



Solutions for Change

Solve It! Resources

Solving Homelessness

Reducing Dependency Solves Homelessness

More than 600,000 people are homeless in the United States and forty-one percent are families with children. For nearly twenty years, Solutions for Change - a community-based, mostly privately funded organization in Vista, California - has been **permanently solving homelessness** for families.

Solutions for Change is a transformational housing program that provides housing, life skills training, workforce development, counseling, and a host of other wrap-around services for homeless families. Solutions' residents come from backgrounds of poverty, domestic violence, substance abuse, and family crises. **Solution's 1000-day Solutions University educational program works to reduce and even eliminate reliance on publicly funded aid**, such as housing vouchers and food assistance, by transforming lives and restoring hope. The self sufficiency, leadership, workforce, and other life skills instilled as a part of the Solutions for Change program leads to graduates of the program gaining employment, amassing savings, and attaining permanent housing.

The Current System

Public assistance programs offer inadequate responses to homelessness because they fail to address the root causes of homelessness. More often than not, shelters, motel vouchers, and government subsidized housing create a culture of dependence. **Families and individuals often cycle through crisis, limited assistance, and need over and over again.** Temporary assistance typically runs out

Summary

Solutions for Change has demonstrated that homelessness can be permanently solved.

Through its program of transformational change, housing, and support services, Solutions for Change has permanently solved homelessness for more than 900 families and 2,500 children.

Solutions for Change addresses the root causes of homelessness, which leads to residents becoming economically independent and resilient to becoming homeless again.

Government programs attempt to contain or manage homelessness, which contributes to the endless churn of crisis, limited assistance, and renewed need.

Housing First, requires programs to jettison sobriety, work, and accountability or lose critical funding.

before root causes are addressed or permanent housing attained. These programs, instead of solving homelessness, contain or manage it, thereby perpetuating the notion that the homeless are unable to achieve self sufficiency.

The Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and most states have adopted Housing First, an approach that provides permanent, “low barrier” housing to the chronically homeless. Housing First, as implemented by HUD and several states, fails to address the root causes of homelessness that contribute to the churn of crisis, temporary assistance, and renewed need. Instead, these programs channel enormous public subsidies into permanent housing that offer optional services. By focusing on residents without the means to earn at least twenty percent of Area Median Income, it is difficult to understand how a permanent public housing approach can be sustained over time.

In Southern California, with low apartment vacancy rates and high rents, landlords are reluctant to participate in supportive housing – even with generous subsidies. Research shows that Rapid Re-Housing is an ineffective means towards increasing housing stability. The program’s time limits on rental subsidies and lack of transformational interventions or even basic accountability measures, fail to prepare participants to overcome the issues that initially led to their homelessness. The Family Options Study shows that fifty percent of those in transitional housing and Rapid Re-housing return to shelters instead of becoming economically independent.

For the eighty-two percent of homeless that are not characterized as chronic and seriously mentally ill, housing is only part of the solution. Instilling tools to achieve self-sufficiency and reducing the need for public assistance are effective ways of permanently ending homelessness for this population. Housing First, in its single-minded focus on the chronically homeless, demands that programs jettison requirements like addiction recovery and job training.

Programs seeking to serve the eighty-two percent of non-chronic or seriously mentally ill homeless are faced with an either-or-choice of serving a vastly different population or lose critical funding.

Outcomes

Solutions for Change is a complete and sustainable solution for the majority of homelessness. It reaches the root causes of homelessness by a transformative leadership and skill-building program that requires work, sobriety, and accountability. The outcomes of Solutions for Change are exceptional:

- Ninety- eight percent of parents acquired employment
- One-hundred percent of families moved into permanent housing
- Ninety-three percent of residents over the last three years have acquired stable housing, at least \$2,000 in savings, and skills to provide long-term resilience against returning to homelessness
- The average program cost of Solutions for Change per family is \$24 a day

Homelessness is a problem that can be solved. **Public policies and approaches that serve the chronically homeless should continue to be supported but other programs should not be penalized that serve other populations.**