

Homelessness Prevention

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) - Proposed HUD budget for Fiscal Year 2016 is focused on helping to secure quality housing for Americans; to end homelessness; to make communities more resilient from natural disasters; to protect people from housing discrimination; and to provide critical rental assistance for millions of extremely poor families. The 2016 budget includes \$49.3 billion to support these efforts, representing a \$4 billion, or 8.7 percent, increase over current levels. (Source: http://portal.hud.gov/hudportal/HUD?src=/press/press_releases_media_advisories/2015/HUDNo_15-013) The overall HUD budget **continues to be underfunded**. Many HUD programs like the Section 8 program and Public Housing program received increases over prior years' funding level, though in many cases, they will not be enough to make up for past cuts. Many communities will still be receiving far less funding for low-income housing programs than is needed to meet the need of the area's low-income people.

The Rental Squeeze – HUD is also releasing a series of reports designed to measure the scale of critical housing problems facing very low-income unassisted renters. The latest report finds that in 2013, the number of these 'worst case housing needs' remains at very high levels – 7.7 million renter households paying more than half of their income on rent, living in severely substandard housing, or both. While growth in the number of low-income renters is an important factor driving the spread of cost burdens, the difficulty of supplying housing at rents these households can afford is also a problem. As a result, the gap between the demand for and supply of affordable rentals continues to widen. In 2011 more than a third of affordable units were occupied by households with higher incomes. For every 100 extremely low-income renters, only 36 units were both affordable and available, leaving 64 percent of these individuals without proper housing.

(Source: http://www.jchs.harvard.edu/sites/jchs.harvard.edu/files/jchs_americas_rental_housing_2013_1_0.pdf)

VA homelessness funding – Veterans Affairs Homeless Assistance Programs (HUD-VASH case management, the Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF), Grant and Per Diem, etc.) were funded at a slightly increased level of **\$1.6 billion in 2015**. (Source: http://b.3cdn.net/naeh/2cbco69b66a5bb922a_3fm6bxl8c.pdf). This keeps SSVF at the expanded \$500 million level. This continued level of funding helps us to end veteran homelessness by the end of 2015.

About McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Grants

McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Grants fund local, regional, and state homeless assistance programs through the Homeless Continuum of Care (HCC). HCC is a geographical administrative unit through which federal homeless assistance funds are distributed. Homeless assistance providers in a specific geographic area work together to apply for federal funding. Funding can be used for permanent and supportive housing, transitional housing, and services. Some funding is also distributed to communities through the Emergency Solutions Grants program. The budget for FY 2015 proposes \$2.405 billion for HUD's McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Grants. This would be a 14 percent increase over the FY 2014 level of \$2.105 billion. (Source: http://b.3cdn.net/naeh/2cbco69b66a5bb922a_3fm6bxl8c.pdf).

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About OLHSA Homelessness Prevention Programs

- OLHSA has provided homeless services since 1994, including emergency homeless sheltering, first month's rent, eviction assistance, security deposits, foreclosure counseling, property tax payments, down payments, support to veterans and home repairs.
- The Homeless Point in Time Count for 2015 was 101 in Livingston County and 486 in Oakland County, a decrease for both counties from the 2014 count. This count measures the homeless population across the country on a single day in January. For our two communities, that means 587 people are homeless every night - sheltered and unsheltered.
- LIVINGSTON COUNTY: In 2014, OLHSA received 365 requests for homeless prevention services and 31 households were able to be assisted until funding was expended.
- Eviction and lack of affordable housing are the top reasons for homelessness, which are followed by loss of job, domestic violence, and mental health.
- According to the recent Michigan United Way Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed (ALICE) Report, a family of 4 with 2 young children needs to earn more than \$30.00 per hour to live in Oakland and Livingston counties.

Recommendations

- In support of HUD's priority of "Housing First" an emphasis needs to be placed on **creating more affordable housing** and strengthening the foundation to **prevent homelessness** in the first place. Agencies using a Housing First model have been shown to be extremely effective at maintaining housing, but the lack of available affordable housing has proved to be the number one reason why families and individuals remain homeless.
- **Increase supportive services to families** that prevent homelessness. Families come to us with multifaceted problems which may take at least 3-6 months of counseling to help overcome. Many individual grants only allow a small percentage for case management.
- **Increase services to parents with children.** Many are still struggling with affordable housing. Many are "doubled up" and therefore are not counted as homeless during the official HUD Point in Time count.
- **Increased funding for the HUD mandated database** - Homeless Management Information System (HMIS). Congress wants to see quality data in the AHAR report, but appropriate funding needs to be increased.
- **Support of the Section 8 rental assistance program.** For many families with disabilities and those unable to work, the voucher rental assistance program is a lifeline.
- **Basic needs** such as health, emergency utility assistance, food, and transportation must be "wrapped around" housing families to remain stable.

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