



## *Working to increase affordable housing and eliminate homelessness in our great state*

### **Governor's Affordable Housing Summit Talking Points**

*The Alaska Coalition on Housing and Homelessness (AKCH2) provides the following recommendations to provide better tools and resources for Alaskan communities to address their affordable housing and homelessness concerns.*

### **Planning and Data**

AKCH2 recognizes that the first step to addressing housing and homelessness issues in Alaska is for reliable housing and homeless data be made available to all communities and that planning processes be aligned.

1. **Legislation that adds a Housing & Homelessness Element to the Comprehensive Plan of Municipal Governments (AS 29.40.030).** Currently, there is no such requirement. Subsequently, throughout the state, the housing/homeless language used and approach to addressing housing and homelessness issues vary greatly from community to community. This can lead to confusion, non-participation, or an inability to acquire resources for housing and homelessness issues.
2. **Access to reliable housing data.** In general, there is not a true sense of housing availability or understanding of the housing need in the state. Pockets of housing data exist (State Census, Alaska Housing Finance Corporation, Department of Labor, Department of Commerce and Economic Development, Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority, Rasmuson Foundation, and data that a handful of communities have contracted out to create one-time needs assessment or their own data sets.) The Coalition proposes assembling a workgroup to create a statewide housing data resource that provides up-dated community level housing data that covers the full spectrum of housing (emergency shelter to fair market housing) and provides clarity for communities, planners, policymakers, media, researchers, investors, and other stakeholders. Two models:
  - a. **State of California Community Development Department – [Building Blocks for Effective Housing Elements](#)**
  - b. **Vermont Housing Data Website - <http://www.housingdata.org/profile/>**
3. **Homeless Data & Homeless Management Information System (HMIS).** As of June 1, 2015, the two Alaska Continua of Care (CoC's) – the Anchorage Coalition to End Homelessness (ACEH) and the Alaska Coalition on Housing and Homelessness (AKCH2) have contracted with the Institute for Community Alliances (ICA) to improve homeless data collection and housing inventory data for those experiencing homelessness throughout the state. **(See Handout)**  
Next steps:
  - a. Outreach and greater community participation in the Annual Point-In-Time Homeless Count.
  - b. More reliable Point-In-Time Count (PIT) and Housing Inventory Chart (HIC) information broken down to community level – only available in Anchorage, Balance of State categories in the past.



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- c. Coordinated Entry (CE) – Both CoC’s need to implement a CE system that involves HMIS data sharing and coordination of local housing resource to ensure persons experiencing homelessness are housed appropriately and in a timely manner.

### **Building the Continuum of Care**

### **Housing and Services for the Homeless: Emergency Shelter, Transitional Housing, and Permanent Supportive Housing**

CoC Housing Inventory Chart (HIC) data and maps indicate that housing resources for the homeless in Alaskan communities is limited – and in many communities does not exist. In many balance of state communities the only resources are domestic violence or seasonal emergency shelter beds and as a whole the statewide system is severely lacking in permanent supportive housing opportunities (scattered site and congregate setting). **(See Handouts)**

1. **Making the Shift to Permanent Supportive Housing:** Essentially the state is operating a limited shelter system for the homeless when best practice noted by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), and US Interagency Council on the Homeless (USICH) indicate that permanent supportive housing is the key to ending homelessness in communities.
  - a. **Technical Assistance Collaborative Permanent Supportive Housing Report (TAC):** The Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority and Department of Behavioral Health have utilized the Technical Assistance Collaborative to analyze our state system to increase and maximize the supply of affordable housing and to create more Permanent Supportive Housing units. The Coalition encourages utilizing this technical expertise across state departments and in communities around the state.
- ★ 2. **Access to Supplemental Security Income/Social Security Disability Insurance (SSI/SSDI):** A key component of ending or avoiding a period of homelessness is to ensure individual income and access to mainstream benefits that individuals at risk for homelessness are eligible for. Alaska consistently rates last in the nation for Social Security Disability appeals (AK – 21%, National Average – 43% for 2015). Furthermore, despite efforts of Alaska Legal Services Corporation, the Disability Law Center, and AKCH2 to train providers across the state in the SOAR process, a SAMSHA best practice to approve accuracy and processing time, Coalition members consistently report high rates of application denials through the SOAR process by Alaska Disability Determination Services. The Coalition encourages the administration to look into this matter and to work with our Federal Delegation to ensure Alaskans are receiving the benefits they deserve.



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### **Building the Statewide Housing System**

- 1. Creation of an Alaska State Legislature Committee on Housing/Homelessness.** Legislatures across the country address housing and homelessness concerns in formal committees. The Coalition encourages creating a similar committee in the Alaska House or Senate or by adding this subject matter to the responsibilities of an existing committee.
- 2. State Housing Director Position.** Advancement of housing and homeless policy in the short-term will require additional coordination with the understanding that housing/homeless data, resources, planning processes, and expertise in the sector are scattered amongst a wide-range of State departments and partner agencies that are often in silos and don't communicate effectively. The Coalition proposes a high-level director position to ensure that these conversations take place.
- 3. Alaska Affordable Housing Trust Fund.** In order to develop affordable housing (80% Area Median Income and below, workforce housing, senior housing, emergency shelter, transitional housing, recovery housing, permanent supportive housing, etc.), significant long-term investment will be needed (state, local, community foundations, businesses, etc.). *Alaska is only one of 3 States that doesn't have a Housing Trust Fund (HTF).* HTF's provide distinct funds established by city, county or state governments that receive ongoing dedicated sources of public funding to support the preservation and production of affordable housing and increase opportunities for families and individuals to access decent affordable homes. HTF's provide funding for capital, operating, technical assistance, and capacity building. The Coalition proposes beginning the research on funding sources and the organizational structure of an Alaska Affordable Housing Trust Fund to be established in the future.

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