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Phoenix Community Alliance  
Social & Housing Advancement Committee Communication  
Subcommittee  
Glossary Project, April 1, 2020

**Overview:**

Glossaries are especially important when multiple organizations are involved in efforts as challenging as people experiencing homelessness. We are aware that, in various stages and settings, different vernacular may be used. By using this glossary, we attempt to align and ensure that our understanding of key terms is consistent, and content is translated to the highest quality and aligned.

**HOUSING**

*These terms reference types of housing that are central to the dialogue surrounding the shelter to vulnerable populations (see definition of "vulnerable populations" on page 3).*

**Affordable Dwelling/Housing:** "Affordable dwelling" is housing for which the occupant(s) is/are paying no more than 30% of his/her income for gross housing costs, including utilities. (Source: U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development)

**Permanent Supportive Housing:** An intervention that combines affordable housing assistance with voluntary support services to address the needs of the chronically homeless. The services are designed to build independent living and tenancy skills, and connect people with community-based health care, treatment and employment services. (Source: National Alliance to End Homelessness)

**Subsidies:** Housing subsidies come in many forms, but the main objective is to supplement or offset monthly housing costs for individuals or families to remain in housing. Forms of subsidies include direct housing subsidies, public housing, rent supplements and some types of cooperative housing.

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**Workforce Housing:** Housing that's affordable (30% or less of gross income) to households earning between 60% and 120% of area median income. Workforce housing targets middle income workers including police officers, firefighters, teachers, health care workers, retail clerks, etc. (Source: Urban Land Institute)

## PEOPLE

*These terms reference the people and populations central and most relevant to the challenge of homelessness.*

**Chronically Homeless:** An unaccompanied individual with a disabling condition who has either been continuously homeless for one year or more OR has had at least four episodes of homelessness in the past three years, where the combined occasions total a length of time of at least 12 months. (Source: U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development)

**Experiencing Homelessness:** An individual or family that lacks a fixed, regular and adequate nighttime residence, such as those living in emergency shelters, transitional housing or places not meant for human habitation.

**First-Time Homelessness:** People experiencing homelessness for the first time. Possible causes include job loss, increased rent or domestic/family issues.

**Previously Homeless:** An individual or family that has advanced into housing or a sustainable living situation. Although no longer experiencing homelessness, they are vulnerable to becoming homeless again.

**Severe Mental Illness (SMI):** Approximately 6% of Americans are severely mentally ill, compared to the 20-25% of the homeless population that suffer from mental illness. Furthermore, 45% of the homeless population show history of mental illness. Due to the increase in factors such as substance abuse, individuals

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experiencing both mental illness and homelessness are more likely to be incarcerated. (Source: National Institute of Mental Health)

**Vulnerable Population:** Vulnerable populations include the economically disadvantaged, the uninsured, low-income children, the elderly, individuals experiencing homelessness and those with chronic health conditions, including severe mental illness. Their health and health care problems intersect with social factors, including housing, poverty and inadequate education.

### SERVICES

*These terms reference the services common to organizations and agencies working on solutions for individuals and families seeking and/or maintaining shelter or affordable housing.*

**Coordinated Entry:** Coordinated entry processes, deployed across an entire community, make it possible for people experiencing or at risk of experiencing homelessness to have their strengths and needs quickly assessed (triage), and to be swiftly connected to appropriate, tailored housing and services within the community. People with the greatest needs receive priority for any type of housing and homeless assistance available, including permanent supportive housing, rapid rehousing and other interventions.

**Domestic Violence Priority:** The population of individuals with limited economic resources is at increased vulnerability to homelessness. Priority for services is given due to the direct correlation between intimate partner violence and housing instability.

**Eviction Prevention:** Efforts to prevent the dispossession of a tenant of leased property by force or especially by legal process.

**Family Reunification:** One-way, one-time transportation assistance to individuals experiencing homelessness (or at imminent risk) who wish to return to

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their family or other support system in another part of the U.S. Individuals must have family or support systems in place when the relocation occurs.

**Triage:** As an entry point to resources, a program or caseworker must assess the specific needs of an individual or family in crisis and direct those in need to the appropriate resources.

### TERMS TO AVOID

PCA's SHA Committee recognizes there are terms in the common diction of our social environment, but also recognizes these very terms (below) provide little clarity, or that there are subtle connotations that remove the human element from a very human challenge. The SHA Committee prefers to avoid the following terms:

- "the homeless"
- homeless person
- vagrancy
- transient
- underserved
- attainable housing

*If you have questions or a new term you would like clarified, contact Leah Tan at 602-682-6612 (extension 109) or ltan@dtphx.org.*

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