

State Public Health Departments as Partners

Ben Bradley, Caitlin LaCroix, and LaQuetta Rouser-Greer

Overview

Homelessness is a public health crisis. Experiencing homelessness makes it harder to become and remain healthy. Research has shown that the lack of safe, affordable, and decent housing can negatively impact a person or family's health and well-being. Individuals and families who forgo healthy food or medicine to pay high housing costs may experience poor health outcomes.

Reducing and preventing homelessness does not just impact the health and well-being of people experiencing and at risk of homelessness; the positive impacts ripple outward, yielding lower health care costs and healthier communities.

Community Solutions created the State Public Health & Homelessness Playbook for state public health officials, homelessness and housing advocates, and state policymakers who want to learn more about how state public health agencies and programs can proactively support efforts to reduce and prevent homelessness. **In this session, we'll highlight important components of the playbook and detail how CoCs and communities can leverage public health resources and advocate for their state public health department to be an active participant in the homeless response system.**

Additional Details

This session will provide a brief overview of the State Public Health & Homelessness Playbook and highlight important opportunities that communities can look to pursue to bring new resources and partners to the work to reduce and prevent homelessness. We'll detail specific examples and best practices from the playbook.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

Given the relationship between housing and health, state public health agencies, officials, and policymakers have the opportunity to play a critical role in the homeless service system. State public health departments are well-positioned to bring new resources, ideas, ways of working, and capacity to the collaborative effort to make homelessness rare and brief.

Communities can advocate and educate their state public health agencies to be more intentional about how they work with the homeless response system. By highlighting the various opportunities and best practices detailed in the playbook, communities can offer new ways that they can partner with state public health agencies.

There is no singular or right way that state public health departments must participate in what should be a whole of government effort to prevent and reduce homelessness. Included in the playbook are a myriad of examples showcasing the innovative, dynamic partnerships between state public health departments and the homeless response system to improve the health and well-being of people experiencing homelessness.

Considerations for Equity

The playbook describes the concept of health equity, which is when everyone has the opportunity to attain their full health potential and no one is disadvantaged in achieving this potential because of social or economic position or any other socially defined circumstance. Promoting and ensuring health equity is a core mission of public health departments. The playbook details how state public health departments can leverage their resources, networks, and capacity to promote healthy equity by ensuring that people have safe, accessible, affordable, and stable housing available to them. The cross-system work to reduce homelessness, create more affordable housing, and prevent housing instability ultimately impacts the health and well-being of entire communities, and by extension, makes the whole state healthier.

