

Health Care for the Homeless Mobilizer

The National Health Care for the Homeless Council

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Expand HUD's Definition of Homelessness

Call Your Mayor's Office Today

In June 2005 the U.S. Conference of Mayors (USCM) approved a Resolution urging the U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness to adopt a common definition of homelessness throughout all departments of the Federal government. The resolution added fuel to a constructive, ongoing conversation between policymakers, service providers, and homeless advocates.

While support for a universal definition remains strong, the focus of the debate has shifted to the definition used by the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) – a narrow interpretation of the McKinney Act definition that excludes many clients of Health Care for the Homeless projects and fails to adequately capture the extent of homelessness in the United States. Unlike the Departments of Education or Health and Human Services, HUD's targeted homelessness programs currently preclude people who are "doubling up" or living in motels, including many families.

At the next meeting of the USCM, Mayor Mark Begich of Anchorage will introduce a new Resolution calling upon HUD to broaden its definition of homelessness to include people who are sharing the housing of others (due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or a similar reason) and people living in motels. Its passage would put a major constituency on record as supporting Federal policy that recognizes the actual breadth of modern homelessness and gives communities greater flexibility to respond to the needs of families. The Resolution would also contribute positively to the definition debate that will occur during the reauthorization of HUD's McKinney-Vento programs.

ACTION:

- **Ask your Mayor to co-sponsor and support the Resolution calling for an expanded definition of homelessness.** The deadline for endorsements is April 19. Ask your Mayor to communicate his or her endorsement of the Resolution to Julie Hasquet, Mayor Begich's Communications Director at 907-343-7103 or HasquetJM@ci.anchorage.ak.us
- **Study** the Proposed Resolution, last year's Resolution, a Position Statement of the National Health Care for the Homeless Council and other advocacy organizations, and an Interagency Council on Homelessness newsletter on this issue at <http://www.nhchc.org/definitions.html>

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