



CALIFORNIA HOMELESS COORDINATING AND FINANCING COUNCIL

Business, Consumer Services and Housing Agency
Gavin Newsom, Governor | Alexis Podesta, Chair

2019 Action Plan—DRAFT

1-17-19

The Homeless Coordinating and Financing Council

The Homeless Coordinating and Financing Council (Council) was resourced and staffed starting July 2018, amidst an ongoing and urgent homelessness crisis in California. The Council is structured to look at the big picture around homelessness – namely how to quickly make dramatic reductions in the almost 130,000 individuals living without shelter or permanent housing. The Council, with members representing both state and local entities, is uniquely positioned to provide policy recommendations that look across traditionally siloed state/local and state inter-departmental programs. Being housed in the Business, Consumer Services and Housing Agency (BCSH), the Council can facilitate both vertical and horizontal collaboration to ensure programs and funding for homelessness are both effective and efficient. The Council can proactively and responsively develop and implement strategies to support state and local initiatives to address homelessness, such as implementing the Homeless Emergency Aid Program (HEAP) and developing a state-level homeless data integration system.

To achieve these goals the Council proposes to take a data-driven approach to its recommendations. Given the challenge a lack of consolidated and integrated data poses – but intently aware of the need to start making an immediate impact – the Council must work simultaneously on addressing immediate needs as well as building an enduring system that can assist with prescriptive and preventive policy.

As a first step, Council staff seek to articulate a shared understanding of the collective work to be undertaken by the Council as a whole and by individual Council members through the organizations and constituencies they represent. Over the coming weeks and months, the Council will work with the new Administration to ensure the activities proposed in this 2019 Action Plan reflect the Governor’s priorities and have his full support.

2019 Action Plan for the Council

1. Homeless Emergency Aid Program (HEAP). Distributing the \$500 million in HEAP funds efficiently and partnering with local jurisdictions to successfully implement the program using best practices and evidence-based strategies.
 - a. Targets: Award 100 percent of funds in the first round (by January 31, 2019); all funds expended by June 30, 2021.
 - b. Provide ongoing technical assistance and peer-to-peer learning to ensure HEAP funds are used to effectively address immediate needs of homeless individuals and families. Develop joint technical assistance and peer-to-peer learning opportunities with state and federal partners.

- c. Develop reporting forms and provide ongoing support to local jurisdictions to ensure they are collecting the data required to report on their expenditures and the impact of HEAP funds on homelessness in their communities.
2. California Homeless Data Integration System (CHDIS). Developing and implementing a state-level homeless integrated data system designed to provide the data necessary for nuanced policy decisions. The immediate priority is establishing a state homeless data system that gives the state access to data already collected at the local level (Phase 1). The second phase would build a platform that can integrate and analyze data collected from state agency and department programs, and eventually from local jurisdictions, on homelessness (Phase 2).
 - a. Targets (Phase 1): Complete procurement by September 2019 (funding dependent); complete implementation by December 2019; first quarter of data available for analysis April 2020.
 - b. Targets (Phase 2): Complete procurement by April 2020 (funding dependent); complete implementation by January 2021; first quarter of data available for analysis by April 2021.
 3. Strategic Planning. Developing a data-driven, evidence-based high-level strategic plan to stop the growth, shelter the unsheltered and significantly reduce the overall numbers of homeless individuals and families in California. Focus on a limited number of key policy recommendations in the short term that will promote large decreases in the homeless population. Recognize that this strategic plan will be augmented and adjusted as the data systems that are developed concurrently are available.
 - a. Targets:
 - i. January 2019: Map out a timeline and approach that will result in a high-level plan with effective, evidence-based strategies that can be successfully implemented and will yield significant results. Identify key stakeholders, including people with lived experience, service providers, local jurisdictions, researchers, and the business community, and develop a communications and engagement strategy to support development and implementation of the plan.
 - ii. February-April 2019: Invite researchers, policy experts, and key stakeholders to provide white papers with their recommended strategies to address homelessness; the rationale for their recommendations; data, evidence, and case studies to support their recommendations; and the estimated impacts each strategy could have on homelessness in California. Include a focus on addressing homeless youth, consistent with Senate Bill 918.
 - iii. May-July 2019: Staff work to develop the draft strategic plan, incorporating feedback from stakeholders (including white paper recommendations) and research on best practices and effective strategies.
 - iv. June 2019: Convene a summit with key homeless experts in the state to discuss priority policies and tactics that will have the largest and most effective impact on reducing the homeless count.
 - v. July 2019: Provide the draft strategic plan to the Council for review, discussion and feedback at the July Council Meeting. Integrate Council feedback into the draft strategic plan.
 - vi. August 2019: Issue the draft strategic plan for stakeholder feedback.

- vii. August-October 2019: Convene meetings throughout the state with key stakeholder groups to present draft strategic plan and receive feedback.
 - viii. October-December 2019: Revise strategic plan, including a comprehensive strategy to address youth homelessness. Include a plan to monitor, evaluate and re-address the policy recommendation at years three and five when more data from the state homeless data platform are available.
 - ix. December 2019: Publish final strategic plan and present to the Council for review, discussion and feedback.
- b. Framework for the strategic plan: Strategies should be looked at through a multi-faceted lens of optimizing existing resources, deploying new resources, regulatory reforms and enhanced information/coordination. Top strategies should be focused on the big-picture “low-hanging fruit” that can be achieved quickly and have the greatest impact on reducing the number of people experiencing homelessness.
 - c. Telling the Story: Data can begin to tell us where to focus policy, resources and coordination interventions to have the greatest impact in the shortest amount of time. The Council will focus initial efforts on gathering existing research to understand and address the root causes or drivers of homelessness.
4. Housing First. Continuing efforts to support state agencies and departments as they implement Housing First in their housing and housing-related services programs.
- a. Targets:
 - i. July 1, 2019: Complete all initial assessments of state housing and housing-related series programs. Identify changes to regulations and guidelines needed to bring programs into compliance with Housing First and, for programs initiated prior to July 1, 2017, any revisions are adopted.
 - ii. July 1, 2019: Report to Legislature and Governor’s Office on progress of all state agencies and departments in implement Housing First.
 - b. Develop joint technical assistance and peer-to-peer learning opportunities with state and federal partners, including a Housing First “tool kit” that provides recommended language, policies, and resources for both state and local entities.
5. Youth Homelessness. Setting goals and developing a workplan to implement SB 918, the Homeless Youth Act of 2018. Identify best practices and provide technical assistance and peer-to-peer learning opportunities, in collaboration with youth homelessness experts and programs, to state and local entities providing supports and services to youth and young adults experiencing homelessness or at risk of homelessness.
6. Federal and state partnerships. Collaborating with the US Interagency Council on Homelessness (USICH), the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), the state Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD), the California Department of Social Services (CDSS), and other state partners to do all of the following:
- a. Provide technical assistance and peer-to-peer learning opportunities to strengthen Continuums of Care (CoCs) and regional collaboration; improve the Point-in-Time (PIT) Count, Coordinated Entry System (CES) implementation, and Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) data collection and analysis; and support alignment between regional homelessness plans and the allocation of resources.

- b. Coordinate state and federal homelessness activities and align program goals, requirements, and timelines wherever possible; identify and jointly promote evidence-based practices; and identify additional resources for preventing and addressing homelessness.
7. Changing the Narrative. Developing and implementing a statewide public awareness campaign to change the narrative around homelessness, in coordination with local and philanthropic campaigns. Recognizing that one of the largest inhibitors to sheltering and providing housing for homeless individuals and families comes from community opposition to affordable housing and shelters, there is a need to reframe the narrative and change the conversation around homelessness.
- a. Targets:
 - i. May 2019: Design scope of work for campaign.
 - ii. August 2019: Identify and obtain funding.
 - iii. Fall 2019: Campaign commences.

Long-Term Strategies

In order to take significant action to address the homelessness crisis,¹ both the Council as a whole and individual Council members will actively work to support the following five strategies:

1. Closing the Gap: increase the supply of affordable housing. Since one of the biggest contributors to the increase in homelessness is the lack of affordable housing, closing the gap between the cost of housing and what people can afford is key to permanently reducing homelessness. Several programs administered by the Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD), the California Housing Finance Authority (CalHFA), and the Tax Credit Allocation Committee (TCAC) administer programs or provide funding to increase the supply of affordable housing in California. *Rationale: According to the Homelessness Task Force Report published in 2018², 21 of the 30 most expensive rental markets are in California; 2.2 million extremely low-income and very low-income renters compete for 664,000 affordable rentals.*
2. Bridging the Gap: increase housing stability and access to available housing. Rental assistance and landlord incentives can be effective in keeping at-risk individuals and families in their homes and helping those who are homeless rapidly re-enter permanent housing. Often, the current caps on rental assistance are too low for California’s housing markets, and the time limits are too short to ensure recipients remain stably housed once the rental subsidy goes away. HEAP, administered by BCSH, provides a source of one-time, flexible funds that may be used for rental assistance and landlord incentives. Additionally, HCD, the Governor’s Office of Emergency Services (OES), the Department of Health Care Services (DHCS), and the Department of Social Services (DSS) administer programs or provide funding to increase housing stability and access to available housing in California. *Rationale: According to the 2018 Annual Homeless Assessment Report (AHAR),³ of the almost 130,000 people experiencing homelessness in California, over 95,000 (74 percent) are not*

¹ Please see attached graphic illustrating the demographics of California’s homeless population.

² “Homelessness Task Force Report: Tools and Resources for Cities and Counties”, *League of California Cities, California State Association, and Institute for Local Government*, 2018, accessed January 14, 2019, <http://www.cacities.org/Resources-Documents/Policy-Advocacy-Section/Hot-Issues/Homeless-Resources/League-CSAC-Task-Force/HTF-Homeless-2018-Web.aspx>

³ “HUD 2018 Continuum of Care Homeless Assistance Programs Homeless Populations and Subpopulations,” California state data, *HUD Exchange*, last modified December 2018, accessed January 14, 2019, https://www.hudexchange.info/resource/reportmanagement/published/CoC_PopSub_State_CA_2018.pdf

chronically homeless. They need assistance before their homelessness becomes long-term and compounded by other challenges caused or exacerbated by experiencing homelessness.

3. Sheltering the Unsheltered: reduce the number of unsheltered individuals and families as an intermediate step towards permanent housing. While shelters are not a long-term solution, in combination with other supports and services they can play an important role in bringing people off the streets and into an environment in which their needs can be addressed. HEAP provides a source of one-time, flexible funds that may be used for building or expanding shelters and other short-term housing for unsheltered homeless individuals and families. Additionally, OES, DHCS, and DSS administer programs or provide funding for shelters and other short-term housing in California. *Rationale: According to the 2017 PIT Count, over 90,000 of the almost 135,000 people experiencing homelessness in California are unsheltered.*
4. Catching it Early: provide housing and supports for unaccompanied homeless youth. Many counties have lacked resources dedicated to meeting the needs of youth who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. Research clearly demonstrates that effective strategies to address youth homelessness differ from those that effectively target adult populations. HEAP provides a set-aside specifically for establishing or expanding services and supports for this vulnerable population. Additionally, OES administers programs and provides funding for supporting unaccompanied homeless youth. *Rationale: According to the 2018 Annual Homeless Assessment Report (AHAR),⁴ California has over 12,000 unaccompanied youth experiencing homelessness. Studies suggest that about 50 percent of chronically homeless adults were first homeless before the age of 25.⁵*
5. Strengthening Continuums of Care (CoCs): build capacity in CoCs and support collaboration. CoCs are the entities designated by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) as responsible for conducting the biennial PIT counts, implementing the Coordinated Entry Systems (CES), administering the local Homeless Management Information Systems (HMIS),⁶ coordinating local homelessness services, and identifying and managing resources to effectively address homelessness.⁷ Very little state or federal funding is currently available to support the 43 California CoCs in performing these important functions. The California Emergency Solutions and Housing (CESH) program administered by HCD provides funding for building capacity in CoCs, and up to 5 percent of the Homeless Emergency Aid Program (HEAP) funding can be used by CoCs for administrative activities. *Rationale: CoCs are a critical component of a successful state strategy to end homelessness, and they often lack sufficient capacity or resources to fulfill their roles effectively. This is especially true in small or rural CoCs.*

⁴ “HUD 2018 Continuum of Care Homeless Assistance Programs Homeless Populations and Subpopulations,” California state data, *HUD Exchange*, last modified December 2018, accessed January 14, 2019, https://www.hudexchange.info/resource/reportmanagement/published/CoC_PopSub_State_CA_2018.pdf

⁵ “Homelessness Task Force Report: Tools and Resources for Cities and Counties”, *League of California Cities, California State Association, and Institute for Local Government*, 2018, accessed January 14, 2019, <http://www.cacities.org/Resources-Documents/Policy-Advocacy-Section/Hot-Issues/Homeless-Resources/League-CSAC-Task-Force/HTF-Homeless-2018-Web.aspx>

⁶ A Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) is an information technology system required by HUD and used on an ongoing basis by CoCs to collect and report data about people in the community who are known to be experiencing or to be at risk of homelessness. (Source: “Homeless Management Information System,” *HUD Exchange*, last modified January 2019, accessed January 9, 2019, <https://www.hudexchange.info/programs/hmis/>)

⁷ See the Continuum of Care (CoC) Program page on the HUD Exchange website for more details: <https://www.hudexchange.info/programs/coc/>

Demographics of Homelessness in California

More than 129,000 people experienced homelessness on a single night in California in 2018

