

City of  
SACRAMENTO

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November 21, 2018

Honorable David De Alba, Presiding Judge  
Sacramento County Superior Court  
720 Ninth Street, Department 47  
Sacramento, CA 95814

**Re: Sacramento County Grand Jury Report: A Tarnished Jewel: The Status of  
Illegal Camping on the American River Parkway**

Dear Judge De Alba:

Pursuant to Penal Code sections 933 and 933.05, the following specific responses are submitted to you regarding the 2017-2018 Grand Jury's Findings and Recommendations on *A Tarnished Jewel: The Status of Illegal Camping on the American River Parkway*.

**Finding 1: An inordinate amount of the money and effort spent on the parkway is a result of the approximate 200 illegal campers on the parkway.**

**Response to Finding 1:** The City of Sacramento agrees that significant resources are expended by both the City and County of Sacramento addressing homelessness and camping on the American River Parkway. The City disagrees with the implication that any resources are being expended improvidently or in excess of that necessary to properly address the issue.

**Recommendation 1: The focus should be on the removal of the estimated 100 "service resistant" campers on the parkway.**

**Response to Recommendation 1:** The City of Sacramento has already implemented programs to address homelessness and illegal camping within City limits, although not in the manner recommended here. The City has diligently worked, and continues to work, with homeless advocates and related organizations to identify the appropriate response for all homeless individuals, including those that camp along the parkway. These efforts have included, as appropriate, removing illegal campers from the parkway, but the City anticipates utilizing a more holistic approach to accomplishing our citywide goals. To the extent that this is a recommendation that the City make the "removal" of these campers a priority, that recommendation is rejected for the reasons stated in this paragraph.

**Finding 2: Current ordinances do not act as an effective deterrent to illegal camping in the Parkway.**

**Response to Finding 2:** The City of Sacramento disagrees with the finding. The City's approach to the enforcement and prosecution of its ordinances has multiple components, each of which require the discretion of the individual involved. The universe of ordinances and state law available to law enforcement is sufficient to provide prosecution and eventual penalties appropriate to each situation. Deterrence arises from the imposition of penalties, and the current city ordinances are sufficient to achieve that end.

**Recommendation 2: A carefully crafted "stay away" ordinance should be considered by both the City and County.**

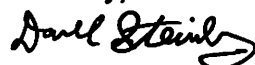
**Response to Recommendation 2:** This recommendation will not be implemented. The City already has an illegal camping ordinance which provides the "balanced options" referenced in the grand jury report. In performing "compassionate policing," Sacramento police officers attempt to put homeless individuals in contact with mental health, housing and other service providers. If the illegal camper is resistant to those services, convictions under the City's illegal camping ordinance can already result in "stay away" orders when that type of response is appropriate.

A more aggressive unlawful camping ordinance or the imposition of longer jail sentences or broad stay away orders with threats of jail is not the answer, as these remedies do nothing to deal with the root causes of homelessness, or to address the reasons why certain members of the homeless population are, in fact, "service resistant." In addition to being poor public policy, the course recommended by the grand jury is of dubious constitutionality.


While additional laws are not needed at this time, the City has implemented unprecedented and innovative programs to address both the needs of the homeless community and address long term solutions. To that end, attached to this letter is a staff report presented to the City Council on October 16, 2018, outlining just some of the programs and policy objectives the City is considering and/or has implemented.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide these responses to the grand jury report.

Sincerely,



Darrell Steinberg  
Mayor



Howard Chan  
City Manager

Attachment



## **City Council Report**

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**File ID: 2018-01393**

**October 16, 2018**

**Discussion Item 01**

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**Title: Homeless Sheltering Policy Options**

**Location: Citywide**

**Recommendation:** Pass a Resolution stating the City's policy objectives related to emergency shelter access, operations and programming.

**Contact:** Emily Halcon, Homeless Services Coordinator, (916) 808-7896, Office of the City Manager

**Presenter:** Emily Halcon, Homeless Services Coordinator, (916) 808-7896, Office of the City Manager

**Attachments:**

- 1-Description/Analysis
- 2-Current List of Shelters in Sacramento
- 3-Overview of Shelter Operations in Sacramento
- 4-Five Keys to Effective Emergency Shelter
- 5-Resolution

### Description/Analysis

**Issue Detail:** The crisis of unsheltered homelessness is one that impacts an entire community, both those experiencing homelessness and the broader community of housed residents, businesses, and neighborhoods. According to the most recent Sacramento County Homeless Deaths Report, death rates among the unsheltered homeless population are four times that of the general population, and rose by almost 75% from 2016 to 2017. The only solution to homelessness is housing, and the City has made significant investments to increase access to and availability of housing for people and families experiencing homelessness, including:

- Developing and implementing the Pathways to Health + Home Program, bringing up to \$64 million in local and federal funds to provide assertive outreach, engagement, care coordination and housing supportive services to up to 3,000 people over four years; and
- In partnership with Sacramento County, re-allocating 450 Housing Choice Vouchers (HCVs) specifically to serve persons and households experiencing homelessness over three years; and
- Working with Sacramento County Department of Health and Human Services to allocate \$44 million in Mental Health Services Act (MHSA) funding to enhance and expand access, treatment and housing opportunities for people experiencing homelessness who also have behavioral health needs; and
- In partnership with SHRA, managing a portion of the City's allocation of federal Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG) funding to support a City/County rapid re-housing program; and
- Supporting the development and implementation of the Coordinated Entry System, managed by Sacramento Steps Forward (SSF), lowering barriers to over 2,000 housing units funded through the federal Continuum of Care (CoC) grant; and
- In partnership with SHRA, providing administrative funding for SSF since 2013 to ensure the coordinated implementation of the CoC funding.

In addition to these current efforts, the recently announced Homeless Emergency Aid Program (HEAP) will provide over \$18 million to the City and the CoC to help create a new Flexible Housing Program with wrap around supportive services.

While continuing to focus on housing and supportive services is critical to making lasting impacts to reduce the homeless population, the City must also have a coordinated response to address the crisis of unsheltered homelessness. Shelters can be a critical component of a housing crisis resolution system, and the City has an opportunity to establish priorities and policies to guide investments in both current and future shelters.

This report and accompanying presentation will:

- Provide details on current shelter system capacity, operations and performance
- Describe best practices in shelter programs from other communities, and the role that shelters can play in a broader homeless strategy
- Describe different shelter approaches the City could consider
- Recommend policy statement for City investments in shelter programs

#### Current emergency shelter system in Sacramento

Sacramento's current shelter landscape is comprised of many large and smaller shelters programs, both year-round and seasonal, which provide services to a range of populations including: single adults (individuals over age 25), families with minor dependents, youth and young adults, unaccompanied minors, and those fleeing a domestic violence situation. Over the last year, there has been a 52% increase in the inventory of shelter beds and a 22% increase in the inventory of shelter units, as measured by program participation in the Sacramento Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) and augmented by City staff with information on known programs not reported from HMIS. An overview of changes to the shelter inventory are outlined in the table below and more complete information is found in Attachment 2.

2017			2018		
	Beds	Units		Beds	Units
Year-round	513	106	Year-round	845	129
Seasonal	207	-	Seasonal	247	-
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>720</b>	<b>106</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1,092</b>	<b>129</b>

Shelters serving adults only are counted by the number of beds, and shelters serving families with dependent children are counted by the number of units, which can serve differing size families. Assuming an average family size of three in a family unit, the 129 family units can serve, at any point in time, 387 people.

Changes to the shelter inventory are likely as a result of three factors: the inclusion of shelter programs and their data in HMIS which had previously not be reported, addition of new shelter programs—notably the City's Winter Triage Shelter and the County's Rehousing Shelter, and increases to number of beds/units in an existing shelter program. Attachment 2 provides more information on the local shelter inventory.

Simultaneous to the increase in the overall shelter inventory, the number of households enrolled across shelters also increased in 2018. From 2017 to 2018, the number of unduplicated shelter enrollments has increased from 2,917 to 3,135. Although the shelter

system has served more households, the overall composition of these households has remained similar over the last three years with regard to race, age, and gender identity. However, pronounced changes to additional demographic information have occurred incrementally since 2015 and point to nuanced changes among those served in local shelter programs. Further information is found in Attachment 3, but some of these changes are outlined in the table below.

2016			2017			2018		
	Num.	%		Num.	%		Num.	%
Unduplicated Enrollments	2,806	-	Unduplicated Enrollments	2,917	-	Unduplicated Enrollments	3,135	-
Unsheltered prior to entry	1,118	40%	Unsheltered prior to entry	1,586	54%	Unsheltered prior to entry	1,775	57%
1 year + Continually homeless	514	18%	1 year + Continually homeless	918	31%	1 year + Continually homeless	1,216	39%

Starting in 2016, and more purposefully since 2017, both the City and County implemented changes in shelter programming which redirected access into select shelter programs. At the core, these changes sought to better target households experiencing unsheltered homelessness and better facilitate the connection to shelter for those populations. Over the past three years, the proportion of households unsheltered prior to program enrollment has increased nearly 20% and enrollments of households coming from a housed situation decreased by 17%. This more purposeful targeting of shelters to serve those most vulnerable has also changed the demographics of who we see in shelters. One such shift is shown above; in just two years, the percent of people in shelters who have been homeless at least one year has more than doubled. Other demographic shifts are highlighted in Attachment 3.

#### Best practices in emergency shelters

In most communities, emergency shelters pre-date the first major federal legislative response to homelessness, the McKinney-Vento Act of 1987. Prior to the federal government involvement, shelters were typically operated by concerned citizens, faith groups and non-profits seeking to provide safety, security and basic needs to people experiencing homelessness in their communities. Over the past thirty years, federal, state and local governments have become more active both in funding shelter programs, but also in directing programming and operations.

Homeless shelters vary widely in terms of approach, funding and depth of services. Some shelters operate as true crisis shelter, offering basic services of a bed and food, and little more. Others have developed to be robust and extensive "programs" offering intensive services and programming (behavioral health, employment, child care, etc.) in addition to shelter. In between these two extremes are an assortment of shelter programs as varied as the

population(s) they are serving. In Sacramento, we can find examples on both ends of the shelter spectrum, and each brings its own unique philosophy and approach to serving people in need. The one commonality we find in the shelter system (especially the system serving adults without children) is the lack of coordination and collaboration, leaving those in need to navigate a system which really is just a series of individual programs.

The situation in Sacramento is not unique. However, as homelessness has risen, and funding has become more complex, policy leaders and funding programs have encouraged shelter programs to transition operations to orient to embracing key principals as detailed in a policy paper from the United States Interagency Council on Homelessness (USICH) <sup>1</sup>:

- Promote dignity and respect, employing trauma informed care techniques and embracing a non-judgmental approach to working with guests.
- Diversion of people at the front door of a shelter when possible, prioritizing shelter spaces for people and families who are literally homeless.
- Adopting a housing first approach, placing as few expectations on guests and orienting services to quickly connecting people and families with permanent housing.
- Reducing barriers to access by removing pre-conditions to entry and responding to the needs of guests seeking shelter.
- Using emergency shelter as a platform to access permanent housing, creating quick connections to housing and offering housing supportive services.
- Scaling shelter to meet the needs of the community and financing shelters to meet the expectations for services and outcomes.

The National Alliance to End Homelessness (NAEH) is a research and policy non-profit leading the national conversation on how to create systems that best serve people experiencing homelessness. Using data from the 2015 Annual Homeless Assessment Report (AHAR), NAEH looked at national data on emergency shelters. Their findings have informed their policy guidance to communities looking to re-orient their shelter system. <sup>2</sup>

When they looked at national data, they found that most families who became homeless were able to quickly resolve their homelessness and rarely returned. In this same study, people shared why they avoided shelters. The reasons varied, but included many things related to program design, including "too many rules" (28%); unable to stay with partner/family (23%); won't accept pet (22%); and nowhere to store stuff (19%). These results "...suggest that system decisions rather than family characteristics are responsible for long homeless stays". In other words, shelters as a whole are inadvertently designed to keep those they serve

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<sup>1</sup> [https://www.usich.gov/resources/uploads/asset\\_library/emergency-shelter-key-considerations.pdf](https://www.usich.gov/resources/uploads/asset_library/emergency-shelter-key-considerations.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> [https://endhomelessness.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/Emergency-Shelter-Role-of-Shelter\\_Webpage.pdf](https://endhomelessness.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/Emergency-Shelter-Role-of-Shelter_Webpage.pdf)

homeless longer than needed and to keep those who may need more intensive services/interventions out.

These findings, and their work with communities throughout the country and the policy guidance from the USICH, lead NAEH to advise, "An effective crisis response system provides immediate and low-barrier access to safe and decent shelter to anyone that needs it and aims to house people as quickly as possible" and that "Shelter should be part of a process of getting someone housed, not a destination." The NAEH "Five Keys to Effective Emergency Shelter", which summarizes the objectives described above is included as Attachment 4 to this report.

#### *San Francisco Navigation Centers*

In March of 2015, the San Francisco Department of Homelessness and Supportive Housing opened the first Navigation Center in a former school site that was slated for redevelopment. As of early 2018, the City had opened six navigation centers with a total of 352 beds, and had plans for three additional sites. The physical buildings vary: a former school site, temporary modular buildings on a closed city street, a closed storefront, a closed single room occupancy hotel, and a sprung structure – but the approach is consistent. The Navigation Centers are accessed by outreach teams only and do not take referrals from external partners or walk-ups. There are few barriers to access and intensive services are provided on site. The costs are about double that of a traditional shelter bed at \$100 per bed per night, but they are seeing successes unlike those of traditional shelters, with approximately 54% of people served exiting to permanent housing.<sup>3</sup>

With the success of the San Francisco Navigation Center model, other cities – Portland, Seattle, San Diego, and others – have opened their own version of a navigation center. In Sacramento, we have coined the term "triage shelter" to describe this approach, and piloted our first triage shelter in the City's Railroad Triage Shelter. The Triage Shelter, along with the County run Flexible Re-Housing Shelter, are the community's first concerted efforts to create low-barrier housing focused shelters. Despite its temporary nature, in its almost year of operations, the City's Triage Shelter has seen outcomes similar to these examples from other communities and signaled that, with a permanent location(s) and consistent funding, the City could bring this concept to scale and see results like those described above.

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<sup>3</sup> <https://sfgov.legistar.com/View.ashx?M=F&ID=5808320&GUID=5D938B09-B92C-4822-8DD4-102DD717E7D3>



**Shelter approaches**

While not exhaustive, the table below describes some typical ways that communities can provide emergency shelter.

	Congregate shelter	Scattered site shelter	Motel Vouchers	Host Homes	Rotating Faith Based
Description	Most common approach to sheltering, with people sheltering in shared spaces	Variation on congregate shelter using single family homes for (typically) 6 or fewer guests	Using motels for (typically very short) shelter stays; often used as "overflow" from other shelter programs	Partnering with households to allow sheltering in an extra bedroom in a home; typically used for specific subpopulations	Partnering with congregations to open their facilities as emergency shelter, typically for a limited term
Physical Structure	<i>Varies (as built structures, re-use of building, sprung structures, etc.)</i>	Master leased single family homes	Willing motels/hotels	Guest bedroom in occupied home	Varied facilities owned by congregations
Population(s) Served	All	Focus on particular subpopulation by house	All	Transition age youth	Adults, no significant disabilities
Costs	Ranges, depending on services offered	~ \$60/bed/night (shelter and services)	High – going rate of motel	Low – may pay stipend to host + cost of services	Low – transportation + food + volunteer staffing
Current examples?	Triage Shelter CATC VOA A Street Salvation Army Bannon Street Next Move Saint Johns Union Gospel	County Flexible Re-Housing Shelter	County DHA motel vouchers  LGBT emergency shelter program	No formal program; used informally by Wind and LGBT Center	Winter Sanctuary Program

While the physical buildings and targeted populations may vary, the most critical differentiation between shelter programs is the operational approach and level of services offered. Some models, such as motel vouchers and rotating faith-based shelters, do not lend themselves to operating as a triage shelter with wrap around services. However, other models, regardless of size or building design, with appropriate resourcing, can be operated as triage shelters.

In general, a triage shelter is characterized by:

- Low barrier access, serving people with “pets, partners, and possessions” coordinated through assertive outreach focusing on those most vulnerable
- Offering intensive, housing-oriented services on site, but not conditioning a guest’s stay on their willingness to participate in services
- Applying trauma informed care techniques, respecting the unique needs and challenges of guests
- Orienting towards a “housing first” approach, recognizing that, while we should not impose arbitrary time limits, stays should be as short as possible to help exit someone into permanent housing

Recently, the State of California has released requirements for jurisdictions under the new Homeless Emergency Aid Program (HEAP), which will be offering \$500 million statewide to address the crisis of unsheltered homelessness in local communities. Recognizing the benefits of housing first program, HEAP requires that all shelter and housing programs funded under HEAP must be in compliance with the core components of Housing First.

**Policy Considerations:** Given the direction of national policy and programmatic leaders from the USICH and NAEH, the requirements under the new State HEAP program, as well as the successes seen from triage shelter models, both in Sacramento and elsewhere, staff recommends that Council adopt a policy affirming their intent to align funding to programs that adhere to triage shelter characteristics. This policy will guide staff’s work not only in standing up new sheltering programs, but in working with existing shelter providers to adjust operations to meet these standards. The attached resolution contains the recommended parameters for shelters funded by the City to meet.

**Economic Impacts:** None.

**Environmental Considerations:** None.

**Sustainability:** Not applicable.

**Commission/Committee Action:** None.

**Rationale for Recommendation:** The numbers of people living and dying unsheltered in Sacramento is on the rise, and there are not sufficient shelter beds to meet the need. The United States Interagency Council on Homelessness recommends that “Shelters must be low barrier, focus on assessment and triage, and intentionally link to permanent housing resources so that people move through to housing quickly”. Communities that have shifted shelters to this

model have seen success in serving highly vulnerable chronically homeless individuals out of homelessness who have not been successful in traditional shelters and seeing higher rates of success at exiting people to permanent housing. The City, as a primary funder of emergency shelters in Sacramento, can help facilitate similar changes in Sacramento by aligning resources to sheltering programs who adopt these approaches.

**Financial Considerations:** None.

**Local Business Enterprise (LBE):** Not applicable.

**Emergency Shelter Beds and Units  
Sacramento County, 2018**

Program	Operator	Location	Population Served			# Beds	# Units	Funding(s)	Notes
			Single Men	Single Women	Families w/children				
Bishop Gallegos Maternity Home	Bishop Gallegos Maternity Home	City	-	Yes	Yes	-	11	Private	
Emergency Hotel Vouchers	Frances House	N/A	-	-	Yes	-	3	Private	
Family Promise Center	Interfaith Network	City & County	-	-	Yes	-	11	Private	Rotating shelter in faith congregations
Sister Noras Place	Loaves and Fishes	City	-	Yes	-	16	-	Private	
Family Shelter	Next Move	County	-	-	Yes	-	17	County DHA Private	
Cathedral Downtown Housing	Sacramento Self Help Housing	City	Yes	Yes	-	8	-	DSP	
Meadow House	Sacramento Self Help Housing	Elk Grove	-	-	Yes	-	3	City of Elk Grove	Operates as transitional, with 9-12 week stays
Grace House	Sacramento Self Help Housing	Elk Grove	Yes	Yes	-	5	-	City of Elk Grove	Listed as TH in HIC (max 6 month stays), EG calls it shelter
Rehousing Shelter	Sacramento Self Help Housing	City & County	Yes	Yes	-	75	-	County DHA	County frequent users shelter, low barrier, access by outreach only
Safe Ground Pilgrimage	Safe Ground Sacramento	City	Yes	Yes	-	76	-	Private	Rotating shelter in faith congregations
Cal Works Emergency Shelter Program	Saint John's Program for Real Change	City	-	Yes	Yes	-	35	County DHA Private	City funding supporting addition of 30 more units. Total units as reported on HIC
Salvation Army Veterans	Salvation Army	City	Yes	Yes	-	30	-	Dept. of Vet Affairs	Co-located in Center of Hope
Interim Care Program	The Salvation Army	City	Yes	Yes	-	16	-	Health Systems	Operated by WellSpace Co-located in Center of Hope
Center of Hope	The Salvation Army	City	Yes	Yes	-	84	-	City CDBG; City General Funds; Private	
Palmer Apartment	TICS	County	Yes	Yes	-	48	-		
Emergency Shelter	Union Gospel Mission	City	Yes	-	-	52	-	Private	
Bannon Street Family Emergency Shelter	Volunteers of America	City	-	-	Yes	-	20	County DHA Private	
North A Street Emergency Shelter	Volunteers of America	City	Yes	-	-	80	-	City General Funds; City & County FSO; Private	
Open Arms	Volunteers of America	City	Yes	Yes	-	12	-	HOPWA (through SHRA)	For adults with HIV/AIDS
Interim Care - Program	Volunteers of America	City	Yes	Yes	-	16	-	Health Systems	Operated by WellSpace Co-located in CATC
Comprehensive Alcohol Treatment Center (CATC)	Volunteers of America	City	Yes	Yes	-	80	-	City General Funds County CDBG	For serial inebriate homeless adults
Railroad Triage Shelter	Volunteers of America	City	Yes	Yes	-	200	-	City General Funds Private	Low barrier, intensive services Access by outreach only
T-3 Program	WellSpace	City & County	Yes	Yes	-	15	-	Health Systems	
Youth Center	WIND	City	Yes	Yes	-	32	-	City & County General Funds; Private	Specifically serves young adults, ages 18-24; some units serve unaccompanied minors
Emergency Shelter Program	Women Escaping A Violent Environment	Undisclosed	-	Yes	Yes	-	29	Private	For women & children fleeing domestic violence
							645	120	
Seasonal Shelters	Carmichael Winter Sanctuary	HART Carmichael	Carmichael	Yes	Yes	-	25	Private	Operates 12/14 - 3/8
	Citrus Heights Winter Sanctuary	HART Citrus Heights	Citrus Heights	Yes	Yes	-	25	Private	Operates 12/14 - 3/8
	Elk Grove Winter Sanctuary	HART Elk Grove	Elk Grove	Yes	Yes	-	25	Private	Operates 12/14 - 3/8
	Folsom Winter Sanctuary	HART Folsom	Folsom	Yes	Yes	-	20		
	Rancho Cordova Winter Sanctuary	HART Rancho Cordova	Rancho Cordova	Yes	Yes	-	30	Private	Operates 12/27 - 3/20
	Winter Overflow Shelter	Next Move	County	-	-	Yes	22	County DHA Private	Operates 11/24 - 3/31
	Winter Sanctuary	First Step Communities	City & County	Yes	Yes	-	100	County General Funds Private	Operates Thanksgiving - March
							247		

Data from the 2018 Housing Inventory Count (HIC), prepared by Sacramento Steps Forward and supplemented with additional community information on programs not in the HIC

## Attachment 3: Overview of Shelter Operations

### Background

Sacramento's current shelter landscape is comprised of many large and small shelter programs, both year-round and seasonal, which provide services to a range of populations including: single adults (individuals over age 25), families with minor dependents, youth and young adults, unaccompanied minors, and those fleeing a domestic violence situation. Currently, funding for the local shelters is a composite of public and private funding sources wherein the City plays a key role in the funding of a number of shelters, most notably shelter programs serving single adults. Key public funding sources for the local shelter system include the following:

- Emergency Solution Grants (State and Federal)
- Community Development Block Grants
- California Office of Emergency Services
- Federal Emergency Management Agency
- City General Funds
- County General Funds

Program operations differ across shelters due in part to differences in requirements and conditions of funding as well as the mission and philosophy of a service provider agency. Both factors can shape the type of population served as well as the approach of service delivery.

### Shelter Inventory

Over the last year, there has been a 52% increase in the inventory of shelter beds and a 22% increase in the inventory of shelter units, as measured by program participation in the Sacramento Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) and augmented by City staff with information on known programs not reported from HMIS. Shelters serving adults only are counted by the number of beds, and shelters serving families with dependent children are counted by the number of units, which can serve differing size families. Assuming an average family size of three in a family unit, the 129 family units can serve, at any point in time, 387 people. The below tables summarize the changes to the shelter inventory.

	2017			2018	
	Beds	Units		Beds	Units
Year-round	513	106	Year-round	845	129
Seasonal	207	-	Seasonal	247	-
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>720</b>	<b>106</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1,092</b>	<b>129</b>

Changes to the shelter inventory are likely as a result of three factors: 1) the inclusion of shelter programs and their data in HMIS which had previously not be reported, 2) addition of new shelter programs—notably the City’s Winter Triage Shelter and the County’s Rehousing Shelter, and 3) increases to number of beds/units in an existing shelter program.

### **Access**

Most local shelters manage access through a centralized process specific to each program, which usually consisting of a waitlist or walk-up process. Households may be directed to contact a shelter provider periodically to gain access to a shelter bed or unit as turnover occurs. This can often present barriers to entry as access is dependent on consistency and self-advocacy and may inadvertently disadvantage those who are vulnerable and in need of immediate access to an available bed.

Recently, both the City and County have begun to implement changes in shelter programming which seek to redirect access into select shelter programs. At the core, these changes seek to better target households experiencing unsheltered homelessness and better facilitate the connection to shelter for those populations. The County of Sacramento has restructured access into County funded family shelters which allows for more assessment and triage of households and provides diversion services when appropriate to keep people who need services, but are not literally homeless, out of the shelter. Similarly, both the City and County have designed new shelter programs with access via assertive community outreach and in partnership with other community programs.

### **Shelter Data Overview**

All data on the local shelter system has been prepared by Sacramento Steps Forward (SSF). Each reporting period follows the City’s fiscal year (July to June). Data has been analyzed over three consecutive fiscal years and has been aggregated to include only system-level data, de-identifying specific shelter programs and their program participants. The findings here are intended to foster a community conversation on shelters in general and not to draw conclusions on the performance of any particular program.

According to data produced by SSF, from July 1, 2017 to June 30, 2018, the local shelter system served 3,135 unduplicated households. These households are composed of single heads of households, families with minor dependents, and youth and young adults (including unaccompanied minors). Combined, these households account for 4,303 enrollments across all shelters, meaning an estimated 24% of the 3,135 unduplicated households were enrolled more than once in a shelter program

during the report timeframe. Since 2015, the number of both unduplicated enrollments and total program enrollments has increase, as summarized in the table below.

	2016		2017		2018	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
<b>Enrollments</b>						
Total Enrollments	3,850	-	4,016	-	4,303	-
Unduplicated Enrollments	2,806	-	2,917	-	3,135	-
Multiple Enrollments	716	26%	682	23%	758	24%

By collecting demographic information on households served in a shelter program, the community is able to better understand the population accessing shelter services. By looking at the data, it is clear that although the shelter system has progressively served more households, the overall composition of these households has remained somewhat consistent in regards to age, race, and gender identity. A multi-year view of this demographic information is presented below.

	2016	2017	2018
	Percent	Percent	Percent
<b>Behavioral and physical health</b>			
Disabling Condition	59%	63%	64%
Mental Health Illness	47%	49%	47%
Substance Abuse (drugs and/or alcohol)	14%	12%	10%

<b>Age</b>			
18-24	7%	9%	9%
25-34	19%	18%	18%
35-44	22%	21%	18%
45-54	26%	25%	25%
55-61	17%	17%	18%
62+	8%	9%	11%
Unknown	<1%	<1%	<1%

<b>Race</b>			
White	50%	51%	51%
Black or African America	39%	39%	38%
Asian	1%	1%	1%
American Indian or Alaska Native	3%	2%	2%
Multiple Races	5%	5%	5%
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	1%	1%	1%

Unknown Race	1%	1%	1%
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	2016	2017	2018
	Percent	Percent	Percent
<b>Gender Identity</b>			
Female	43%	42	43%
Male	58%	57	57%
Transgender	<1%	<1%	<1%
Non-conforming	0%	0%	<1%

Although many key demographic data elements have remained mostly consistent, there are pronounced changes to additional demographic information that have occurred incrementally since 2015 and point to nuanced changes among those served in local shelter programs. Overall, the shelter system is serving a population experiencing longer lengths of continual homelessness and increased reported disabling conditions as show in the table below.

	2016	2017	2018
	Percent	Percent	Percent
<b>Demographic Information</b>			
1 year + Continually homeless	18%	31%	39%
4 years + Continually homeless	4%	9%	12%
Disabling Condition	59%	63%	64%

Additionally, the proportion of households unsheltered prior to program enrollment has increased by nearly 20% over the past three years and enrollments of households coming from a housed situation decreased by 17%.

	2016	2017	2018
	Percent	Percent	Percent
<b>Prior Living Situation</b>			
Unsheltered	40%	54%	57%
House or Other Sheltered Situation	47%	33%	30%
Discharged from an Institution	12%	12%	11%
Hospital	8%	9%	13%
Substance Abuse Treatment Facility	2%	2%	9%
Jail/Prison	2%	1%	2%
Foster Care Home	<1%	<1%	<1%
No Data Collected	1%	1%	<1%



Over the last three years, the overall shelter system has seen a decrease in exits to permanent housing, despite an overall increase in the number of unduplicated exits. Overall, only 21% of households exiting shelters exit to a permanent housing situation, a decrease of 28% over three years. The rate of households exiting to unsheltered homelessness has reduced, likely pointing to households moving from shelter to shelter programs.

Exit Destination	2016		2017		2018	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Total Exits	3,365	-	3,295	-	3,969	-
Unduplicated Exits	2,452	-	2,384	-	2,805	-
Permanent Housing	922	33%	827	28%	661	21%
Unsheltered Homelessness	397	14%	589	20%	516	16%

### Summary

The Sacramento shelter system has many strengths. Capacity has increased and diversified, with new programs targeting marginalized populations (transition age youth, LGBT populations, etc.) opening in recent years. Both the City and County have created low barrier shelter program that are serving homeless populations who previously did not engage regularly in the homeless system of care. These targeted programs have helped to better target serving people who are literally homeless in shelters, and reduced the numbers of people entering the shelter system from a non-homeless situation. The broader shelter system providers are actively engaged in improving outcomes at shelters, and coordinating with non-traditional partners, such as health care, employment, and education systems.

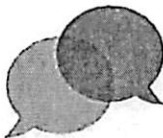
However, there are also some troubling trends found in shelter data. People being served in shelters have been homeless significantly longer than just three years ago, and with these longer terms of homelessness, people are more disabled and vulnerable. The combined challenges of housing people with significant disabilities and the constrained housing market have reduced exits to housing. Shelter providers indicate they do not have the funding or capacity to effectively serve those most in need, and share the concern of shelters becoming de facto "housing" for some of the community's long term homeless populations.

# THE FIVE KEYS TO EFFECTIVE EMERGENCY SHELTER



## HOUSING FIRST APPROACH

Align shelter eligibility criteria, policies, and practices with a Housing First approach so that anyone experiencing homelessness can access shelter without prerequisites, make services voluntary, and assist people to access permanent housing options as quickly as possible.



## SAFE & APPROPRIATE DIVERSION

Provide diversion services to find safe and appropriate housing alternatives to entering shelter through problem-solving conversations, identifying community supports, and offering lighter touch solutions.



## IMMEDIATE & LOW-BARRIER ACCESS

Ensure immediate and easy access to shelter by lowering barriers to entry and staying open 24/7. Eliminate sobriety and income requirements and other policies that make it difficult to enter shelter, stay in shelter, or access housing and income opportunities.



## HOUSING-FOCUSED, RAPID EXIT SERVICES

Focus services in shelter on assisting people to access permanent housing options as quickly as possible.



## DATA TO MEASURE PERFORMANCE

Measure data on percentage of exits to housing, average length of stay in shelter, and returns to homelessness to evaluate the effectiveness of shelter and improve outcomes.



National Alliance to  
END HOMELESSNESS