Guiding Policy Principles

2020

Principles

By advocating for better programs, funding, and legislation at the federal, state, and local levels, LAHSA will advance its mission to create, support, and sustain solutions to homelessness in the City and County of Los Angeles. The policy principles listed below are in alignment with federally recognized best practices that formed the basis of the establishment and ongoing refinement of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development’s (HUD) McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Grant Program, as well as local funding initiatives such as Los Angeles County’s Measure H.

LAHSA supports federal, state, and local initiatives, legislation and efforts that will have a meaningful impact on preventing and ending homelessness. The principles underlying these initiatives are:

• Preservation of existing funding levels for programs (at all levels of government) that fund the social safety-net for individuals experiencing and at-risk of homelessness
• Creation and preservation of housing opportunities and housing development, with an emphasis on permanent supportive housing, rapid re-housing and rental assistance, affordable housing, and interim housing
• Equitable geographic distribution of permanent supportive, affordable, and interim housing to ensure persons living in all parts of the County have access to permanent and immediate housing options
• Access to public assistance to prevent and/or end homelessness for all people, regardless of race, color, religion, age, actual or perceived sexual orientation, gender identity, disability, national origin or immigration status, marital or familial status, physical health or mental health status, economic status, veteran status, limited English proficiency, or those who are least likely to access assistance in the absence of special outreach or accommodation
• Preservation of existing low-income housing opportunities
• Utilization of data to determine priorities, evaluate performance, and inform policy decisions
• Increase and accelerate the capacity of the Los Angeles Continuum of Care (LA CoC) to house individuals, youth, and families
• Coordination of resources to improve efficiency and effectiveness, including advocating for solutions that scale all parts of the homeless services system appropriately
• Coordination of nimble and creative responses to immediate and emergency needs that Los Angeles County faces
• Support for efforts to decriminalize homelessness and remove barriers to housing that incarceration and criminal justice enforcement can create
• Recognition of added barriers that certain populations face which lead to disproportionate representation in the homeless population
• Responses to unsheltered homelessness in alignment with LAHSA’s “Policy Guidance for Local Responses to Unsheltered Homelessness” and other court mandates
• Recognition of structural racism, as explored by the Ad Hoc Committee on Black People Experiencing Homelessness, and gender inequality, as explored by the Ad Hoc Committee on Women Experiencing Homelessness, and the need for policy responses to rectify these inequities

Priorities
The policy priorities below will guide LAHSA staff as it works toward its mission to create, support, and sustain solutions to end homelessness. Priorities are organized by three major drivers that are critical to achieving significant progress and success.

Secure and Expand Resources
Securing and expanding federal and state-financed homeless assistance is critical to supporting persons experiencing or at risk of homelessness. As the lead agency in the LA CoC, LAHSA seeks full funding to meet the HUD Hearth Act guidelines and requirements, in addition to the provision of at least $3 billion for the McKinney-Vento program in FY20-21. Moreover, LAHSA supports enhanced coordination between housing, homeless, health, and other sectors to ensure they are working in better alignment, and to avoid expansions of eligibility for homeless services without concomitant increases in resources and stronger coordination and alignment between different systems of care and public assistance.

At the federal and state level, there must be a continued focus on sustaining critical safety-net programs including health care, entitlement and income support programs that offer persons experiencing or at-risk of homelessness a measure of resource stability. Additionally, LAHSA calls for state action to retain or increase funding levels for mental health, substance use disorders, and trauma-related services afflicting a sizable contingent of the homeless population. Moreover, efforts to reinforce harm reduction practices should be supported. Los Angeles faces unique circumstances in its homelessness crisis; accordingly, LAHSA supports innovative and responsive local approaches that respond to emergency conditions while reinforcing long-term efforts to connect people to permanent housing.

Preserve and Increase Housing and Housing Access
Increasing the affordable housing stock throughout Los Angeles County and ensuring equitable access to and distribution of housing opportunities are fundamental to directing persons out of homelessness and into stable housing. State and local action is urgently needed to expand permanent and interim housing development, increase housing resources, and encourage access to market-rate housing for participants in public and subsidized housing programs, while also ensuring robust compliance and enforcement of affordability requirements. State and local action is also needed to ameliorate the conditions of street homelessness by providing additional public health services and infrastructure.

At the federal level, LAHSA advocates for the protection of funding allocations to the Federal Housing Trust Fund (HTF) and public housing programs, and supports programs and legislation that facilitate and fund housing affordability and development, including the Low-Income Housing Tax Credit. In addition, LAHSA supports efforts to ensure that the most vulnerable populations be prioritized for resources. Finally, LAHSA opposes federal proposals to further reduce access to housing and homelessness resources based on factors that include workforce participation, age, disability, or immigration status.
LAHSA also supports protection of fair housing and other programs that seek to address housing access through a racial equity lens.

Locally, LAHSA advocates for the expansion of resources to create and preserve affordable housing, as well as land use policies to enable the creation of affordable, supportive, and interim housing opportunities.

More than ever, protections must be in place to reduce entries into homelessness, particularly for low-income renter households at risk of eviction and sharp rent increases, and individuals from marginalized groups less likely to access housing opportunities due to personal history. Action should be taken to implement new protections and ensure they are enforced. LAHSA opposes efforts to criminalize homelessness and supports action that reduces housing barriers for persons with backgrounds of criminal activity that have served their time and completed their sentences, persons that are victims of domestic violence or human trafficking, and other marginalized groups. Finally, local and state solutions to homelessness should employ a balanced approach that pairs interim and emergency interventions with permanent housing strategies.

**Strengthen Regional Coordination and Collaboration**

A collaborative approach is needed to effectively leverage and maximize local resources to support adults, families and youths experiencing homelessness in Los Angeles County.

Leading the Los Angeles CoC, LAHSA supports increased cooperation among service providers and public organizations that serve homeless populations in the Continuum. Central to this mission is the promotion and expansion of the Coordinated Entry System (CES) to quickly and effectively connect homeless adults, families, and youths with housing and supportive resources. In addition, using and sharing data is integral to effective coordination and collaboration across entities.