



For Immediate Release

Homelessness Declines Among Key Populations, Despite Stubborn Numbers Overall

***New Report Shows Family and Veteran Homelessness Are Down,
Even as Total Homelessness Sees a Slight Increase***

December 17, 2018, Washington, D.C. – Homelessness in the nation increased by 0.3 percent in 2018, according to a new report released today by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). The *2018 Annual Homeless Assessment Report (AHAR) to Congress* reports that on a single night in 2018, 552,830 people were identified as experiencing homelessness.

This represents the second year that homelessness has seen a slight increase in the United States, following seven consecutive years of decreases. Despite the overall rise, the report also shows decreases among key populations, including family households (-2.7 percent) and veterans (-5 percent). This can be attributed to the focused efforts and resources from service providers, local leaders, and federal partners that have made it a priority to end homelessness for these populations.

“It’s very clear that focus creates progress. We see the greatest declines among populations that have received targeted and sustained resources,” said Nan Roman, President and CEO of the National Alliance to End Homelessness. “Now, we have to pay close attention to the populations where we’re seeing increases. That specifically includes people who are living unsheltered, as well as homeless individuals.”

According to the report, almost half of individuals experiencing homelessness (48 percent) are unsheltered, living outdoors, in encampments, or in other places not meant for human habitation. As communities nationwide have struggled with this phenomenon, the National Alliance to End Homelessness has increased its technical assistance efforts to help communities design more effective crisis response systems, including making their shelters lower-barrier and more housing-focused. The organization has also announced that it will hold a national convening on ending homelessness for individual adults in February 2019, in San Diego, CA.

“We’re not going to end homelessness if we don’t have a clear strategy for homeless individuals,” said Roman. “This includes building crisis response systems for individual adults, and developing best practice strategies for outreach, shelter, services, and housing for them.”

The Impact of Affordable Housing

The increase in homelessness also comes as the nation grapples with a prolonged affordable housing crisis. There is currently a shortage of 7.2 million rental homes for extremely low-income renters.¹ The

¹ National Low Income Housing Coalition, *The Gap: A Shortage of Affordable Homes*. (2017).

lack of affordable housing has a dual effect: it pushes more people into the homelessness system, while also making it more difficult to help people exit into housing.

“The solution to homelessness is housing. And when the nation had an adequate supply of affordable housing, we didn’t have a homelessness crisis,” said Roman. “We have been losing affordable units every year, and the gap between supply and demand just keeps widening. Today, the lack of affordable housing affects large cities and rural communities alike, putting more people at risk of becoming homeless each month. We cannot overstate the scope of this challenge, or the impact it has had on the nation.”

Building on Success

Despite the increases, the number of people experiencing homelessness declined in 31 states and the District of Columbia in 2018. In fact, current levels of homelessness remain 13.2 percent lower than in 2010 and 15 percent lower than in 2007. Roman attributes this to the many communities committed to becoming more effective and efficient by embracing proven best practices.

“Those working on the front lines of the homelessness system are actually getting more people back into housing every year,” she said. “The increases of the past two years aren’t because the homelessness system isn’t effective; they are because more people are coming into the system than ever, and there are fewer homes to put them into. Nonetheless, the fact that so many communities continue to reduce the number of homeless people is proof that with greater federal and local investments and a bigger commitment to affordable housing, the rest of the nation can do the same.”

About the National Alliance to End Homelessness

The National Alliance to End Homelessness is a nonprofit, non-partisan, organization committed to preventing and ending homelessness in the United States. As a leading voice on the issue of homelessness, the Alliance analyzes policy and develops pragmatic, cost-effective policy solutions; works collaboratively with the public, private, and nonprofit sectors to build state and local capacity; and provides data and research to policymakers and elected officials in order to inform policy debates and educate the public and opinion leaders nationwide.

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