Sample Exercise on Defining the Problem

This exercise is designed to help structure a brainstorming session among a planning group in order to begin to define the problem that the Continuum of Care is trying to address. It also helps the group begin to identify some of the policy and context issues that affect who is homeless and who is at risk of homelessness.

Who is Homeless?	How many people are homeless?	Where are they from?
Working poor families	Increasing	Lost housing in community
Families fleeing domestic violence	Increasing, or increased visibility	Lost housing in community
Individuals with dual diagnosis	Increasing, or recently identified as such	Lost housing in community
Individuals with substance abuse problems	80% of single adult shelter residents – increasing younger residents	Treatment, state systems

Who is at risk of homelessness?	How many people are at risk?	Where are they from?
Families losing welfare benefits	Increasing (%)	Housing in community, doubled up
Young people discharged from DSS (aging out and kicked out)	Increasing (%)	State systems

Policy and Funding Context:

Issue or Problem?	Current or likely impact?	Possible impact?
High cost and escalating rental market	Limited or no access to affordable housing; declining ability to use tenant-based rental assistance	Need for permanent housing production to expand supply