

# Existing and Emerging Approaches

Jurisdictions statewide are prioritizing homelessness in their communities because the benefits of addressing this problem will help improve the overall health of their communities. Fortunately, cities and counties can use a number of existing resources, services and programs to address this complex problem. The list below provides a starting point to think about what could work in your community — but each city and county is unique, and therefore individual approaches should be based on the community's unique needs and resources.



## Housing

Lack of affordable housing options is a leading cause of homelessness. California has an estimated affordable housing shortage of more than 1 million units<sup>19</sup>.

- **Rapid Rehousing:** This approach provides temporary housing assistance to homeless individuals. The model entails prioritizing the quick relocation of homeless populations into temporary housing and then providing other support, such as mental and social services.
- **Continuum of Care (CoC):** CoCs are designed to promote communitywide commitment to the goal of ending homelessness. They provide funding for efforts by nonprofit providers and state and local governments to quickly rehouse homeless individuals and families while minimizing the trauma and dislocation caused to homeless individuals, families and communities by homelessness. Typically, CoCs are local planning bodies that coordinate homelessness services for specific geographic areas.
- **Tiny homes:** Tiny homes have gained in popularity as a lower-cost alternative to traditional single-family housing construction. Tiny homes have also served as transitional housing for individuals experiencing homelessness. A tiny home is a small structure of between 60 and 400 square feet that supports a minimalist lifestyle. Depending on funding, a tiny house can range from a simple room with a bed to something

more robust with a compostable toilet, kitchenette, loft and front porch. For the purposes of housing those experiencing homelessness, these units are not necessarily meant to be fully contained dwellings, but rather sleeping units intended to replace other substandard sleeping arrangements. Building small communities of tiny homes to be used as transitional housing embraces the established Housing First model. Tiny homes are sustainable and less expensive to build and do not require extensive expertise, allowing volunteers of many backgrounds and skill levels to help with construction. Moreover, the simple materials required can be donated by local stores and community members. Depending on funding, donations and resources, a tiny home village could contain showering and laundry facilities and essential wraparound services. Tiny homes and villages are not without controversy and can face local barriers to construction. One primary barrier is local zoning laws that prevent the construction of structures as small as tiny houses. Finding a place to locate a tiny home village can also be difficult in some areas due to limited space and concerns from nearby residents over transitional housing.

<sup>19</sup> [http://www.hcd.ca.gov/policy-research/plans-reports/docs/California percent27s-Housing-Future-Full-Public-Draft.pdf](http://www.hcd.ca.gov/policy-research/plans-reports/docs/California%20percent27s-Housing-Future-Full-Public-Draft.pdf)

### ***Rapid Rehousing — Bridge to Housing***

#### **BEST PRACTICE**

Yolo County, the City of West Sacramento and Yolo County Housing collaborated on a pilot project in 2014 to relocate an entire homeless encampment on a West Sacramento riverbank. The project relocated the encampment to a single motel where participants were offered temporary housing, case management and services.

Spearheaded by the West Sacramento Police Department, the pilot project featured a highly collaborative and comprehensive planning process involving multiple stakeholders. The planning group, composed of public, private and nonprofit entities, met over the course of two months to develop the best strategy for relocating the homeless encampment. After the planning process, the pilot included three assessments to gain a better understanding of the needs and challenges of the homeless population living in the encampment. Coordinated outreach was also conducted to build relationships with the population.

The program placed an emphasis on providing frequent and consistent on-site services. Through four months of temporary housing and intensive case management, participants were able to stabilize their lives, address health issues and secure a housing voucher. Other services provided on-site included daily lunches, haircuts, mental health services and harm reduction classes. Of the 53 participants who completed the program, 42 remained engaged in services with case managers 12 months after exiting the program. Furthermore, 68 percent of participants were able to secure permanent housing.

The overall cost of the project was \$152,238 — \$6,000 less than expected. It was funded primarily by the City of West Sacramento and Yolo County (the rest of the cost was covered by donations).

### ***Temporary Emergency Shelter Units — 14Forward***

#### **EMERGING PRACTICE**

In 2016, Yuba County collaborated with local nonprofits, faith-based organizations and the private sector to launch a temporary shelter community for its local homeless population. Faced with the problem of several encampments along surrounding rivers, the county created a 20-unit tiny village of Tuff Sheds to relocate some of the homeless population. The Tuff Sheds are 12 by 8 foot shelters with beds, windows and insulation. They do not have electricity or running water, but there are lavatories on-site as well as a nearby homelessness center that offers meals and showers.

After a plan was fully formulated, the village was developed in about two months and officially opened in July 2016. Meant to function as temporary shelter, the goal of the village is to provide individuals with shelter for 30 days and with supportive resources to help move tenants into more permanent housing. Since its opening, the on-site case managers have helped over 100 people, coordinated nearly 900 service referrals and transitioned over 45 percent of people exiting the program to a permanent destination.

The village was funded through county temporary relocation funds collected from countywide code enforcement activities, a small amount of general funds and financial and in-kind donations.

### ***Tiny Homes — Fresno Poverello House***

#### **EMERGING PRACTICE**

Launched in 2004, the Poverello House — a homeless shelter in Fresno — created the Village of Hope and, in 2007, expanded it to include the Community of Hope to meet an increasing demand for homeless shelters. The villages consist of tiny homes or Tuff Sheds that accommodate about 124 clients every night. Homeless individuals staying in the villages have access to services such as education, substance abuse counseling and life-skills training coordinated by a client services coordinator.

With a motto of “take care of yourself, take care of others, and take care of this place,” the overnight clients are expected to provide their own security and clean up after themselves. The simple shelter provides secure and temporary housing for individuals to make the transition into permanent housing.

## Veterans

“Homeless veterans” refers to those who have served on active duty in the armed forces of the United States. In 2016, California had a total of 9,612 homeless veterans. This equates to one in four veterans.<sup>20</sup> A number of funding programs are available to cities and counties to combat veteran homelessness. See the Funding Options section on page 11 for more information.

### ***Housing Assistance for Veterans — Housing Our Heroes*** BEST PRACTICE

In 2016, the City of San Diego and the San Diego Housing Commission (SDHC) partnered to launch the Housing our Heroes initiative and committed to getting 1,000 homeless veterans off the streets and into shelters or housing. This initiative is part of *Housing First — San Diego*, the SDHC’s three-year Homelessness Action Plan launched in 2014.

The initiative involves a \$12.5 million investment (from federal, city and SDHC resources) to provide housing opportunities for homeless veterans through coordinated efforts with landlords, financial assistance and supportive services. The program comprises four key components.

- **Landlord Outreach:** Incentives are provided to landlords to encourage more of them to rent units to homeless veterans. Specific incentives include a monetary payment for each unit that is rented to veterans.
- **Rapid Re-housing Assistance:** This component will help homeless veterans and families who may become homeless due to unforeseen circumstances. Funds can cover up-front move-in costs and, at times, rental assistance.
- **SDHC Federal VASH Vouchers:** Vouchers will be available to assist chronically homeless veterans that have both a disability and honorable discharge with rental assistance and supportive health services.



- **SDHC Federal Housing Vouchers with Supportive Services:** These vouchers will be available to homeless veterans that are not eligible for the Federal VASH vouchers.

Over a two-year period, funds will be allocated to these four components to help the City of San Diego provide housing for up to 1,000 homeless military veterans. Since 2016, the initiative had more than 700 homeless veterans enrolled in the program.

The initiative is funded by a combination of federal resources (VASH vouchers), city general funds and SDHC funds.

## Health and Social Services

Homelessness is closely linked to factors related to health, behavioral health and social services. In many cases, untreated health issues can lead to homelessness. According to HUD, those living in homeless shelters are “twice as likely have a disability compared to the general population”<sup>21</sup>.

- **Whole Person Care (WPC):** The WPC model is an integrated and coordinated approach between health, behavioral health and social services agencies to provide efficient and effective resources to Medi-Cal recipients who are frequent users of the health care system. The model addresses the full spectrum of a person’s needs, such as health, behavioral and socioeconomic challenges. Many of the pilot programs are targeting high utilizers, residents who are homeless or at risk of homelessness and people with mental health or substance use disorders.

20 U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. *The 2016 Annual Homeless Assessment Report (AHAR) to Congress*. Page 54.

21 National Alliance to End Homelessness: <https://endhomelessness.org/homelessness-in-america/what-causes-homelessness/health/>

- **Safe Havens:** Private or semi-private long-term housing for people with severe mental illness and are limited to a small number of people within a facility.
- **Homeless Outreach Teams:** Homeless Outreach Teams provide outreach to and engage with the homeless population to connect them with services all focused on the goal of getting the client housed.

**Whole Person Care — Alameda County  
Care Connect (AC3)**  
PROMISING PRACTICE

The California Department of Health Care Services (HCS) in 2016 awarded the Alameda County Health Care Services Agency (HCSA) \$140 million to implement a whole person care pilot program. The goal of the AC3 pilot is to build infrastructure that will improve integration, reduce unnecessary utilization of health care services and improve health outcomes for homeless individuals and other “high utilizers” of health care services.

With the understanding that individuals often need coordinated services across several departments and sectors, the AC3 vision is to create an integrated system across multiple systems that helps high-need patients achieve optimal independence and health in safe and stable housing. AC3 includes six critical components: 1) strengthening of care coordination by including comprehensive social resources into a person’s care plan; 2) improving and facilitating care integration between primary care providers, mental health providers, substance use programs and family supports; 3) data sharing between partners in the form of a community health record; 4) housing and homelessness, focusing on fully implementing the Housing Resource Centers and Coordinated Entry; 5) BH Crisis Response System focusing on decreasing the revolving door to acute psychiatric care; and 6) improving the consumer and family experience.

The funding for AC3 comes from federal dollars through an 1115 waiver or a Medi-Cal 2020. These waivers enable states to negotiate how Medicaid dollars are spent to allow flexibility with programs. The grant also requires a 50 percent match.

**Marin County Homeless Outreach Teams**

In response to persistent high visibility people on the street who were also high utilizers of expensive services, the community began piloting a new approach called HOT (Homeless Outreach Team). Marin County created its version of HOT based on what was being done successfully in San Mateo.

The HOT process in Marin County involved these steps:

1. Creating a HOT list of the most challenging and hard-to-serve individuals in downtown. The team consulted the Fire Department, Police Department and downtown outreach workers to identify the chronically homeless. Outreach workers from the San Rafael Police Department and Community Action Marin engage candidates to build trust. After a person grants permission, they are added to the HOT list.
2. Bringing together every provider of services to the chronically homeless. This included St. Vincent’s, Ritter Center, the City of San Rafael, Marin County Health and Human Services, County Mental Health, Probation, Marin Housing Authority, the District Attorney’s Office, Community Action Marin and Homeward Bound.
3. Creating and implementing a customized housing plan for each person on the HOT list. Each provider is accountable for completing action items to move a person on the list toward housing. At biweekly meetings, each provider reports on what it accomplished since the previous meeting. The goal is to place someone as quickly as possible in permanent housing appropriate for their needs.
4. Making sure front-line and senior staff are on the HOT team, so that when they are in the process of helping individuals, system gaps that hamper effective service provision can also be addressed. Having high level people on the team who can make things happen is absolutely vital to this process.

The program’s success is measured by not just housing someone, but also by keeping them housed. The intensity of services needed to do that requires all our public and nonprofit providers to rethink and redesign how services are provided. Case managers ensure that the person is



connected to all the services needed to keep them stably housed. With the initiation of the HOT teams, police contacts dropped from 38.46 per month to 0.04 per month.

The project manager is funded partly by the county and partly by St. Vincent's, which is the project manager. Additional contributions come from each of the service providers. Additional information on the program can be found online.

- County of Marin: [marinhot.org](http://marinhot.org)
- City of San Rafael <https://www.cityofsanrafael.org/documents/homeless-outreach-team-hot-program-report-2016>
- City of San Rafael blog: <https://www.cityofsanrafael.org/departments/homelessness>

### ***LifeMoves Homeless Outreach Team (HOT)*** PROMISING PRACTICE

San Mateo LifeMoves is using a multifaceted therapeutic service model to end homelessness in San Mateo and Santa Clara counties. The model includes using modern housing in conjunction with intensive and tailored health services.

One of its successful program elements is the Homeless Outreach Team, a team of trained case managers that reaches out to homeless individuals on the ground level. The goal is to transition them off the streets and eventually into stable housing. Because homelessness is a complex issue, HOT members typically work with a variety of different groups including local law enforcement, community stakeholders and businesses to successfully move homeless men and women into supportive housing. HOT members also provide homeless individuals with case management and connect them with essential services. This proactive approach helps reduce costs and expenses related to medical and law enforcement services.

With over 17 sites throughout the Bay Area, the nonprofit serves about 1,000 homeless individuals each night.

LifeMoves Outreach services are largely funded by the County of San Mateo Human Service Agency with Measure A funding. LifeMoves services are funded through a combination of many city, county and federal government contracts and private donations.

## **Families**

Families experiencing homelessness may be harder to identify, as they may not be as visible as other populations. They can experience homelessness due to a number of reasons including job loss, income insecurity or unanticipated bills. According to the National Alliance to End Homelessness, families comprise about 35 percent of the homeless population. Homelessness among families significantly compounds toxic stress, which impacts children and parents alike and can lead to or exacerbate other issues such as substance abuse, domestic violence and truancy. A number of funding programs are available to cities and counties to assist homeless families. See the examples below and the Funding Options section for more information.

### ***Saint John's Program for Real Change*** BEST PRACTICE

Saint John's Program for Real Change operates the largest shelter in Sacramento County and the only one focused exclusively on homeless women and children. Its total daily capacity is 270, with an annual capacity of 1,000. Sacramento County's point-in-time count in July 2017 was 3,666 people living without permanent shelter, and 2,000 of those people were living outdoors.

Funded through a combination of private and public funders, including the USDA, California Department of Education, California Wellness Foundation, Allstate Foundation and Serving California, among many others, Saint John's is a true public-private partnership. For every \$1 in county funding received, Saint John's raises \$9 to serve more women and children with full programming.

Saint John's Program for Real Change is designed to support women and children in becoming permanently independent from "the system," thereby making room for others in need. The average woman who comes to Saint John's is 34 years old with two children. The challenges they face vary. However, 100 percent of the women lack stable work history/current employment. Other challenges include substance abuse (74 percent), domestic violence (68 percent), criminal history (60 percent), mental illness (54 percent) and lack of education (52 percent do not have a high school diploma or GED).

Originally founded as an emergency shelter in 1985, Saint John's has expanded into a 12–18 month program that provides women with the education, tools and habits needed to work and live independently.

The program provides housing and meals in coordination with on-site intensive, structured and individualized support including mental health therapy, alcohol and drug counseling, budgeting classes, basic education and hands-on employment training. Over the course of a year, each program participant receives an average of 675 hours of service each month.

The program model also supports reunification of women and children through Child Protection Services (CPS) processes, facilitating CPS-required education, appointments and supervised visits. In 2016, 20 women were reunited with 46 children.

Between 2014 and 2016, over 1,500 women and children were served through Saint John's. In 2016 alone, reduction in homelessness saved taxpayers a minimum of \$13 million, thanks to the program.

Saint John's Program for Real Change is primarily funded by private donations and some public funds.

### **Job and Skills Training — City of Bakersfield**

#### **BEST PRACTICE**

In May 2013, the City of Bakersfield partnered with the Bakersfield Homeless Center (BHC) to help solve the problem of highway litter after state budget cuts reduced Caltrans' resources to clean up highways. The partnership developed an innovative freeway litter cleanup program performed by members of the homeless community. The program would provide job training skills and increase employment opportunities for the homeless population and the problem of highway litter.

The funding for this program came from Caltrans and the Kern Council of Governments. Through this partnership, clients of BHC received paying jobs to clean the freeways. As a result, over 50 homeless individuals were employed at minimum wage. About 250 family members were in housing and approximately 64 percent paid their rent without any subsidy. Local businesses have also begun to

participate in similar programs — the city now provides jobs in green waste sorting and animal care.

The successful program not only reduced the highway litter problem, but also decreased the homeless population and created an emerging labor force eager to work. Many of the individuals who participated in the program were able to receive better paying jobs in the private sector and in the city.

### **Community Service — Downtown Streets Team**

#### **BEST PRACTICE**

Founded in 2005, Downtown Streets Team is a nonprofit addressing homelessness by not only providing solutions to homeless men and women, but also challenging them to take an active role in their recovery. This takes the form of having the homeless volunteer with Downtown Streets Team on beautification projects within their respective communities. In return, the volunteers or "team members" receive necessities including a stipend, vital health services and case management. The program offers a "ladder of success" system where team members can continue to improve their skills and move up the ladder, while gaining additional work responsibilities with the potential for promotion to managerial levels. Team members are also encouraged to share their stories with the community at schools, churches or business associations, which helps to shift the negative perceptions of homelessness. The eventual goal is to transition team members to full-time employment over the course of a year.

Downtown Streets Team operates in eight Bay Area communities (San Francisco, San Jose, Palo Alto, Santa Cruz, Hayward, Novato, San Rafael and Sunnyvale) and serves over 750 homeless men and women every week. In addition, through its beautification efforts, the nonprofit has removed over 2.8 million gallons of debris in the last year alone.

Funding differs in each community, but sources can include Public Works/Parks and Recreation departments, CDBG (economic development and human services), environmental agencies (water districts, environmental services departments, EPA), corporate sponsorships and Business Improvement Districts, along with county and city funding.

## Law Enforcement

Law enforcement plays a critical role in addressing homelessness.

- **Reentry Programs:** These programs are aimed at helping men and women recently released from jail or prison successfully re-enter their community to reduce recidivism.
- **Coordinated Outreach Teams:** This approach involves the creation of a team that conducts outreach to homeless populations in communities. Law enforcement officers may be the first to respond to situations involving the homeless population but may not have all the necessary resources to effectively communicate with them. Therefore, these teams often consist of a law enforcement officer, health and human service representative and clinicians to provide the appropriate services to people.

### **Homelessness Coordinator — City of Citrus Heights Navigator Program** PROMISING PRACTICE

In 2015, the City of Citrus Heights faced a growing need to provide services to its homeless population. Post-recession, the city had experienced the reduction of services in the urban core. The Citrus Heights Police Department conducted a survey of the homeless community and found there was a predominant desire to stay in the city even though most homeless resources were not available within the city limits. Through its partnership with Sacramento Self Help Housing (SSHH) and the Citrus Heights Homeless Assistance Resource Team (HART), the city identified a need for a “navigator” or case manager for the local homeless population. The model has been used in other communities to facilitate enrollment into HUD’s Coordinated Entry wait list and ranking system for available housing.

The navigator or homelessness coordinator serves as the main point of contact in the county’s coordinated system and reaches out to homeless populations to connect them with services. In addition, the navigator works in the field to directly engage individuals where they are located. Based on an initial “vulnerability” test, the navigator assesses which services might work best for each homeless individual.

This position is fully funded with a combination of CDBG funds and other funding from the City of Citrus Heights.

### **Outreach Teams — City of Anaheim Homelessness Outreach Team (HOT)** PROMISING PRACTICE

Since 2014, the City of Anaheim has transitioned 960 people from homelessness, with 92 percent still housed a year later.

Anaheim launched its comprehensive homelessness program, Coming Home Anaheim, in 2013. It focuses on weekly outreach, case management, access to services and stable, lasting housing. Since 2014, Anaheim has contracted with a nonprofit partner, City Net, to lead weekly outreach with the help of over 100 supporting churches and other nonprofits. Known as the Anaheim Homeless Collaborative, the group pools resources to find shelter space, transitional housing and long-term housing and supportive services.

The Anaheim Police Department’s Homelessness Outreach Team plays a key role in Coming Home Anaheim and works alongside City Net on weekly outreach. Anaheim police respond to 15,000 homelessness-related calls annually. Where necessary, the city turns to enforcement to address public safety and quality of life concerns, but enforcement is not seen as a solution to homelessness. Rather, it is another tool in a larger, comprehensive program. In some cases, enforcement — or the prospect of it — can be the impetus for someone accepting help and services and transitioning out of homelessness.

Anaheim’s annual contract with City Net totals \$150,000. In December 2017, the city council allocated an additional \$100,000 in funding to address homelessness. Anaheim uses its General Fund to support these efforts. The city also runs the Anaheim Housing Authority, which provides \$580,000 annually in rent-assistance vouchers from HUD.