

Terms to Know

Types of Homelessness

- **Chronically homeless individual:** A homeless person with a disability who lives either in a place not meant for human habitation, a safe haven, or in an emergency shelter, or in an institutional care facility if the individual has been living in the facility for fewer than 90 days and had been living in a place not meant for human habitation, a safe haven, or in an emergency shelter immediately before entering the institutional care facility. In order to meet the “chronically homeless” definition, the individual also must have been living as described above continuously for at least 12 months, or on at least four separate occasions in the last 3 years, where the combined occasions total a length of time of at least 12 months. Each period separating the occasions must include at least 7 nights of living in a situation other than a place not meant for human habitation, in an emergency shelter, or in a safe haven.
- **Episodic homelessness:** Refers to people who experience regular bouts of being unhoused. Unlike transitional homelessness, they are chronically unemployed and may experience medical, mental health, and substance use issues.
- **Hidden homelessness:** Refers to people who aren’t part of official counts. They might be couch surfing at a friend’s or a relative’s house.
- **Homeless:** An individual who lacks a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence; as well as an individual who has a primary nighttime residence that is a supervised publicly or privately operated shelter designed to provide temporary living accommodations, an institution that provides a temporary residence for individuals intended to be institutionalized; or a public or private place not designed for, or ordinarily used as, a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings.
- **Imminent risk of homelessness:** It applies to individuals and families on the brink of being unhoused. They have an annual income below 30 percent of the median income for the area. They don’t have sufficient resources or support networks needed to obtain other permanent housing.
- **Individuals Experiencing Homelessness Not Ready for Services:** Individuals who are unwilling or able to receive services due to mental health concerns, substance use disorders, trauma, or other reasons. These individuals will refuse offers of assistance for various reasons.
- **Individuals Experiencing Homelessness with Behavioral Health Concerns (Endanger):** Unhoused individuals who exhibit behaviors that endanger others or property. Behaviors associated are often violent acts directed at people or significant destruction of property.
- **Individuals Experiencing Homelessness with Behavioral Health Concerns (Nuisance):** Unhoused individuals who exhibit behavior that leads to public nuisance activity, such as loitering, public defecation/urination, excessive littering and other community concerns.

- **Panhandlers:** Individuals who may or may not be experiencing homelessness who ask people for money or food.
- **Predators:** Those who are not experiencing homelessness, but who are preying on unhoused individuals.
- **Transitional homelessness:** When people enter the shelter system for only one stay – usually for a short time. They are likely to be younger and have become homeless because of a catastrophic event, such as job loss, divorce, or domestic abuse.

Housing/miscellaneous terms

- **Affordable Housing:** In general, housing for which the occupant(s) is/are paying no more than 30 percent of his or her income for gross housing costs, including utilities.
- **Continuum of Care and Continuum:** Promotes community-wide commitment to the goal of ending homelessness. The program provides funding for efforts by nonprofit providers and state and local governments to quickly rehouse homeless individuals and families.
- **Disability:** A physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more of the major life activities of such for an individual.
- **Emergency Shelter:** Any facility, the primary purpose of which is to provide temporary or transitional shelter for the homeless in general or for specific populations of the homeless.
- **Permanent Housing:** Community-based housing without a designated length of stay and includes both permanent supportive housing and rapid re-housing. The program participant must be the tenant on a lease for a term of at least one year that is renewable and is terminable only for cause. The lease must be renewable for terms that are a minimum of one month long.
- **Rapid Re-Housing:** A permanent housing solution emphasizing housing search and relocation services and short and medium-term rental assistance to move homeless persons and families (with or without a disability) as rapidly as possible into housing.
- **Safe Haven:** Must serve hard-to-reach homeless persons with severe mental illness who came from the streets and have been unwilling or unable to participate in supportive services. In addition, the housing must provide 24-hour residence for eligible persons for an unspecified period, have an overnight capacity limited to 25 or fewer persons, and provide low-demand services and referrals for residents.
- **Transitional Housing:** A project that facilitates the movement of homeless individuals and families to permanent housing within a reasonable amount of time (usually 24 months). Transitional housing includes housing primarily designed to serve deinstitutionalized homeless individuals and other homeless individuals with mental or physical disabilities and homeless families with children.
- **U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD):** Established in 1965, HUD's mission is to increase homeownership, support community development, and increase access to affordable housing free from discrimination. To fulfill this mission, HUD will embrace high standards of ethics, management and accountability and forge new partnerships — particularly with faith-based and community organizations — that leverage resources and improve HUD's ability to be effective on the community level.

Click [here](#) to visit HUD's full glossary of terms.