

Health Care for the Homeless Mobilizer

The National Health Care for the Homeless Council

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HCH Policy Statements for 2006

The Board of Directors of the National Health Care for the Homeless Council has adopted a set of HCH Policy Statements for 2006. Taken together, these Statements provide a brief but thorough analysis of contemporary American homelessness, and they describe an agenda for policy changes that will end homelessness as we have come to know it.

These Policy Statements will provide the basis for the National Council's advocacy for the coming year, and actions suggested in the *HCH Mobilizer* will align with them. Our action suggestions and the Statements themselves attempt to conform to our "51% Solution," which dictates that over half of our advocacy be focused on root causes of homelessness, while not neglecting the needs of people who are already homeless. For example, we strongly support single-payer National Health Insurance, but we also call for expanding Medicaid as an interim measure, and for improving targeted homeless health programs to achieve more immediate impact. Similarly in the crucial area of housing, we insist on a National Housing Trust Fund and the right to housing, but we also support HUD McKinney-Vento programs as a temporary expedient that will relieve suffering. The Policy Statements attempt to keep their eyes on the prize – policies that will actually end homelessness – while recognizing current unhappy realities.

We encourage *Mobilizer* readers to review the full Statements, available at www.nhchc.org and summarized only suggestively below. Each full Statement is one to four pages long and contains useful data, analysis and specific policy recommendations.

Homelessness and Health analyzes the relationship and calls for universal access to health care and housing through targeted and mainstream public programs, including reauthorization of and an increased appropriation for HCH projects and other Consolidated Health Centers.

Universal Health Care and Homelessness examines problems in health care financing as they affect poor and homeless persons, and calls for single-payer National Health Insurance.

Medicaid, SCHIP and Homelessness calls for expanding the Medicaid entitlement, simplifying and expediting application procedures, and guaranteeing access to all needed services.

Disability Benefits and Homelessness seeks to assure adequate SSI/SSDI benefits for disabled persons, and to overcome the effects of the substance abuse exclusion enacted in 1996.

Addiction, Mental Health, and Homelessness urges strengthening mainstream programs, improving targeted PATH and THP programs, use of a recovery model in behavioral health care, and parity for behavioral health in insurance plans.

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Housing and Homelessness policies would reauthorize and increase funding for HUD McKinney-Vento programs, expand the HUD definition of homelessness, establish a National Housing Trust Fund, support Housing First and Permanent Supportive Housing approaches, protect and restore public housing, and replace funding for homeless services as it is withdrawn by HUD.

Fair Wages and Homelessness seeks living wages for all workers, including those employed by homeless service agencies, and formal national recognition of the human right to fair wages.

Incarceration, Homelessness and Health discusses the impact of the criminal justice system on homeless people and calls for decriminalization of homelessness, continuity of health care despite incarceration, availability of housing upon release, and ending discrimination against ex-offenders.

Institutional Discharge and Homelessness seeks to prohibit publicly-funded institutions from discharging residents into homelessness and to promote investment in recuperative care (respite care) facilities.

Child & Youth Health and Homelessness discusses program improvements and policy changes that would ensure access to health, education and social services for children and families experiencing homelessness.

Unaccompanied Youth and Homelessness recommends ways to expand and improve medical, behavioral health, and social services for teenagers experiencing homelessness.

Military Spending and Homelessness opposes increases in the Defense budget and calls for redirection of 15% of the current military budget to housing, health care and other domestic priorities, and for the creation of a Federal Department of Peace and a US Peace Academy.

Federal Torts Claims Act calls for extension of liability insurance coverage to volunteer providers At HCH projects and other Consolidated Health Centers.

ACTION

- Read the Policy Statements at www.nhchc.org
- Watch for the next *HCH Mobilizer* and be prepared to act!

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