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MAYORS JOIN WITH 'NATIONAL ALLIANCE TO END HOMELESSNESS' TO RELEASE 38-CITY SNAPSHOT OF HOMELESSNESS AND HUNGER IN AMERICA

Washington, D.C. – The 2016 annual assessment of hunger and homelessness released today by The U.S. Conference of Mayors found that despite the economic recovery, many cities across the country have rates of homelessness higher than the national rate of homelessness, yet only show a small increase in requests for emergency food assistance.

Today's results were unveiled on a telephone press conference by Chair of the USCM Task Force on Hunger and Homelessness Santa Barbara (CA) Mayor Helene Schneider, the Conference's CEO & Executive Director Tom Cochran and Director of the Homelessness Research Institute at the National Alliance to End Homelessness Samantha Batko. The full [report](#) is available at www.usmayors.org and an audio file of the press conference call will be available on the site by Thursday, December 15th.

For more than a quarter century, The Conference of Mayors has reported annually on the status of hunger and homelessness in the nation's cities, as well as highlighted innovative local programs offered to help those needing emergency assistance in cities and their metropolitan areas. This year, the Conference worked in conjunction with the National Alliance to End Homelessness, a leading voice on homelessness research in the nation. Using the Alliance's expertise, this year's mayors report is able, for the first time, to present a snapshot of homelessness in U.S. cities as well as compare trends in homelessness between cities and the nation as a whole.

"We are pleased to work with the National Alliance (to End Homelessness) this year on the report," said Mayor Schneider who chairs the USCM Hunger and Homelessness Task Force. "The Conference's work on this report is already well known nationally, but the Alliance will help us to broaden our perspective as we seek to find solutions to help the people in our communities who are most vulnerable."

"We are excited about the potential of this collaboration," said Nan Roman, President and CEO of the Alliance. "In order to end homelessness, we need to understand the scope of the problem, and what works to solve it. Our collaboration with the U.S. Conference of Mayors helps to achieve that, and we look forward to continuing to work with the organization and their members to ensure that everyone in our nation has a safe and stable place to live."

The report's findings on HOMELESSNESS are as follows:

- The rate of homelessness in study cities was 51 people experiencing homelessness per 10,000 people in the general public. This is higher than the national rate of homelessness of 17 people per 10,000.
- Nationally, homelessness has been declining for several years—a 12.9 percent decrease from 2009 to 2016, including a 2.6 percent decrease from 2015 to 2016. Two-thirds (65 percent) of study cities followed the long-term trend, reporting decreases from 2009 to 2016, and two-thirds (62 percent) also reported decreases from 2015 to 2016.
- For the most part, trends in homelessness in the study cities followed trends seen nationally, with some notable exceptions, particularly in trends in unsheltered, individual, and chronic homelessness where increases in study cities either contradict national trends or are driving increases nationally.
- Study cities show that even if every emergency shelter bed and transitional housing bed were to be filled, over 34,000 people would still be unsheltered on a given night.

In terms of solutions, communities, regardless of being an urban, suburban, or rural locality, respond to homelessness with a variety of housing and service programs, including emergency shelters, rapid re-housing, permanent supportive housing, and transitional housing. A shift in homelessness toward permanent housing solutions—namely rapid re-housing and permanent supportive housing—has been seen since 2013. Cities have mainly followed this trend.

“The report shows that the experience of homelessness varies,” said Nan Roman, President and CEO of the National Alliance to End Homelessness, “While it is decreasing in some cities, it is increasing in others. In some places a majority of those experiencing homelessness are individuals, while elsewhere it is predominantly people in families,” said Roman. “The one thing we found to be almost universally true among the surveyed cities was that the lack of affordable housing prevented them from solving the problem of homelessness. While the report shows that many of the cities are able to reduce homelessness, the national lack of affordable housing is likely to have a chilling effect on their efforts over the coming years.”

In her discussion of the report’s findings, Mayor Schneider said “As we all know, tremendous strides have been made across the country to end homelessness, but the results reveal that a majority of the cities had rates of homelessness higher than the national rate of homelessness. What this report tells us is that our efforts must be laser-beam focused on expanding the stock of permanent and affordable housing options in our cities.”

The report’s findings on HUNGER are as follows:

- Forty-one percent of survey cities reported that the number of requests for emergency food assistance increased over the past year. Across the survey cities, emergency food assistance increased by an average of 2 percent.
- Among those requesting emergency food assistance, 63 percent were persons in families, 51 percent were employed, 18 percent were elderly, and 8 percent were homeless.
- Low wages led the list of causes of hunger cited by survey cities; followed by high housing costs and poverty.
- City officials said that more affordable housing, more jobs and increase in SNAP benefits are actions that should be taken to reduce hunger. Employment training programs, better paying jobs, affordable childcare, higher wages are other important actions to take to reduce hunger.

“It is encouraging that the number of people needing emergency food assistance in our cities and metropolitan areas appears to be shrinking,” said USCM CEO and Executive Director Tom Cochran. “Nevertheless, it is concerning that even people who are employed continue to need the help of food pantries to make ends meet. As policymakers in Washington talk of a national economic recovery, we know the impact of that recovery is not being felt evenly in our communities. Thus, we must continue to examine these issues, bring national attention to them, and highlight local programs that are working in the hopes of replication across the country.”

Methodology:

A copy of the survey report, which contains detailed findings, individual city profiles, and detailed descriptions of specific programs that some of the cities have undertaken to combat both hunger and homelessness, can be downloaded from the U.S. Conference of Mayors Web site at www.usmayors.org. Only cities whose mayors are members of the Conference of Mayors Task Force on Hunger and Homelessness were invited to submit information for the hunger section and two questions on homelessness.

A total of 32 cities in 24 states were included for the analysis of homelessness in U.S. cities. These cities represent all cities whose geography aligns with their respective Continuum of Care (CoC), the local or regional entity that coordinates services and funding for homeless programs, as well as cities which have a population (as of July 1, 2015) that represents at least 75 percent of the total population in the CoC geography. These cities do not constitute a representative sample of U.S. cities, and the data reported reflect only the experience of the cities responding to the survey. This report, therefore, should not be interpreted as a national report on hunger or homelessness. For a full listing of study cities, see Appendix A of the report.

The Task Force cities included in the survey vary greatly in size and in their approach to collecting data on Hunger. Cities were asked to provide information on the data sources they used to answer each question and any clarifying information that would aid data analysis. Of the cities responding to this year’s survey, some left individual questions on the survey unanswered. In calculating survey results for an individual survey question, counts and percentages are based on the number of cities answering that question. A list of contacts for each city’s hunger staff person is provided in Appendix B of the report.

The 38 survey cities included in this year’s report are as follows: Albuquerque (NM), Alexandria (VA), Augusta (GA), Austin (TX), Baltimore (MD), Cambridge (MA), Charleston (SC), Charlotte (NC), Chicago (IL), Cleveland (OH), Dallas (TX), Des Moines (IA), Detroit (MI), District of Columbia, Durham (NC), El Paso (TX), Gresham (OR), Indianapolis (IN), Lincoln (NE), Long Beach (CA), Los Angeles (CA), Louisville (KY), Nashville (TN), Norfolk (VA), Oklahoma City (OK), Pasadena (CA), Philadelphia (PA), Portland (ME), Portland (OR), Providence (RI), Salt Lake City (UT), San Antonio (TX), San Francisco (CA), Santa Barbara (CA), Seattle (WA), St. Louis (MO), St. Paul (MN) and Wichita (KS).

The U.S. Conference of Mayors is the official nonpartisan organization of cities with populations of 30,000 or more. There are nearly 1400 such cities in the country today, and each city is represented in the Conference by its chief elected official, the mayor. Like us on Facebook at facebook.com/usmayors, or follow us on Twitter at twitter.com/usmayors

