

A Shifting Focus

What's New in Community Plans to End Homelessness

In 2000, the National Alliance to End Homelessness released a report calling for a dramatic overhaul in the effort to combat homelessness. The report, *A Plan, Not a Dream: How to End Homelessness in Ten Years*, outlined a community-based framework that moved from simply managing the problem to ending it in 10 years. Promising strategies in the report were based on research and innovative practices from across the country. These included increasing the stock of affordable housing, providing housing with supportive services, and a new focus on prevention.

By 2006, local efforts to end homelessness had proliferated, with over 200 communities initiating 10-year plans at the state, regional, and local levels. This widespread adoption of the 10-year model was significant in that it represented a collective, national commitment to ending homelessness. In 2006, the Homelessness Research Institute at the National Alliance to End Homelessness released *A New Vision: What is in Community Plans to End Homelessness?*¹ This was the first nationwide assessment and content analysis of local plans to end homelessness and served as a critical resource for organizations and jurisdictions involved in the 10-year planning process.

¹Cunningham, M., M. Lear, E. Schmitt, and M. Henry. 2006. *A New Vision: What is in Community Plans to End Homelessness?* This report is available at www.endhomelessness.org

The solution to every problem must start with a plan.

This Data Update provides an updated content analysis of the 234 completed community plans to end homelessness. In addition to illustrating of the growth of 10-year plans, this update will compare the content of earlier (first 90 plans) and later plans (144). As the data show, changes in homeless service trends have directly affected the content of 10-year plans. Finally, this Data Update provides a qualitative analysis of factors identified by the Alliance that are most likely to lead to implementation.

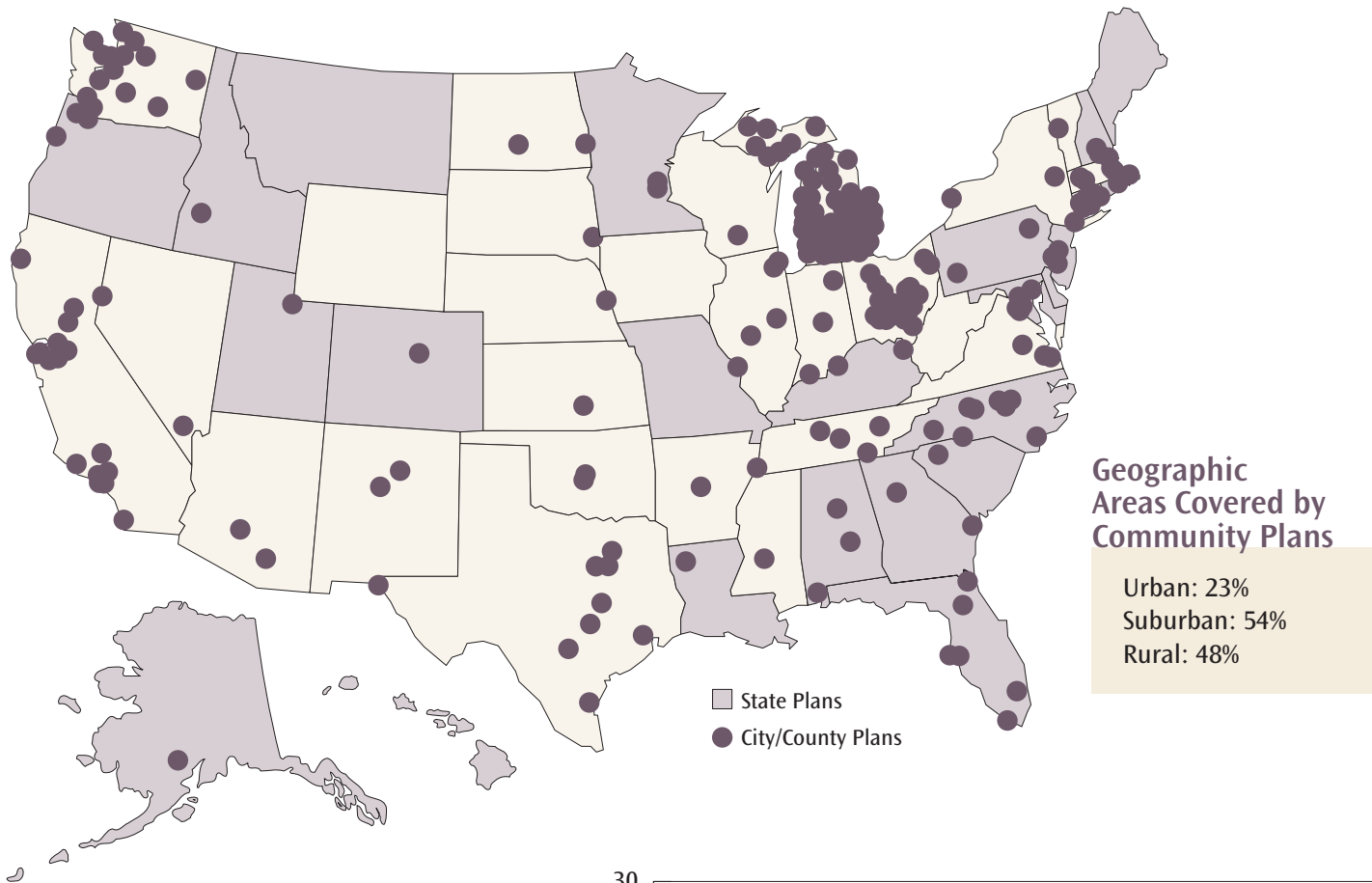
By the Numbers

234 Completed Plans to End Homelessness

185 are city or county plans (79%)

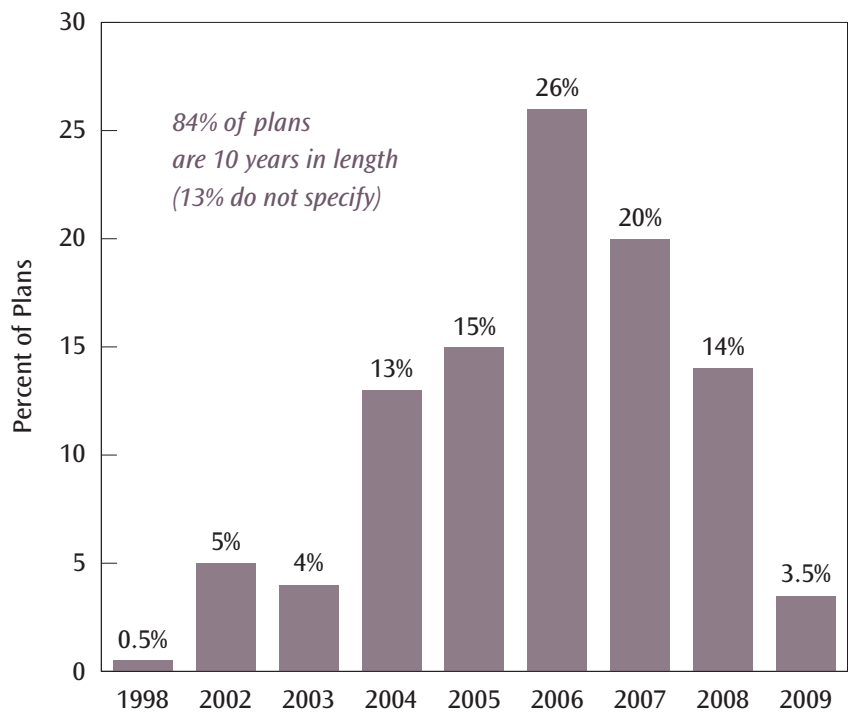
25 are state plans (11%)

24 are regional plans (10%)



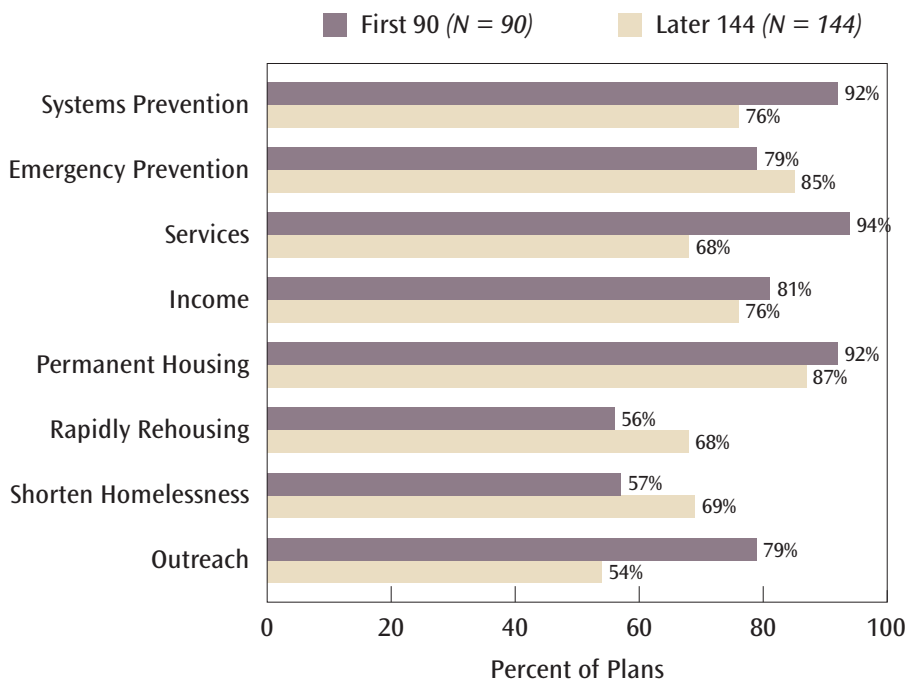
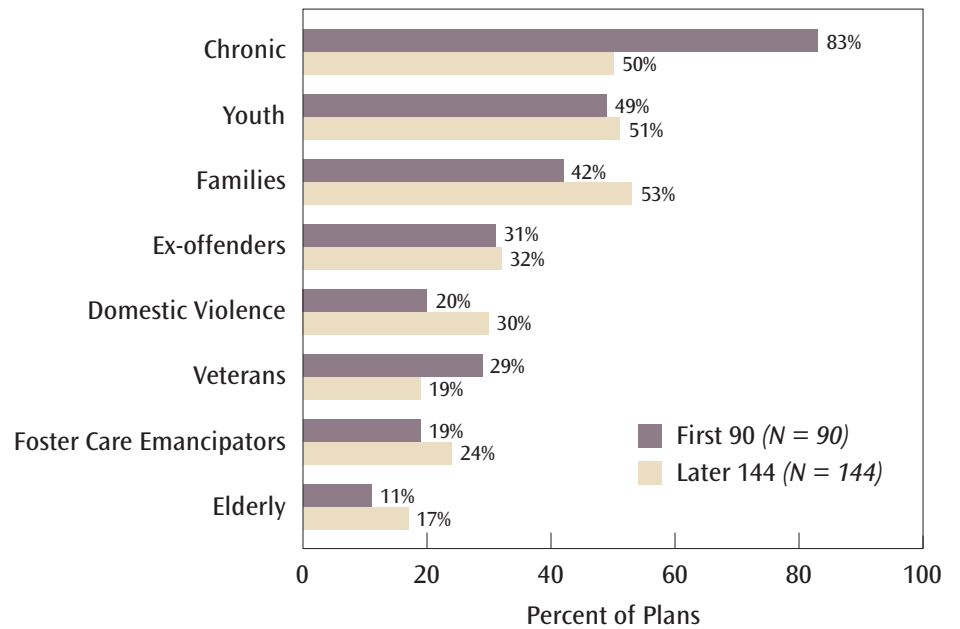
Plan Creation Timeline

Of the 234 plans created, the vast majority (84 percent) are designed for a length of 10 years. Thirteen percent of the remaining plans do not specify a duration (perhaps the 10-year timeline is assumed). Thus, 10-year plans will start to reach their expiration date in 2012 unless they are extended or amended.



Sub-Populations

This chart shows that the sub-populations targeted in the 10-year plans have shifted over time. In the earlier plans, 83 percent aimed to combat Chronic homelessness, a focus that dropped considerably in the second wave of plans (down to 50 percent). Other subpopulations were increasingly targeted in the second round of plans, such as survivors of Domestic Violence (20–30 percent) and Families (42–53 percent).



Strategies

The figure to the left shows the strategies identified in the Ten Year Plans. There are some differences in the strategies identified by the first wave of plans and the second wave of plans. The more recent plans have a greater emphasis on Rapid Re-housing and Shortening Homelessness, as compared with the first 90 that more heavily stressed Outreach and Services. However, there has been a consistent focus throughout on Permanent Housing and Prevention as strategies to end homelessness.

Are Plans Being Implemented?

It has been nearly ten years since the Alliance first presented its plan for ending homelessness. While we know that a considerable number of communities have created 10-year plans, there has not been a comprehensive evaluation of the extent to which plans are being implemented. Indeed, while developing a plan is a step in the right direction, it is just words on paper until that plan is put into action. Momentum surrounding the creation of 10-year plans must be re-focused to ensure these plans are implemented with the same level of commitment.

To that end, the Alliance has identified four factors that are thought to lead to successful plan implementation, including: identifying a person/body responsible for implementation, setting numeric outcomes, identifying a funding source, and setting a clear implementation timeline. Each of the 234 plans was analyzed by Alliance staff to determine if these factors were present in each plan. The findings reveal that the inclusion of these factors is low. It remains to be seen how successful 10-year plans will be without these key implementation elements.

In June 2009, the Alliance embarked on a study evaluating the extent to which 10-year plans are being implemented. A survey was administered to the first 90 communities to establish a plan. The survey included questions evaluating the implementation of the plan as a whole, the implementation of four strategies within the plan, and the major factors that have enabled or prevented implementation. In light of the economic downturn, the study also included questions about the impact of the recession and Recovery Act funds on 10-year plans.

