



Business, Consumer Services and Housing Agency
Gavin Newsom, Governor | Lourdes M. Castro Ramírez, Secretary

Meeting Summary
December 18, 2020
9:00AM – 12:00PM
Teleconference

I. Call to Order and Roll Call

Secretary Lourdes M. Castro Ramírez called the meeting to order at 9:07AM.

Council Members Present:

- Lourdes M. Castro Ramírez, Council Chair and Secretary of the Business, Consumer Services and Housing Agency;
- Emilio Ramirez, Council Vice Chair and Director of Housing, City of Oxnard;
- Amy Anderson, Chief Housing Officer, Office of Los Angeles Mayor Eric Garcetti;
- Russell Atterberry, Undersecretary of the Department of Veterans Affairs;
- Alexis Barries, Family Partner, Placement Service and Crisis Stabilization Response Team, Santa Clara;
- Corrin Buchanan, Assistant Director of the Housing and Homelessness Branch in the Department of Social Services;
- Donald Cavier, Chief Deputy Director of the California Housing Finance Agency;
- Gail Gilman, Chief Strategy Officer, All Home California;
- Jody Ketcheside, Deputy Regional Director of Turning Point of Central California;
- Jennifer Loving, Chief Executive Officer, Destination: Home;
- Gary McCoy, Congressional Aide, Office of House Speaker Nancy Pelosi;
- Toks Omishakin, Director of California Department of Transportation (*not present at initial roll call*); and
- Gustavo Velasquez, Director of California Department of Housing and Community Development

Absent:

- Gina Buccieri-Harrington, Assistant Director of Grants Management, Victim Services Program in the Governor's Office of Emergency Services;
- Jacey Cooper, Chief Deputy Director of Health Care Programs in the Department of Health Care Services; and
- Joe Uchishiba, Police Officer, City of Fairfield

Opening Remarks

Secretary Castro Ramírez welcomed attendees and Council Members to the meeting. This is the Homeless Coordinating and Financing Council (HCFC)'s final meeting of 2020. The state continues to focus on COVID-19 response and more information is available at covid19.ca.gov.

II. Adoption of the October 26, 2020 Council meeting minutes

The Council approved the [meeting minutes](#) from the October 26, 2020 Council Meeting. All members present voted to approve.

III. Update on the Homeless Data Integration System (HDIS)

Executive Officer Julie Lo provided an update on HDIS. HCFC is working with the California Department of Technology (CDT), staff from the Business, Consumer Services and Housing Agency (BCSH), and the selected contractor for HDIS, Plante Moran, on this project. HDIS will contain data from the state's 44 Continuums of Care (CoCs) to help identify patterns of service usage including within sub-populations, identify racial or other inequalities, and explore cross-jurisdictional trends.

HDIS will allow HCFC to determine the count of people accessing homelessness services across the state but will not be a count of all people experiencing homelessness. The system will show aggregate and summary information and is not intended for individual case management.

In building out the system's data reporting and visualization tools, HCFC is prioritizing web-based data dashboards and is conducting testing and outreach with partners to ensure the tool is both useful and user-friendly. The initial goal is to be up and running by March 2021, and HCFC expects to have more to present at the Council's meeting that month.

Council Member Russell Atterberry asked if information in the system will be available to the public.

- A public-facing dashboard is being prioritized in development and will provide access to summarized information.

Council Member Atterberry commented that he is unsure whether veteran-specific data is captured in CoCs' Homeless Management Information Systems (HMIS) but wants to see that data included in HDIS.

Council Member Amy Anderson asked about the consistency of HMIS data across CoCs and if there are other challenges to consider as the data is compiled or made public.

- There will be differences across CoCs but the goal is to provide the most reliable information that overlaps among them. HCFC is working with technical assistance (TA) providers for the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban

Development (HUD) for advice on inconsistencies and is doing iterative testing to determine completeness of records and the extent to which they can be merged.

Council Member Jennifer Loving commented that this system provides a great opportunity to understand trends, prioritize, and streamline systems, but that it will take time and effort to get jurisdictions aligned on data collection. It is hard to prioritize data quality locally and maybe there could be funding offered for this purpose.

- HCFC is attempting to build a data culture through an iterative process, to be able to make data-informed policy choices. The initial goal is not to push anyone into perfection yet but to find the most reliable information possible. The best way to get local communities to adapt is for them to see the value it makes at a statewide level.

Council Member Corrin Buchanan commented to thank HCFC for the work going into HDIS. The California Department of Social Services (CDSS) is excited to have this system as a resource.

Public Comment

- Chris Pitcher, HUD TA: Working with BCSH staff on this project. There will be certain veteran data from HMIS, including the Supportive Services for Veterans and Families (SSVF) program. HUD is currently working to bring over data for the Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing (HUD-VASH) program and HDIS will ultimately have access to this information.
- Christine Smith, California Partnership to End Domestic Violence: Organization wants HCFC to speak to confidentiality issues with comparable databases and victim service providers.
 - Initially, HDIS is only using HMIS data and will not be adding anything to that dataset yet.
- Christopher Weare, Center for Homeless Inquiries: Beyond public dashboards, will the State be developing reports or analytic tools that could help CoCs? What are plans for allowing access to data to research organizations such as the USC Homeless Policy Research Institute?
 - Following development of public dashboards, HCFC will be providing CoCs individual access to data. Yes, the intent is to make data available for research purposes after it has been vetted, as well as standardized and de-identified in the interest of protecting persons experiencing homelessness.
- Debbie Villasenor, Housing Consultant from Northern California: How will HCFC distinguish and separate issues between rural and urban areas in HDIS? Also concerned that data collected is on currently available funding sources and may not be able to identify gaps in programs.

IV. Year in Review

Secretary Castro Ramírez introduced this item, noting that BCSH and HCFC have been working in close partnership at the State level and with local communities to implement priorities set by Governor Newsom this year, including the large-scale initiatives Project

Roomkey and Homekey. HCFC also launched its Action Planning process this year and is looking forward to 2021. Throughout this, the Governor has provided leadership and support.

Governor Gavin Newsom presented on this item, thanking the Council for its hard work. During this pandemic and all its challenges, there has sometimes been a sense that the State has taken its eye off the issue of poverty and homelessness, but in fact, initiatives and efforts that would have otherwise been much slower have been accelerated. Attention and intentionality have been focused toward a Housing First model, which addresses the need to stabilize an individual with housing before dealing with underlying issues that led them to homelessness.

There is always a challenge of whether to prioritize social services or brick-and-mortar facilities. Over the last 30 or 40 years, there has been argument for more and better things that don't always come through. The Homeless Emergency Aid Program (HEAP) and Homeless Housing, Assistance and Prevention Program (HHAP) are good, but different strategies are also needed.

This year, crisis-induced thinking led to Project Roomkey, which has served over 22,000 individuals in more than 16,000 non-congregate shelter units since April. Out of this project came the idea of Homekey, which with the assistance of Federal funds has helped acquire over 6,000 units of permanent housing. Next year, the State budget is planned to include resources to continue to accelerate this progress, which will be complemented by the California Advancing and Innovating Medi-Cal (CalAIM) program.

As an announcement, FEMA has just approved support for Project Roomkey through the duration of the COVID pandemic, so that the State will no longer have to submit monthly requests for continuing approval.

Council Member Loving commented appreciation for the State making many resources available this year, and that she understands more Federal relief will be coming, but there is so large a number of people asking for rental assistance that Santa Clara County is uncertain how to help families hold on until then.

- The State put out \$1 billion-plus as quickly as possible, tripled the earned income tax credit, and didn't wait to ask for Federal assistance. We will have to see what relief the current Federal bill provides, but next year's State budget is planned to include more relief for those most in need.

Council Member Jody Ketcheside commented that Fresno has 1,000 evictions pending, waiting for the moratorium to end. Historically, there is not a lot of money provided for eviction prevention, and those evictions will go through unless those renters are able to get more relief.

- Prevention, especially homelessness prevention, is a particularly important investment right now. The State is working on strategic, targeted relief to complement the actions that only the Federal government can and must take.

Council Member Gail Gilman commented that she hopes the Council and next year's State budget can continue with the innovation and urgency shown through the pandemic. In the Bay Area, with innovation, quick action, flexible dollars, and focus, almost 5,000 people have been assisted through Project Roomkey.

- Urgency and intentionality are necessary. Legislation in the last 24 months around California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) streamlining has been an important hurdle.

Senior Counselor to Governor Gavin Newsom, Jason Elliott, added that streamlinings around CEQA and Article 34 have been key to getting Homekey done. However, those streamlinings do not roll over into next year and will have to be sought again legislatively.

Governor Newsom concluded by stating that Homekey is not the one homeless policy but is complementary to other efforts. Movement with urgency to figure out a scaled solution is needed. Certain areas of the economy have been resistant to improved efficiencies that have helped with innovating solutions, and there is hope that in the next 1-3 years we will really see things take shape.

Jason Elliott added that the Governor is committed to the issue of homelessness, which was demonstrated in 2020's State of the State Address and January budget even prior to the pandemic. There is now an opportunity to learn what worked and what didn't. CEQA streamlining has been critical; Assembly Bill (AB) 3088 has worked in the way it was intended; Project Roomkey and Homekey are both important to look at. Next year's budget will be informed by both successes and failures within these efforts.

Deputy Secretary for Homelessness Ali Sutton introduced a [video](#) about Project Roomkey and thanked CDSS and the Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD) for work on Project Roomkey and Homekey this year.

Early in the COVID pandemic, the Governor quickly prioritized \$150 million to protect people experiencing homelessness. HCFC put out \$100 million of this money, primarily for Project Roomkey, but also to ensure protection for the state's unsheltered homeless population. Around the same time, HCFC allocated its \$650 million round 1 of HHAP funding, much of which has gone into COVID response and rehousing people out of Project Roomkey. Applications from the state's 58 counties, 44 CoCs, and 13 largest cities for HCFC's \$300 million round 2 of HHAP funding are due January 23, 2021.

In partnership with CDSS and HCD, HCFC put out a [guidance document](#) on rehousing out of Project Roomkey and how to think strategically about available funding. Listos California, in partnership with CDSS and HCFC, put out a [disaster guide](#) for people experiencing homelessness with information about best practices, where to go, and how to access resources in a disaster situation.

In December of 2019, the Governor announced his 100-Day Challenge effort. The first cohort included four communities and was targeted at Project Roomkey housing efforts.

[Case studies](#) from this cohort are publicly available. The second cohort is currently in progress and has some focus on Project Roomkey, but also focuses on youth and veterans, and more broadly, rehousing efforts during a pandemic. A third cohort will be starting in early 2021.

V. HCFC Action Plan Updates

Deputy Secretary Sutton introduced this agenda item. HCFC has been working to add detail to its Action Plan and has provided an [overview](#) of its vision, structure, and objectives thus far. Feedback from stakeholders has shown a desire for increased leadership from the State to help communities with best practices, information sharing, and vision.

HCFC's coordination is intended to be purposeful and action-oriented, and to help ensure alignment across State agencies and programs in short- and long-term solutions. Stronger, collaborative partnerships with public and private local partners will be an important part of this plan, as will efforts to address and reduce racial inequities, and a shared responsibility among State agencies for effective data analyses and performance metrics. HCFC hopes to have a draft Action Plan for the Council to discuss in February 2021, and for the Council to approve the Action Plan in March 2021.

HCFC Consultant Matthew Doherty presented on this item, including information about [draft objectives and activities](#) for the Action Plan. The Action Plan documents for today's meeting retain the same objectives approved at the Council's last meeting but are reordered to bring emphasis to the Strengthening Systems action area, as well as objectives about racial equity and engaging people with lived expertise.

HCFC's Action Plan will include clear statements of activities, identification of the lead department(s) responsible, and collaborating departments. Some activities in the Action Plan will apply to the entire population of people experiencing homelessness, and some will likely apply to specific populations such as youth or domestic violence survivors. Timeframes and key milestones will be included, as will performance measurements including process measures, output measures, and outcome measures.

In feedback sessions, stakeholders have emphasized an interest in clear guidance from State departments in terms of program intentions, goals, and progress measurements. Stakeholders expressed a need for more predictability and consistency across State departments and programs, including which programs may receive funding each year, in order to more efficiently use resources and avoid duplicating efforts. The importance of healthcare resources, including CalAIM, was highlighted, as was the need to tailor strategies to include the unique needs of youth and other populations. A balance of both urgency and organized, scalable planning is needed.

Council Member Toks Omishakin was called for roll at 10:50 AM.

Council Member Gilman commented that she would like to see a specific, measurable goal highlighted in this plan, toward which all State departments can move collectively.

More coordination and standardization between funding applications, reporting, and definitions is needed. The Council should also look at what its role can be in terms of advocacy within the State government.

Council Member Loving commented in agreement that clear, measurable goals, permanent or predictable financing streams, and strong partnerships will be important for the Action Plan.

VI. Update on Eviction Prevention Efforts

Deputy Secretary Sutton introduced this item, reviewing commonly used terminology. “Diversion” refers to services targeted to people who have recently lost housing or become homeless and is often funded by homelessness systems. “Homelessness prevention” is targeted toward people who are about to become homeless out of a range of different systems and can be funded by homelessness systems but should not be the first priority for this funding. “Eviction prevention” is not specifically targeted to the 10-25% of evictees who would become homeless and typically uses Federal, State, and local housing funds.

Deputy Secretary of Housing Lynn von Koch-Liebert presented on the State’s eviction prevention efforts. In September, AB 3088 was passed and signed into law by the Governor to provide an eviction prevention framework for people impacted by COVID. This bill required BCSH to [engage stakeholders](#) and develop strategies for future funding, which was done through both an online survey and meetings with stakeholders.

399 online surveys were received; 28% of respondents were representing local jurisdictions, 24% homeowners, 21% nonprofits, 20% tenants, 11% affordable housing developers/providers, and 11% landlords. The top response to where dollars should be spent was to assist persons experiencing homelessness with high risk of COVID-19 exposure. Programs proposed in the Federal HEROES Act 2.0 were used to structure the questions into housing-related areas and eligible uses.

The top priority for Emergency Rental Assistance was assistance for tenants on unpaid utility and rent payments up to 12 months to prevent evictions; for Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG) HEROES was emergency shelter; for Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) HEROES was housing assistance; and for Coronavirus Relief Fund (CRF) was ensuring Californians achieve and maintain stable housing.

BCSH used survey responses to draft, based on the proposed \$2.2 trillion HEROES Act 2.0, the dollar amounts that could be allocated under each program and the estimated impact in number of households served. The coronavirus relief bill currently under discussion is valued at a smaller amount and contains an estimated \$3 billion in funding for Emergency Rental Assistance to California, which would be split between the State, for administration, and direct allocations to cities with populations over 200,000.

Council Member Anderson commented appreciation for BCSH for the effort put in to engage stakeholders. Protecting tenants through AB 3088 and advocating for additional resources are critical efforts.

Deputy Secretary Sutton presented on the State's homelessness prevention efforts, highlighting the importance of targeting strategies that will be accessible to people with the greatest risk of becoming homeless. People with prior experiences of homelessness are often the greatest at risk of becoming homeless if not supported. Extremely low-income households are also at high risk and HCFC encourages prioritization of funding for this group. It is important to deploy resources into the most highly impacted neighborhoods to work toward an equitable COVID recovery. Interventions should be focused on flexible forms of assistance and not just rental assistance.

Council Member Loving commented that flexibility is important in providing assistance, and that one goal should be how to best provide as close to direct cash assistance as possible. In some cases, private money has been used to solve problems that other funding sources lack flexibility for.

Council Member Anderson commented in agreement, explaining that the rental assistance program in the City of Los Angeles encountered challenges initially with landlords' willingness to participate. The City pivoted to direct tenant assistance and now, broadly, half of the City's \$100 million in rental assistance will be going directly to tenants.

Council Member Loving added that Destination: Home has provided almost \$20 million in direct cash assistance through the pandemic with three different flexible delivery methods.

VII. Other departmental and HCFC updates

Deputy Secretary Sutton provided updates from HCFC. The HHAP Round 2 application is open and is due January 23rd, 2021.

HCFC has approximately \$6 million in technical assistance requests for proposals open right now and is reviewing proposals across four topic areas: youth interventions, racial equity, permanent housing, and systems performance.

HEAP and HHAP annual reports are due January 1st, 2021.

HCFC has open positions for a Grants Director, a Director of Statewide Policy, an Executive Assistant, and two IT positions for the HDIS project. These are posted on [HCFC's website](#).

The following Departments provided a written [update](#) of their relevant homeless programs:

- Department of Education
- Department of Health Care Services

- Department of Housing and Community Development
- Governor’s Office of Emergency Services
- Department of Social Services
- Department of Veterans Affairs

VIII. Future meeting agendas

Council Member Gilman suggested a briefing on the Governor’s proposed budget be included at the next Council Meeting, as well as information on any pending legislation that would affect the Council and a quick update on relevant rule changes from the California Debt Limit Allocation Committee (CDLAC).

IX. Public comments and final remarks

- Helene Schneider, Regional Coordinator, U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness: Pleased to hear the announcement about FEMA support for Project Roomkey. Today, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) put out a frequently asked questions document around COVID-19 vaccination for people experiencing homelessness.

X. Adjournment

Meeting is adjourned at 11:46AM.