

SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIALS
TO THE STAFF REPORT
FOR THE HOMELESS
COORDINATING AND
FINANCING COUNCIL
JULY 11, 2018 MEETING




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Executive Summary

Unlike many other states, California does not have one location where elected officials, policy makers, state government agencies, homeless service providers, Continuums of Care (CoC), advocates or the general public can access information about the demographics, nature and scope of homelessness across the state. The majority of data regarding persons experiencing homelessness is contained within local Homeless Management Information Systems (HMIS). The data is in multiple, fragmented, and disparate systems across the state and is difficult to access, insufficient, potentially duplicative or inaccurate.

This brief lays out a solution to integrate data from across the state by creating a Homeless Data Integration Environment that would be able to accept data from all California CoCs. Further, the Homeless Data Integration Environment would allow for direct data entry and the integration of other local- and state-level data. The Homeless Data Integration Environment could take the data warehouse model, combine HMIS and other data sets in a central location and add a front-end data entry option similar to HMIS, thereby creating a data integration environment that leverages the best assets of a data warehouse and an HMIS.

Below is a set of high-level recommendations and a list of positives and negatives for creating a data integration environment:

Homeless Data Integration Environment Recommendations	
Develop project scope and communication strategy	Provide adequate staffing resources
Acquire an HMIS off-the-shelf solution	Analyze statewide HMIS privacy and security
Leverage the HUD HMIS CSV Schema ¹ structure	Develop CoC-level participation incentives
Provide adequate financial resources	Create direct data entry option

Pros	Cons
Cost efficiency of HUD HMIS CSV Schema	Limited by data within HUD HMIS CSV Schema
Cost efficiency of an HMIS off-the-shelf solution	Limited by HMIS off-the-shelf solution capabilities
Statewide presence of HUD HMIS CSV capabilities	Effort to combine large amount of HMIS (36)
Statewide presence of HMIS off-the shelf solutions	Competing data needs across different state-level agencies
Ability to customize data system	HMIS authority retained by the CoC not the state
Ability to allow direct data entry	
Provide the data infrastructure for a Balance of State (BoS) CoC	
Ability to combine data sets from other local- and state-level sources	
No need to create a custom schema	

These recommendations are explained in further detail in the balance of the document. Note that the recommendations are only as complete as the information gathered to date and are meant to be a starting point for a thorough and comprehensive project planning process. Given the early nature of the planning process for the data integration environment, there are a great deal of unknowns. As the project moves from the proof of concept phase into the project planning phase more details will need to come into focus

¹ Comma-Separated Values (CSV) files include all data elements, corresponding response categories and fields defined by the HUD HMIS Data and Technical Standards.

including, but not limited to:

- Project scope
- Staffing level
- Project budget
- CoC participation incentive(s)
- Privacy restrictions
- Security concerns
- Statewide CoC buy-in

Introduction

Statewide approaches and strategies to prevent and end homelessness are limited by the lack of comprehensive data. Most data on homelessness is contained within the local HMIS at the CoC level or within disparate state- or local-level data systems. California currently has 43 CoCs, by far the most of any state in the country. By comparison, the balance of United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Region IX (AS, AZ, NV, GU, HI, MP) has ten CoCs. There are also 36 HMIS implementations² across five different HMIS solutions (see “Attachment I” for a CoC-by-CoC list of current HMIS platforms in California). By comparison, the balance of HUD Region IX has six HMIS implementations across three different HMIS solutions. California presents a very nuanced and difficult challenge for the creation of a data integration environment.

With the enactment of the [Homeless Emergency Assistance and Rapid Transition to Housing \(HEARTH\) Act of 2009](#), HMIS participation became more formalized for all CoC. The HEARTH Act states that the CoC must “ensure operation of, and consistent participation by, project sponsors in a community-wide homeless management information system”. California has the largest number of HMIS implementations of any state in the country. Therefore, to obtain a statewide understanding of the nature and scope of homelessness, the state may develop a data integration environment that combines existing HMIS data (and potentially other local- and state-level data) in a single data environment. The data integration environment could be designed for the future to allow a CoC to directly enter their data in the Homeless Data Integration Environment and aid in the creation of a California BoS CoC.

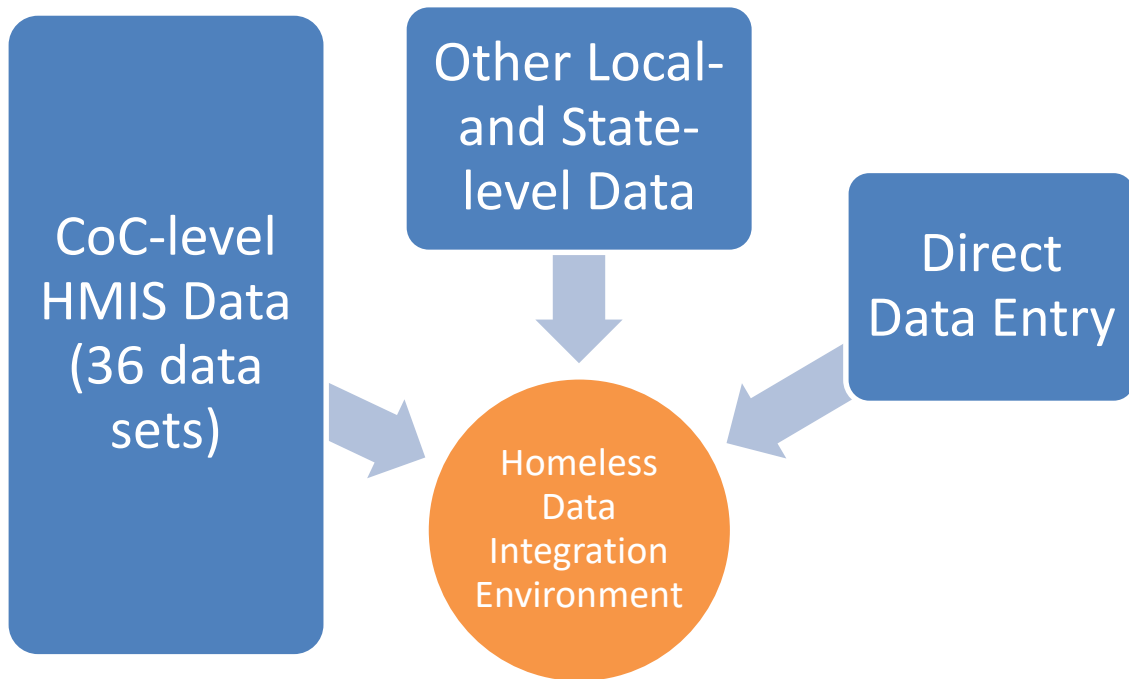
Data Integration Project Structure

The most effective option for the State of California to pursue is the implementation of a statewide data integration project with an off-the-shelf HMIS solution. Off-the-shelf HMIS solutions are specialized data systems that are developed and designed specifically based upon the [HUD HMIS Data and Technical Standards](#) and should be able to import and export data in the [HUD HMIS CSV](#) Schema format, assuring a consistent data exchange language. The benefits of such a system include:

- Cost efficiencies of the HUD HMIS CSV Schema;
- Statewide presence of HUD HMIS CSV capabilities;
- Ability to customize the data integration environment;
- Ability to provide direct data entry;
- Ability to combine data sets from local- and state-level data sources; and
- No need to create a custom data schema.

There are many technological options for creating a data integration environment; however, by leveraging the HUD HMIS Comma Separated Value (CSV) Schema, the data integration project will have the ability to launch quickly. This graphic below lays out a solution that integrates data from across the state.

² An [HMIS implementation](#) is a unique instance of an HMIS solution used by one or more CoC, for example there is one instance of HMIS used by both CA-503 and CA-521 CoC.



The graphic below details how the data would flow from persons experiencing homelessness to the Homeless Data Integration Environment.



Additional Considerations

There are several areas that will require additional examination to assure that the data integration environment is successful including analysis of state-level data privacy rules and regulations; local HMIS consent, privacy and security protocols (that may prevent the exchange of historical data); and the development of a participation incentive package. Data integration projects that have failed to properly

conduct analysis on privacy, security and consent have been prone to failure. Additionally, the creation of a financial incentive package would assure that the majority of CoC participate in the data integration environment.

Much like the California itself, the CoCs represent a very diverse group of communities from Los Angeles and San Francisco to Tehama and Imperial Counties. Since there is such diversity in size and resources throughout these communities, it is likely that the most successful financial incentive package to increase submission of data to the state will need be customized by CoC. The financial incentive packages can be based on a CoC award, population, state homeless funding, or any number of other factors.

Data Growth Potential

HUD is actively encouraging small, under-performing, and rural CoCs to merge with a more successfully established CoC or become part of a Balance of State Continuum of Care (BoS CoC). Additionally, HUD is incentivizing CoC mergers with 25 bonus points in the [FY2018 CoC Application](#) to encourage small, under-performing and rural CoC to merge. California has many CoCs that meet the criteria for a CoC merger effort.

The California State Auditor stated the following “...provide statewide leadership to agencies at all levels to improve coordination of efforts to address homelessness and provide funding for CoC and the Inter-agency Council”. This guidance from the California State Auditor indicates that during the development of the Homeless Data Integration Environment, California should consider not only the short term needs (all homeless data in one location) but also long term needs (the data collection and reporting needs of small, underperforming CoCs and the potential creation of a BoS CoC).

The off-the-shelf HMIS solution will act as a central repository for homeless data using the HUD HMIS CSV Schema. This would allow for the addition of other data sets in the future and be flexible enough to allow for customization. By selecting an off-the-shelf HMIS solution, the state leaves the door open for direct data entry into the data integration environment by small, under-resourced and rural CoCs or a BoS CoC.

Further, once the data integration environment is created, the state may pursue the combination of other state-level data sources to understand the interconnectedness of the systems that interact with individuals or families experiencing homelessness.

This can leverage the efforts of California Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD), California Department of Social Services (CDSS), California Department of Veterans Affairs (Cal Vet) that are already using HMIS for some state funding sources. This analysis could potentially be done within the data integration environment or outside in another state-level system. Whether the data analysis is simply HMIS data or HMIS data plus other state-level data, the state will be in a much stronger position to understand the demographics, nature and scope of homelessness and develop strategic strategies to address the homeless crisis within California.

The State of California represents **47%** of the total unsheltered homelessness in the U.S.

Data Integration Environment Requirements

The state will need to determine how the data integration environment moves forward, whether that is through support of funding from [Assembly Bill 2161](#) or with other funding. Once funding is secured for the data integration environment, the state should embark upon the project planning process that will include a mission and goal setting process to further to develop the proof of concept detailed in this brief.

Communication with the CoC will be critical for success during the project planning process. The state should also consider the development of an incentive package to encourage participation. Once the proof of concept is agreed upon and the project planning process has made significant progress the quest for a technological solution can begin. The state would follow internal procurement processes and seek a technological solution with the following requirements:

Proposed Selection Criteria for an off-the-shelf HMIS solution:

- Limitless transfer of data across systems, both exporting and importing data using current HUD HMIS CSV Schema compliant with the latest version specified on the HUD Exchange website.
- Software designed to collect and report all HMIS data elements and response categories compliant with the latest version as specified on the HUD Exchange website.
- Software that can be easily customized and adapted to accommodate other data points of state specific programs.
- Collect and report HMIS data elements in a secure, widely accessible, and easily manipulated data environment.
- Ability to collect and report data for a Coordinated Entry System.
- Consistency in the user interface and functionality - buttons, terms, functionality, placement, movement, transitions all look and work the same from any point of entry.
- An intuitive user experience: information is requested only once and auto-populated to other screens; information is derived or inferred from other responses where possible and logical to avoid duplication of data.
- Thorough instruction on the proper use and set up of the software solution to optimize reporting accuracy and timeliness; train-the-trainer capacity; data quality auditing and management tools are accessible and easily manipulated.
- Thorough and continually updated user interface documentation, including all parts of system from system administration to front-end use to data integration; every screen is documented in a clear and cohesive manner.

Reporting Requirements:

- Solution includes the ability to produce all state, HUD and Federal Partner required reports.
- Solution includes an integrated, immediate, extensive, supported, infinitely configurable, easy-to-use and unlimited-by-size-or-frequency-of-query reporting tool.
- Queries of the entire database are easy to build, save, and modify.
- Available tables and fields for inclusion in queries are unrestrained; access to all tables for use in reporting and documentation, and customer support is maintained.
- Report functionality that provides manipulated visual presentation software for customer use.
- Additional detailed report analysis of aggregate reports as a standard practice of report development.
- Thorough and continually updated report documentation (including data models and data dictionaries).

Customer Service Requirements

- User Acceptance Testing (UAT) procedures around every software upgrade, patch release, feature enhancement delivery (including customized reporting), and other system change.
- Technical support services to ensure ongoing bug fixes and feature enhancements exists; integrated "ticket system" for customer ticket creation.
- Respondent operates a customer support team with specific performance requirements: time limits on "outstanding tickets"; spec-to-production quality assurance protocols, continual improvement for customer experience based upon ongoing analysis of current experience.
- Patch release timing, content, communication, customer testing, and customer acceptance are well coordinated.

System Administration

- Integrated Online Help functionality exists.
- Integrated and accessible system administration tools: ideal functionality for the work system administrators do 100% auditing of every field: changes made to records, date stamped and reportable, who made the change and the original value vs the changed value; must be able to reverse changes.
- Adequate fund-source management; local, state and federal dollars must be tracked to services provided to clients to ensure accurate reporting to all interested parties.

Once an HMIS solution is chosen, the data integration environment tasks will likely include:

- Monitoring and oversight of the HMIS solution provider;
- Monitoring and oversight of the CSV data transfer from 36 HMIS implementations;
- Troubleshooting CSV data transfer from 36 HMIS implementations;
- Coordination with 43 CoCs on data transfer and data quality issues;
- Analysis of data quality issues;
- Data scrubbing as necessary;
- Basic report analysis and creation; and
- Engagement with state-level partners.

Funding and Staffing

To determine the exact funding and staffing requirements of the data integration environment, the state would build upon the proof of concept and project planning process to develop a funding and staffing plan. The scope of the data integration environment will evolve over time from a statewide data integration environment, to include other state-level data source and introduction of a front-end data collection system for small, rural CoC and those that elect to become part of a Balance of State CoC.

Based on the recommended approaches in this brief, it is likely to get the data integration environment off the ground there will need to be five Full Time Equivalent (FTE) staff. However, at this point both staffing and overall budget are difficult to predict. The amount of nuanced decisions that have yet to be discussed will each have different associated pricing drivers. The estimated cost of launching the data integration environment will be between \$6 million and \$7 million, but may exceed this estimate due to the size and complexity of this project.

Below is a very preliminary budget that will guide the state towards a funding requirement for the data integration environment. This number is likely to change upwards or downwards depending on the data integration environment decisions yet to be made.

Data Integration Environment Expense(s)	Funding Amount Year 1	Funding Amount Year 2+
HMIS solution provider	\$ 6,000,000	\$ 1,000,000
HMIS consulting cost(s)	\$ 100,000	\$ 500,000
Total:	\$ 6,100,000	\$ 1,050,000

Resources

[HMIS Data Warehouse Curricula](#)

[CSV Schema](#)

Attachment I: California HMIS Analysis 6.25.2018

Below is a list of the HMIS solutions and type of HMIS implementations for each CoC in California. An HMIS implementation is a unique instance of an HMIS solution used by one or more CoCs. In California, there are five HMIS implementations that have more than one CoC using the same HMIS instance, these are referred to as multiple CoC implementations. At the end of the chart there is a legend detailing which CoC are working collaboratively in a multiple CoC implementation. If you add up all the single CoC implementations (31) with the five multiple CoC implementations, you arrive at 36 unique HMIS implementations in California.

CoC	HMIS Solution	HMIS Implementation Type
CA-500: San Jose, Santa Clara City and County	BitFocus: Clarity	Single CoC Implementation
CA-501: San Francisco	BitFocus: Clarity	Single CoC Implementation
CA-502: Oakland, Berkeley/Alameda County	Mediware: Service Point	Single CoC Implementation
CA-503: Sacramento City and County	BitFocus: Clarity	Multiple CoC Implementation
CA-504: Santa Rosa, Petaluma/Sonoma County	ETO: Social Solutions	Single CoC Implementation
CA-505: Richmond/Contra Costa County	Mediware: Service Point	Single CoC Implementation
CA-506: Salinas/Monterey, San Benito Counties	Mediware: Service Point	Single CoC Implementation
CA-507: Marin County	BitFocus: Clarity	Single CoC Implementation
CA-508: Watsonville/Santa Cruz City and County	BitFocus: Clarity	Single CoC Implementation
CA-509: Mendocino County	Client Track	Single CoC Implementation
CA-510: Turlock, Modesto/Stanislaus County	Client Track	Single CoC Implementation
CA-511: Stockton/San Joaquin County	BitFocus: Clarity	Single CoC Implementation
CA-512: Daly City/San Mateo County	BitFocus: Clarity	Single CoC Implementation
CA-513: Visalia/Kings, Tulare Counties	Client Track	Single CoC Implementation
CA-514: Fresno City and County/Madera County	Mediware: Service Point	Single CoC Implementation
CA-515: Roseville, Rocklin/Placer, Nevada Counties	Mediware: Service Point	Multiple CoC Implementation
CA-516: Redding/Shasta, Siskiyou, Lassen, Plumas, Del Norte, Modoc, Sierra Counties	Mediware: Service Point	Single CoC Implementation
CA-517: Napa City and County	BitFocus: Clarity	Single CoC Implementation
CA-518: Vallejo/Solano County	Mediware: Service Point	Single CoC Implementation
CA-519: Chico, Paradise/Butte County	BitFocus: Clarity	Single CoC Implementation
CA-520: Merced City and County	Mediware: Service Point	Single CoC Implementation
CA-521: Davis, Woodland/Yolo County	BitFocus: Clarity	Multiple CoC Implementation
CA-522: Humboldt County	Mediware: Service Point	Single CoC Implementation
CA-523: Colusa, Glenn, Trinity Counties	Mediware: Service Point	Multiple CoC Implementation
CA-524: Yuba City and County/Sutter County	Bell Data: Client Service Network	Single CoC Implementation
CA-525: El Dorado County	Bell Data: Client Service Network	Single CoC Implementation
CA-526: Tuolumne, Amador, Calaveras, Mariposa Counties	Bell Data: Client Service Network	Single CoC Implementation
CA-527: Tehama County	BitFocus: Clarity	Multiple CoC Implementation
CA-529: Lake County	BitFocus: Clarity	Multiple CoC Implementation
CA-530: Alpine, Inyo, Mono Counties	Bell Data: Client Service Network	Single CoC Implementation
CA-600: Los Angeles City and County	BitFocus: Clarity	Multiple CoC Implementation
CA-601: San Diego City and County	Mediware: Service Point	Multiple CoC Implementation
CA-602: Santa Ana, Anaheim/Orange County	BitFocus: Clarity	Multiple CoC Implementation
CA-603: Santa Maria/Santa Barbara County	Mediware: Service Point	Single CoC Implementation
CA-604: Bakersfield/Kern County	Client Track	Single CoC Implementation
CA-606: Long Beach	Mediware: Service Point	Single CoC Implementation

CoC	HMIS Solution	HMIS Implementation Type
CA-607: Pasadena	BitFocus: Clarity	Multiple CoC Implementation
CA-608: Riverside City and County	Client Track	Single CoC Implementation
CA-609: San Bernardino City and County	BitFocus: Clarity	Single CoC Implementation
CA-611: Oxnard, San Buenaventura/Ventura County	Mediware: Service Point	Single CoC Implementation
CA-612: Glendale	BitFocus: Clarity	Multiple CoC Implementation
CA-613: Imperial County	Mediware: Service Point	Multiple CoC Implementation
CA-614: San Luis Obispo County	Bell Data: Client Service Network	Single CoC Implementation

Multiple CoC Implementation Legend
CA-503 and CA-521
CA-516 and CA-523
CA-527 and CA-529 (plan to be single CoC implementations in the future)
CA-600, CA-602, CA-607 and CA-612
CA-601 and CA-613



What the Needs Assessment Is

In 2016, Corporation for Supportive Housing (CSH) began work on a National Supportive Housing Needs Assessment – the first attempt to understand and quantify the extent of supportive housing need across the United States. Notably, this work stepped outside the boundaries of populations that are most commonly considered in conversations regarding housing and services interventions. While people experiencing homelessness constitute a large share of those individuals and families with needs consistent with supportive housing and other interventions, health and behavioral health care, corrections, and child welfare systems are beginning to identify supportive housing as a critical first step toward the effective administration of supportive services to achieve successful outcomes.

After implementing the National Needs Assessment, CSH refined the needs assessment methodology to work with cities, counties, and states to assess the need for supportive housing and other homeless housing and services interventions (e.g. rapid re-housing and other affordable housing and prevention and diversion resources), based on data we collect from these cities, counties, and states.

How it Works

CSH utilizes data from a variety of systems with populations that typically feed into homeless systems, such as criminal justice, health, behavioral health, and child welfare systems. CSH uses research to identify indicators for need among populations in each of these categories, and specific state or local data drive the rates at which staff estimate the likely need for each housing and services intervention for each population.

CSH staff gather input from city, county and state partners to determine specific populations to consider, the scale of analysis, the costs related to developing housing and services needs within the client geography, and the prevalence of indicators that point to the need for each housing and services intervention across populations.

Staff funnel the need for housing and services into a financial model that takes the total unit count and sketches out the capital, services, operating, and rental assistance costs related to building and sustaining each appropriate intervention to meet the assessed need. In addition to an analysis of need for supportive housing, the Needs Assessment outputs include recommendations around other housing interventions appropriate for the share of the population who does not need supportive housing. This includes analyses of rapid re-housing or affordable housing needs, as well as need for prevention and diversion resources.

Goals of a Needs Assessment

The Needs Assessment is a critical conversation-starter around what it will take to create enough of each intervention in a homelessness response system. Communities that are willing to examine needs and costs are the communities that will end homelessness and unnecessary institutionalization. Using data-driven approaches gives homeless system planners, community members, and elected officials the tools they need to understand what it will take to end homelessness. When a community gets real about the problem, it can get real about the solution.

Needs Assessment in California

Given the size of the State of California in terms of both population and geography, conducting a needs assessment across the state is a uniquely complicated task. Methodologies must be tailored to address wide variability in terms of housing need and development costs and resources.

CSH staff discussed the following approaches with the Interagency Staff Working Group:

1. A homeless system analysis for three to four homeless Continuums of Care in the metro areas with the highest homeless populations, paired with a statewide analysis.
2. A homeless system analysis for each of a subset of several homeless Continuums of Care in counties that represent a cross-section of geographies across the state. We would then apply findings to other geographies based on similarity to the analyzed Continuums of Care.
3. A complete homeless system analysis of every county across the state.

The first approach ensures that an analysis will be conducted in areas where it is likely to have the largest-scale impact. A couple of the homeless Continuums of Care in counties with the highest homeless populations have either recently conducted a needs assessment or are in the process of completing a needs assessment, which would provide a foundation for the CSH analysis. CSH worked with the Los Angeles Housing and Services Authority to determine to conduct a Homeless System Analysis and Financial model. This work led to the modeling of the successful Measure H and Proposition HHH that are designed to generate the resources called for in the financial model to take supportive housing to scale and end chronic homelessness. Orange County recently worked with CSH to conduct a Financial Model for 2,700 units of supportive housing.

The second approach addresses concerns of lack of geographic diversity from the first approach by identifying a cross-section of homeless Continuums of Care in counties and using them as stand-in's for other Continuums of Care of similar geography, allowing an analysis for differences in how need is characterized between geographies of varying types (e.g., rural, urban, suburban, etc.). This approach could also be modified by breaking the state into super-regions and selecting representative homeless systems in counties within each region. This adds a layer of analysis and reflects the fact that need for interventions may manifest differently by county type and geography. One challenge to assuming need in some locales based on analysis conducted in others is the potential lack of local buy-in on the numbers and therefore a likely lack of buy-in for resource generation. A benefit could be that the state will have a rough snapshot of more community need, and some communities may find this to relieve them of the costs and efforts of local analysis.

The third approach is the most robust by far, and does not limit granularity of data or flatten data based on the assumptions made in the first and second. It is, however, the most logistically complex and would demand

considerable resources in terms of staff time and capacity to implement, not available to CSH under the current contract with HCD.

Proposed Approach Working Group Recommended

The Interagency Staff Working Group recommended adopting a hybrid approach that would combine a statewide analysis with elements of Approaches 1 and 2, detailed above. Under this approach, CSH staff would undertake the following phased needs assessments, with input and support by the Interagency Staff Working Group and the Homeless Coordinating and Financing Council members:

- **Phase 1:** A statewide assessment and system map, which would provide conclusions on the supportive housing need and rapid re-housing and other affordable housing need. CSH would work with staff from the Interagency Staff Working Group to collect statewide data on—
 - The number of child-welfare involved families,
 - Youth held in residential juvenile justice facilities,
 - Transition-aged youth in foster care,
 - The prison and jail populations,
 - The number of people with developmental disabilities living in residential and group homes,
 - The number of people living in mental health institutions and residential care settings,
 - The number of people living in nursing homes, and
 - The number of people living in substance use disorder residential care settings.

Based on these data, along with most-recently published homeless point-in-time counts, CSH would estimate the subpopulations needing supportive housing and rapid re-housing and other affordable housing. Because California does not have statewide data, diversion and prevention data may need to be roughly estimated, providing an annualized need for other affordable housing. Staff would then do some financial modeling to estimate dollars required to provide interventions.

- **Phase 2:** An assessment of the homeless Continuums of Care in three to four counties with the highest homeless populations (Los Angeles, Santa Clara, and San Francisco Counties and, possibly, San Diego County), with conclusions similar to the statewide assessment. CSH staff would work with the Interagency Staff Working Group to collect and confirm data for the needs assessments. This work would require considerable local buy-in.
- **Phase 3:** A snapshot of needs for two to six homeless Continuums of Care counties across the State, with the goal of incorporating Continuums of Care that represent geographic and population diversity. CSH would work with the Interagency Staff Working Group to identify Continuums of Care to assess, taking into account a range of data elements (for example, size of homeless population, economic conditions, local resources, demographics, etc.) Potential Continuums of Care would also depend on the extent of local cooperation with data collection. Through each of these needs assessments, CSH staff would work with local contacts to obtain data we would need to conduct this assessment, as well as local buy-in with the needs assessment process. To the extent data are available, CSH would conduct a similar analysis as the analysis collected for the statewide assessment.

CSH will provide a scope of work and timeline of the phased implementation of the needs assessment process after the July 11th State Homeless Coordinating and Financing Council meeting.