

## **National Consumer Advisory Board Consumer Participation Outreach #3**

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The National Consumer Advisory Board (NCAB), part of the National Health Care for the Homeless Council, consists of homeless or formerly homeless persons who have been clients of Health Care for the Homeless projects throughout the county and participate in governance and advocacy for the those HCH projects. To increase the participation of HCH clients, NCAB uses a method called “Consumer Participation Outreach” to engage people experiencing homelessness across the country in dialogue concerning issues of importance to them. Using a standard set of questions, local Consumer Advisory Boards ask people experiencing homelessness in their communities about issues identified by NCAB, and send the results to NCAB. NCAB uses the gathered information to develop its own advocacy agenda and advises the National HCH Council about homeless consumers’ opinions and needs.

This report summarizes the responses from the third Consumer Participation Outreach survey, which addresses the definition of “chronic” homelessness, services and the National HCH Council’s advocacy work.

**486 homeless persons** from across the country participated in the survey.

### **CHRONIC HOMELESSNESS**

According to HUD the Federal definition, a “chronically homeless” person is defined as *an unaccompanied homeless individual with a disabling condition who either has been continuously homeless for a year or more, or has had at least four episodes of homelessness in the past three years.*

**More than half** of homeless participants identified themselves as “chronically” homeless. 74% of total participants felt that chronically homeless persons were the most important group to focus on. Families and children were among other populations recognized by participants as being important. Sixty-six participants identified “all homeless” and “women and children” as alternative groups that should be given attention.

- One person responded by saying “Someone will always be homeless, not to say single people are ‘less’ important, but families with children are the future of America and they should get the first shot at housing.”

### **ACCESS TO SERVICES**

In addition to housing needs, people experiencing homelessness are in need of other services in order to join mainstream society. Participants were asked what else they would need if they got housing, the most frequent responses were:

- Food: 152
- Utilities: 73
- Health care: 49
- Transportation: 32
- Education/school: 22

- Job: 147
- Furniture:73
- Income: 46
- Community Support: 25
- Therapy/counseling: 22

Other responses included:

Sobriety  
 Case management  
 Money management/budgeting  
 Children  
 Daycare  
 God/faith  
 Mental health services  
 Additional resources

**Access to Services**

*"I would be very happy to take care of a house or apartment. Take better care of myself to keep it."*

*"To continue to further my education so I will have resources so I won't become homeless ever again."*

*"Good health, food, job so I would be able to pay PG&E, etc."*

**ADVOCACY**

Participants were asked what issues they thought the National Health Care for the Homeless Council should focus on in their policy work. The top three answers in order were health care, employment and housing.

**Approximately 1 out of four participants (27%) felt that the National HCH Council should advocate on behalf of health care.**

**Listen to the Voices**

*"Making sure that everyone has health care."*

*"Easy access to medical providers, more funding for all clinics to increase services."*

*"To provide services to a broader range of people, to do more prevention work and to do more education for the general public."*

*"Germany offers free health care to all their residents. I feel we should do the same"*

Other advocacy issues included:

- Shelters
- Mental health
- Drug/alcohol treatment
- Food
- Funding
- Child issues