

# Effectiveness of Homeless Service Networks in Coordinating Services During COVID-19

*Strategies to Achieve Alignment, Collaboration, and Synergy Across Delivery and Financing Systems*

Research-in-Progress Webinar  
April 7, 2021  
12-1pm ET

**Welcome** Chris Lyttle, JD – Systems for Action

**Presenters** Hee Soun Jang, PhD – University of North Texas  
Jesús N. Valero, PhD – University of Utah  
Michelle Flynn, MPA – The Road Home

**Q&A**



**Hee Soun Jang** is an associate professor in the Department of Public Administration at the University of North Texas. Her research explores nonprofit and government partnerships, collaborative governance and nonprofit sector in South Korea. Her research has been published in scholarly journals, including *Public Administration Review* and *Journal of Health and Human Service Administration*. Jang's research has been funded by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, IBM Center for the Business of Government, and Dallas Habitat for Humanities.

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**Jesús N. Valero, PhD** is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Political Science at the University of Utah. Jesús' research explores government-nonprofit partnerships, effective leadership in nonprofit organizations, and the use and impact of technology in public service. His work has been published in academic and practitioner outlets and is the recipient of the Emerging Scholar Award from the Association for Research on Nonprofit Organizations and Voluntary Action (ARVOVA) and the Founders' Fellowship Award from the American Society for Public Administration (ASPA). His research has been funded by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, Korea Foundation, IBM Center for the Business of Government, and the Utah Foundation. Jesús earned his PhD in public administration with a specialization in nonprofit management from the University of North Texas; Master of Public Administration from the University of Texas-Pan American; and BA from the University of Texas-San Antonio.

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**Michelle Flynn** has served as Executive Director of The Road Home since February 2020, having been with the agency for 25 years. Michelle has an Master's of Public Administration from the University of Utah. She serves on multiple boards including the Salt Lake Valley Coalition to End Homelessness. Michelle specializes in systems planning, emergency shelter, rapid rehousing, and permanent supportive housing. The Utah Housing Coalition selected her as their 2020 Person of the Year.

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- Provide brief background on homelessness in the U.S. & effects of pandemic
- Discuss our research goals & timeline
- Share what we have learned thus far from our early conversations with CoC leaders
- Outline our next steps for continuing our 2-year research effort

# Homelessness Was Increasing Prior to COVID-19 (2020 PIT Data)

- Homelessness increased nationwide: +2%
- Increase in unsheltered: individuals (+7%), families with children (+13%), veterans (+6%)
- Overrepresentation: Black (39%), Hispanic/Latino (23%), indigenous people (5%)
- More than half of populations were in 4 states (CA-28%, NY-16%, FL-5%, TX-5%): 70% of CA pop are unsheltered

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# The High Demand of a Coordinated COVID-19 Response: CoC as a System Approach

- Response to COVID-19 among homeless population requires whole community coordination: CoC (Continuum of Care) leadership, public health agencies, health care providers, housing authorities
  - Individuals experiencing homelessness are vulnerable in the COVID-19 pandemic; they are less likely to access health care system
  - CDC guidance for shelters not to exclude people who tested positive, to adopt community-based approach to build response plans & tackle spread of virus
  - Federal funding has predominantly focused on Housing First services—leaving other major health and human services to be addressed by local governments and nonprofit organizations

# Challenges in Serving Homeless Population in Response to COVID-19

- Vulnerable conditions demand resources immediately
  - Homeless population are higher risk category for severe illness from COVID-19
  - Congregate setting of sheltered population
  - Unsheltered population: outdoor living and living in encampment area
- Communities had to identify additional sites and resources
  - Overflow sites
  - Isolation sites
  - Quarantine sites
  - Protective housing

- Testing in shelters and mobile testing centers
- Securing quarantine space for the homeless patients
- Use of technology such as telehealth to connect with clients
- Addressing vaccination inequity and access barriers
- Prevention of homelessness: Eviction moratorium and rental assistance

- Lack of aggregate data on rate of infection, testing, & vaccination of homeless population
- Not all communities are tracking positive cases & other critical data points

## A Snapshot of the Spread of COVID-19 Among Homeless Population

	Total Positive Cases	Total Hospitalizations	Total Vaccinations	Total Homeless Population
Salt Lake County	966	117 (12%)	994	1958
Los Angeles County	7107	1369 (19%)	-	63706

- To what extent and in what ways is the COVID-19 pandemic causing challenges and disruptions within CoC homeless service networks in communities across the US?
- How well are CoC homeless service networks performing in addressing the broad health and human service needs of individuals experiencing homelessness during the COVID-19 pandemic?
- What are the key factors affecting the success of CoC homeless service networks in reducing health disparities and improving health equity during the COVID-19 pandemic?



- We have completed 3 listening exercises with leaders of CoC in Dallas, TX; Salt Lake, UT; Sarasota, FL
- What we have learned:
  - CoC system is one of multiple key players in the response effort
  - Local governments, particularly counties, play a critical role in leading the pandemic response efforts
  - Coordination across the sectors is helping communities house the homeless & provide for their stable care
  - Vaccination of the homeless is not a states' priority
  - Level of collaboration, beyond just coordination, may be challenged during the pandemic due to organizational focus on survivability

- We plan to engage with 15-20 CoC homeless service networks across the U.S. to understand the challenges & needs created by the pandemic
- Specifically interview representatives of the medical, public health, & social service sectors as well as at least 1 leader of the network
- Use of interviews to build qualitative understanding, to then inform the creation of a national survey to develop more systematic understanding of the effects of the pandemic & factors that explain successful adaptation & resiliency

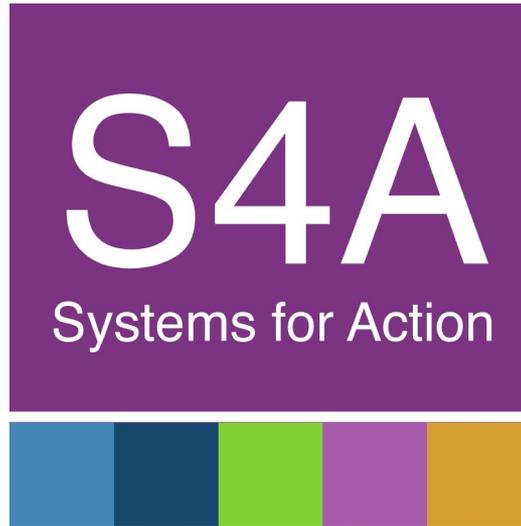
- PIT count data to HUD (2021 PIT count was modified or cancelled)
- Homeless Management Information System (HMIS)
- Coordinated Entry System (May share with HMIS)
- School districts- Homeless liaison
- **Data opportunities: COVID-19 testing, care and vaccination**

- We plan to publish a public report of our case study research at the end of the year
- Launching national survey of CoC leaders, public health agencies, and government managers in early 2022
- Interested in building dataset on the effects of COVID-19 on homeless population, open to collaboration opportunities
- Please stay connected with our project & research reports on the [S4A website](#)

**Michelle Flynn**

*Executive Director, The Road Home*

# Questions?



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 [@Systems4Action](https://twitter.com/Systems4Action)

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One will be emailed to you.

# New Funding Opportunity

## \$2 million is available to measure solutions to the **wrong-pocket problem:**

when costs and benefits for promising solutions aren't distributed evenly, implementation costs are drawn largely from one set of pockets while benefits flow into alternative sets of pockets.



## 2021 S4A Call for Proposals

Click [here](#) to view the  
Informational Webinar Recording



### Additional CFP Resources

- [Funding Opportunity Brochure](#)
- [Information Webinar Recording](#)
- [Informational Webinar Q&A](#)
- [Informational Webinar Slides](#)
- [Infographic: S4A CFP at a Glance](#)

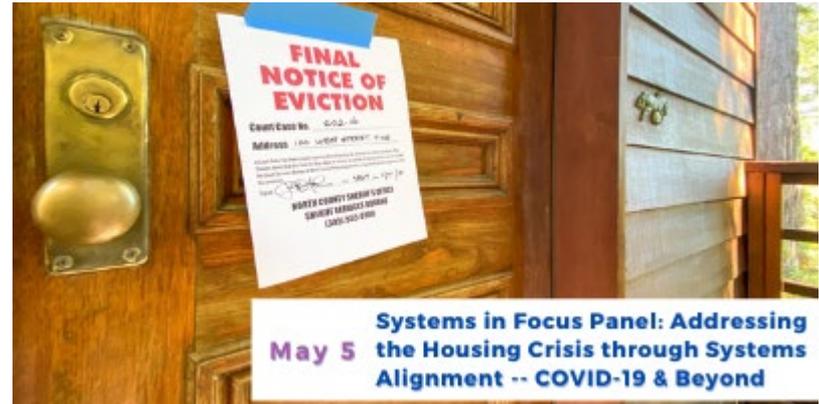
Learn more: <http://systemsforaction.org/funding-opportunities-2021>

Biweekly on Wednesdays at 12pm ET



**April 21**

**Multi-Dimensional COVID-19 Control in US:  
Identifying Counties with High and Low  
Levels of Success**



**May 5**

**Systems in Focus Panel: Addressing  
the Housing Crisis through Systems  
Alignment -- COVID-19 & Beyond**

***Systems for Action*** is a National Program Office of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and a collaborative effort of the Colorado School of Public Health, administered by the University of Colorado Anschutz Medical Campus, Aurora, CO.



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