

What Does it Take to End Homeless?



A research study supported by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (January 2004) identified 11 key elements that are included in successful approaches to reducing chronic street homelessness, among the “best practice” cities featured in the research study. These elements fall into three main categories:

- Essential Elements (5) – essential for the strongest approaches
- A Catalyst Element (1) – capitalizing on events to encourage action
- Contributing Elements (5) – to make an approach stronger

The key 11 elements are listed below. More detailed descriptions of these elements and the “best practice” communities are included in the full report, available from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development at www.huduser.org/Publications/PDF/ChronicStrtHomeless.pdf.

Essential Elements:

- 1) **★ Paradigm Shift:** Moving away from traditional goals and approaches, toward a model of low-demand permanent supportive housing.
- 2) Clear Goal of Ending Chronic Street Homelessness
- 3) Community-Wide Level of Organization: Based on communication, coordination and collaboration.
- 4) **★ Strong Leadership and an Effective Organizational Structure:**
 - *Leadership* from idealistic inspirers, socially and politically skilled organizational masterminds, people who occupy vitally important positions in government, people who can bring about a significant meeting of minds, and people who really care.
 - *Organizational structures* that include strong links to elected officials, mainstream governmental and private sector resources, structures that work in a context broader than just homelessness, and organizational membership crossed over city, county and private sector boundaries.
- 5) Significant resources from mainstream public agencies: This requires major commitments of resources from mainstream public housing, health, mental health, substance abuse, welfare and other agencies.

Catalyst Element:

- 6) Trigger Event: The capacity to turn trigger events with potentially disastrous consequences for homeless people into opportunities for growth and change.

Contributing Elements:

- 7) **★ Significant Resources from the Private Sector:** Private businesses and foundations provide significant contributions to reducing street homelessness.
- 8) **★ Commitment and Support from Elected Officials**
- 9) Outcome Evaluation Mechanisms for Program Support and Improvement
- 10) Openness to New Service Approaches
- 11) **★ Strategies to Minimize Negative Neighborhood Reactions to Projects**