



National Coalition for the Homeless

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Homeless Self-Help and Empowerment Projects

NCH Fact Sheet # 17

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Homeless Self-Help and Empowerment Projects with the National Coalition for the Homeless

About the National Coalition for the Homeless

The National Coalition for the Homeless (NCH) was founded in 1984 as a national network of people who are or who have been homeless, activists and advocates, service providers, and others committed to the mission of ending homelessness. Our common bond is our commitment to creating the systemic and attitudinal changes necessary to prevent and end homelessness. At the same time, we work to meet the immediate needs of people who are either homeless or at risk of becoming so. We take as our first principle of practice that homeless and formerly homeless people must be actively involved in all of our work.

NCH has adopted a set of policy and practice goals and objectives that declare what we expect to accomplish because of our work. Our policy and practice goals and objectives are in four areas: civil rights, economic justice, health care justice, and housing justice. NCH employs various approaches to achieve our policy and practice goals, including community organizing, policy advocacy/lobbying, public education, research, and technical assistance.

NCH offers the following opportunities for people who have experienced homelessness to join us in ending and preventing homelessness:

Community Organizing

- **Become a Volunteer Community Organizer for NCH.** NCH seeks to ensure that our work is shaped and supported by people who are experiencing homelessness. In order to make sure that all viewpoints are heard, it is important that we are in touch with as many people on the local level as possible. To get involved with organizing efforts in your community, contact Michael Stoops at (202) 462-4822 ext.19 or mstoops@nationalhomeless.org.
- **Conduct a Homeless Voter Registration Campaign.** People experiencing homelessness must become involved in electing public officials who will represent their concerns. NCH sponsors the "You Don't Need A Home to Vote" nonpartisan voter registration/education/get-out-the-vote campaign each federal election cycle. To obtain our voting rights registration

manual and poster or to learn how to advocate for a homeless voting rights written policy or law in your state, contact Michael Stoops at (202) 462-4822 ext. or mstoops@nationalhomeless.org, or visit NCH's website at <http://www.nationalhomeless.org/voting.html>.

- **Join the National Homeless Civil Rights Organizing Project.** NCH's National Homeless Civil Rights Organizing Project (NHCROP) addresses the growing trend of homelessness being criminalized as well as the rise in hate crimes and violence against people experiencing homelessness. NHCROP's nine regional field sites are working to stop these problems through documentation, community organizing, policy advocacy, and litigation. To reach the field site nearest you or to become a civil rights advocate in your area, contact Michael Stoops at (202) 462-4822 ext. 19 or mstoops@nationalhomeless.org, or visit <http://www.nationalhomeless.org/nhcrop.html>.

Policy Advocacy/Lobbying

- **Join an NCH Policy Work Group.** NCH has established work groups for civil rights/grassroots organizing and policy to provide direction to the NCH staff and board of directors on public policy issues. To receive regular mailings or become a participant in the monthly, toll-free conference calls of one of our policy workgroups, call (202) 462-4822 or email info@nationalhomeless.org.
- **Respond to NCH Legislative Action Alerts.** NCH Legislative Action Alerts provide updates about activities in Congress affecting homelessness. When an alert comes out, it will tell you what you can do to influence policies that are made on a national level. To receive NCH Legislative Action Alerts, become an NCH member or visit <http://www.nationalhomeless.org/alerts.html>.

Public Education

- **Join or Form a Speakers Bureau.** Through NCH's "Faces of Homelessness" panel presentations, people who have experienced homelessness personalize the issue for audiences who may never have spoken to a person who has experienced homelessness. Speakers Bureau presentations also dispel stereotypes about people who experience homelessness and inspire community responses. People who speak on "Faces of Homelessness" panels also gain valuable skills and experience. To organize or participate in a "Faces of Homelessness" panel in your community or to set up your own Speakers Bureau, contact the Speakers Bureau Coordinator, Michael O'Neill, at (202) 462-4822 ext. 20 or moneill@nationalhomeless.org, or visit <http://www.nationalhomeless.org/faces.html>.
- **Start or Contribute to a Street Newspaper.** Street newspapers educate the general public about homelessness and create an outlet for people experiencing homelessness to have their articles, editorials, letters to the editor, cartoons, photos, artwork, and poetry published while providing them with employment opportunities as vendors and writers. To locate the street newspaper nearest you or for assistance in establishing a newspaper in your community, contact Michael Stoops at (202) 462-4822 ext.19 or mstoops@nationalhomeless.org, or visit <http://www.nationalhomeless.org/stnews.html>.
- **Participate in National Hunger and Homelessness Awareness Week.** Each year, the National Coalition for the Homeless and the National Student Campaign Against Hunger and Homelessness co-sponsor an awareness week during the first full week before Thanksgiving to remind people of the problem of homelessness and to talk about how it can be solved. Awareness

weeks are organized in more than 500 campuses and communities nationwide. For more information or to order an organizing guide, contact Michael Stoops at (202) 462-4822 ext. 19 or mstoops@nationalhomeless.org, or visit <http://www.nationalhomeless.org/awareness.html>.

- **Recognize National Homeless Persons' Memorial Day.** Every year, on or around the first day of winter (December 21), nearly 100 communities nationwide hold local memorial services to remember people who have died homeless during that year. To find out if your community already sponsors such an event or for help in organizing one, contact Michael Stoops at (202) 462-4822 ext.19 or mstoops@nationalhomeless.org, or visit <http://www.nationalhomeless.org/memorial96.html>.

Become a Member

- **Join the National Coalition for the Homeless.** If you become a member of NCH, you will receive our quarterly newsletter, *Safety Network*, monthly policy updates, a 50% discount on NCH publications and merchandise, and timely legislative action alerts. *NCH offers low or no cost memberships to low-income people and those who are currently homeless or who have experienced homelessness.* To join, contact NCH at (202) 462-4822 or info@nationalhomeless.org, or visit <http://www.nationalhomeless.org/joinnch.html>.
- **Join your Local or Statewide Homeless/Housing Coalition.** There are nearly 300 local and statewide homeless/housing coalitions in all 50 states, including Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands. To find the local or state homeless coalition nearest you, contact NCH at (202) 462-4822 or info@nationalhomeless.org, or visit <http://www.nationalhomeless.org/state/>.