

**SUMMARY FOR THE
ADVISORY COMMITTEE TO THE
CALIFORNIA INTERAGENCY COUNCIL ON HOMELESSNESS**

November 5th, 2025

Via videoconference and telephone

I. Call to Order, Tribal Land Acknowledgment, and Roll Call

The meeting was called to order at 1:08 pm.

Advisory Committee Members Present:

- **Songhai Armstead** – Director, Justice Care and Opportunities Department
- **Lauren Carden** – Director, California Housing Advocacy, Justice in Aging
- **Monique Guerra** – Lived Experience Advisory Board Support
- **Kevin Klahn** – Lived Experience Advocate
- **Graham Knaus** – Chief Executive Officer, California State Association of Counties
- **James Mackey** – Program Manager, Community Medical Centers
- **Lisa O'Connell** – Director, Enhanced Health Services
- **Tunisia Owens** – Policy and Advocacy Manager, Family Violence Law Center
- **Carolina Reid** – Faculty Research Advisor, Terner Center for Housing Innovation
- **Melanie Robledo** – Lived Experience Advisory Board Support
- **Alicia Sebastian** – Executive Director, California Coalition for Rural Housing
- **Karla Thomas** – Executive Director, Empowering Pacific Islander Communities
- **Alex Visotzky** – Senior California Policy Fellow, National Alliance to End Homelessness
- **Roxanne Wilson** – Homeless Services Director, County of Monterey

II. Advisory Committee Co-Chair Updates

Advisory Committee (AC) Co-Chair, Alex Visotzky: Thanked staff and attendees for their commitment and participation. Expressed the need for greater accountability to people experiencing homelessness who are the ones that deeply feel policy and system failures. Uplifted Housing First and person-first models as strategic alternatives to punitive responses to homelessness amidst federal shifts. Implored the state to embody its full power and potential to help people retain and regain housing and support Medi-Cal and CalFresh coverage. Many people living on the margins are at-risk and would like state leadership to step in, in the absence of federal funding. Encouraged AC members to share their thoughts on the state's role in preventing and ending homelessness.

Advisory Committee Co-Chair, Roxanne Wilson: Directed comments to local communities, expressed gratitude toward the commitment to addressing the housing and homelessness crisis, and acknowledged incredible work happening across California. Shared the committee plays a vital role to provide their local experience to state policymakers so that policy can translate into real impact on the ground. Acknowledged a pivotal historical moment where federal support is at risk and data driven decisions are being challenged. Advised planning for worst-case scenarios and uplifting people who are most impacted.

III. Interagency Opening Comments

BCSH Deputy Secretary of Homelessness, Dhakshike Wickrema: Provided opening comments on behalf of Executive Officer Megan Marshall. Thanked the diverse representation of the AC members and their efforts to collaborate as a collective. Provided assurance that the state is closely monitoring Continuum of Care (CoC) funding and other gaps in federal funding including the current federal government shut down and its impact on California. Shared there is bi-partisan effort to continue CoC grants without disruptions regardless of the federal government shutdown.

Cal HHS Deputy Secretary of Policy and Strategic Planning, Brian Kaplun: Provided agency updates and underlined intersections of Medi-Cal, CalFresh and other health and human services funding. Federal changes estimate 3.4 million Medi-Cal beneficiaries are at-risk of losing coverage, including \$30 billion in funding that is at risk annually. New community engagement requirements mandate work, education, or volunteer efforts for Medi-Cal recipients, representing a major change to this program. Eligibility for re-enrollment will occur every 6-months as opposed to the current standard of one year. In 2028 there will be more medical costs absorbed by the state, as well as restrictions on lawful immigrant participation accessing Medi-Cal services. A [webinar on the impact of federal policy changes on California](#) provides more updates on HR1 efforts, including principles of implementation that are intended to relieve local workload burden to the extent possible. About 495,000 able-bodied adults without dependents are at-risk of losing their CalFresh benefits. Previous work exemptions for people experiencing homelessness and people aging out of foster care will be removed. State agencies are working to ensure impacts can be minimized. The State advanced \$80 million to foodbanks across CA and informed communities about food assistance alternatives.

Advisory Committee Member Discussion:

Graham Knaus: Noted the substantial increase in people who will no longer receive Medi-Cal coverage and that communities will need to address issues for those who don't have a place to receive care. In addition, more frequent re-determination requires significantly more work that is not funded or reimbursed. Under HR1, people can be automatically rejected from the program without proof of employment. Most people receiving CalFresh are employed, but it can be a burden to present documentation that takes time away from their work, which may result in less people covered by these benefits. These actions will make homelessness more prevalent and will require mitigation efforts.

IV. Working Group Evaluation Update

Cal ICH's Director of Policy & Innovation, Courtney Tacker, provided a strategic review of Cal ICH's working groups, including gaps analysis and recommendations. Additional details can be found in the [meeting presentation materials](#).

Advisory Committee Member Discussion:

Graham Knaus: Asked whether the groups are limited to state bodies collaborating, or if there are opportunities for a focused effort or working group on accountability and potential measures

to determine success, on providing recommendations for framework that includes the state, local governments, and others.

- **Courtney Tacker:** There are several bodies existing in the state, and experts on this committee may also be participating in other groups. Cal ICH is supporting opportunities for coordination and alignment on housing and homelessness with other working groups in other state departments.

Alex Visotzky: Identified the Commission for Behavioral Health (CBH) is an opportunity for collaboration.

Lauren Carden: Shared the Master Plan for Aging has several housing initiatives. The Disability and Aging Community Living Advisory Committee features a housing subcommittee around homelessness prevention due to the increase in the aging homeless population in recent years.

Alex Visotzky: Added there are a few coalitions among CoCs, one focused on state policy making and another on sharing best practices, which are open to collaboration.

Roxanne Wilson: Shared there is a CA Executive Leaders Program with leaders in homelessness across CA that share policies and procedures to compare notes and ideas around funding opportunities and identify what gets rejected by the state.

Monique Guerra: Emphasized there is power in having Cal ICH's own groups to address specific projects and purpose around housing and homelessness. While Cal ICH collaborates with others, there are reasons to convene people in-house with specific missions and priorities to accomplish our goals.

V. Recovery Housing Guidance Update

Cal ICH Council Coordination Manager, Giselle Sanchez, presented the newly published Recovery Housing Guidance document. Please see the [presentation materials](#) for additional detail.

Advisory Committee Member Discussion:

Songhai Armstead: Currently trying to navigate how to get more access to recovery housing in Los Angeles County for those who want it or need it. We can have recovery housing that fits in line with Housing First with certain caveats that require education and support in navigation, noting specifically justice impacted communities. Not all programs are licensed for recovery housing, but there are sober living facilities where people are referred and receiving treatment.

Graham Knaus: Discussed ways in which recovery housing fits in with overall goals in the homelessness field. This guidance is not required or funded, and some guidelines will not be met by certain communities or programs. Encouraged meeting people where they are using the recovery model alongside the Housing First model. There is a need for expectations regarding unfunded guidelines with real accountability. Noted the potential for guidance to become an academic exercise as opposed to something tangible for communities. Federal destabilization makes this work harder. The state has a critical role in creating the framework to allow communities to put the work into practice.

Alex Visotzky: Guidance is an important first step. As we see communities use state funding to direct toward recovery housing, we will likely need to answer more questions as they arise. Housing First is the best model for getting people into housing and retaining that housing, since it includes participant choice. It is already a struggle to get communities to implement Housing First with fidelity, especially given existing and incoming funding gaps. This guidance is helpful to ensure that Housing First remains relevant admits changing federal policies.

VI. Tribal Homelessness Policy Brief

Cal ICH Tribal Liaison, a member of the Choctaw nation and a person with lived experience of homelessness and foster care, **Vevila Blossoming Bear**, presented California's first Tribal Homelessness Policy Brief. Outlined the rationale for land acknowledgments, discussed the overrepresentation of tribal homelessness despite data discrepancies, and highlighted the need to have Tribal voices at the center of Tribal solutions. See [meeting materials](#) for additional detail.

Advisory Committee Member Discussion:

Graham Knaus: Relationships between counties and Tribes vary across the state. There is some Tribal representation in various local working groups, but not always. Expressed interest in opportunities to better connect with Tribal communities.

Carolina Reid: Expressed interest in learning more about supporting Tribal efforts, including addressing the existing housing need or barriers to housing. Expects that federal changes will greatly impact Tribal communities and asks that Cal ICH notifies them of opportunities for support, if any.

Tunisia Owens: Identified work in the intersection between domestic violence and homelessness, and noted that their work with a tribal community seem less likely to interact with homelessness services, but more likely to receive domestic violence services. Interested to know how we can do more collaborative work around this intersection.

- **Vevila Blossoming Bear:** Shared about the [Cal ICH Tribal Affairs Event Calendar](#) that is being filled with local tribal events on homelessness and housing. Invites committee members to share any resources helpful in their partnership with tribes.

Alex Visotzky: Acknowledged the need for culturally responsive programs developed in partnership with Tribal communities. Asked Cal ICH to consider if there are formal structures that could be brought to aid Tribal partners into the policy process.

VII. General Public Comment

Ruby Torralva: Kings County, a welfare recipient experiencing homelessness for a year. Asked Cal ICH to look at how housing and homelessness programs are being administered in Kings County. There are structural problems, including lack of ADA accommodations. No one at the state-level has intervened in the poor administration of programs who operate as if they are above reproach. Noted the county's refusal of technical training and lack of ADA technical training and implementation. Housing First principles should be imbedded in Kings County. The California Department of Social Services (CDSS) has said they have no jurisdiction to hold entities accountable. Asked which entity has oversight to help counties administer programs correctly. Identified that homeless families are increasingly unsheltered and continues to

advocate and inform to help the county understand these laws and policies. Looking forward to state intervention.

VIII. Final Remarks and Adjournment

Alex Visotzky provided final comments. Carolina Reid requested a future discussion on the implications of federal policy changes. Graham Knaus suggested mapping the framework of responsibility between local, state and federal efforts in the homelessness field. Tunisia Owens suggested a discussion on Housing and Urban Development's (HUD) Point-in-Time count and opportunities to collect better data.

The next Advisory Committee meeting is to be determined depending on AC member availability. The meeting was adjourned at 2:52 pm.