

# Health Care for the Homeless Mobilizer

The National Health Care for the Homeless Council

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## Measures to Implement Our Rights: Council Adopts HCH Policy Statements for 2007

The Board of Directors of the National Health Care for the Homeless Council has adopted a set of policy statements for 2007 as a foundation for the Council's advocacy work in the coming year. Collectively, the 13 brief statements provide a thorough analysis of contemporary homelessness and present an agenda for policy changes that, if enacted, would end contemporary homelessness in America.

Consistent with the National Council's longstanding approach, the 2007 Policy Statements simultaneously advance two complementary responses to homelessness in the United States: (1) the provision of appropriate emergency services for people currently experiencing homelessness; and (2) advocacy for Federal policies that address the underlying problems of poverty and reflect the human rights to health care, housing, and a livable income. The dearth of services available to homeless individuals and families and the conspicuous absence of legislative measures to guarantee these fundamental human rights for all Americans remind us all of the important work before us if we are to make homelessness an increasingly rare and brief experience.

**Homelessness and Health** analyzes the relationship between health and homelessness and calls for universal access to health care and housing through targeted and mainstream public programs, including the reauthorization of Health Care for the Homeless projects through the Health Centers Renewal Act of 2007.

**Universal Health Care and Homelessness** examines the all-too-familiar consequences of lacking health insurance in the United States and reaffirms the Council's commitment to a national system of universal health care through a "single-payer" financing mechanism.

**Medicaid, SCHIP and Homelessness** calls for the protection of Medicaid entitlements, the simplification of the application process, the expansion of eligibility to everyone below 200% of Federal Poverty Guidelines, and the reauthorization of the State Children's Health Insurance Program.

**Disability Benefits and Homelessness** promotes the provision of adequate SSI/SSDI benefits for people with disabilities, advocates expediting benefits for people experiencing homelessness, and seeks to restore SSI/SSDI eligibility for persons whose substance use is material to their disabilities.

**Addiction, Mental Health, and Homelessness** urges lawmakers to strengthen mainstream public programs, increase funding for the PATH and THP programs, include "harm reduction" as an eligible treatment modality, and to require all insurance plans to cover behavioral health services.

**Housing and Homelessness** calls for the protection and restoration of public housing, the establishment of a National Affordable Housing Trust Fund, and the reauthorization and increased funding of the McKinney-Vento Act to include an appropriately broad definition of homelessness.

**Fair Wages and Homelessness** promotes the right to a fair and livable wage, asks nonprofit organizations to institute “living wages,” and calls upon Congress to reintroduce the Bringing America Home Act.

**Incarceration, Homelessness and Health** examines the consequences of the criminalization the homeless and promotes access to housing, employment, public benefits, and health services upon release from jails and prisons.

**Institutional Discharge and Homelessness** seeks to prohibit public institutions from discharging people into homelessness, promotes investment in respite care facilities, and calls upon Congress to reintroduce the Bringing America Home Act.

**Children and Youth Homelessness** examines the barriers to care among homeless youth and calls for the reauthorization of SCHIP and the inclusion of mental health services in private and public health insurance plans.

**Military Spending and Homelessness** explores the relationship between military spending and homelessness, opposes increases in the Defense Department budget, and calls a 15% budget reallocation to housing, health care, and other programs.

**Federal Tort Claims** recommends that Congress reintroduce the Community Health Center Volunteer Physician Protection Act, which extends liability insurance coverage to volunteer providers at Consolidated Health Centers.

**Medical Respite Care** promotes improved access to medical respite services and the designation of “respite care” as a reimbursable service for Medicaid and other insurance plans.

## **ACTION**

**Download & Distribute:** Read the 2007 Health Care for the Homeless Policy Statements at [www.nhchc.org](http://www.nhchc.org). Share them with your staff, Board, and Members of Congress. Use them in your advocacy work throughout the year.

**Schedule a Meeting with Your Representatives:** Attending the 2007 National HCH Conference in Washington? Schedule an advance meeting with your Congressional representatives to coincide with your visit. Find out who represents you at [www.house.gov](http://www.house.gov) or [www.senate.gov](http://www.senate.gov). Please send notice of your meeting to Adrienne Breidenstine at [abreidenstine@hchmd.org](mailto:abreidenstine@hchmd.org) or call 443-703-1337 for assistance.

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