck with us long enough and did all of the right things, eventually, someday, you could be rewarded with housing.”

“But homeless people didn't need 18 months of classes on being a better parent; they needed a home.”



In 2015, the number of homeless families decreased 4.6 percent from the previous year.
Jim West / Alamy Stock Photo

It's a simple and direct approach for people who need a finish line, not red tape. Though some homeless people have been on the street for years, with mental and behavioral health or substance abuse disorders interfering with their chance for a sustainable lifestyle and requiring permanent supportive housing with heavy social service delivery, many are simply caught in the economic friction between wages and the cost of living.

“The level of poverty for families who are homeless isn't very different from everyone else who lives in their neighborhood,” Billek said. “They're on the margins and something happens, their car breaks down and they can't get to work, they lose their job and their carefully balanced world falls apart. Get them in a safe place where they can get their bearings and they could be back on their feet.”

Reorganizing Mercer County's system redirected all families through a standard screening and assessment process. Since 2012, Mercer County has not had a chronically homeless family, down from 130 in 2008.

The program has cut down on the length of time a family draws public assistance (an average of 189 days, down from the previous 339-day average), and increased monthly income in 50 percent of cases, compared to 14 percent previously. In the past seven years, only 6 percent of families have reported becoming homeless

again, compared to an earlier 21 percent recidivism rate. All of that adds up to a nearly 50 percent cut in costs from the previous model.

Single homeless adults generally exhibit mental health or substance abuse disorders that require permanent supportive housing, but Billek said the county has a rapid re-housing model for single people, too.

“We focus on getting them back to work, but if they haven't held a job in three years, they're probably not getting one soon, so we shift our focus to getting them Social Security payments and then working on job training,” she said.

Regardless of the population, vigilance in program evaluation is necessary for success.

“Never take your eye off of the numbers,” Billek said. “If you don't look at your data all the time and see the amount of time people spend in the shelter has gone from 47 days to 54 days, and you don't ask ‘Why did that happen, what's the problem?’ pretty soon the number will keep creeping up.”

In the rapid re-housing process, Mercer County provides expert consultation for lease negotiations.

“For a mother of three who gets in a house and then finds out she's responsible for every utility and she has to clear the snow, that just makes it harder to keep her in a home,” Billek said. “We can be advo-

cates for them, the social service environment is very confusing unless you have some help navigating it.”

A SAFETY NET BEFORE THE SAFETY NET

Of course, keeping people from becoming homeless in the first place is another strategy. Hennepin County, Minn. is developing a “chatbot” legal advice smartphone app, which can give tenants a resource for their rights and options if they are facing eviction.

“We have a lot of households who use this tactic of stopping paying rent if the landlord isn't fixing something,” said Mikel Beckmen, director of the Hennepin County-Minneapolis Office to End Homelessness. “That may work in other cities and states but in Minneapolis, that will get you evicted.”

So educating tenants and trying to avoid eviction is all part of Hennepin County's strategy of preventing homelessness in the first place. In some circumstances, that includes direct rental assistance to tenants.

“As much as you can keep people in housing, you should, because once you lose it, it becomes very hard to find a spot in a competitive housing market,” Beckmen said. “Families who have been in shelters are at the most risk of repeating, but studies have also shown that (government) rental assistance isn't necessary for keeping all families in their homes. If we do offer direct rental assistance, to keep people from being evicted, we target families with less than \$15,000 in annual income and who have had shelter experience previously.”

Beckmen's department is also trying to reconcile the different timelines for emergency assistance services and housing court.

“Housing court is fast, it could take between three and 14 days for someone to be evicted, but it takes longer than that to even get emergency assistance started, leaving a vulnerable gap.”

Hennepin County is also working with cooperative landlords to provide direct counseling and a form of mediation to work out solutions to keep tenants from being evicted.

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If all of that fails, Hennepin is one of a dwindling number of counties with a Right to Shelter policy for all families and single people with disabilities, the only in the upper Midwest.

A GEOGRAPHIC CHALLENGE

Battling rural homelessness presents a number of challenges. Communities spread out over larger areas make it hard to position service providers. The National Alliance to End Homelessness estimated that 7 percent of the homeless population lives in rural areas, according to the Department of Health and Human Services. Many rural homeless stay with family or friends, which keeps them off of the official homeless counts and makes it hard to accurately track the size of the population.

That contributes to less funding for rural counties to fight homelessness.

"A lot of times, when it comes to funding, we end up not being eligible," said Danielle Lurie, chairwoman of the Tuscarawas County, Ohio HOME (Housing Opportunity Monitoring Education) Network. "It's tough."

So she and her staff do what they can, as do other counties in the same situation, working from the margins to do what they can for people living on the margin to put people in homes. They have some vouchers, and some funding for rapid re-housing, but most efforts involve a lot of scraping to get by.

When an oil and gas boom in eastern Ohio brought out-of-town workers, affordable housing was in high demand and lower-income residents' options narrowed further.

"We were able to get through to some

local landlords who understood the purpose we served and were willing to stick with (the local renters)," Lurie said. "It wasn't an issue that they wouldn't get the money, Section 8 vouchers come guaranteed straight from the government, and quite frankly, in the long run it was more affordable for landlords because the oil and gas population was pretty rough on the properties. But we developed those relationships and made sure landlords knew the impact."

Some counties have it worse than Tuscarawas, which still opens up its 91-bed shelter to neighboring Carroll County, which doesn't have one of its own. Just over half of the United States' 3,069 counties (1,536, to be exact) maintain homeless shelters with at least one bed. Like Tuscarawas County, they do tenant education, build that roster of cooperative landlords and hope for options a drop-in shelter some day.

"It's a need, it continues to come up. It's not something that's particularly they welcomed by the community — nobody wants it in their back yard — but if managed properly, it could be a real asset," Lurie said.

A PLACE TO LIVE

The bridge between homelessness and security is the availability of safe affordable housing, which HUD defines as costing no more than 30 percent of an individual's income.

It's something Billek feels fortunate about in Mercer County.

"We're not San Francisco, we have housing and we can put a person in a house and they'd have choice," she said. "If they don't want to be in Trenton, there's housing in Princeton, or Hamilton or Hopewell."

St. Clair County, Ill. has plenty of housing, following a population decline that started in the 1950s. But many of the houses are in poor condition, and Terry Beach, director of the county's intergovernmental grants department, has overseen disbursement of grants worth up to \$20,000 to rehabilitate low-moderate single-family homes, including emergency building code repairs.

In Butte County, Calif., a different plan to create safe housing is in the works. The county's 10-year plan to end homelessness describes a designated campground for the homeless, with on-site amenities including showers, laundry facilities, mailboxes and a possible community building.

"For the chronically homeless, accustomed to an alternative lifestyle, a housing-first model can be threatening," the plan says.

Just to the south, a Yuba County homeless shelter opened 20 8-foot-by-14-foot "tiny houses," consisting of a room with two beds with no water or electricity, to provide some protection from the elements for the homeless for 30 days per person.

Whatever the resources they have available, counties are providing what is likely the last chance for many people in distress.

"Most of the time, people have family or friends they can rely on for help, so the people we see showing up at a shelter tend to be the least connected with the shallowest personal support networks," Beckmen said. "Homelessness looks similar across the country because it's really about people with incredibly low incomes trying to compete for an ever-dwindling resource." ■

Stable housing helps homeless confront issues

From **ROMAN** page 17

it is very difficult for people to resolve very difficult problems like these when they are living on the streets or in shelters. On the other hand, having a stable home allows people to take on and address these complex issues. All of us need the safety of a home to successfully address life's problems.

While federal, state and local governments all grapple with the problem of homelessness, whom do you believe has the largest stake in solving it?

I am not sure that any one level of government has a greater stake than the others, but because homelessness is experienced at the local level, it is likely that's where not only the economic costs but also the social and human toll of the problem is most directly felt.

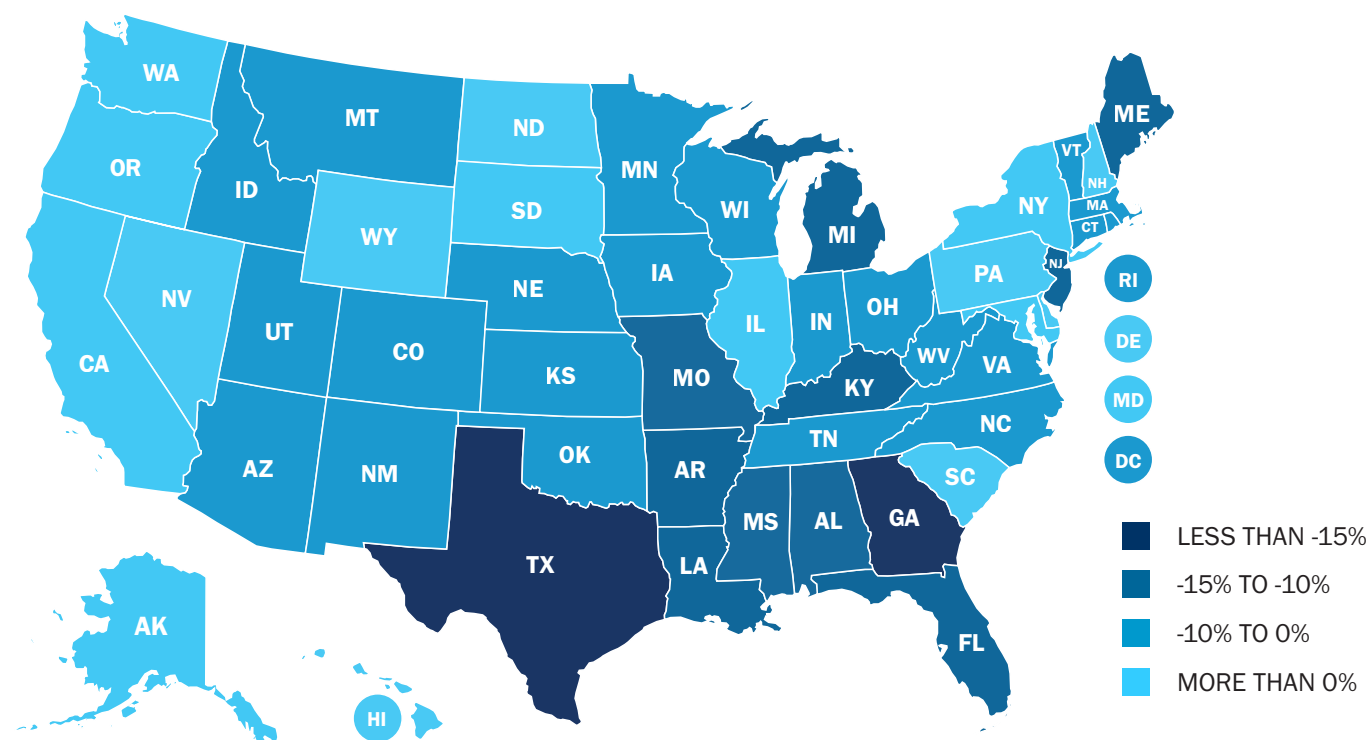
People point to poverty, lack of affordable housing, domestic violence, unemployment, substance abuse problems or mental health issues as the principal causes of homelessness. Would you agree, and if so, which do you think is the most likely reason?

Many factors contribute to homelessness: poverty, mental illness, addictive disorders, decreases in public assistance, rising health care costs. But the main reason people experience homelessness is because they cannot afford the housing that is available to them. Runaway rent increases are far outpacing the slow, stagnant growth in wages and the distance between the two is growing into a worrisome gap.

What advice would you give county leaders seeking to reduce the number of homeless in their communities?

I would advise three things: commit to ending homelessness, set a timeline for getting there and put together the partners you need to solve the problem; focus on the strategies that are proven to work with an emphasis on housing; and remember that although we know what to do, we need to do enough of it and do it long enough to reach the goal. ■

CHANGE IN OVERALL HOMELESSNESS, 2014-2015

Source: *The State of Homelessness in America - 2016*, The National Alliance to End Homelessness



10 STRATEGIES TO END CHRONIC HOMELESSNESS

The national rate of homelessness fell in 2015 to 17.7 homeless people per 10,000 in the general population. Marmaduke St. John / Alamy Stock Photo

U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness

We can end homelessness for people with the most complex needs in our communities, including people with disabilities with the most extensive experiences of homelessness. We know the solution — supportive housing — and have seen it work across the country. However, ending chronic homelessness takes political will, leadership, collaboration and coordination among multiple state and local programs to align resources for housing and supportive services. To help you do this challenging work, we've compiled 10 strategies you can use to drive progress in your community.

1 Start at the Top: Get State and Local Leaders to Publicly Commit to and Coordinate Efforts on Ending Chronic Homelessness

One of the key lessons we have learned through our work ending veteran homelessness is that commitments from — and cross-sector coordination among — state and local elected officials can create the urgency necessary to achieve an end to homelessness. The same is true for ending chronic homelessness. Governors, mayors and county leaders can convene the appropriate partners and drive accountability. And they can ensure that strategic planning is coordinated and that health, behavioral health, reentry and housing policies and resources are avail-

able and aligned to scale and deliver supportive housing to achieve this goal.

2 Identify and Be Accountable to All People Experiencing Chronic Homelessness, including People Cycling through Institutional Settings

You can't solve a problem you can't see. Solving chronic homelessness is only possible if every individual experiencing or at risk of it is located and identified across a variety of settings, and their progress in engagement and housing placement is tracked in real time. To do so, your community should conduct coordinated outreach, implement data-driven targeting by using and cross-referencing data sets (e.g., Homeless Management Informa-

tion System, Medicaid, jail/corrections), and use other methods to identify people experiencing or at risk of experiencing chronic homelessness, including people cycling between homelessness, jails and hospitals. By tracking engagement efforts at the person-level, such as with an active list, communities can better monitor their progress and hold themselves accountable to quickly helping every individual experiencing chronic homelessness.

3 Ramp up Outreach, In-reach and Engagement Efforts

Persistent, coordinated and creative outreach efforts — and in-reach into institutional settings — are vitally important to the ability to not only identify, but engage,

people experiencing chronic homelessness and link them to the housing and services interventions available in your community. That involves:

- ensuring that outreach efforts are comprehensive — covering a full geographic area and the multiple settings within it — and coordinated across all teams and providers

- sharing information across outreach teams and sites, and coordinated with other systems, including law enforcement, hospitals and emergency departments, prisons and jails, libraries and job centers

- partnering with Health Care for the Homeless (HCH) grantees and Projects for Assistance in Transition from Homelessness (PATH) grantees who can have a powerful impact on improving care coordination and optimizing resources

- partnering with law enforcement, prisons, jails and hospitals to conduct both in-reach and outreach to reduce the cycle between homelessness and criminal justice system involvement.

These efforts should seek to reach and connect with all people who are unsheltered within your community, including people living in encampments or tent cities, as well as people in institutional settings, such as jails and hospitals. All outreach should be person-centered and emphasize building rapport and trust as a means of helping people obtain housing with appropriate services.

4 Implement a Housing-First System Orientation and Response

Communities must adopt a “housing first” approach across their entire system to ensure that people with complex needs can exit homelessness as quickly as possible. To drive such transformation, communities should adopt uniform measures of success that emphasize permanent housing, with the right level of services, as the goal for people experiencing chronic homelessness. Other strategies include:

- reducing or removing barriers for applicants with substance use issues, poor credit or financial history, or past involvement with the criminal justice system

- coordinating with legal services organization to address individual and systemic legal needs of people experiencing chronic homelessness

- creating strong and direct referral linkages and relationships between the crisis response system — local shelters, outreach programs, hospitals, police departments — and supportive housing, and

- ensuring that all staff in shelters, outreach teams and housing settings are trained that substance use, criminal histories or motivation are not obstacles to

successful tenancy in housing.

5 Set and Hold Partners Accountable to Ambitious Short-Term Housing Placement Goals

Many communities have established ambitious monthly, quarterly or 100-day housing placement efforts, sometimes called housing placement “surges,” to break down the larger goal of ending chronic homelessness into focused blocks of time and effort, while pushing their systems to perform with maximum efficiency and better outcomes. These goals can be met by:

- creating and sharing a community-wide list of people experiencing chronic homelessness

- using a tested and validated assessment tool and process to prioritize and target interventions

- using navigators or guides to address individuals’ needs

- monitoring progress rooted in access to housing on a weekly or monthly basis.

6 Prioritize People Experiencing Chronic Homelessness in Existing Supportive Housing

In many communities, the supportive housing opportunities that have been created have unfortunately not been well targeted. In fact, national data shows that only about 29 percent of existing supportive housing is targeted to individuals experiencing chronic homelessness. You can maximize the impact of existing supportive housing by adopting a policy that prioritizes individuals experiencing chronic homelessness for any newly created units, and for any units that become available through turnover, unless there are no longer any individuals experiencing chronic homelessness remaining.

Coordinated entry is a critically important approach for prioritizing and matching people experiencing homelessness to the most appropriate housing and services. Within coordinated entry systems, communities can use data-driven approaches to prioritize people experiencing chronic homelessness who have the most significant needs for housing and services.

7 Project the Need for Additional Supportive Housing and Reallocate Funding to Take It to the Scale Needed

To end chronic homelessness, communities must have an adequate supply of supportive housing to assist individuals who are currently experiencing chronic homelessness and those who are likely

ALL OUTREACH SHOULD BE PERSON-CENTERED AND EMPHASIZE BUILDING RAPPORT AND TRUST AS A MEANS OF HELPING PEOPLE OBTAIN HOUSING WITH APPROPRIATE SERVICES



to be chronically homeless in the near future. Some communities can make significant progress toward the goal just by improving the targeting of existing units. Most communities will also need to expand their supportive housing inventory through maximizing both targeted grants and leveraging new mainstream resources.

The degree to which resources meet this current and future need will vary from community to community. A good starting point is to use data to assess whether your community has a gap in supportive housing availability, and if so, to determine the size of that gap.

To expand the supply of supportive housing, communities can also monitor the performance and cost effectiveness of programs within their homelessness service system and reallocate funds to the programs with the best outcomes. Reallocating funds is one of the most important tools by which communities can make strategic improvements to their system for ending homelessness.

8 Engage and Support Public Housing Agencies (PHA) and Multifamily Affordable Housing Operators to Increase Supportive Housing through Limited Preferences and Project-Based Vouchers

By partnering with public housing agencies and operators of HUD-financed multifamily housing, communities can expand the supply of supportive housing, as well as create new housing opportunities for current residents of supportive housing. Specifically, PHAs and operators of multi-

family housing can:

- establish a limited preference, committing Housing Choice vouchers, public housing units and multifamily housing units to serve people experiencing chronic homelessness, which communities can couple with supportive services

- use project-based Housing Choice vouchers within apartment buildings being developed to serve as supportive housing


- increase opportunities for tenants of supportive housing who do not need the intensity of services provided to “move up” through Housing Choice vouchers and other affordable housing and employment services, freeing up supportive housing opportunities for people experiencing chronic homelessness.

9 Leverage Medicaid and Behavioral Health Funding to Pay for Services in Supportive Housing

Supportive housing combines affordable housing with a tailored package of supportive services that help people achieve housing stability. Implementing successful supportive housing requires consistent and effective supportive services, which in turn require reliable and sustainable funding. One of the most promising sources of sustainable financing for these services is Medicaid.

As federal guidance has clarified, states have the option of ensuring their Medicaid plans cover housing-related and supportive services that help people find and keep their housing and connect to care. States can supplement Medicaid with behavioral health system funding, such as mental health and substance abuse prevention and treatment block grants. By leveraging Medicaid and behavioral health funding for supportive services, communities can shift HUD funding toward providing rental assistance for additional units.

10 Help People Increase Their Income through Employment Opportunities and Connections to Mainstream Benefits and Income Supports

By combining affordable housing with supportive services, employment opportunities, and income supports, communities can help individuals with disabilities achieve stability and independence. A critical way to provide that stability is by connecting eligible people experiencing chronic homelessness to Supplemental Security Income and Social Security Disability Insurance benefits, and by increasing income through connections to employment opportunities and workforce programs. 

Adult homeless strategies, poor fit for youths

By Charlie Ban
senior staff writer

After an uncertain stretch on the streets, a young person makes it into a shelter, then finds himself rapidly re-housed — placed in an apartment by himself. And that's not always good news.

That's the wrong way to approach youth homelessness, according to organizations that provide youth services to counties, and it illustrates the disconnect between public policy and the situations young people are facing when they don't have homes.

"The needs of homeless youth are vastly different from homeless adults," said Paul Hamann, president and CEO of the Night Ministry, a Cook County, Ill. service provider. "There needs to be a continuum of options available, because if you rapidly re-house a young person in an apartment by themselves, especially if they've never lived by themselves, it usually doesn't do too well for them."

Melinda Giovengo, president and CEO of YouthCare, King County, Wash.'s youth homeless service provider, agrees.

"Housing is an integral part, but for young people, you were only putting a bandage on situations. If you're not connecting young people on a true path to exit homelessness, they're going to fail. They probably haven't lived by themselves and supported themselves (like adults placed in rapid re-housing), so when their rent subsidy runs out, they'll probably be evicted."

This confluence makes sense to David Pirtle, public educational coordinator for the National Coalition for the Homeless.

"They're the last people we think of when we think of homeless folks," he said. "They're an afterthought when it comes to programming, and they're harder to count because they don't come use services the way adults do. They don't always know where to go."

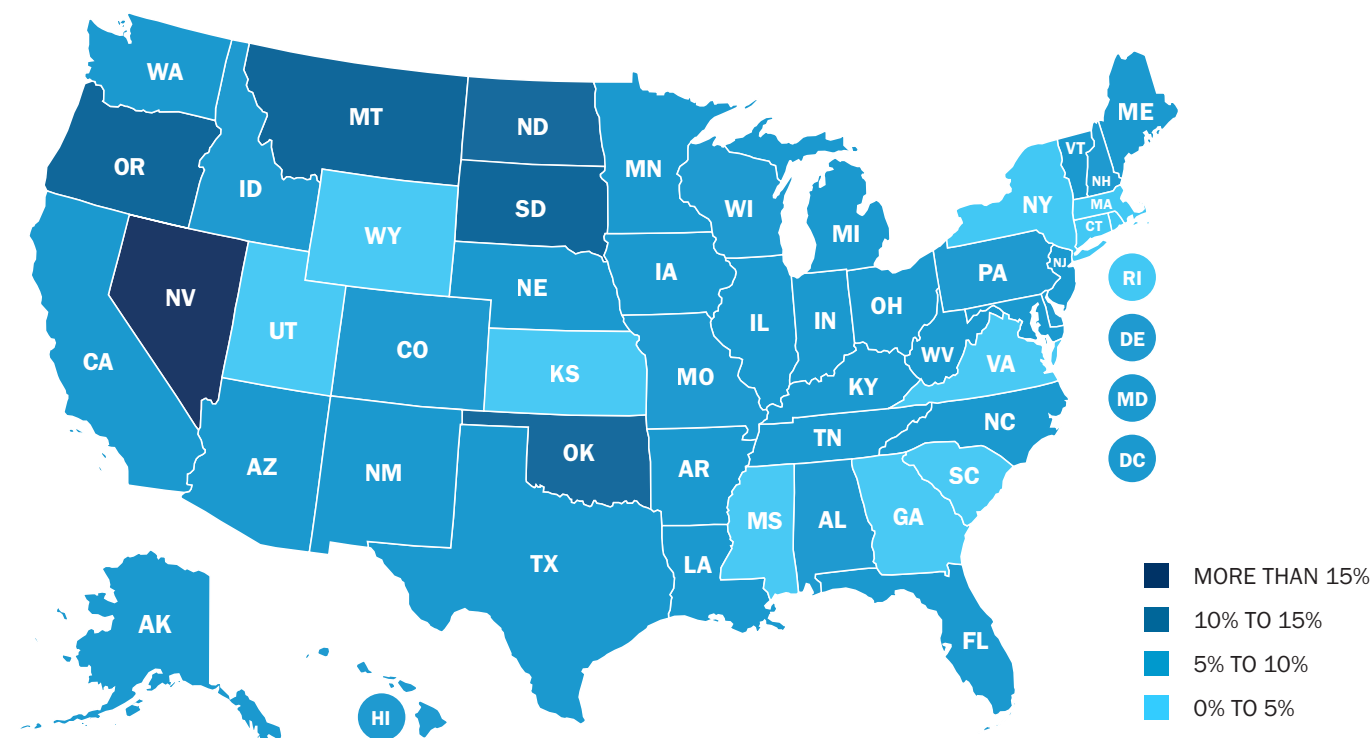
The 2014 U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development point-in-time count pegged youths under 24 as 34 percent of the national homeless population.

Giovengo suggests transitional housing, which is more temporary and more service-delivery intensive, but meets the needs of a developing person. But, HUD does not fund transitional housing as it once did, which makes it difficult to afford.

Hamann would like a developmentally appropriate compromise that places several youths in a group living situation with structured programming and supervision.

Giovengo said job training and education has to be a part of the path out of home-

PERCENTAGE OF HOMELESS PEOPLE WHO ARE UNACCOMPANIED CHILDREN AND YOUTH, 2015



Source: *The State of Homelessness in America - 2016*, The National Alliance to End Homelessness

lessness.

"Biggest question we're asked is 'Can you help me get a job?'" she said.

With all concerns about housing in mind, the most important function is just getting kids into some kind of shelter.

"The most vulnerable moment is the child's first night on the street," Giovengo said. "In the first 48 hours, you will be raped, robbed or beaten. It doesn't take long for homelessness to take a toll on young people. We have to do everything we can to prevent a young person from spending a night on the street."

Just as the route out of homelessness is different for adults and youths, who are broken down to the 13–17 and 18–24 age groups, the paths that brought them there are different, too.

Where lost jobs or mental health or substance abuse disorders are typically the largest contributors to adult homelessness, youths age out of foster care or juvenile justice systems or run away from or are kicked out of their homes.

National estimates put the population of LGBTQ homeless youth at 40 percent of the total homeless youth population. In Harris County, Texas, 48 percent of homeless LGBTQ youth reported being kicked out of their family homes.

Homeless youths of all kinds gravitate to urban areas, with the population, culture and community most likely to support them, yet counties remain the bedrock social safety net and provide services regardless of jurisdictional lines.

Giovengo said that King County youth typically gravitate toward the urban centers — there's a large encampment beneath Interstate 5 — and stick to their age range.

"Adult homeless camps are pretty frightening for kids," she said.

Though her organization does outreach to many of the camps, bringing food and clean water, drug dealers and pimps also and prey upon the kids there.

"They'll give them a free sample (of drugs) to get them hooked," she said. "A lot of the kids are looking for something to anesthetize them to what's happening."

Roughly 70 percent of homeless youth report having engaged in "survival sex" to secure housing, food or money, and the most effective response King and many other counties have found is to not prosecute prostitution, but rather target the traffickers.

"If you're a 13- or 14-year-old, alone for 45 minutes at the Westlake Mall, a pimp or John will approach you," she said.

As for where to go, Giovengo said a good start is getting a count of the youth homeless population, from which to base programming. King County's Count Us In report found 824 homeless and unstably housed youths on Jan. 28, 2016.

"Every year we're within about 100 of the last year, always between 700 and 1,000," she said. "The number gave us a target, but it's also a number the community and the funders can plan around you can plan solvable solutions for."

Hamann said counties can improve their

youth homeless services by coordinating where departments that interact with them, then share data, which can go a long way to getting a better picture of the homeless youth they're dealing with.

He also suggests counties pay for transitional housing that will better serve the youths' developmental needs.

"There is definitely a role for the county to play in funding alternative housing options," he said.

Prevention programs help.

"If there was a place for kids to cool off when there's tension with their family, that would help stop a lot of rash decisions," Hamann said. "If we could get a good preventive system in place, we can probably cut the population by one-third."

Giovengo set King County's goal as one of an outfielder diving to make a catch.

"We can't prevent every child from leaving home or every family from breaking up, but we can prevent every child from sleeping in the street," she said.

We have to do everything we can to prevent a young person from spending a night on the street. The longer a young person is out there, the harder it is to get them back inside.

And that first night is an eye-opener.

Pirtle, who was himself homeless for two-and-a-half years as an adult, found some common ground with homeless youths he met during that time.

"The most terrifying thing is realizing everything you don't know that first night," he said. **HT**

LEADERSHIP EDGE



By Ron Manderscheid, Ph.D.

Homelessness remains a serious and chronic problem in the United States. Although the number of persons who are homeless has decreased slightly as the economy has improved over the past several years, about 600,000 persons will be homeless tonight, including about 40,000 military veterans. Of this number, between 120,000 and 180,000 (20 percent–30 percent) are persons who have a serious mental illness.

Mental illness is a key risk factor for becoming homeless, and being homeless is a key risk factor for becoming incarcerated. Thus, tonight, about 180,000 persons incarcerated in our county and local jails will be persons with a serious mental illness, many of whom are homeless.

Common knowledge in the behavioral health field asserts that if a person does not have a home, then the jail becomes his or her home. A fundamental question is how to break this cycle of mental illness-homelessness-incarceration.

One key intervention is excellent mental health services. Our current work with county mental health and behavioral health programs has linked weak crisis-response capacity with higher levels of incarceration for persons with serious mental illness.

Good crisis response services include warm and hot lines, crisis intervention team training for police and other first responders, respite beds for clients and for family members, restoration or sobering centers, community residential and hospital in-

Treatment and Housing Services for Persons with Serious Mental Illness

patient beds, and effective case management and peer support services. Since only large counties are likely to have all of these services, the operational question becomes which of these services a county actually needs to put into place to reduce incarceration of persons with serious mental illness.

A second key intervention is good housing services. We have learned that mental health services and other health services will be less effective if a client has no place to live. Hence, it is important to address both health and housing needs. Good housing services for persons with serious mental illness include both short- and longer-term transitional housing, as well as permanent housing, each with appropriate mental health service supports. These supports will include case management and peer support, as well as appropriate treatment interventions. In the most highly developed systems, they also can include job and social supports as well.

Although Medicaid is a primary source of service funding for persons who are mentally ill and homeless, it was not designed to pay for housing, per se. However, the Center for Medicaid Services, through its Innovation Center, has developed demonstration grants intended to deploy Medicaid funds to pay for the necessary infrastructure that will link health and behavioral health service clients with needed housing, job and social supports. Counties should monitor these Community Accountable Care Grants to determine how well they work and whether they will be continued by CMS in the future.

Some counties already are developing housing for those with serious mental illness. One variant is longer-term, yet temporary housing for persons who are homeless. The Haven for Hope in Bexar County, Texas, is probably the pre-eminent example of this arrangement. Persons and families can reside for up to two

years at the Haven while learning needed job skills. Funding for the Haven was provided through a large philanthropic grant.

A second variant is the conversion of former motels and hotels into permanent housing for persons who are mentally ill and homeless. Sometimes these conversions are paid for with donated private funds, other times by appropriated county funds. Good examples of these arrangements can be found in Sonoma County, Calif. and Victoria, Texas.

A third variant is the conversion of a house into a permanent small group home for several clients, usually with donated funds. Examples of this arrangement can be found in King County, Wash. and Fairfax County, Va.

A fourth variant is a full continuum of housing arrangements from short- to longer-term temporary housing and permanent housing. An excellent example of this arrangement can be found in Los Angeles County, which supports eight different levels of housing arrangements for persons with serious mental illness. Funds to support this program are provided through the “millionaires’ tax” for mental health, which is unique to California.

Thus, to be able to provide both health and housing services, counties will need to be very agile. In many instances, public-private partnerships will be necessary secure funding to develop required housing.

The population of persons who are both mentally ill and homeless presents counties with a very complex service problem. Solutions to this problem will require a comparable level of creativity and complexity. **EN**

Manderscheid is the executive director of the National Association of County Behavioral Health and Developmental Disability Directors, and the National Association for Rural Mental Health. He is also an adjunct professor in the John Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health.

PROFILES IN SERVICE

KEN DAHLSTEDT

NACo Board Member
Commissioner
Skagit County, Wash



Number of years active in NACo: 16 years

Years in Public Service: 16 years; just reelected Nov. 30

Occupation: County commissioner— row crop farmer

Education: Community college, two-year Washington State Ag Forestry Leadership graduate

The hardest thing I’ve ever done: Getting elected five times as county commissioner

Three people (living or dead) I’d invite to dinner: My wife, Florence, George Washington and Thomas Jefferson

You’d be surprised to learn that I: Was in the life insurance business for 13 years.

The most adventurous thing I’ve ever done is: Jump off a cliff on a guy-wire over a river.

My favorite way to relax is to: Spend time visiting with family and friends.

I’m most proud of: My four children and six grandchildren.

Every morning I read: *The Skagit Valley Herald*. I check the obituaries to make sure I am not there.

My favorite meal is: Home-made spaghetti and meat sauce, and fresh Dungeness crab.

My pet peeve is: People driving through red lights at intersections.

My motto is: Tell the truth. It is easier to remember.

The last book I read was: *Dreamland*.

My favorite movie is: *Star Wars*.

My favorite music is: Country

My favorite U.S. president is: George Washington.

My county is a NACo member because: If you are not involved, you can’t make a difference in our county. NACo is a tremendous advocate for counties across the nation.



A dream I have is to:
Catch a 50-pound salmon.

MONEYMATTERS

How much is enough? The challenge of health care costs in retirement

Health care is likely to be among your greatest expenses in retirement — second only to housing. In fact, 62 percent of pre-retirees now say they are “terrified” of what health care costs may do to their retirement plans.

Many experts say you’ll need 70 percent to 90 percent of your current income to maintain your standard of living in retirement. But when you consider additional factors, such as rising health care and long-term care costs, and longevity, financial experts say today’s workers may need considerably more assets at their disposal when they retire.

The most relevant health care costs to retirees are those they must pay themselves like the expenses not covered by Medicare or employer-sponsored retiree health care benefits. A 65-year-old couple retiring today can expect to spend more than \$220,000 over the next 20 years on out-of-pocket health care expenses. According to the National Clearinghouse for Long-Term Care Information, at least 70 percent of people over the age of 65 will require some form of long-term care in their lifetime.

What are we getting for our health care money? We’re living longer. Living past age 100 is becoming more and more probable. Although it seems odd to say, living longer is a real risk. Especially to your money.


Take Action – Get a Free Health Care Cost Estimate

To help you plan for health care spending in retirement, Nationwide launched the Personalized Health Care Cost Assessment so that you can estimate future expenses. There

is no fee for this service — it’s part of the value Nationwide brings to our members as the premier provider of retirement plans with NACo.

The assessment starts with a brief questionnaire on your health history, lifestyle and family history of medical conditions. The information is analyzed to predict a meaningful, personalized estimate of out-of-pocket health care costs based on those risks and your estimated life expectancy. You then get a report that helps you plan for future medical expenses.

The information collected on the Personal Health Care Assessment will be kept confidential and used to provide an estimate of your potential health care costs in retirement. The estimate is based on your specific financial situation and goals, as well as your current overall health. Your financial situation and health condition may change over time. Please keep in mind that the estimates resulting from this fact-finder are for hypothetical purposes only and are not guaranteed.

To get a Personalized Health Care Cost Assessment, call the Income Planning Team at 866-975-6363. 

Retirement Specialists are registered representatives of Nationwide Investment Services Corporation: Member FINRA. Nationwide representatives cannot offer investment, tax or legal advice. Consult your own counsel before making retirement plan decisions. Nationwide Investment Services Corporation (NISC), member FINRA. The Nationwide Retirement Institute is a division of NISC. Nationwide, the Nationwide N and eagle, Nationwide is on your side and Nationwide Retirement Institute are service marks of Nationwide Mutual Insurance Company.

From the HR Doctor, a Holiday Poem

‘Twas the night before Christmas
And throughout County Hall
Not a bureaucrat was stirring
No sounds heard at all

The janitor’s night off, the alarm systems set
The beacons for Security and decorations met
The ambient light kept the stars out of sight
No Bethlehem star could be seen on that night

Those bringing gifts were turned back at the door
No gifts could be given, auditors galore
No risk of polluting the ethics machine
Even frankincense and myrrh would have to be screened

While Christmas and Chanukah meet in December
We seem to forget what we all should remember
Of friendship and family, of futures so bright
Of civil behavior and doing what’s right

The holidays tell us of great lessons learned
A safer and better world to be earned
Give gratitude and joy — the greatest gifts, we believe
It’s better to give than it is to receive

With Love and Best Wishes for a
“Service to Others” Holiday Season...
—Phil Rosenberg, AKA, The HR Doctor

— And from the County News staff

Warm wishes to you, your family and
your county in this season of high hopes
and friendship.

BRIGHT IDEAS | MARICOPA COUNTY, Ariz.

'Citizen Consultants' Spark Process Improvements, Save County Money

PROBLEM: Surveys showed that users of various county regulatory departments were dissatisfied with some of the services provided.

SOLUTION: Volunteer, citizen process-improvement consultants who evaluated departments and made recommendations at a fraction of the cost of professional consultants.

By Charles Taylor
senior staff writer

As the recovery from the Great Recession of the late 2000s continued to stress county budgets, Maricopa County, Ariz. came up with a way to improve the services it provides — and save money doing while doing it.

A Citizen Consultancy Program allowed volunteer users of county services to evaluate

departments' performance and recommend improvements. The program, begun in 2013, has saved the county \$90,000 in consulting fees and improved customer satisfaction with several of the departments, county officials said.

"We took a look at every department, and we were always trying to figure out what the needs of the customer are," said Valerie Beckett, the Maricopa County manager's chief of staff, "and we finally said, 'Wait a minute, we really have this kind of backwards; we need to have the customer tell us what they need and how to help us get there to better serve them.'"

Five of the county's regulatory departments — air quality, transportation, environmental services, flood control, and planning and development — participated in the program.

Before the program, Beckett said, survey results and customer feedback showed concerns about permit review

times, burdensome review requirements and regulations, and inconsistent customer service.

To address these issues, the Board of Supervisors directed the county manager to invite members of the public and business community to serve as volunteer process-improvement consultants.

The "consultants" — community and business leaders, and users of the departments' services — made a commitment of four to six months, Beckett said. For instance, the group that assessed planning and development included engineers, zoning attorneys, city building officials and developers.

Since 2013, the teams have made more than 110 recommendations for four of the departments, 90 of which have been approved by the Board of Supervisors and implemented.

Process evaluations were beneficial to the county and to the consultants, she added. "It

was a great learning opportunity because oftentimes those different customer types didn't understand how some of the processes interconnected in the back office."

The consultants learned why some county procedures might have seemed unnecessarily bureaucratic.

"They realize that the staff is not just trying to make it difficult for them but trying to work within regulatory structure and figuring out ways to remove barriers and better serve them while remaining compliant with those rules and procedures."

The consultancy program cost the county about \$8,000 to \$10,000 in staff time per task group, county officials said. Hiring a private process-improvement consultant would have cost more than \$25,000 per department evaluated.

Since their involvement, consulting team members have become "our ambassadors," Beckett said, sharing

what they learned, by word of mouth, among others in the community. **CN**

Bright Ideas features noteworthy and award-winning county programs.

ON THE MOVE

NACo STAFF

● **Sanah Baig**, most recently an adviser to USDA Secretary Tom



Baig

Vilsack on rural development and opioid abuse, is NACo's new program director for economic development, resilience and transportation. Baig previously worked in the White House Liaison Office, Office of the Undersecretary for Marketing and Regulatory Programs and the Rural Opportunity Investment initiative.

● **Brian Bowden**, associate legislative director, presented a post-election analysis of federal health laws for the Maryland Association of County Human Resources Officers at the winter conference of the Maryland Association of Counties, Dec. 8, in Dorchester County (Cambridge).

● **Paul Beddoe**, deputy legislative director, served on a panel discussing the post-election outlook for health and human services at a meeting of, CompTIA's Human Services IT Advisory Group, Dec. 1. CompTIA is an IT industry trade association.



Maricopa County, Ariz. staff and members of a volunteer citizen consultation team meet to discuss process improvements to several county departments. Photo courtesy of Maricopa County, Ariz.

NEWS FROM ACROSS THE NATION

ARIZONA

PIMA COUNTY's Board of Supervisors delayed until February a vote on a property tax plan to bring a Monsanto business to the county. That's when the board will consider whether to support the agribusiness giant's application to the U.S. Commerce Department for foreign trade zone status, *tucson.com* reported. The designation would result in 10 percentage point reduction in the company's local property tax assessment for 10 years.

In exchange, Monsanto has promised to spend at least \$90 million on a 7-acre greenhouse that would grow **genetically modified corn**. The development would create at least 50 local jobs.

CALIFORNIA

The Boards of Supervisors in **FRESNO** and **TULARE counties** are looking to **update their ordinances on marijuana**, following last month's vote to legalize pot statewide for non-medical uses, according to the *Fresno Bee*.

Fresno County's board is considering a temporary ban on all commercial cultivation, as well as growing or smoking marijuana outdoors or in private residences.

Tulare County proposes an immediate ban on commercialization and activities not legalized through Proposition 64. The county's position is that marijuana remains illegal under federal law.

For years, both counties have opposed the commercialization of medical marijuana.

COLORADO

When **ROUTT COUNTY** was short on funds to acquire a second police dog for the Sheriff's Office, an anonymous local couple offered to help.

The Board of Commissioners accepted their offer to pay for a new K-9 officer and its training — at a cost of more than \$45,000.

"I'm humbled when folks come and make offers like that," Sheriff Garrett Wiggins told the *Craig Daily Press*.

The new canine will join Boomer, the Sheriff's Department's current drug-sniffing dog, to fight heroin trafficking. Boomer has been deployed 65 times since April 2015. More than 25 of those deployments, mostly traffic stops, resulted in arrests for possession of illegal drugs, according to Deputy Ed Hendricks, who will handle both dogs.



HAWAII

MAUI COUNTY Council is considering a bill that would ban the use of **polystyrene food service containers** countywide beginning in 2018.

Proponents say polystyrene's light weight and tendency to breakdown into smaller pieces could harm marine animals and birds.

The measure would exempt food providers where compliance would cause them significant financial hardships.

INDIANA

The **INDIANAPOLIS CITY-COUNTY COUNCIL** passed a **resolution condemning "hate speech"** and showing its solidarity with Muslim Americans, immigrants and people of color.

The resolution "categorically rejects political tactics that use fear to manipulate voters or to gain power or influence; commits to pursuing a policy agenda that affirms civil and human rights, and ensures that those targeted on the basis of race, religion or immigration status

can turn to government without fear of recrimination ...," according to WRTV-TV News.

It also "reaffirms the value of a pluralistic society" ... and "the inalienable right of every person to live and practice their faith without fear."

The resolution doesn't have the force of law, but the council felt it was important to address the issue of discrimination.

MINNESOTA

HENNEPIN COUNTY officials have launched a broad-based plan, called Positively Hennepin, to **prevent HIV infections** and provide better care for those who are infected.

The county also pledged better support for communities that are disproportionately affected by the disease.

Currently, 55 percent of all Minnesotans living with

i#★@*



NEVADA

Spreading joy and good cheer, the **CLARK COUNTY** Fire Department hosts the 15th Annual Fill the Fire Truck **holiday toy drive** sponsored by the Southern Nevada Burn Foundation. The toys will be distributed to children through local charities and houses of worship. Photo courtesy of Clark County, Nev. Fire Department

HIV reside in Hennepin County, according to county data. Close to 40 percent of people living with HIV in the county are not accessing care and 50 percent have not had their virus suppressed.

One goal of Positively Hennepin is that 70 percent of people diagnosed with HIV will have suppressed virus: They'll have tested positive; they'll be retained in treatment; they'll be healthy and not passing the virus on to others.

OHIO

● The **CUYAHOGA COUNTY** Council may require people **convicted of abusing animals** to register with the sheriff and be barred from owning, sheltering or acting as a caretaker for an animal.

A new state law — effective in September — makes cruelty to pets a felony. The registry would be shared with local and state law enforcement agencies, animal shelters, humane societies, dog kennels, pet stores and licensed animal rescue agencies; and a public registry, with a photograph, would be available on the county's website *The Plain Dealer* reported.

● Northwestern Ohio is scheduled to have a **needle exchange** by spring 2017, with **LUCAS COUNTY** establishing one, which health officials say will help slow the spread of HIV and hepatitis C among intravenous drug users. Cleveland, Columbus and Cincinnati have exchanges, as do the smaller cities of Dayton and Portsmouth.

The one-for-one exchange program will offer medical screenings and the overdose-reversal medication naloxone, among other resources. *The Toledo Blade* reported that lack of funding for a needle exchange had slowed progress toward one.

PENNSYLVANIA

● Most services in **CLINTON COUNTY** will be consolidated in a single building after purchasing and moving into an



insurance company's former headquarters. The building will be large enough to "put as many **county government services together under one roof** for the convenience of those who require our services," according to Commissioner Jeff Snyder, and will allow the county to stop renting office space.

The consolidation will allow the county to sell one of its office buildings and relocate next to an airport *The Express* reported. The commissioners are expected to close on the property at the end of January.

● The Pennsylvania District Attorneys Association has recommended investigators not release the names of **police officers involved in shootings** unless they are charged criminally, the *Pittsburgh Tribune Review* reported.

Although the association granted that the decision to release audio or video depends on the case, it should generally be done. If charges could be or have been filed, the recordings should not be released because they could be evidence, the association said. Association officials said they believed the guidelines were the first statewide recommendations in the country.

SOUTH CAROLINA

An opinion written by the assistant attorney general has **BEAUFORT COUNTY** thinking it may have a new defense against **annexation by its municipalities**.

Elinor Lister wrote that "that (the) municipality, and not the county, is responsible for the maintenance and repair of roads located inside its corporate limits"... and it is "irrelevant what political subdivision

built or traditionally maintained the streets."

County Attorney Tom Keaveny told *The Island Packet* that the opinion makes clear that even if the county paid for the construction of a road, a municipality would be responsible for maintaining it should municipal leaders annex the roadway into a town or city.

An attorney general's opinion isn't legally binding, but the opinions are used "to resolve questions of law as the author believes a court would decide the issue," according to the attorney general's website.

TEXAS

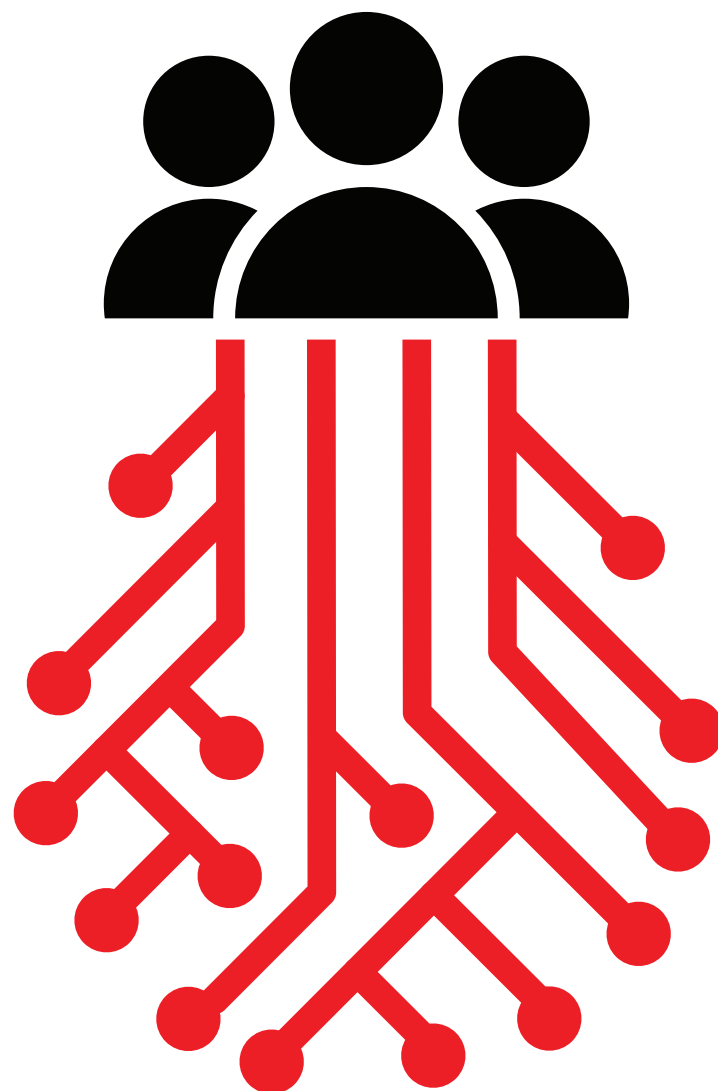
WALLER COUNTY may indeed **prohibit guns in its courthouse** after a state district court judge upheld the police.

Albert McCaig Jr.'s ruling counters Attorney General Ken Paxton's opinion, written last year, that the state law's prohibition of firearms in "the premises of any government court or offices utilized by the court" did not apply to the entire building.

His ruling resolves a local suit between the county and a gun rights advocate who initially requested the county remove signs stating that firearms are not allowed in the courthouse. Waller County District Attorney Elton Mathis and County Judge Trey Duhon found justification in the ruling, while Paxton and the advocate condemned it, the *Houston Chronicle* reported.

UTAH

● **SALT LAKE COUNTY** no longer has to offer **ballots and other voting assistance** in Spanish. The Department of Justice first required Salt Lake County to start such assistance in 2011, based on the Census Bureau's recommendations, which are updated every five years. According to the *Salt Lake Tribune*, those accommodations are required if 5 percent of all eligible voters belong to a single-language minority whose proficiency in English would make voting difficult for large numbers of



that population.

Reduced immigration from Mexico and increased fluency are credited with that population dipping back under 5 percent.

● Two Utah counties have sued to challenge a **federal moratorium on new coal leases**. **KANE** and **GARFIELD counties** argue that the moratorium is blocking a mine expansion that could pump millions of dollars into the local economies, the Associated Press reported.

The lawsuit points out that mining jobs pay about double the average state wage. Though the moratorium was initially expected to last at least three years, President-elect Donald Trump has vowed to rescind it.



COUNTIES IN THREE STATES PREP FOR TECH JOBS

Three Florida counties, two in Maryland and one in Texas are among the latest round of **TechHire initiative communities** announced by the White House. They are **ALACHUA** and **PENSACOLA counties**, Fla.; **CARROLL** and **HOWARD counties**, Md., and **EL PASO COUNTY**, Texas.

President Obama launched TechHire in March 2015 with the goal of building a "pipeline of tech talent" through accelerated training programs, in partnership with the Department of Education and the nonprofit Opportunity@Work.

These new additions bring to more than 70 the number of local U.S. jurisdictions involved in the initiative. **CN**

News From Across the Nation is compiled by Charles Taylor and Charlie Ban, senior staff writers. If you have an item for News From, please email ctaylor@naco.org or cban@naco.org.

CAPITAL LOOP

Congress passes stopgap measure to avoid government shutdown

Just before the midnight deadline, Dec. 9, Congress passed a stopgap funding measure that extends current funding levels for most federal agencies through April 28, minus a half percent across-the-board cut.

Senate passes \$12 billion water bill, including WRDA

The Senate has passed a major water infrastructure package, the Water Infrastructure Improvements for the Nation Act, (S. 612), which is now headed to the president's desk for his signature. The bill passed easily by a vote of 78-21, Dec. 10. Included in S. 612, is the Water Resources Development Act (WRDA), which both the House and Senate passed earlier this year.

Obama signs massive health, justice related legislative package

The 21st Century Cures Act, which includes provisions related to criminal justice, mental health and addiction — key NACo priorities — headed to the president's desk after a 94-5 Senate vote, Dec. 7.

BLM releases final Planning 2.0 rule containing some improvements requested by NACo

On Dec. 13, the Department of the Interior's Bureau of Land Management (BLM) published its final Resource Management Planning rule, commonly referred to as "Planning 2.0." The rule, which will be effective on Jan. 11, 2017, sets out the processes under which the BLM will de-

velop its Resource Management Plans.

EPA issues final rule on storm water permitting for small communities

On Nov. 17, the EPA published a final rule governing how small municipal separate storm sewer systems obtain coverage under the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System general permit program. The new rule, which would set clear guidelines for public engagement in the permitting process, is relevant for smaller populated counties that hold federal storm water permits.

Though the final rule provides some additional flexibility for states and local governments, it does not offer the full range of options NACo had requested in its comments.

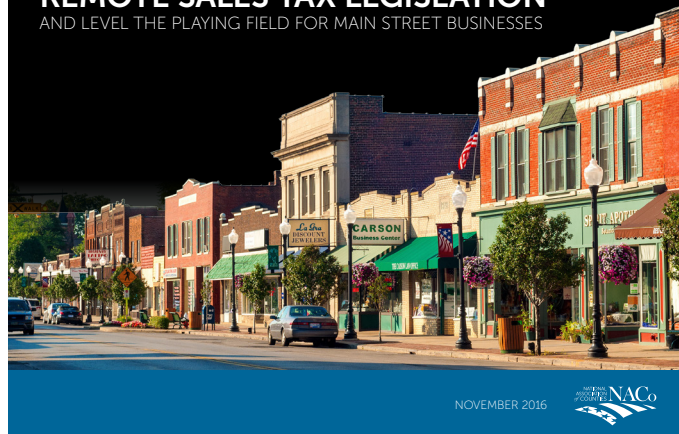
NACo releases new presentation on remote sales tax legislation

As 2016 winds down, counties will see another holiday shopping season and the end of another session of Congress without the passage of federal remote sales tax legislation. Until a legislative solution is found,

the amount of uncollected sales taxes that counties, cities and states could use to provide critical public services continues to grow as retail sales on the internet surge. To help county officials in their outreach to Congress, NACo has developed a new presentation, "Counties Urge Congress to Pass Remote Sales Tax Legislation." **CN**

COUNTIES URGE CONGRESS TO PASS REMOTE SALES TAX LEGISLATION

AND LEVEL THE PLAYING FIELD FOR MAIN STREET BUSINESSES



NOVEMBER 2016



2017 NACo LEGISLATIVE CONFERENCE

FEATURING



MICHAEL BESCHLOSS

Presidential historian, NBC News and PBS NewsHour contributor, New York Times columnist and #1 best-selling author



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Special appearance by D.C. VIP's the Washington Nationals Running Presidents!



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MARRIOTT WARDMAN PARK HOTEL

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