

**Message from Ann Oliva, Director,
Office of Special Needs Assistance Programs (SNAPS)**

HEARTH Act Implementation

The Homeless Emergency and Rapid Transition to Housing (HEARTH) Act of 2009 amends the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act and enacts major changes to McKinney-Vento for the first time in 20 years. These changes allow for increased flexibility in who may be served and what activities may be carried out.

HUD believes that the changes introduced by the HEARTH Act present tremendous opportunities for communities to take a fresh look at strategies and programs for ending homelessness and see where they might be improved.

Much work will need to be done over the next several years to realize the possibilities introduced by HEARTH, and this process will inevitably be accompanied by some anxiety. SNAPS is committed to helping you take advantage of the opportunities that HEARTH brings and support you during this time of change. Ultimately, the work all of us will be doing in implementing HEARTH will move us closer to our shared goals of preventing and ending homelessness.

This message is the first in a series of messages that will be posted on the HRE in the coming months to keep everyone up-to-date on implementation of the HEARTH Act.

This message includes:

- Brief introduction to the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act as amended by the HEARTH Act;
- Information on proposed regulations; and
- Information on technical assistance to help in transition to HEARTH.

Introduction to the HEARTH Act

On May 20, 2009, President Obama signed the Homeless Emergency and Rapid Transition to Housing (HEARTH) Act of 2009. The [HEARTH Act](#) amends and reauthorizes the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act with substantial changes, including:

- A consolidation of HUD's competitive CoC grant programs (i.e. SHP, S+C, and SRO) and a change to the definition of who is eligible to be served by them;
- Formal recognition of the role of local governance, planning, data collection, and management, plus authorization of administrative funding to support this role;
- An increased emphasis on performance of homeless systems and programs funded through HEARTH;
- An increased emphasis on prevention and recognition of the rapid re-housing model; and
- The creation of a Rural Housing Stability Assistance Program.

To read the amended and reauthorized McKinney-Vento Act, see [The McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act as amended by S.896, the Homeless Emergency and Rapid Transition to Housing \(HEARTH\) Act of 2009](#).

Proposed Regulations

The public comment portion of the regulatory process for implementing HEARTH began on April 20, 2010 with the publication of the proposed rule for the definition of homelessness, which can be found at www.hudhre.info/documents/ProposedHomelessDefinition.pdf. HUD is now reviewing comments submitted during the public comment period that ended on June 21, 2010.

Please note that the definitions and recordkeeping requirements in the proposed rule will not impact the 2010 CoC NOFA competition or the use of 2010 ESG funds. Current definitions and recordkeeping requirements remain in effect until modified by the final HEARTH Act regulations.

The next public step of the regulatory process will be comment on program requirements for the Emergency Solutions Grant, Continuum of Care and Rural Housing Stability Programs. Interested parties will be invited to submit comments on the proposed program requirements later this year. After considering the comments and making adjustments to the regulations, final regulations will be published.

HUD anticipates that the new regulations will first impact programs in FY2011.

Technical Assistance on Making the Transition to HEARTH

HUD will be providing a wide range of assistance to help communities to plan their transition to the HEARTH Act including training conferences, sample tools and templates, guidebooks and white papers, webinars, FAQs, and a Virtual Help Desk.

Recognizing that communities will be focusing on their 2010 CoC NOFA applications over the next several months, and in order to avoid confusion, HUD assistance will be provided almost entirely after the 2010 application process has ended.

Identical 3-½ day national conferences will be held this year in Denver (Sept 14-17) and Atlanta (Sept 27-30) to initiate HEARTH transition planning. The conferences will be focusing on these topics:

- CoC system performance and redesign
- CoC governance and management
- Combining SHP, S+C, and SRO programs
- Rethinking ESG
- Rural homelessness
- Enhancing connections to mainstream resources

Conference registration is open and available at <http://www.onecpd.info/>.

Technical assistance on making the transition to HEARTH will continue after the conferences, with the most specific assistance provided after the program regulations are published.

The HRE HEARTH page (<http://www.hudhre.info/hearth/>) will keep you informed about all HUD guidance and other assistance related to transitioning to the new programs. It will be updated as new information becomes available. Listserv communication will also help keep you informed as new information or resources become available.

Thank you for your energy and efforts toward achieving our shared goals.