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The Santa Clara County's Office of Supportive Housing in California is working with J-PAL North America and affiliated researchers to test the impact of rapid re-housing on homeless shelter entry, housing moves, and hospital visits for single adults.

J-PAL North America seeks partners to research homelessness

Housing Stability Evaluation Incubator will provide funding and technical assistance to help partners build evidence on strategies to reduce and prevent homelessness.

J-PAL North America
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J-PAL North America, a research center in the MIT Department of Economics, has announced a new Housing Stability Evaluation Incubator to support organizations fighting homelessness in developing randomized evaluations that test the impacts of their policies, programs, and services.

To many, rising rates of homelessness in some U.S. cities might seem like an intractable challenge. In the United States, more than 500,000 people experience homelessness on a given night, and 1.4 million people pass through emergency shelters in a given year. Many more individuals experience housing instability in other, often uncounted forms, whether living doubled-up with friends or family, living in temporary accommodations such as motels, or living under threat of eviction.

However, the challenge of housing instability is not insurmountable. There is strong evidence on some strategies for ending homelessness and there are powerful tools for learning even more about how to support unhoused individuals and families in accessing and maintaining safe, affordable housing. For example, several randomized evaluations of Housing First programs helped demonstrate that providing permanent supportive housing with no

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preconditions was a more effective approach to housing unhoused individuals with severe mental illness when compared to conventional transitional housing programs.

The results from these studies changed many peoples' perceptions about how to best help house people experiencing homelessness. These results also led to dramatic reductions in chronic homelessness among communities that adopted a robust Housing First approach and expanded the number of permanent supportive housing units in their jurisdiction.

However, many questions remain on how to best design, implement, and target services aimed at reducing and preventing homelessness. To answer these questions, J-PAL North America will support organizations fighting homelessness to evaluate their own programs and learn more about what works for promoting housing stability.

Through the Housing Stability Evaluation Incubator, organizations can apply for technical assistance from J-PAL North America staff, connections with J-PAL's network of leading researchers, and flexible proposal development funding to develop one or more high-quality randomized evaluations.

Any organization interested in answering policy-relevant research questions on strategies to reduce homelessness is invited to apply. This may include nonprofit service providers, government agencies or offices, public housing authorities, Continuums of Care, and other organizations that operate programs or policies aimed at reducing homelessness, preventing eviction, or promoting housing stability.

To guide the development of future research, J-PAL North America also released an evidence review summarizing results from 40 rigorous evaluations of 18 distinct programs related to homelessness prevention and reduction. The publication focuses mainly on questions that can be answered through rigorous impact-evaluation methods and outlines a research agenda for additional evaluation. The Housing Stability Evaluation Incubator is a next step toward supporting new evaluations to fill gaps in the evidence base.

J-PAL-affiliated researchers are working on five ongoing research projects related to homelessness with local jurisdictions across the United States. For example, the County of Santa Clara's Office of Supportive Housing and local nonprofit provider, HomeFirst, are working with J-PAL North America and researchers from the University of Notre Dame's Wilson Sheehan Lab for Economic Opportunities to develop a randomized evaluation of a new rapid re-housing program for single adults. The ongoing study in Santa Clara County, California, will inform decisions around expansion of the program in the county and can contribute new evidence to inform other governments facing similar challenges.

"Partnering with researchers to improve evidence-based programs is critically important to reducing and preventing homelessness," says Ky Le, director of the Office of Supportive Housing for the County of Santa Clara. "With J-PAL's assistance, we are striving to optimize our impact and efficiency."

Interested organizations are encouraged to submit a letter of interest by April 6. Detailed instructions on how to apply to the Housing Stability Evaluation Incubator can be found on the initiative webpage. Please contact Initiative Manager Rohit Naimpally with questions.

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J-PAL North America will host a webinar on Feb. 10 at 2 p.m. to provide an introduction to the evaluation incubator, review the application process, and respond to questions. To receive information about the webinar and other updates about the evaluation incubator, sign up for J-PAL North America's mailing list on reducing and preventing homelessness.

Topics: **Abdul Latif Jameel Poverty Action Lab (J-PAL)**   **Economics**   **Poverty**

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