



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**NEW PUBLIC – PRIVATE PARTNERSHIP AIMS TO REDUCE HOMELESSNESS  
FOR VIRGINIA’S CHILDREN**

**GOAL IS TO INCREASE RAPID RE-HOUSING IN COMMUNITIES AND SELF SUFFICIENCY FOR VIRGINIA’S FAMILIES**

**Richmond, VA** – The Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development has partnered with the Virginia Coalition to End Homelessness and the National Alliance to End Homelessness in a new initiative sponsored by the Freddie Mac Foundation aimed at meeting the Commonwealth’s goal of reducing homelessness by 15 percent for children and their families in urban, suburban, and rural communities across Virginia.

The initiative will help communities improve the availability of affordable housing for children and their families experiencing homelessness by increasing the provision of rapid re-housing. Rapid re-housing is a proven solution to homelessness for children and their families. It permanently ends homelessness and is often more cost-efficient than current programs.

Homelessness among Virginia’s children and their families was decreasing until 2008 when the financial downturn struck. High rates of unemployment and poverty have contributed to higher rates of homelessness in Virginia.

In response, the Commonwealth of Virginia released a plan in November 2010 to reduce homelessness by 15 percent by 2013. One of the main strategies of the plan is to increase rapid re-housing. “The state plan is aligned with the paradigm shift taking place across the country in the way that communities respond to homelessness,” said Bill Shelton, Director of the Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development. “A rapid re-housing model views obtaining housing as a critical first step in helping individuals and families live productive lives. Once in housing, tailored services are delivered to ensure that the family remains in housing and does not experience homelessness again.”

“Rapid Re-Housing is a strategy that has been successfully used by many communities to reduce rates of homelessness,” said Nan Roman, President and CEO of the National Alliance to End Homelessness. “Research shows that most households experience homelessness as a result of a financial crisis that prevents them from paying rent, or a domestic conflict that results in one member being ejected or leaving with no money to pay for housing. Most households who experience homelessness today have already lived in their own housing, and they can generally return and remain stably housed.”

The initiative will aim to replicate the work of other communities from across the nation in using rapid re-

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housing to reduce homelessness for children and their families. It will build on the experiences of Virginia's communities in delivering rapid re-housing and will specifically focus on identifying and implementing solutions to move children and their families out of emergency shelter and into their own homes.

Virginia service providers, local government, and state government were recipients of federal funding for both homeless prevention and rapid re-housing programs through the Homeless Prevention and Rapid Re-Housing Program (HPRP.) A study of nine communities and their experiences with rapid re-housing, published by the Virginia Coalition to End Homelessness, found that rapid re-housing was successful in Virginia because it addressed the causes of homelessness. These causes are lack of affordable housing and the need for tailored services necessary to assist families with maintaining their housing. The study finds that an increased focus on employment will increase self-sufficiency of families helping them to remain in their own homes.

"There is no better time than now to prioritize ending homelessness for children and their families," stated Phyllis Chamberlain, Executive Director of the Virginia Coalition to End Homelessness. "We know that homeless children are four times more likely to experience delayed development, twice as likely to have learning disabilities, and three times as likely to experience emotional and behavioral problems, and have higher rates of anxiety, depression, and withdrawal. The time is now to ensure that Virginia's children have the opportunity for bright futures through stable housing."

"This initiative is exactly the kind of partnership that we know will create widespread change in communities across Virginia," stated Freddie Mac Foundation President and CEO Ralph F. Boyd, Jr. "The Freddie Mac Foundation has been a long time supporter of housing first initiatives through our Stable Homes, Stable Families work. This partnership with the Commonwealth is an opportunity for us and for our partners across the state to invest wisely and make a real and measurable difference for children and their families. Together and through increased collaboration, we can make stable homes for Virginia's children a top priority."

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The National Alliance to End Homelessness is a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization committed to preventing and ending homelessness in the United States. For more information visit [www.endhomelessness.org](http://www.endhomelessness.org)

The Virginia Coalition to End Homelessness is the statewide nonprofit organization dedicated to preventing and ending homelessness in the Commonwealth of Virginia through community collaboration, capacity building, education and advocacy. For more information visit [www.vceh.org](http://www.vceh.org)

The Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) is a state government agency committed to creating safe, affordable, and prosperous communities to live, work and do business in Virginia. By partnering with local governments, nonprofit groups, state and federal agencies and others, DHCD is working to improve the quality of life for Virginians. For more information, visit [www.dhcd.virginia.gov](http://www.dhcd.virginia.gov)

The [Freddie Mac Foundation](http://www.freddiemacfoundation.org) works to make home a place where children and families thrive. Self-funded through its endowment, the Foundation focuses its community investments in the areas of stable homes, stable families; foster care and adoption; and academic and career success. Now celebrating its 20th anniversary, the Freddie Mac Foundation has improved the lives of tens of thousands of children and their families. For more information, visit [www.freddiemacfoundation.org](http://www.freddiemacfoundation.org)

For more information on the initiative, visit <http://www.vceh.org/rapid-re-housing>