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For Immediate Release

New Census Reveals Decline in Greater Los Angeles Homelessness

LOS ANGELES, October 28, 2009 – On any given night, an estimated 43,000 people are homeless in Los Angeles' Continuum of Care, according to the *2009 Greater Los Angeles Homeless Report (HC09)*, released today by the Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority (LAHSA). The number of homeless people in Los Angeles, while still the highest in the nation, represents an estimated 38% decrease from 2007.

Although the data shows that a significant number of homeless in Los Angeles are still without shelter, it also demonstrates progress in the City's and County's efforts at reducing homelessness. The decrease reflects a combination of increased focus on homelessness by Los Angeles City and County leaders, investments in housing and innovative programs, and a strong network of agencies focused on ending homelessness. While progress has been made, two out of three homeless people in Los Angeles remain on the streets, including families and children.

LAHSA, a Joint Powers Authority created and managed by both the City and County of Los Angeles, is the lead agency for the Los Angeles Continuum of Care, a consortium of homeless service providers that encompasses all but three cities throughout Los Angeles County, including the City of Los Angeles. As required by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), LAHSA conducts a homeless census every two years during the last 10 days in January. Service providers in the Continuum of Care, which includes approximately 200 independent agencies, use these census estimates to plan for critically-needed services. The 2009 count was conducted from January 27-29, and excludes the cities of Glendale, Long Beach and Pasadena, which all conduct their own counts. Adding these three cities to the Los Angeles homeless count, the total homeless population for Los Angeles County is approximately 50,000, on any given night.

"Los Angeles' new homeless data shows tangible results from the efforts of the City, County and the Continuum of Care agencies to address poverty and homelessness," said Michael Arnold, LAHSA's Executive Director.

"We will continue to build on our momentum and progress, but more needs to be done – we still have almost 15,000 people in shelters and temporary housing, and more than 30,000 unsheltered people on our streets every night," said Supervisor Don Knabe, Chairman of the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors.

The decline in the numbers for Los Angeles appears consistent with similar national decreases seen in areas like New York (-30% in street homelessness), Indianapolis (-22%) and Riverside County (-22%), which have also experienced significant reductions in homelessness between 2007 and 2009. According to the National Alliance to End Homelessness, 44% of the nation's 2009 local homeless counts report decreases. "We have not won the war against homelessness in Los Angeles, but we are making progress," Arnold continued. "Ironically, the recession may have

had a counter-intuitive impact on homelessness as the declining real estate market has also helped lower housing rental rates, giving more people access to affordable housing."

However, thousands of people have lost jobs in the Los Angeles region. As the unemployment rate continues to rise there are signs that homelessness could increase again. It is estimated that nearly 10,000 people were found living on private property in areas not meant for human habitation.

Major region-wide efforts to reduce homelessness are ongoing. Many factors likely contributed to this decline including new and expanded programs implemented by the Los Angeles CoC network of housing and service providers. Many of these new programs are funded by the County and City of Los Angeles, such as the County's \$100-million Homeless Prevention Initiative, the City's Permanent Supportive Housing Program and expanded Section 8 vouchers that specifically target homeless individuals and families. Most importantly, local housing and service providers are making an important paradigm shift with programs centered on housing homeless families and individuals, and providing them with the tools and skills they need to remain housed. The City and County have embarked on an unprecedented expansion of a collaborative effort to reduce homelessness in recent years. The decline reflects their success.

"The good news here -- that homelessness has declined significantly in Los Angeles -- can be attributed to a new spirit of joint cooperation between the City, the County and the service providers who make up the Continuum of Care. We still have a long way to go, but this is real progress, and we are very gratified to see it," said Commissioner Howard Katz, Chair of the LAHSA Board of Commissioners.

Like previous years, to collect the most reliable figures, four distinct components of the census count were completed: (1) a street count, (2) a shelter count, (3) a demographic survey and (4) a "hidden homeless" telephone survey. To ensure greater accuracy of these elements, more than 3,000 volunteers participated in the data collection process conducted over 13,000 square miles of the region – an area larger than nine states in the nation. Additionally, experts from the University of North Carolina's Survey Research Unit, skilled in tracking hard-to-reach populations, provided data collection tools and statistical analysis.

While the methodology for the 2009 Homeless Count remained consistent with previous counts, enhancements to the data collection process have collectively enabled researchers to extrapolate more detailed information. Highlights of these enhancements include:

- 50% increase in the number of census tracts covered from 2007
- More than 3,000 volunteers covered more than 13,000 miles
- 3,073 interviews with the homeless were conducted
- More than 4,000 households were contacted during a telephone survey to locate the number of homeless living temporarily off the streets, but near private residences

About the Los Angeles Homeless Service Authority

The Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority (LAHSA) is a joint powers authority of the City and County of Los Angeles, created in 1993 to address the problems of homelessness in Los Angeles County. LAHSA plans, funds and administers programs that assist homeless individuals and families in their transition to permanent housing. LAHSA is the lead agency in the HUD-funded Los Angeles Continuum of Care, and coordinates and manages over \$70 million annually in federal, state, county and city funds for programs providing shelter, housing and services to homeless persons. Additionally, LAHSA partners with the City and County to integrate services and housing opportunities to ensure wide distribution of service and housing options. LAHSA funds agencies that address many underserved

homeless populations including survivors of domestic violence and their children, persons struggling with chronic homelessness, veterans, youth transitioning from foster care, and individuals with mental health needs. For more information, please see <http://www.lahsa.org>

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