



# Homelessness in Yolo County

---

*Strengthening the Community-Wide Homeless System*

---

**TABLE OF CONTENTS**

---

**Executive Summary ..... 2**

**Homelessness in Yolo County ..... 5**

    Definition of Homelessness ..... 5

**Nationwide Best Practices in Addressing Homelessness ..... 7**

    Strategic and Comprehensive Local Response to Homelessness ..... 7

    The Housing First Approach ..... 8

    Providing “Just Enough” Assistance ..... 9

    What Happens When Best Practices are utilized? ..... 11

**Homelessness in Yolo County: How Big is the Problem? ..... 13**

**Yolo County’s Efforts to Address Homelessness: What’s Happening Now? ..... 14**

    The Community-Wide System for Addressing Homelessness ..... 14

    Resources and Fundraising Efforts ..... 15

    Affordable Housing and Supportive Services for the Homeless ..... 16

    Use of Resources ..... 17

**How can we Improve the Community-Wide System? ..... 18**

**What Role Should Yolo County Hold in Addressing the Problem? ..... 21**

---

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

---

More than 600,000 people experience homelessness on any given night in the United States, yet many people misunderstand the causes of homelessness. Although circumstances vary, most people are homeless because they cannot acquire and/or maintain housing they can afford. People fall into homelessness due to extreme poverty coupled with an episode of bad luck, poor judgment, or the disruption of a domestic relationship, and once homeless, face barriers to re-housing such as low or no income, criminal history, poor rental history, or a poor credit history. While personal circumstances such as substance abuse or mental health certainly contribute to the problem, statistics have increasingly shown that efforts to end homelessness are more successful when they focus primarily on re-housing homeless individuals first, and providing support services to address personal circumstances once the individual has been permanently housed.

In Yolo County, many jurisdictions, organizations, and residents are showing a renewed interest in addressing issue of homelessness. In response to this interest, this report identifies best practices in the homeless field, discusses the prevalence of homelessness in Yolo County, describes the community's existing system of care, and makes recommendations for strengthening the system of care for the homeless in Yolo County at both the County and community-wide levels.

### ***Nationwide Best Practices in Addressing Homelessness***

---

National homeless organizations have recently begun advocating for a new approach to addressing homelessness, which couples strategic and efficient local response with use of the Housing First model. This approach was developed using a growing pool of national data on the issue, which indicates that it reduces the prevalence of homelessness, improves quality of lives and communities, and results in net savings for service providers and jurisdictions.

Nationwide best practices suggest that the communities most successful at significantly reducing the number of people experiencing homelessness engage in several essential steps or behaviors as a part of the new approach.

1. ***Engage in a Strategic and Collaborative Local Response:*** According to best practices, developing a community wide strategic plan aimed at ending homelessness should be the first step. These plans outline a comprehensive and systematic approach to addressing the different facets of homelessness through a community-wide collaborative process.

Studies of existing plans indicate that while developing a plan is a good start, many plans have been largely ineffective due to loss of momentum in the implementation stage. Research indicates that successful plans identify a person or body responsible for implementation, have adequate staffing and dedicated funding, identify specific and measurable goals, are informed using local data, and embrace evidence-based practices such as the Housing First model.

2. ***Embrace a Housing First Approach:*** Housing First is a relatively recent approach to addressing homelessness that centers on providing homeless people with permanent housing as quickly as possible and then providing them with supportive services as needed to foster long-term stability and prevent a return to homelessness. The approach is based on data showing that people without a stable home are often unable to focus on dealing with other issues such as improving their job skills, stabilizing a mental illness, or recovering from addiction.

3. Connect People Experiencing Homelessness with “Just Enough” Assistance: Efficient systems of ending homelessness also place an emphasis on connecting people with “just enough” assistance so they can become housed and stay housed. For some homeless people “just enough” might be extremely intensive and long-term services, while others may need very little. This allows homeless systems to reach the greatest number of people with limited resources.

Communities that are most successful at providing efficient homeless systems provide a blend of various services and housing options, allowing service providers to target the right services to the right individuals. In particular, rapid re-housing and permanent supportive housing have been proven to be the most cost-effective and efficient methods of addressing homelessness.

### Homelessness in Yolo County

Every two years the Yolo County Housing and Poverty Action Coalition (HPAC) conducts a count to

Jurisdiction	2007	2009	2011	2013
Rural	9	2	8	9
Davis	86	114	117	114
West Sacramento	138	230	192	165
Woodland	181	145	151	186
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>414</b>	<b>491</b>	<b>468</b>	<b>474</b>

determine the number of homeless people living within the County. During the most recent Point-in-Time Homeless Count (PIT) 474 homeless individuals were identified on a single night in January 2013. For the purpose of comparison, the table provides a summary of Yolo County’s homeless counts since 2007.

### Yolo County’s Efforts to Address Homelessness

Several years ago Yolo County began an effort to address homelessness in a coordinated and systemic manner, as suggested by best practices. The community used a collaborative process to develop a ten-year plan to end homelessness, which was adopted by Yolo County and its four cities, and endorsed by many local organizations and individuals. However, since adoption the Plan has not gained much traction and local efforts have not noticeably improved circumstances for the community.

At present, efforts within Yolo County to reduce the number of homeless individuals and families have been hindered by several core problems, including structural flaws in the Ten-Year Plan that impede leadership and accountability, insufficient resources, and ineffective fundraising efforts.

1. Structure of the Ten-Year Plan: The existing structure of the Plan hinders leadership and accountability. Best practices suggest that successful community wide plans typically contain specific and measurable goals that include a description of the steps necessary to accomplish the goal, identify the responsible parties, and outline a timeline for achieving each goal. Some of the goals in Yolo County’s Plan are very vague, making it difficult to measure progress on the Plan. Without a clear understanding of what progress has been made the Plan’s leadership is unable to ensure that the Plan continues to move forward.
2. Fundraising Efforts: Yolo County struggles with obtaining the resources necessary to provide housing and services. The funding currently utilized by the community is very limited, and is dependent primarily on federal government funding. In particular, the homeless system in Yolo County is dependent on funding from the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), but has received relatively low scores on its HUD funding applications and has had difficulty responding to the changing funding priorities of HUD.

These issues with federal grants demonstrate an increased need to diversify funding sources for the homeless system in Yolo County. However, the local homeless providers often lack the

capacity needed to apply for large grants from the State or private foundations, and Yolo’s local government invests few local dollars in the issue.

3. *Availability and Use of Resources:* In Yolo County opportunities for homeless families to move into decent and affordable permanent housing are virtually non-existent. In addition, Yolo County has not historically had a strong data management system, which has limited the community’s ability to identify how resources are best utilized in assisting the homeless. Finally, the community has not fully embraced best practices, such as Housing First, which have been proven to assist the greatest number of people with limited resources.

**Recommendations for Addressing Homelessness in Yolo County**

This report proposes that problems with the homeless system in Yolo County be addressed in two stages, as displayed in the table below.

Recommendations for Improving the Community-Wide System of Care for the Homeless
<b>Stage One:</b>
Improve the community-wide approach for addressing homelessness to include stronger collaboration, leadership, and accountability
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Develop a community-wide definition of homelessness</li> <li>2. Improve the accountability mechanisms in the 10-Year Plan to End Homelessness</li> <li>3. Dedicate staff and funding to the management and implementation of the 10-Year Plan</li> <li>4. Increase collaboration by strengthening linkages between service providers and the 10-Year Plan</li> </ol>
<b>Stage Two:</b>
Pursue additional funding for affordable housing and supportive services
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Improve alignment with HUD funding priorities</li> <li>2. Develop a funding task force to identify funding opportunities and coordinate applications</li> <li>3. Diversify homeless funding sources to include national, state, local, and private funding sources</li> </ol>
Focus on utilizing existing resources effectively and efficiently
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Develop an accurate community wide system of data collection</li> <li>2. Re-prioritize the use of existing funding and resources to increase efficiency (including embracing a Housing First approach)</li> </ol>

The County government, like all local jurisdictions, should play a role in developing and maintaining a community-wide homeless system. This report recommends several initial steps Yolo County might take to become more involved in the community’s homeless system.

Recommendations for how the County of Yolo can Address Homelessness
1. Actively participate in the Ten-Year Plan
2. Ensure that mainstream services are accessible to the homeless
3. Add homelessness to the tactical plan
4. Add advocacy for affordable housing to the County’s legislative platform
5. Consider funding programs or services for the homeless

**HOMELESSNESS IN YOLO COUNTY:**  
*Strengthening the Community-Wide Homeless System*

Homelessness is a nationwide issue, with more than 600,000 people experiencing homelessness on any given night in the United States.<sup>1</sup> Despite the prevalence of the issue, many people misunderstand the causes of homelessness. Although circumstances vary, most people are homeless because they cannot acquire and/or maintain housing they can afford. Often, people fall into homelessness due to extreme poverty coupled with an episode of bad luck, poor judgment, or the disruption of a domestic relationship. Once homeless, many people face housing barriers such as low or no income, criminal history, poor rental history, or a poor credit history. While personal circumstances such as substance abuse, mental health issues, or physical disabilities contribute to the problem, statistics are increasingly showing that efforts to end homelessness have been more successful when resolving these issues is not the primary focus of assistance. Rather, the most successful homeless systems focus first on re-housing, with support services offered once the individual or family has been permanently housed.

In Yolo County, many jurisdictions, organizations, and residents are showing a renewed interest in addressing issue of homelessness. In response to this interest, this report identifies best practices in the homeless field, discusses the prevalence of homelessness in Yolo County, describes the community’s existing system of care, and makes recommendations for strengthening the system of care for the homeless in Yolo County at both the County and community-wide levels.

**Definition of Homelessness**

It is difficult to pinpoint a single accurate definition of homelessness, as it impacts a wide range of people in varying circumstances. However, without a single definition it is impossible to collect and compare data across communities and gain an understanding of the issue on a large scale. For this reason the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development’s (HUD) definition of homelessness is commonly utilized (provided in Table 1) when defining homelessness.<sup>2</sup>

**Table 1: HUD Definition of Homelessness**

<b>Category One: Literally Homeless</b>	<b>Category Two: Imminently Losing Nighttime Residence</b>	<b>Category Three: Persistent Housing Instability</b>	<b>Category Four: Fleeing Domestic Violence</b>
<p>An individual or family who lacks a fixed, regular and adequate nighttime residence, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Places not meant for human habitation</i></li> <li>• <i>Shelter and transitional housing</i></li> <li>• <i>Hotel/motel stays paid for by voucher</i></li> </ul>	<p>Individual or family being evicted within 14 days and:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Has no subsequent residence identified; and</i></li> <li>• <i>Lacks the resources to obtain permanent housing</i></li> </ul>	<p>Unaccompanied youth or families with children who fit ALL of these characteristics:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Have not had a permanent residence in the past 60 days</i></li> <li>• <i>Have moved two or more times in the past 60 days</i></li> <li>• <i>Have at least one chronic disability, health condition, substance addiction, history of domestic violence or child abuse, and/or barrier to employment</i></li> </ul>	<p>Individuals or families who are fleeing or attempting to flee dangerous or life threatening conditions that relate to violence and:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Have no other residence</i></li> <li>• <i>Lack the resources to obtain permanent housing</i></li> </ul>

<sup>1</sup> National Alliance to End Homelessness (NAEH). (2013). *Snapshot of Homelessness*. [...](#)

<sup>2</sup> National Alliance to End Homelessness. (2012). *Changes in the HUD Definition of “Homeless.”* [http://b.3cdn.net/naeh/579e3b67bd7eeb3fc3\\_q0m6i6az8.pdf](http://b.3cdn.net/naeh/579e3b67bd7eeb3fc3_q0m6i6az8.pdf)

While HUD's definition encompasses many types of homelessness, it is important to note that a national definition cannot possibly address the many unique and varying circumstances of local communities. As just one example of misaligned definitions, the City of West Sacramento has a large number of homeless individuals who stay in hotels or motels when they receive their monthly income (such as Supplemental Security Income [SSI]). However, the monthly income is rarely enough to keep them housed in a hotel/motel through an entire month, so they often end up living on the streets again once the money runs out. Many consider this group of people to be homeless, but the HUD definition excludes anyone staying in a motel or hotel that they paid for themselves.

---

## NATIONWIDE BEST PRACTICES IN ADDRESSING HOMELESSNESS

---

In recent years many communities, governments, and organizations throughout the nation have become increasingly devoted to addressing the root causes of homelessness. In May 2009 President Obama signed the Homeless Emergency Assistance and Rapid Transition to Housing (HEARTH) Act of 2009, which amended and reauthorized the existing federal homeless assistance legislation. In the HEARTH Act the federal government demonstrated an increased commitment to the issue of homelessness by mandating the development of a national strategic plan to end homelessness, which was implemented in 2010.

Reports from HUD indicate that these efforts are working, and have resulted in a 6.1 percent drop in homelessness nationwide since 2010, with reductions in every major category or subpopulation of homelessness (including a 24 percent drop in veteran homelessness, a 16 percent drop in chronic homelessness, and an 8 percent drop in family homelessness).<sup>3</sup>

National organizations such as HUD, the National Alliance to End Homelessness, and the United States Interagency Council on Homelessness (USICH) have recently begun advocating for a new approach to addressing homelessness that couples strategic and efficient local response with a Housing First approach. Evidence based best practices indicate that the new approach reduces the prevalence of homelessness, improves quality of lives, and results in net savings for providers and jurisdictions.<sup>4</sup>

### Strategic and Comprehensive Local Response to Homelessness

Evidence-based best practices indicate that homelessness needs to be addressed through a strategic, collaborative and locally led response. While the federal and state governments must fill an important support role, ending homelessness has to become a local priority. This means the involvement of all stakeholders, including non-profit organizations, business leaders, the faith community, politicians, local governments, law enforcement, rental property owners, and employers.

According to best practices, developing a community wide strategic plan aimed at ending homelessness should be the first step of communities attempting to address this issue. Though often called “Ten-Year Plans,” the most important component of these plans is not the timeline in which they should be accomplished so much as an emphasis on ending homelessness rather than simply managing it. This is a shift in the way that homelessness is addressed, as previous efforts to deal with homelessness typically worked to mitigate the effects of homelessness rather than reducing and ultimately resolving the issue. A study completed in 2011 found that more than 360 local jurisdictions and 33 states have developed ten-year plans, demonstrating that this practice has generated a lot of buy-in nationwide.<sup>5</sup>

#### Elements of a Successful Plan

---

Studies of existing plans indicate that while developing a plan is a good start, many plans have been largely ineffective at reducing homelessness due to loss of momentum in the implementation stage. Research indicates that successful plans (meaning plans that helped significantly reduce the number of

---

<sup>3</sup> U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. (2013). *HUD Reports Continued Decline in US Homelessness Since 2010*. [http://portal.hud.gov/hudportal/HUD?src=/press/press\\_releases\\_media\\_advisories/2013/HUDNo.13-173](http://portal.hud.gov/hudportal/HUD?src=/press/press_releases_media_advisories/2013/HUDNo.13-173)

<sup>4</sup> National Alliance to End Homelessness. (2013). *The New Approach: The Emergence of a Better Way to Address Homelessness*.

<sup>5</sup> United States Interagency Council on Homelessness. (2011). *Ten-Year Plan Update*.



people experiencing homelessness in a community) were tied to several important elements, as described below.<sup>6 7</sup>

- 1. Implementation Body and Dedicated Staff:** Successful plans identify a person or body responsible for implementation, including staff members dedicated to the task. Plans might be staffed and implemented by a local organization, council, or government body. However, many successful communities developed a non-profit organization with the sole focus of coordinating the community's efforts to end homelessness.
- 2. Specific and Measurable Goals:** Successful communities develop an action plan that describes specific steps, timelines, measurable goals and responsible parties. Without these important elements ten-year plans are typically too vague or unclear, and plans often fall short of success due to lack of accountability.
- 3. Dedicated Funding Stream:** Successful plans identify specific funding sources or strategies.
- 4. Content:** Successful plans are informed using local data, contain an emphasis on homeless subpopulations (such as chronically homeless, families, and youth), and embrace evidence-based best practices including the Housing First approach.<sup>8</sup>

## The Housing First Approach

Housing First is a relatively recent approach to addressing homelessness that centers on providing homeless people with permanent housing as quickly as possible and then providing them with supportive services as needed to prevent a return to homelessness.<sup>9</sup> The approach is based on data showing that people without a stable home are often unable to focus on dealing with other issues such as improving their job skills, stabilizing a mental illness, or recovering from addiction.

Housing First contrasts with the more traditional approach that has been used by homeless systems for many years prior to the development of Housing First. In the traditional approach, homeless individuals transition through three progressive stages of housing with the ultimate goal of self-sufficiency. In this approach individuals and families experiencing homelessness begin with a stay in an emergency shelter, followed by a temporary (usually 12-24 month) stay in transitional housing, and ending with a transition to permanent housing.

Data has proven Housing First to be more efficient at resolving homelessness with limited resources, and the major national homeless organizations all support the Housing First approach (including HUD, the National Alliance to End Homelessness, and the United States Interagency Council on Homelessness).

---

<sup>6</sup> National Alliance to End Homelessness. (2010). *What is a Ten Year Plan to End Homelessness?*  
[http://b.3cdn.net/naeh/04e698bcb798f4ca28\\_hum6bnu03.pdf](http://b.3cdn.net/naeh/04e698bcb798f4ca28_hum6bnu03.pdf)

<sup>7</sup> National Alliance to End Homelessness. (2009). *A Shifting Focus: What's New in Community Plans to End Homelessness.*  
[http://b.3cdn.net/naeh/8fb05553670fae3f64\\_9km6ibuf7.pdf](http://b.3cdn.net/naeh/8fb05553670fae3f64_9km6ibuf7.pdf)

<sup>8</sup> United States Interagency Council on Homelessness. (2013). *Developing and Implementing Strategic Plans to End Homelessness.* [http://usich.gov/resources/uploads/asset\\_library/CommunityStrategicPlanning\\_February\\_2011.pdf](http://usich.gov/resources/uploads/asset_library/CommunityStrategicPlanning_February_2011.pdf)

<sup>9</sup> National Alliance to End Homelessness. (2006). *What is Housing First?*  
[http://b.3cdn.net/naeh/b974efab62feb2b36c\\_pzm6bn4ct.pdf](http://b.3cdn.net/naeh/b974efab62feb2b36c_pzm6bn4ct.pdf)

## Providing “Just Enough” Assistance

In addition to developing an effective community plan for ending homelessness and embracing the Housing First approach, communities with effective and efficient systems of ending homelessness place an emphasis on connecting people with “just enough” assistance so they can become housed and stay housed. For some homeless people “just enough” might be extremely intensive and long-term services, while others may need very little. This allows homeless systems to reach the greatest number of people with limited resources. Communities that are most successful at providing efficient homeless systems provide a blend of various services and housing options that allow service providers to tailor the level of service delivery to the needs of a particular individual. Table 2 provides a description of the various elements essential to a comprehensive system of care for the homeless.

**Table 2: Types of Homeless Services**

Homeless Service	Definition	Example	Who Needs It?
<b>Prevention</b>	Assisting individuals and households at risk of homelessness to maintain their housing by providing housing relocation and stabilization services or short-term emergency financial assistance	Landlord-tenant mediation	Those at imminent risk of homelessness
<b>Emergency Shelter/ Services</b>	The first stop for people experiencing homelessness, and often the point of entry into the homeless system	Emergency shelters	All Homeless populations
<b>Rapid Re-Housing (RRH)</b>	Rental assistance combined with supportive services to help individuals and families attain and retain permanent housing	Short to medium term rental assistance	People who are expected to be able to be independent after assistance has ended (such as families with children)
<b>Transitional Housing (TH)</b>	Interim placements for those without access or readiness for permanent housing. Offers clients the opportunity to gain the personal and financial stability needed to transition to and maintain permanent housing	Up to 24-month housing program for victims of domestic violence with supportive services offered on-site	Domestic Violence Survivors; Transition aged youth; People struggling with substance abuse
<b>Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH)</b>	Programs combining housing assistance and supportive services (either onsite or through partnering agencies)- Participants may stay indefinitely, and must have a chronic disability	Affordable housing units with onsite support services	Chronically homeless people with chronic disabilities
<b>Affordable/ Subsidized Permanent Housing</b>	Long-term, safe, decent, and affordable housing	Housing vouchers	All homeless populations
<b>Outreach</b>	Services target the most vulnerable of the homeless population who are often unable or unwilling to accept emergency shelter services	Street outreach to people residing in parks, campgrounds, and places not fit for human habitation	All homeless populations, but in particular, the chronically homeless
<b>Supportive Services</b>	Services needed for a person to move towards self-sufficiency and independent living	Job skills training	All homeless populations
<b>Discharge Planning</b>	Institutions (jail, foster care, mental health, medical care) create a clear path to housing when discharging individuals, and do not release into the homeless service system	County Jail assisting inmates in identifying housing prior to their release	Inmates at imminent risk of homelessness
<b>Mainstream Income Assistance</b>	Mainstream cash assistance programs that provide homeless individuals with a stable income.	CalWORKs; Supplemental Security Income	All homeless populations

SOURCE: HUD. (2013). *CoC 101: A Guide for PHAs*. [http://usich.gov/media\\_center/videos\\_and\\_webinars/coc\\_101](http://usich.gov/media_center/videos_and_webinars/coc_101)

While all of the services described in Table 2 are important, targeting the right housing and services to the right individuals is essential to making a homeless system work efficiently. In particular, rapid re-

housing and permanent supportive housing have been proven to be the most cost-effective methods of addressing the needs of homeless individuals. Transitional housing is less essential to the newer model of addressing homelessness, although it is recommended by HUD for use with three specific populations.

### **Rapid Re-Housing**

---

Rapid re-housing, which is a short-term and inexpensive solution to homelessness, moves people into housing faster and more efficiently than other homeless programs. Families and individuals with low service needs are the best candidates for rapid re-housing, as data shows that they generally experience homelessness for a short period of time, and ultimately leave homelessness without returning. Prime candidates for rapid re-housing will benefit most from rental assistance, access to affordable housing, and connections to “mainstream” community services and supports (such as CalWORKs and CalFresh). Individuals requiring additional intensive care or services to remain housed are less likely to be successful with rapid re-housing services.

When utilized correctly rapid re-housing has been proven to reduce the prevalence of homelessness and shorten the length of homelessness while operating at a lower cost than other homeless services.<sup>10</sup>

- **Shorten Length of Stay:** Several years ago the federal stimulus provided funding to programs throughout the nation to provide rapid re-housing services to the homeless. In the first year 110,000 families received rapid re-housing assistance, and 91% of those families exited homelessness for permanent housing (more than half within just one month of assistance).
- **Reduce Homelessness:** In Kern County, California homelessness was reduced by 12 percent in two years using a robust rapid re-housing program.
- **Prevent Return to Homelessness:** The State of Michigan rapidly re-housed 4,550 homeless persons in families, and fewer than 5 percent returned to homelessness.
- **Reduce Costs:** In Alameda County each successful exit from homelessness through rapid re-housing costs \$2,800. In contrast, each successful exit from emergency shelter costs \$10,714 and each successful exit from transitional housing costs \$25,000.

### **Permanent Supportive Housing**

---

Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH) is best utilized when targeted towards the chronically homeless and/or those with chronic mental illness or disabilities. These populations are typically homeless repeatedly or for long periods of time, have high service needs, and often cycle in and out of institutions.<sup>11</sup>

Successful PSH programs make housing accessible to these hard to reach populations by utilizing a simple application process and maintaining no conditions of tenancy (such as mandatory case management or sobriety) beyond those included in a typical lease. While housing is not contingent upon compliance with supportive services, PSH programs typically provide an intensive level of services that can respond to the natural ebbs and flows in need that a person might experience while stabilizing.

---

<sup>10</sup> National Alliance to End Homelessness. (2013). *Rapid Re-Housing: Successfully Ending Family Homelessness*. [http://b3cdn.net/naeh/35f1338115aabf3410\\_0bm6iioyi.pdf](http://b3cdn.net/naeh/35f1338115aabf3410_0bm6iioyi.pdf)

<sup>11</sup> National Alliance to End Homelessness. (2010). *Chronic Homelessness Policy Solutions*. <http://www.endhomelessness.org/library/entry/chronic-homelessness-policy-solutions>

Effective PSH programs can help tenants increase their income, get arrested less, make progress towards recovery, and become more productive members of their communities.<sup>12</sup> Additionally, while PSH is relatively expensive as compared to other homeless services in the short-term, it serves the hardest to reach and most expensive homeless individuals, making successful programs actually result in a positive return on investment in the long run.

- In a five year study of the Pathways Program in New York City there was an 88 percent retention rate of persons placed in supported housing using the Housing First model. For comparison, only 47 percent of the participants in the City’s residential treatment system remained housed during the same period.<sup>13</sup>
- A permanent supportive housing program in Denver, Colorado estimated that it reduced the cost of providing public services (including health, mental health, substance abuse, shelter, and incarceration) to its residents by \$15,773 per person per year, which more than offset the annual cost of the supportive housing (\$13,400).<sup>13</sup>
- A study of Los Angeles County’s permanent supportive housing project, called Project 50, found that annual cost savings yielded from a decline in residents’ usage of alcohol and drug services, jail, medical services, and mental health services resulted in Project 50’s costs being offset by 108 percent in a two year period.<sup>14</sup>

### **Transitional Housing**

The newer nationwide best practices place less emphasis on transitional housing. Evidence has shown that transitional housing often becomes either a holding pattern for those who really need less intensive interventions or a barrier to those who need supportive housing on a more permanent basis. Many of those who succeed in transitional programs would have been able to succeed with a much less costly level of assistance, such as rapid re-housing. Meanwhile, those who fail to succeed in transitional housing likely require a more intensive level of assistance, such as permanent supportive housing. Transitional housing is best utilized for homeless subpopulations who are experiencing issues that are temporary in nature, but still require a more intensive level of service (such as transition aged youth, domestic violence survivors, and those struggling with substance abuse).

### **What Happens When Best Practices are utilized?**

Examples abound of communities that significantly reduced the prevalence of homelessness by using a strategic and comprehensive local response that emphasizes Housing First. Alameda County, for instance, has seen a 10 percent reduction in homelessness since 2007 (including an 18 percent reduction in chronic homelessness since 2007 and a 38 percent reduction in family homelessness since 2003) after implementing a collaborative plan for addressing homelessness that included a Housing First focus.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>12</sup> National Alliance to End Homelessness. (2007). *Supportive Housing is Cost Effective*. <http://www.endhomelessness.org/library/entry/supportive-housing-is-cost-effective>

<sup>13</sup> Rynearson, S., Barrett, B., & Clark, C. (2010). *Housing First: A Review of the Literature*. [http://intra.cbcs.usf.edu/PublicationTracker/common/file/162/Housing%20First A%20review%20of%20the%20literature.pdf](http://intra.cbcs.usf.edu/PublicationTracker/common/file/162/Housing%20First%20A%20review%20of%20the%20literature.pdf)

<sup>14</sup> County of Los Angeles. (2012). Project 50: The cost effectiveness of the permanent supportive housing model in the skid row section of Los Angeles County. <http://zev.lacounty.gov/wp-content/uploads/Project-50-Cost-Effectiveness-report-FINAL-6-6-12.pdf>

<sup>15</sup> Every One Home. (2013). *Developing a Housing First Approach System Wide: Alameda County, CA*. [http://b3cdn.net/naeh/e66a8150a4c1d39f7a\\_42m6b5sfo.pdf](http://b3cdn.net/naeh/e66a8150a4c1d39f7a_42m6b5sfo.pdf)

San Francisco is another community that implemented best practices with positive results. In San Francisco, coordinated efforts with a heavy focus on Housing First and permanent supportive housing resulted in a 28 percent decline in homelessness during a three-year period. In a single year San Francisco's Housing First initiative housed 900 people, and reduced the number of deaths due to exposure and untreated medical conditions by 40 percent (from 169 to 101).<sup>13</sup>

Seemingly, evidence shows that communities embracing nationwide best practices in their homeless systems provide more efficient systems of care with better outcomes at a lower cost.

## HOMELESSNESS IN YOLO COUNTY: HOW BIG IS THE PROBLEM?

Every two years the Yolo County Housing and Poverty Action Coalition (HPAC) conducts a Point-in-Time (PIT) homeless count to determine the number of sheltered and unsheltered homeless people living within the County. As evidenced in Table 3, during the most recent PIT count 474 homeless individuals were identified on a single night in January 2013.<sup>16</sup> When considering these numbers it is important to keep in mind that they reflect those persons identified as homeless within the county on a single day. Many individuals and families move in and out of homelessness during the course of a year, meaning that the actual number of people experiencing homelessness in 2013 was much higher than 474.

Additionally, the count does not include people who were doubled up in conventional housing, couch surfers, adults in treatment and criminal justice facilities, or youth in residential treatment facilities, emergency foster care, or detention facilities. HUD mandates the PIT count as a prerequisite to receiving HUD funding, and HUD requirements preclude these populations from the count.

**Table 3: Yolo County Homeless Census (2013)**

Group	Sheltered/ Unsheltered	Rural	Davis	West Sacramento	Woodland	Total
<b>People in Families</b> <i>(with Children)</i>	Sheltered	0	36	33	60	<b>129</b>
	Unsheltered	0	0	0	0	<b>0</b>
	<b>Total</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>129</b>
<b>Individuals</b>	Sheltered	0	55	6	87	<b>154</b>
	Unsheltered	9	23	126	39	<b>191</b>
	<b>Total</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>132</b>	<b>126</b>	<b>345</b>
<b>Total Homeless:</b>						<b>474</b>

For the purpose of comparison, Table 3 provides a summary of Yolo County's homeless counts since 2007. The number of homeless people in the County increased significantly following the recent recession, and has fallen only a small amount since then.

**Table 4: Yolo County Homeless Counts from 2007-2013**

Jurisdiction	2007	2009	2011	2013
<b>Rural</b>	9	2	8	9
<b>Davis</b>	86	114	117	114
<b>West Sacramento</b>	138	230	192	165
<b>Woodland</b>	181	145	151	186
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>414</b>	<b>491</b>	<b>468</b>	<b>474</b>

<sup>16</sup> Homeless and Poverty Action Coalition (HPAC). (2013). *2013 Homeless Census Data Report*.

## YOLO COUNTY'S EFFORTS TO ADDRESS HOMELESSNESS: WHAT'S HAPPENING NOW?

Several years ago Yolo County began an effort to address homelessness in a coordinated and systemic manner, as suggested by best practices. The community obtained a Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) in 2008 to develop a ten-year plan to end homelessness that included the majority of local service providers and jurisdictions. In 2009 the Plan was adopted by Yolo County and its four cities, and endorsed by many local organizations and individuals, and implementation was intended to begin in 2010. The Plan identifies four goals for addressing homelessness in Yolo County including prevention, housing, supportive services, and implementation (for a more detailed description of the Plan see Appendix A).<sup>17</sup> However, since adoption the Plan has not gained much traction and efforts have not noticeably improved circumstances for the community.

At present, efforts within Yolo County to reduce the number of homeless have been hindered by several core problems, including insufficient resources for housing and services, unsuccessful fundraising efforts, and difficulty aligning with nationwide best practices. But most significantly, due to structural flaws the Ten-year Plan does not provide the leadership and accountability necessary to coordinate a collaborative system of addressing homelessness. Because Yolo County's Plan has been largely unsuccessful, many organizations and jurisdictions have made efforts to resolve the issue independently, further perpetuating the disorganization of the community-wide system.

### The Community-Wide System for Addressing Homelessness

Some of the difficulties with developing and maintaining a coordinated system of care for the homeless in Yolo County might be attributed to structural problems with the Ten-Year Plan.

#### Oversight

When created the Plan was intended to maintain oversight through an advisory committee that met once annually and an Executive Commission that met quarterly. The advisory committee was intended to be composed of service providers while the Commission was to be composed of elected officials from each of the jurisdictions in Yolo County. Additionally, the three major goals of the Plan (prevention, housing, and supportive services) were to be led by Action Teams composed of relevant stakeholders. In the two years following implementation the Executive Commission was poorly attended, the Advisory Committee and Action Teams were never formed, and the Plan made little progress.

In 2012 Yolo County Housing (YCH) took responsibility for implementing the Plan, and adjusted oversight to a single oversight body (the Executive Commission) composed of five elected officials, a representative from HPAC, and a homeless or formerly homeless member (the Commission currently lacks its homeless representative). Recent meetings of the Executive Commission have seen better attendance, although the meetings still see little participation from the public. Members of HPAC have expressed an interest in becoming more involved with the Plan, and work has been to ensure that they are fully informed regarding meeting dates and agenda topics.

#### Accountability

The Ten-year Plan also lacks the accountability mechanisms necessary to ensure that it is being implemented. Best practices suggest that successful community wide plans typically contain specific and measurable goals that include a description of the steps necessary to accomplish the goal, identify the

<sup>17</sup> County of Yolo. (2013). 10-Year Plan to End Homelessness. <http://www.yolocounty.org/Index.aspx?page=1834>

responsible parties, and outline a timeline for achieving each goal. Some of the goals in Yolo County’s Plan are very vague, making it difficult to measure progress on the Plan. Table 5 displays one example of an existing goal as described in Yolo County’s Ten-Year Plan to End Homelessness. The example fails to identify responsible parties, does not pinpoint an expected timeline for implementation, and describes success using vague terms that are very difficult to measure such as “few people” and “rarely.”

**Table 5: Example of Goal in Yolo County’s Ten-Year Plan to End Homelessness**

<b>GOAL ONE: PREVENTION</b>	
<i>Prevent homelessness through early, comprehensive assistance to those at-risk</i>	
<b>OBJECTIVE:</b>	
<b>Eliminate discharges into homelessness from public institutions, including: foster care, hospitals, mental health facilities, substance abuse treatment facilities, and prisons and jails</b>	
<i>How will we achieve this strategy?</i>	<i>How will we know we are succeeding?</i>
Analyze data on those served through the County’s Housing Resource Centers to identify people who were recently discharged when they sought services. Use data to advocate for resources to provide housing and services for the populations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Data demonstrated that few people seeking housing or services came from public institutions</li> <li>• Recently transitioned persons rarely access homeless housing or services</li> </ul>

**Other Nationwide Best Practices**

The Plan also does not align well with other nationwide best practices that often result in success for ten-year plans such as having dedicated staffing and funding sources, specifically planning for how to assist homeless sub-populations, and focusing on a Housing First approach.

**Resources and Fundraising Efforts**

In addition to structural issues with the Ten-year Plan, Yolo County often struggles with obtaining the resources necessary to provide housing and services to the homeless. The funding currently utilized by the community is very limited, and is dependent primarily on federal government funds and private donations. In particular, Yolo County relies significantly on three federal funding sources, including HUD Continuum of Care (CoC) grants, HUD Emergency Solutions Grants (ESG), and Emergency Food and Shelter Program (EFSP) grants. Table 6 provides a summary of Yolo County’s federal grants in 2012.

**Table 6: Yolo County's Federal Homeless Grants in 2012**

<b>Grant</b>	<b>Amount</b>
HUD Continuum of Care Grants	\$523,214
HUD Emergency Solutions Grants	\$699,188
FEMA Emergency Food and Shelter Program Grants	\$104,870
<b>TOTAL:</b>	<b>\$1,327,272</b>

The county’s reliance on these federal funding sources is problematic given recent trends. The funding from these sources is not currently sufficient to support homeless programs in the county, and seems to have topped out. Additionally, in the upcoming fiscal year HUD has indicated that both the ESG and CoC grant programs may experience significant funding cuts. Even if the current level of funding is maintained, accessing additional funding from HUD for new projects will become increasingly difficult.

The HUD funding process is competitive, and uses a scoring system to determine funding allocations. In the most recent grant year funding for new projects was only provided to communities that were well



aligned with HUD’s priorities for homeless services and received a score of 97 or higher on their grant application. To receive a high CoC score communities had to demonstrate community-wide planning and coordination, strategic use of resources, integration with mainstream services, and improved data collection. Additionally, HUD prioritized communities that focus their homeless efforts on providing permanent housing and prevention services rather than shelter.

Yolo County received a score of 89.7 on its CoC application in 2012 (as demonstrated in Table 7), which was lower than the national average, and has had some difficulty responding to the changing priorities of HUD. Even if Yolo’s system were better aligned with HUD funding priorities, funding from CoC would only be likely to increase a small amount annually (approximately \$45,000 in funding for Bonus projects, and \$10,000 in planning funds).

**Table 7: HUD Funding Competition- Yolo CoC Application Score (2012)**

Scoring Category	Maximum Score	Yolo CoC Score	National Average
<b>CoC Housing, Services, and Structure</b>	14	10	10.33
<b>Homeless Information Management System</b>	13	10.2	19.93
<b>Point-in-Time</b>	8	4.25	
<b>CoC Strategic Planning</b>	55	40.5	43.83
<b>CoC Performance</b>	34	16.75	19.05
<b>Leveraging</b>	6	6	2.06
<b>COC APPLICATION SCORE</b>	<b>130</b>	<b>87.7</b>	<b>94.81</b>
<b>Bonus Points</b>	4	2	-
<b>Total CoC Score with Bonus Points</b>	<b>134</b>	<b>89.7</b>	-

These issues with federal grants demonstrate an increased need to diversify funding sources for the homeless system in Yolo County. However, the local homeless service providers often lack the capacity needed to apply for grants from the State or private foundations, and Yolo’s local governments invest very few local dollars in the issue. The County and its four cities allocate very little of their annual budgets to addressing homelessness.

**Affordable Housing and Supportive Services for the Homeless**

Additionally, due to the lack of a coordinated homeless system and difficulties obtaining funding, affordable housing and supportive services available in Yolo County are insufficient.

**Housing**

The availability of decent and affordable housing in a community is a significant indicator of whether homeless families or individuals will be able to move permanently out of homelessness. In Yolo County opportunities for homeless families to move into decent and affordable permanent housing are virtually non-existent, which presents a significant barrier to the community’s ability to address homelessness.

In 2010 Yolo County had a housing vacancy rate of only 6.2 percent of all housing units, as compared to 8.6 percent in California and 12.2 percent nationally.<sup>18</sup> Additionally, of the available housing in the County very little is classified as affordable or extremely affordable. Table 8 provides a detailed description of rent as a proportion of income for renter occupied units in Yolo County, California, and nationwide. The table indicates that Yolo County has a higher proportion of high cost housing (47.3

<sup>18</sup> Housing Assistance Council. (2013). The Rural Data Portal. [www.ruraldataportal.org](http://www.ruraldataportal.org)

percent of renters pay 35 percent of more of their income in rent) than do the state (45.7 percent) and the nation (41.7 percent).

**Table 8: Rent as a Proportion of Income**

<b>Rent as a Proportion of Income</b>	<b>Yolo County</b>	<b>California</b>	<b>United States</b>
<b>Rent Less Than 15% of Income</b>	8.6	9.7	12.3
<b>Rent 15-19% of Income</b>	9.4	11.1	12.4
<b>Rent 20-24% of Income</b>	12.8	12.3	12.8
<b>Rent 25-29% of Income</b>	11.5	11.9	11.7
<b>Rent 30-34% of Income</b>	10.4	9.4	9.1
<b>Rent 35% of More of Income</b>	47.3	45.7	41.7

Yolo County Housing (YCH), the public agency charged with providing affordable housing to the community, has experienced significant budget cuts in recent years, which have resulted in a decrease in the availability of housing that might be affordable for the homeless population. YCH is primarily funded through HUD, and provides assistance to approximately 2,076 households through low cost property that it owns and manages as well as two Section 8 voucher programs.<sup>19</sup> YCH has already been forced to drop approximately 190 vouchers by not reissuing, and still has 130 more families on vouchers than it has funding to support.

In addition to national cuts to affordable housing, Yolo County has been significantly impacted by the loss of state redevelopment dollars, which was an essential resource in developing affordable housing.

### **Supportive Services**

Access to supportive services is another essential element of a comprehensive system of addressing homelessness. Yolo County struggles with obtaining the resources to provide these services, and in particular has very limited availability of prevention and outreach services targeted toward the homeless.

### **Use of Resources**

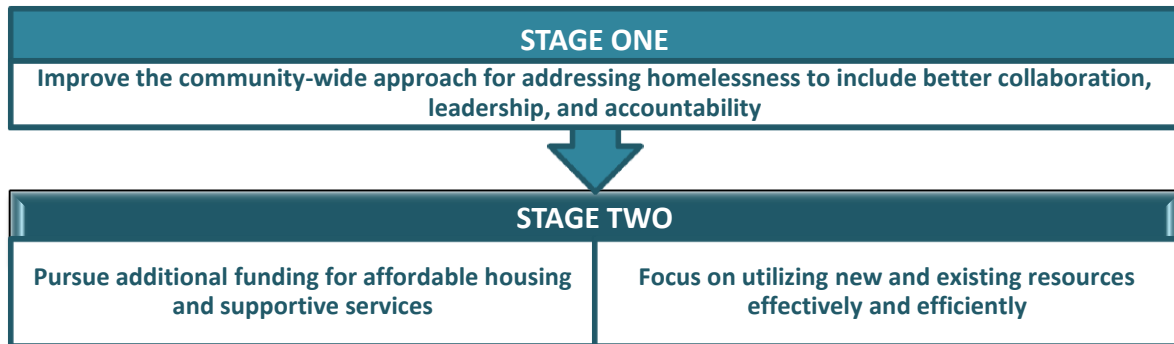
While expanding the availability of housing and services will be essential to reducing the number of homeless in Yolo County, it is also important for the community to identify the best uses of new and existing resources. Data collection and management plays a significant role in the community’s ability to identify how resources are best utilized in assisting the homeless. Yolo County has not historically had a strong data management system, although HPAC is currently in the process of implementing a new Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) that will be helpful in ensuring that resources are used efficiently. Additionally, the community has not fully embraced nationwide best practices, such as the Housing First approach, which have been proven to assist the greatest number of people with limited resources.

<sup>19</sup> Yolo County Housing. (2013). *Welcome to Yolo County Housing!* [http://www.ych.ca.gov/about\\_us/index.php](http://www.ych.ca.gov/about_us/index.php)

## HOW CAN WE STRENGTHEN THE COMMUNITY-WIDE SYSTEM?

Yolo County is currently faced with an excellent opportunity to improve circumstances for people experiencing homelessness. Yolo County's local jurisdictions, elected officials, and residents have become increasingly interested in the issue, which offers an opportunity to raise awareness of the issue and gain local support for the homeless. This report proposes that this opportunity is utilized to address problems with the homeless system in Yolo County in two stages, as displayed in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Recommendations for the Community-Wide Homeless System



### STAGE ONE:

*Improve the community-wide approach for addressing homelessness to include stronger collaboration, leadership, and accountability*

#### **1. Develop a community-wide definition of homelessness**

When Yolo County's Ten-Year Plan was developed the community did not agree upon a community-wide definition of homelessness. HUDs definition of homelessness is often used, even though it fails to capture some of the homeless sub-populations in Yolo County. Without a community-wide definition that captures all of the homeless in Yolo County it is difficult for the homeless system to gain an accurate count of the homeless or prioritize tasks in addressing the problem. The community should gather relevant stakeholders in a collaborative process aimed at identifying a comprehensive definition, which can then be used to inform future decisions of the homeless system of care in Yolo County.

#### **2. Adjust Yolo County's 10-Year Plan to End Homelessness to Improve Accountability**

As suggested by best practices, 10-year plans are more likely to be successful when each goal or objective is tied to a responsible party, specific timeline, and measurable outcome. For instance, a measurable goal to reduce discharges into homelessness from public institutions might state that it aims to "reduce the number of inmates who become homeless in the month following discharge from Yolo County jail to less than 10 percent" rather than aiming to "reduce discharges from public institutions into homelessness." The Plan should be revised to better reflect these best practices, making goals more specific and measurable. Once revised, the Executive Commission, local jurisdictions, and local service providers should receive regular updates on the Plan to monitor progress and increase accountability.

***3. Dedicate staff and funding to the management and implementation of the 10-Year Plan***

Best practices also suggest that successful implementation of 10-year plans is dependent upon dedicated staff and funding. Yolo County’s Plan does not currently have either dedicated staff or funding, which has hindered Yolo County Housing’s capacity to implement the Plan.

In particular, the Plan would benefit from a staff person dedicated to coordinating its implementation including organizing meetings and task forces, assisting the community to identify new goals and potential funding opportunities, and providing updates on the progress of the Plan.

***4. Increase collaboration by strengthening linkages between service providers and the 10-year plan***

Currently, many local service providers are not actively involved with the 10-Year Plan. Representatives from many local organizations were involved during the Plan’s development, but in recent years many service providers have lost interest in the Plan due to its slow progress. However, best practices indicate that a collaborative community-wide system is best equipped to address homelessness, which means that re-engaging local service providers will be essential to the system’s success.

Re-engagement might be accomplished by providing service providers with a meaningful role in implementation, as well as incentivizing participation. For instance, the Plan as originally envisioned was to be implemented through several task forces, but the task forces were never implemented. Service providers might be more likely to actively participate in the Plan if they had a meaningful role in forming the task forces and making changes that would positively impact their organization or clients.

**STAGE TWO:**

***Pursue additional funding for affordable housing and supportive service***

***1. Improve alignment with HUD funding priorities***

Because HUD is Yolo County’s primary funding source for homeless services, scoring well on competitive HUD applications is essential to expanding funding for services in the community. However, Yolo County is not currently very well-aligned with HUDs priorities, which puts the community’s existing HUD funding at risk, as well as making it nearly impossible for the community to access additional funding. Increasing the community’s compliance with HUD priorities, such as limiting transitional housing programs and expanding permanent supportive housing programs, will improve access to HUD funding.

***2. Develop a funding task force to identify funding opportunities and coordinate applications***

In addition to the task forces identified in the Ten-Year Plan (prevention, housing, and services), it may be useful for Yolo County to have a task force dedicated to identifying and researching potential funding opportunities, and aiding local organizations in completing applications.

***3. Diversify homeless funding sources to include national, state, local, and private funding sources***

Some of Yolo County’s struggles with homeless funding can be attributed to a lack of diversification in funding sources. The community relies heavily on federal funding sources, so it is also dependent on the fiscal health and policy priorities of the federal government. By pursuing funding opportunities from a variety of sources the homeless system in Yolo County can increase the stability of its funding and reduce its reliance on the federal government.

---

***Focus on utilizing new and existing resources effectively and efficiently***

---

***1. Develop an accurate community wide system of data collection***

---

Local data is an essential component of ensuring that a community's homeless resources are utilized effectively. Data can identify the most prevalent homeless sub-populations in a community, indicate which programs serve the most homeless individuals, and suggest which programs or services are most effective at preventing or ending homelessness. Historically, Yolo County's data management tool (HMIA) was not very useful, which limited the community's ability to identify the populations most in need of assistance and the best use of resources. HPAC has recently secured a new HMIS provider that they expect to be more successful, though the system is new and still being vetted. By developing a more effective data collection tool Yolo County will eventually be able to increase its efficiency in offering services and aiding the homeless.

***2. Re-prioritize the use of existing funding and resources to increase efficiency, including embracing a Housing First approach***

---

Nationwide best practices indicate that successful and efficient systems of addressing homeless offer a comprehensive array of services, but focus on ensuring that people experiencing homelessness receive just enough services to assist them in quickly obtaining and maintaining permanent housing. Using local data, Yolo County should consider which services and programs within the community are most effective at moving homeless individuals or families into permanent housing in a quick and affordable manner. While the community needs to maintain a diverse and comprehensive range of services, it should also consider whether any existing resources or services might be shifted or altered to improve outcomes for the homeless.

In particular, the community should consider prioritizing a Housing First approach. Best practices have shown that affordable housing models that embrace the Housing First approach tend to result in better outcomes for the homeless at a lower cost to providers and communities.

---

## WHAT ROLE SHOULD YOLO COUNTY HOLD IN ADDRESSING THE PROBLEM?

---

Yolo County, like all local jurisdictions, should play a role in developing and maintaining a community-wide homeless system. However, the County is only one of many stakeholders that should be responsible for addressing homelessness, and therefore must identify what role it should hold within the larger system. This report recommends several initial steps Yolo County might take to become more involved in the community's homeless system.

### **1. *Actively participate in the Ten-Year Plan***

---

Since its creation the Yolo County Ten-Year Plan to End Homelessness has lacked the strong leadership and accountability that it needs to keep it moving forward. The Yolo County Board of Supervisors is one entity that can aid in providing these essential elements of a successful plan. However, until recently the Board has had very little involvement with the Ten-Year Plan, with the exception of appointing a Board Member to the Plan's Executive Commission. The Board has received only one update on the status of the Plan.

The Board of Supervisors can best contribute to progress on the Plan by participating on the Plan's Executive Commission, receiving regular updates on the progress of the Plan, and ensuring that the homeless system is held accountable for accomplishing the goals outlined in the Plan.

### **2. *Ensure that mainstream services are accessible to the homeless***

---

Homeless research has indicated that communities throughout the nation are struggling to address homelessness with insufficient resources. One best practice that aids in using homeless resources most efficiently involves ensuring that homeless individuals have access to mainstream resources (such as CalWORKs, SSI, mental health treatment and Medi-Cal).

As the County is responsible for providing many of these mainstream services, the County should ensure that accessibility to these services is maximized for homeless individuals and families. Many people experiencing homelessness have difficulty trusting service providers, and are unlikely to ask for the help they need. However, without receiving help many of these individuals are unlikely to exit homelessness. Therefore, developing trust with the homeless population will be essential to ensuring that they understand and have access to the mainstream services they need. To improve accessibility, County staff might do outreach with the homeless at local non-profit organizations, such as shelters. Staff representing the major mainstream services should also be empowered to actively participate in the community-wide homeless system, including attending meetings, educating themselves on homelessness, and suggesting innovative ideas for improving access to services for the homeless.

As just one example of a potential partnership that would improve access to mainstream services, the County receives funding through CalWORKs to provide "once in a lifetime" financial assistance to CalWORKs families experiencing homelessness. The money can be used to help families pay for a security deposit, utility deposit, or short hotel stay. However, the funding is not very well utilized by the homeless population in Yolo County. The Center for Families uses HUD funding to provide similar services through its rapid re-housing program, and is more successful at reaching homeless families. Yolo County's CalWORKs program might partner with the Center for Families to ensure that this homeless assistance money is reaching eligible families. Some communities have embraced similar partnerships, and have even contracted with local homeless service providers to identify, screen, and aid homeless families using the CalWORKs funding.

**3. Add homelessness to the tactical plan**

The County of Yolo should also find a way to include the issue of homelessness in its tactical plan. Addressing homelessness would fit well into Goal Four of the Yolo County Tactical Plan, to enhance and sustain the safety net.<sup>20</sup> Goal Four has three major objectives, including promoting healthy communities, protecting vulnerable communities, and aiding people in achieving self-sufficiency. Addressing the issue of homelessness would assist the County in accomplishing all of these goals.

Additionally, including homelessness in the tactical plan would allow staff to prioritize addressing homelessness, and would allow the County to direct funding toward the issue if needed.

**4. Add advocacy for affordable housing to the County's legislative platform**

Much of the funding for developing affordable housing projects or providing housing vouchers comes from the state or federal government, which means it is subject to the policy priorities determined by these governments. Yolo County could add affordable housing to its legislative platform, which would allow the County's legislative team to provide advocacy as issues relating to the accessibility and/or financing of affordable housing arise at the state or federal governments.

**5. Consider funding programs or services for the homeless**

Currently, Yolo County directs little funding toward the issue of homelessness. It does partner with Davis, Winters, West Sacramento, and Woodland to pay for a part-time homeless coordinator and additional shelter beds during the winter, as well as offering mainstream resources that might be utilized by the homeless, and funneling some of its federal and state funding sources (AB 109 and CSBG), towards homeless service organizations. The County should consider expanding the homeless services or programs that it funds, possibly in collaboration with the County's four cities. In particular, the County might partner with other local jurisdictions to fund a position dedicated to implementing the Ten-Year Plan and coordinating the community-wide homeless system.

---

<sup>20</sup> County of Yolo. (2012). Yolo County Tactical Plan. <http://www.yolocounty.org/Index.aspx?page=1378>

**APPENDIX A: YOLO COUNTY'S TEN-YEAR PLAN TO END HOMELESSNESS**

**Table 9: Summary of Yolo County's Ten-Year Plan to End Homelessness**

<b>GOAL ONE:</b>
<b>PREVENTION:</b> <i>Prevent homelessness through early, comprehensive assistance to those at-risk</i>
<b>OBJECTIVES:</b>
1. Adopt countywide policies that support a healthy community and provide early homelessness preventive support
2. Institute a Countywide centralized, coordinated system of prevention services that enhances access for people at risk of homelessness
3. Eliminate discharges into homelessness from public institutions, including: foster care, hospitals, mental health facilities, substance abuse treatment facilities, and prisons and jails
<b>GOAL TWO:</b>
<b>HOUSING:</b> <i>Provide a wide range of housing opportunities and services to help people access and maintain extremely affordable permanent housing</i>
<b>OBJECTIVES:</b>
1. Build countywide support and identify financial support for extremely affordable housing and linked supportive services
2. Create, develop, and provide a wide range of extremely affordable permanent housing for people who are homeless or at-risk throughout the County, including housing linked with supportive services
3. Facilitate and streamline access to housing and housing-related supportive services by people who are homeless or at-risk
4. Ensure a sufficient supply of interim housing, including respite care, emergency, and transitional housing, to meet the need Countywide.
<b>GOAL THREE:</b>
<b>SUPPORTIVE SERVICES:</b> <i>Provide comprehensive, integrated services to help people access and maintain housing and maximize their self-sufficiency</i>
<b>OBJECTIVES:</b>
1. Enhance system-level integration of service provision in order to improve efficiency, accountability, access, and quality of care
2. Provide consumers with comprehensive, integrated services linked to housing to assist them in maintaining residential stability and overcoming barriers to housing
3. Increase availability and access to mental health and substance abuse services
4. Facilitate access to living wage employment by expanding employment assistance services and job training opportunities
5. Enhance access to benefits program and mainstream resources
6. Make transportation assistance available to improve access to services and employment opportunities
<b>GOAL FOUR:</b>
<b>IMPLEMENTATION:</b> <i>Effectively administer, coordinate, and finance implementation of the County's ten-year plan and its efforts to prevent and end homelessness</i>
<b>OBJECTIVES:</b>
1. Establish a Countywide administrative and governing body structure with the legitimacy, representation, power, and resources to effectively and efficiently direct the community's efforts to prevent and end homelessness
2. Allocate resources to support a staff to implement this Plan to end and prevent homelessness
3. Designate preventing and reducing homelessness in Yolo County as a joint priority for all relevant County and City agencies
4. Identify, allocate, coordinate, and secure funding to support Plan implementation and development and operation of homeless housing and services
5. Maximize use of the HMIS to collect and analyze data on homelessness and program outcomes and to facilitate interagency case management and information sharing and to increase efficiency



---

## APPENDIX B: SUMMARY OF PUBLIC COMMENTS ON THE REPORT

---

This report was released to homeless stakeholders in the Yolo community over a two month period (from March 2014 to April 2014) for comments and feedback. Comments were accepted through formal letters, phone calls, and in-person meetings. The following is a summary of the comments received, including common themes, strengths, and areas for improvement.

### COMMENTS RECEIVED FROM:

---

Bob Ekstrom- *Director, Center for Families*

Ellen O'Neil- *Program Director, Veteran Family Services*

Janice Critchlow- *Homeless Coordinator, Yolo County*

Louise Collis- *Senior Program Manager, City of West Sacramento*

Martha Guerrero- *Local Mental Health Board*

Shahera Hyatt- *Project Director, California Homeless Youth Project*

United Christian Centers

Yolo County Homeless and Poverty Action Coalition (HPAC)

---

### COMMON THEMES

---

- The providers expressed that they are very supportive of using best practices including Housing First, as long as it includes a full range of housing options and supportive services. However, they would like more discussion of the challenges faced in implementing best practices, particularly for rural communities.
- The report needs more discussion of the positive things that are already happening in Yolo, especially with efforts to better align the community with best practices. Comments expressed that they report places too much emphasis on the challenges faced by Yolo, and doesn't highlight the achievements.
- Comments expressed appreciation for the discussion of need for additional funding and affordable housing in this community if homelessness is really going to be addressed.
- Overall, people were supportive of the recommendations in the report, but suggested some needed additions or clarifications.

---

### STRENGTHS

---

- Providers were pleased with the emphasis on the lack of decent and affordable housing in Yolo County and low housing vacancy rates.
- Providers were pleased that the report highlights the lack of funding for homelessness coming from jurisdictions.
- Many were pleased with the explanation in the report that 10-Year Plans aren't really about ending homelessness in 10 years, but about shifting our efforts from mitigating the effects of homelessness to addressing the root causes.
- Comments expressed support for many of the recommendations in the report, particularly:
  - Develop a funding task force to identify funding opportunities and coordinate applications
  - Develop an accurate community-wide system of data collection
  - County should actively participate in the 10-Year Plan

- Ensure that mainstream services are accessible to the homeless
- Add homelessness to the County’s tactical plan
- Add advocacy for affordable housing to the County’s legislative platform
- County should consider funding programs or services for the homeless

---

## **AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT**

---

### ***Purpose of Report***

- There seemed to be some confusion about the purpose of the report. Several people read it thinking it was intended to be an action plan that the County would adopt (similar to West Sacramento’s action plan), and were confused about the inclusion of some of the larger community-wide recommendations.

### ***Best Practices***

- Would like more mention of best practices with veterans and homeless youth
- Need to clarify the difference between Housing First, Permanent Supportive Housing, and Permanent Housing
- Some felt it seems like an advocacy piece for Housing First, and should be more impartial
- Many felt that the report highlights the positive aspects of best practices such as “just enough assistance” and Housing First, but doesn’t provide enough discussion of the challenges. Especially with regards to:
  - **Housing First and Rapid Re-Housing-** this community experiences many difficulties with strict approval requirements for affordable housing (even public housing) that make it impossible for some families to move out of homelessness, even with support and case management. The providers work a lot with private landlords, but find that they experience serious burnout if they have one negative experience renting to low income families, and aren’t willing to try again. Low vacancy rates and insufficient affordable housing also contribute to these issues in Yolo.
  - **Transitional Housing:** Providers are trying to align with best practices regarding housing, but it is difficult due to some of the HUD rules. They are not allowed to reclassify “transitional housing” as another type of housing while retaining their HUD funding. They would have to reapply for funding, and likely would experience a funding lag of up to one year in order to do this.
- Some expressed concerns that the best practices are developed based on urban programs, and are more challenging to implement in rural communities. They would like a discussion in the report of how rural communities can be successful in using these best practices.

### ***More Discussion of Providers and Existing Services***

- Many comments expressed that HPAC (and the providers) aren’t mentioned enough in the report, in terms of what they already do or utilizing them as a partner
- **Rapid Re-Housing:** Should add a discussion of the work that Center for Families has done with rapid re-housing, how HPAC has prioritized rapid re-housing in funding applications, and success with capturing 1.6 million in HPRP funds.

### **Point-in-Time (PIT) Count**

---

- Many would like the report to state that although the number of homeless has not experienced a drop in recent years it has remained flat, which might be considered a success given the recession
- Should be some discussion of the flaws in using PIT counts- they aren't the most reliable data, but they are the only available data we have that addresses the unsheltered homeless population.
- Should mention that if funding was secured for the PIT, it could be conducted in a way that was much more exhaustive and reliable.

### **Funding**

---

- **HUD:** The report describes Yolo's challenges with low scores on HUD funding applications, but should explain the root of these challenges. Yolo was doing relatively well on HUD applications, but in 2012 HUD changed its funding priorities drastically, putting Yolo in a very bad position. The providers are trying to better align themselves, but believe it will take time. Also should emphasize that the additional funding that can be accessed by Yolo if better aligned is minimal, maybe \$50,000-60,000 annually.
- Not enough emphasis on the funding successes- Yolo did very well on last round of ESG funding, and have secured some significant grants (like the 1.6 million HPRP)
- Should be some discussion of the loss of redevelopment
- Rapid re-housing is funded only by HUD funds. The program needs a second funding stream to ensure its stability. For instance, the program allows rental assistance for up to 24 months, but the funding cycle is only 12 months. Center for Families often fears approving a new family for the program and then losing its funding.

### **10-Year Plan**

---

- A lot of frustration was expressed about the process for the 10-Year Plan up to this point
- Providers want to be listed as partners in re-working the 10-Year Plan, and believe the framework should be kept but the goals better aligned with the current needs of the community.

### **Recommendations**

---

- Would prefer more discussion of several topics in the recommendations:
  - Needs of children and families
  - Need for prevention
  - Need for more rapid re-housing
  - Probation involvement in homelessness, and use of AB 109 funding on the issue
- Would like the recommendation regarding the re-write of the 10-Year Plan to reference coordination with all stakeholders during the process
- Should recommend the inclusion of a homeless or formerly homeless person on the 10-Year Plan Executive Committee
- Providers disagree with the recommendation to develop a shared definition of homelessness. They don't believe this will be helpful to them since they still have to follow the various definitions laid out in their funding requirements. Instead, they would like a recommendation urging the community to develop a shared understanding of its priority populations (families, chronically homeless, etc.) so they know where to focus their efforts.

- Would like a recommendation added that encourages the County to aid providers in applying for larger grants (SAMHSA, Dept. of Labor, DOJ). The providers often don't have the capacity to go after these grants, so we lose them.