



News Release

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HUD REPORTS DROP IN THE NUMBER OF CHRONICALLY HOMELESS PERSONS

More resources and better reporting contribute to annual declines

WASHINGTON – Last year, nearly 32,000 fewer persons lived on the nation's streets and in emergency shelters. That's according to a new report released today by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development that points to a 15 percent average yearly reduction in chronic homelessness since 2005. For the first time ever, HUD's *Annual Homeless Assessment Report to Congress* is also able to report on the scope of homelessness in America over a full-year period.

In an address before the National Alliance to End Homelessness, HUD Secretary Steve Preston said, "We can all be encouraged that we're making progress in reducing chronic street homelessness in America and with more resources and better reporting, we can continue this trend. But we must also recognize that we have a long way to go to find a more lasting solution for those struggling with homelessness every day."

HUD defines a chronically homeless person as a disabled individual who has been continuously homeless for more than one year or has experienced at least four episodes of homelessness in the past three years. In January 2007, more than 3,800 cities and counties counted the number of homeless persons on the street and in emergency shelters on a single night. Compared to counts conducted over the past two years, this "snapshot" shows a drop in the number of chronically homeless persons and in homelessness generally. To find local homeless data, visit HUD's website.

Local communities across the country report there were 123,833 chronically homeless persons in 2007, compared to 155,623 in 2006 and 175,914 in 2005. However, comparing the number of chronically homeless individuals from year to year should be done with caution. Declines can be attributed to several factors including increased funding from HUD and other sources for permanent supportive housing, improved data collection and reporting, and variation in the number of communities reporting these data on an annual basis. Still, these snapshot counts offer communities a powerful tool to gauge their homeless challenge and to create innovative housing solutions in response.

Since 2001, HUD has awarded more than \$9 billion to support thousands of local housing and service programs throughout the nation and is seeking a record \$1.6 billion for the Department's *Continuum of Care* grant programs for FY 2009.

Homeless Management Information Systems (HMIS)

Quantifying homelessness is extremely challenging and, in the past, has been limited mostly to single-night counts. In recent years, however, HUD's ability to quantify homelessness has been significantly enhanced by the advent of Homeless Management Information Systems (HMIS). These local data

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collection systems allow researchers to study the sheltered homeless population over time, providing a more comprehensive picture of homelessness in the U.S.

For the first time ever, HUD is now able to estimate how many persons use emergency shelters and transitional housing programs during a full year. In the third *Annual Homeless Assessment Report*, HUD estimates that nearly 1.6 million persons experienced homelessness and found shelter between October 1, 2006, and September 30, 2007. This estimate is based on year-long data collected from more than 284,000 persons located in 98 communities nationwide.

HUD's unprecedented year-long sample of HMIS data found the following characteristics of all sheltered homeless persons:

- Geographic – 77 percent are in central cities – 23 percent are in suburban and rural areas.
- Household Type – 70 percent are individuals – 30 percent are persons in families with children.
- Race – 64 percent are members of minorities.
- Gender – 69 percent of all sheltered homeless individuals are men.
- Age – 55 percent of all homeless individuals are 31-to-50 years old.
- Veteran Status – 13 percent of all sheltered homeless adults are veterans.

What's Next?

HUD's latest *Annual Homeless Assessment Report* represents an important milestone in the Department's efforts to study homelessness using year-long HMIS data from a nationally representative sample of communities. It provides a baseline for future reports that will provide direct year-to-year comparisons of numbers and characteristics of homeless people and their patterns of service use. HUD's report offers a vital starting point for measuring homelessness in the future.

The Department and its local partners will enhance future reports by collecting data each year from a broader set of communities and homeless service providers. The additional information will yield a more comprehensive picture of the nation's homeless and formerly homeless populations. Ultimately, HUD expects the *Annual Homeless Assessment Report* to be the primary resource for current information on homelessness in the U.S.

HUD and the Department of Veterans Affairs have also renewed the HUD-VA *Supportive Housing Program (HUD-VASH)* to provide permanent supportive housing for an estimated 10,000 homeless veterans nationwide. HUD-VASH will provide approximately 10,000 new vouchers for homeless veterans and their families this year. The President is requesting another \$75 million in next year's budget to assist an additional 10,000 veterans.

Statement by the White House Press Secretary on Homelessness

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