



Interagency Commission on Homelessness

HOUSING TOGETHER = STRONGER MONTGOMERY

Strategic Plan

Montgomery County ICH Strategic Plan: 2026 - 2028

Montgomery County is at an important moment as a community. Through partnership with non-profit providers of homeless assistance services, foundations, corporations, consumers, donors and the community, Montgomery County's Interagency Commission on Homelessness (ICH) is working toward a common vision of "Housing Together".

In support of this partnership, the community came together in 2019 to build a strategic plan to end homelessness in Montgomery County by the end of 2023. The challenges of a global pandemic and associated upheaval during the plan's duration necessitated a shift in priorities in order to respond to a rapidly changing reality. In 2023, as the plan's timeline was coming to an end, ICH voted to retain the same mission, vision, values, and strategies while updating the Bold Goals and the Action Steps necessary to achieve those goals.

This resulting updated strategic plan is designed to ensure Montgomery County's priorities and assets are positioned to best meet the community need and guide the county's efforts from 2026 through 2028.

Strategic Plan Core Components

VISION

Articulates the change we want to see in Montgomery County, painting a compelling picture of the future that we are all committed to achieving. *Page 3.*

MISSION

Defines the shared purpose and work that the ICH and community will undertake to achieve this vision. *Page 3.*

BOLD GOALS

Set ambitious, population-specific targets for ending homelessness for everyone in Montgomery County. *Pages 3-4.*

VALUES

Underpin Montgomery County's approach to ending homelessness and serve as the foundation for all strategies and actions. *Page 4-5.*

STRATEGIES

Provide prioritization of ICH's efforts to end homelessness in Montgomery County. *Pages 6-9.*

ACTION PLANS

Provide specific actions to be taken for each strategy. *See Appendix.*

HOUSING TOGETHER = STRONGER MONTGOMERY

Montgomery County believes that homelessness is a problem that can be solved. The county has made tremendous progress in recent years, and we have the resources, solutions, and significant public and political will needed to achieve continued success. This strategic plan is designed to provide focus and direction to Montgomery County over the next three years, from 2026 through the end of 2028.

Due to the rapidly evolving political, economic, and social landscape on both federal and local levels, this plan begins with a **One-Year Action Plan** to focus the work of the first year. This Action Plan is found in the Appendix to this plan. As the Action Plan is implemented, strategic working groups and committees will track progress and continue to update the plan as needed for future years. This concrete planning one year at a time does not ignore future years, rather enables a dynamic and flexible approach to ensure the County is able to adapt to changing environments while remaining active in the pursuit to end homelessness.

VISION

We envision a home for everyone in Montgomery County, where the experience of homelessness is rare, brief, and one-time only.

MISSION

Through commitment and collaboration, we will create effective systems in our community to achieve our vision. We strive to be a leader in the work to end homelessness across our nation.

BOLD GOALS

Montgomery County has achieved notable success in ending homelessness in the past decade, including ending homelessness among Veterans in 2015 and significantly reducing homelessness among chronically homeless individuals in 2019. While homelessness has increased for both communities due to the challenges of the past 5 years, Montgomery County is committed to renewing

the effort to make homelessness brief, rare, and one-time only for all populations. To begin, Montgomery County will focus on **youth, veterans, and families** experiencing homelessness. The focus on these sub-populations, does not replace or lessen the continued effort to permanently house single adults and people experiencing chronic homelessness. Rather, it represents a renewed and targeted response to these sub-populations identified in the Housing Together campaign.

Ending homelessness means that we have a comprehensive response system in place that ensures homelessness is prevented whenever possible, or, if it cannot be prevented, it is a rare, brief, and one-time experience. Ending homelessness requires us to prevent housing crises and homelessness for those at-risk, divert people from entering the homelessness services system, prevent returns to homelessness, and to build and sustain systems and practices that end homelessness.

VALUES

The values that guide the strategic plan efforts are as important as the strategies. Supporting the following core values will help to ensure that each person who interacts with the homeless services system is met with the highest standard of dignity and respect and receives the highest quality solutions. Each value is supported by a set of norms that describe the specific actions and beliefs we will uphold.

1. Housing First and Person-Centered Approaches

- We believe that Housing First is key to ending homelessness and addressing the challenges associated with experiencing homelessness.
- We seek to learn from and uphold the choices of people experiencing homelessness and their unique journeys, as they are the experts.
- We value the importance of creating distinct programs for different population level needs.
- We believe in the importance of community connections and social inclusion.

2. Quality Services for the Whole Community

- We believe everyone should have access to homeless response services and affordable housing opportunities of their choice, regardless of life experience.
- We believe it is critical to acknowledge and address the biases that lead people to become homeless and create barriers from

moving out of homelessness.

- We seek to ensure there is a fair distribution of resources and access to resources across the continuum of care.
- We welcome people of all identities and backgrounds and work to ensure that all vulnerable populations are welcomed, supported, and safe across the continuum of care.
- We value the importance of being responsive to unique experiences and factors that lead to homelessness and housing instability.

3. Collaboration Across the Continuum of Care

- We seek to break down the silos across all parties working to end homelessness.
- We believe in shared decision making across parties.
- We encourage patience and an open-minded approach to support collaboration.
- We seek to openly share information and build trust across parties.

4. Data and Results Based Decisions

- We believe in making decisions backed by data.
- We value a focus on the final outcome and accountability to the end goal.
- We seek to be strong financial stewards, ensuring resources lead to results and create strong capacity across the system to sustain those results.

5. Continuous Change and Improvement

- We believe in remaining open to creative approaches.
- We seek to regularly evaluate programs and processes and make changes as needed.
- We seek to try new things.
- We value adaptability.

STRATEGIES

Overview of Strategies:

Montgomery County will employ the following six strategies in order to end homelessness and achieve our population-specific goals.

Strategy 1:
Address Gaps
in Services
Across the
System

Strategy 2:
Build and Support
Strong and
Adaptable Programs

Strategy 3:
Build and Support
Affordable Housing
Solutions within the
Homeless Continuum

Strategy 4:
Coordinate
Effectively Across
Other Systems of Care

Strategy 5:
Increase and Diversify
Funding

Strategy 6:
Educate and
Advocate for Change

Within all six strategies, Montgomery County will intentionally center the voices of people with lived experience of homelessness to ensure that all decisions made within the homeless continuum are informed by the perspectives and experiences of those most impacted by the system.

STRATEGY 1 **Address Gaps in Services Across the System**

Work to eliminate gaps in services across the systems that lead to people experiencing and re-entering homelessness and prevent people from exiting homelessness.

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES:

1. Analyze how the system is currently working and identify areas for improvement in access and outcomes.
2. Provide guidance to other Strategy Workgroups to improve access to services for all.
3. Collaborate with the People's Committee to codify the role of the People's Committee in reviewing policies and regulations that are implemented in the continuum.

STRATEGY 2

Build and Support Strong and Adaptable Programs

Ensure programs across the continuum of care are effectively designed, executed, and supported to meet the varied needs and experiences of people, providing high quality, trauma informed services to all people, absent of discrimination. Montgomery County will continue to effectively meet the needs of county residents as federal priorities, practices and requirements change.

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES:

1. Effectively meet the needs of youth experiencing homelessness and reduce the inflow of youth entering the homeless services system.
2. Ensure people are effectively supported in permanent housing to reduce returns to homelessness.
3. Make the best use of existing resources and best practices for eviction prevention and homeless diversion/rapid resolution to curb inflow to homelessness.

STRATEGY 3

Build and Support Affordable Housing Solutions across the Homeless Continuum

Increase and preserve the supply of affordable housing to ensure clients within the homeless continuum have sustainable and affordable housing opportunities.

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES:

1. Partner with housing developers to obtain dedicated units for homeless system referrals as part of affordable housing production efforts.
2. Maintain and increase landlord partnerships.
3. Support landlords and property management professionals in working with the homeless system and people served through the homeless system.

STRATEGY 4 **Coordinate Effectively Across Other Systems of Care**

Shift the system from siloed services to coordinated services, so agencies across systems work in alignment, with clarity on roles, complementary services, and ease of sharing information and feedback.

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES:

1. Establish defined liaisons for key cross sector partners and key neighboring jurisdictions to streamline coordination with the CoC.
2. Improve the collection and sharing of data.
3. Build infrastructure for robust case conferencing across systems, jurisdictions, and agencies to more effectively serve households in the homeless continuum.

STRATEGY 5 **Increase and Diversify Funding**

Increase the amount of and sources of funding to end homelessness in Montgomery County, ensuring that the availability of resources and the ease of accessing resources matches the need and aligns with the strategic plan's bold goals and timeline.

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES:

1. Establish a clear and transparent understanding of homeless system funding.
2. Identify the full costs of meeting our 3-year population goals.
3. Increase private funding to prioritize funding prevention and housing solutions.

STRATEGY 6 **Educate and Advocate for Change**

Create and support a common advocacy agenda across the homeless services system. Increase the understanding of homelessness and decrease its associated stigma across the community. Create support for the strategic plan's bold goals and timeline.

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES:

1. Create a coordinated education and advocacy effort with supporting infrastructure to raise the profile of the issue of homelessness across the community.
2. Engage in robust outreach to build cross-sector support for the advocacy campaign.
3. Identify policy priorities for the County Executive, County Council, and the Maryland General Assembly, and educational opportunities to boost public awareness about homelessness.