

# Preface

By Barbara Poppe, Executive Director, U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness



The U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness and the National Low Income Housing Coalition share the goal of preventing and ending homelessness by expanding the supply of affordable rental homes. Meeting our goal requires high-quality research that tells us the depth of homelessness and shows the progress we've made towards ending it. Every year, *Out of Reach* provides

just this kind of research. We know from this report that the cost of housing is simply too high for our lowest income neighbors to afford. *Out of Reach* helps us define the problem and points us toward solutions.

I am firm in my conviction that not only can we solve homelessness, but that the pathway to doing so is clear. In 2010, the U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness released *Opening Doors*, the first-ever federal strategic plan to prevent and end homelessness. The most recent national report on homelessness found that as a country we are making progress on ending chronic and Veterans homelessness, yet the number of persons in families experiencing homelessness increased. An increasingly tight rental market and the drop in the number of affordable rental units available to extremely low income households is the greatest barrier to achieving our vision that “no one should experience homelessness, no one should be without a safe, stable place to call home.”

The data in *Out of Reach* highlight the gap between the cost of rental housing and the incomes of low-wage workers. So many families today simply do not make enough to afford the average rents in their towns or cities. With funding for housing assistance threatened by budget cuts each year, federal housing assistance programs are less and less available for struggling families.

Just as USICH is a leader in the national fight to end homelessness, NLIHC is leading the push for innovative policy solutions to the ongoing housing problems addressed in research from both organizations. One of the strategies

for preventing and ending homelessness that USICH focuses on in *Opening Doors* is to increase access to stable and affordable housing, and funding the National Housing Trust Fund is listed as one way to achieve that goal. Building, preserving, and rehabilitating affordable rental homes through a mechanism like the Housing Trust Fund, an idea backed by the Administration, would advance this work. This would represent the first new federal housing construction program to address the housing needs of the lowest income Americans in 30 years. These are the households in the greatest need of decent, affordable housing, and the households at the greatest risk of homelessness.

A majority of Americans agree that homelessness is a problem that must be solved. There is a significant body of evidence that shows that affordable housing is a cost-effective and proven solution to homelessness. There is no better time than now to re-imagine federal housing policy and determine how to ensure that there is a dedicated source of funding for affordable housing production. *Out of Reach* proves that the affordable housing problem is real. It is time for all of us—advocates and policymakers alike—to collaborate on solutions. We need to act with great urgency, now, to ensure that all children, youth, and adults have a stable place to call home.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Barbara Poppe", enclosed in a thin black rectangular border.

Barbara Poppe  
Executive Director, U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness