



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT
WASHINGTON, DC 20410

Dear PHA Executive Director:

On a single night in January 2012, there were more than 630,000 sheltered and unsheltered people experiencing homelessness nationwide.

The Obama Administration believes that no one should be without a safe, stable place to call home—a principle with which, as providers of affordable housing to millions of Americans nationwide, you all no doubt agree.

As part of that commitment, under the leadership of Secretary Donovan, the U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness released *Opening Doors: Federal Strategic Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness* in 2010, with ambitious goals of ending chronic homelessness and homelessness among Veterans by 2015; ending homelessness for families, youth, and children by 2020; and setting a path to eradicate all types of homelessness in the United States.

Your continued leadership and support is necessary to reach these goals.

We at the Department of Housing and Urban Development have heard from many of you about your desire to work toward serving individuals and families experiencing homelessness in your programs, but understand that you are seeking clarity and guidance on ways to accomplish that, especially given the fiscal constraints you now face. To that end, the Department last month published a notice (PIH 2013-15 (HA)) that provides:

- 1) Revised instructions to public housing agencies (PHAs) for data reporting on “homeless at admission”; and
- 2) Guidance about serving individuals and families experiencing homelessness, such as implementing preferences, waiting list management, admissions and termination or eviction policies, partnering with service providers, and supporting project-based vouchers.

In communities across the country where local PHAs have demonstrated leadership on moving toward the goals of preventing and ending homelessness, HUD has seen significant progress. While our data systems are imperfect when it comes to measuring your efforts to target households experiencing homelessness—a challenge that this notice is designed to address—they show that in 2012 alone, at least 12,000 households experiencing homelessness received essential permanent housing assistance from a local PHA. The impact of these investments has been clear and dramatic. Nationally, through targeted efforts by PHAs, in close partnership with local Continuums of Care (CoCs), homelessness among veterans has fallen by

more than 25 percent since 2010. Among those who have languished the longest on our streets and in emergency shelters—individuals and families experiencing chronic homelessness—there has been a reduction of 15 percent since 2010.

Communities from every region have shown that, through innovation and partnership, tremendous progress is possible—examples of which will be highlighted in an online technical assistance resource from the United States Interagency Council on Homelessness (USICH). The PHA Portal, which will be launched this fall, will provide information and examples of how PHAs are contributing to efforts to end homelessness through practices such as: collaborative planning with CoCs and other public and private funders, forming partnerships with service provider organizations, enacting homeless preferences, modifying tenant screening policies, and using project- and sponsor-based vouchers for permanent supportive housing.

The effective and efficient use of mainstream resources is perhaps more important than ever, given the current economic and budgetary environment. While the economy is recovering, many families continue to struggle, especially those that qualify for public housing and vouchers. In addition, each of you is dealing with historically low administrative fee funding levels and other impacts of sequestration, all of which make it challenging to serve vulnerable households—including people experiencing chronic homelessness—that often require additional help from your staff and community partners to find and stay in housing. To this end, we encourage you to reach out to your local CoCs or other homeless service providers to see if there are partnerships that can reduce administrative burdens.

The Administration remains committed to reversing sequestration, and the Department continues to seek adequate funding for public housing, Housing Choice Vouchers, and PHA administrative fees. Meanwhile, we again encourage you to work together with your local partners—particularly CoCs—to step back and examine current policies and practices. While current housing resources remain limited, beginning to make changes now to policies and practices will increase housing opportunities for people experiencing homelessness at a future time when sequestration has been ended. What HUD has learned from many PHAs is that partnering with community homeless providers to reduce barriers and strategically investing mainstream affordable housing resources has allowed many of you to advance your community's efforts to end homelessness.

Notice PIH 2013-15 (HA) (*Guidance on housing individuals and families experiencing homelessness through the Public Housing and Housing Choice Voucher programs*) should further aid in those efforts. You can find a copy of it at the following link: <http://portal.hud.gov/hudportal/documents/huddoc?id=pih2013-15.pdf>.

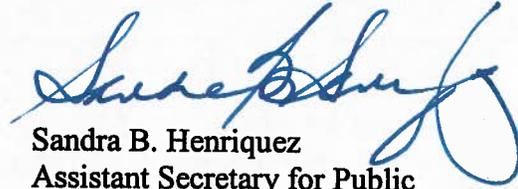
Please read the notice carefully and share it with your staff so that it can help guide your agency as you evaluate your policies and procedures, and to help plan your next steps. We also encourage you to collaborate with your local CoC and other homeless leaders in your community.¹ These are partners that can help your agency determine where your investment will make the most impact.

Opening Doors sets forth aggressive goals and time frames as a reflection of the importance of ending homelessness in America. Your agency has demonstrated the capacity to be strong leaders and problem-solvers in your communities. We are grateful for your commitment and look forward to continuing to work with you and your staff on ending homelessness.



Shaun Donovan
Secretary

Sincerely,



Sandra B. Henriquez
Assistant Secretary for Public
and Indian Housing

¹ You can find the contact information for the CoC lead in your area on HUD's Homelessness Resource Exchange, which is accessible at <http://hudhre.info/index.cfm?do=viewCocContacts>.