

# Recent Accomplishments and the Road Ahead for San Diego County's Homelessness Services Ecosystem

Supporting Coordination to Improve Evidence-Based Practices

March 2026

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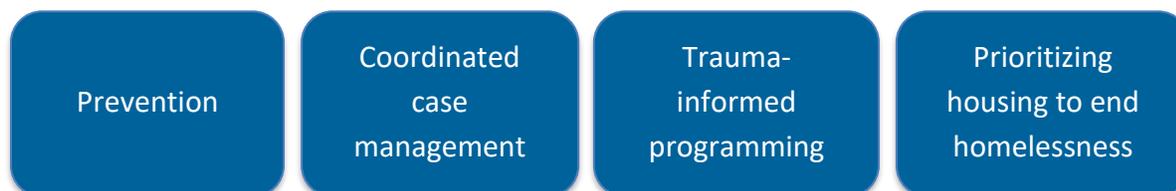
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## Executive Summary

Local governments, housing authorities, and Continuum of Care lead agencies play critical roles in addressing homelessness at the regional level. City and county governments can fund homeless service providers, enforce camping bans, and prioritize some forms of service delivery over others. Local housing authorities and partner governments incentivize and support the creation of affordable housing. The lead agency for the Continuum of Care (CoC) can be a thought leader on evidence-based practices as well as provide oversight of regional activities. In times when federal or state governments reduce contributions to homelessness programming or alter their practices, local agencies remain at the forefront of addressing regional needs.<sup>i</sup>

Agencies in the San Diego region are actively working to address homelessness in their jurisdictions. Through a thorough review of local efforts, this report documents how they are approaching this work in four key areas which have been identified through evaluation as vital for ending homelessness:



Evidence supporting these approaches has been building for over 20 years.<sup>ii</sup> Their adoption by the State of California, national advocacy groups, and the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) has trickled down to many communities.<sup>iii</sup> Although these four areas do not represent every evidence-based practice related to homelessness, they cover key areas highlighted by governments, researchers, and practitioners by focusing on the beginning, middle, and end of homelessness.<sup>iv</sup> Each one is an important element of a robust homeless response sector that supports individual dignity and pathways into permanent housing.

A critical way that local agencies organize their work related to homelessness is by preparing and adopting plans to address and/or end homelessness. Plans are not policy, but they are important aspirational documents that provide local agencies and stakeholders with a roadmap for identifying the nature of regional homelessness, setting an agenda to identify necessary tools and strategies, establishing areas around which regional entities can coordinate and collaborate, and defining metrics for measuring progress.<sup>v</sup> As aspirational documents, plans can be useful tools for holding the officials and entities that adopted them accountable. Conversely, as non-binding guidelines, they can be created and then abandoned or forgotten. In the larger San Diego region, six cities, the lead agency for the San Diego CoC (Regional Task Force on Homelessness, or RTFH), and the County of San Diego have adopted plans.<sup>vi</sup> Using them as guidelines in this report is an effort to bolster the use of plans as guiding principles for regional collaboration and progress on homelessness.

Increasing coordination across entities is the core recommendation of this report. Improving coordination and sharing best practices can support the achievement of evidence-based practices

and improve the regional homelessness service system. This recommendation surfaced across our data sources, which include the region's current plans to end homelessness, interviews with current and former staff from the region, interviews with program providers, and analysis of public documents that outline plans and programs for the cities, County, and RTFH.<sup>vii</sup>

This report underscores the importance of five vital elements for the adoption and implementation of evidence-based practices in San Diego:

- 1) federal, state, and local funding opportunities that provide flexible funding and multiple years of support;
- 2) leadership within local governments and regional agencies that prioritizes evidence-based approaches, particularly prevention and affordable housing, rooted in comprehensive plans;
- 3) staff with experience and expertise in homelessness services who can effectively manage homeless programming, oversee intergovernmental coordination, and apply for state and federal funds;
- 4) and input from people with lived experience of homelessness at all stages, including inception, implementation, and measuring impact to support trauma-informed efforts;
- 5) and regional coordination informed by a regional plan, service need estimates, and shared data where all regional entities come prepared to commit resources and identify a pathway forward.

After describing the evidence-based practices that local agencies are implementing, we describe how coordination can support local agency efforts to further support prevention, coordinated case management, trauma-informed programming, and housing to end homelessness.

Key recommendations include:

- RTFH, County, and municipal staff should increase opportunities for coordination and co-learning that can help cities expand their capacity in diverse ways to be better prepared when opportunities to apply for state and federal funding are available.
- Cities, housing authorities, RTFH, and the County should establish harmonized budget reports for the region's homelessness, residential behavioral health, and supportive housing ecosystems, to support a more robust regional planning process. Present efforts are often stymied by insufficient understanding of what regional goals for service support should be and how far regional providers are from meeting them.
- The County and RTFH should increase data sharing to foster regionwide coordination between currently disconnected entities, such as healthcare, law enforcement, public benefits agencies, and homeless programming.
- Municipalities and the County should pursue revenue generation mechanisms to facilitate the construction of deeply affordable and permanent supportive housing (PSH) and support operating costs.

This report is one in an ongoing series about homelessness service provision and access in San Diego County, conducted by Homelessness Hub at UC San Diego. The Homelessness Hub research team has designed a detailed and comprehensive inventory and assessment of the existing shelter and services ecosystem in San Diego County to better understand how our region can improve program outcomes and move more people into permanent housing. The focus of our research is regional because homelessness does not conform to geographic boundaries, and the services and policies of one municipality can impact neighboring jurisdictions.

We thank the Regional Task Force on Homelessness for supporting our Homelessness-Experienced Action Research Training (HEART) Fellowship. The HEART Fellows are co-researchers with lived experience of homelessness working on various studies, including this one. Learn more about the HEARTs at <https://homelessnesshub.ucsd.edu/heart-fellows/index.html> We thank donors who wish to remain anonymous for their support of our ongoing series on the homelessness services ecosystem. Finally, we thank the Homelessness Hub undergraduate student researchers who contributed to this report, including, Patricia Estaris, Amy Garcia, Samantha Lee, Haven Lo, Kieran Stanko, and Michael Yang.

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# Recent Accomplishments and the Road Ahead for San Diego County's Homelessness Services Ecosystem

## Supporting Coordination to Improve Evidence-Based Practices

### Supporting and Impeding Evidence-Based Approaches for Addressing Homelessness

City and county governments, as well as housing authorities and Continuum of Care leads, play critical roles in addressing homelessness. These entities can fund homeless service providers, enforce city camping bans, incentivize and support the creation of deeply affordable housing, and prioritize some forms of service delivery over others. For elected leaders, which priorities they pursue can be driven by a political calculus. However, for every entity working to address homelessness, there are important factors outside the realm of politics that influence their ability to prioritize evidence-based solutions. Coordination—by which we mean working cooperatively with other entities to identify common solutions, jointly apply for funding, communicate effectively, and sharing data and information—can support the implementation of evidence-based policies and programs. These include prevention, coordinated case management, trauma-informed programming, and prioritizing housing.



### Prevention

Prevention efforts refer to a variety of programs and financial interventions, but all prioritize housing stabilization “upstream” from homelessness, before people initially engage the homelessness system. This evidence-based practice requires a system for identifying people at high risk of homelessness or on the verge of housing loss (e.g., income-based eligibility, proof of loss of income) and typically works by subsidizing rent, or otherwise providing financial support, while a person is still housed.<sup>8</sup>

*Preventing* households from experiencing homelessness is one of the most effective interventions to reduce homelessness. Studies about the effectiveness of prevention efforts show that for many lower-income households, short-term cash infusions or shallow subsidies can support short and long term housing retention.<sup>9</sup> It also costs far less to provide an individual or family financial support to stay in their housing, or find replacement housing while they still have a roof over their heads, than it is to provide emergency shelter, housing, and case management after they have become homeless.<sup>10</sup>

In San Diego County, prevention efforts are becoming increasingly common. The cities of Carlsbad, Chula Vista, La Mesa, San Diego, Solana Beach, and Vista, and the County of San Diego, have some type of rental support program to prevent homelessness.<sup>11</sup> Some explicitly credit previous efforts by the local non-profit Serving Seniors and the County of San Diego as inspirations for their programs (see the Appendix for a complete list of programs).<sup>12</sup>

### ***Factors supporting prevention***

**A plan that prioritizes prevention** can support the adoption of prevention programs because it facilitates communication and elevates a program type across branches of government. For example, to support the City's plan to address homelessness in Vista, city staff and elected officials created the Vista Emergency Housing Assistance Program.<sup>13</sup> The program provides financial support and case management to qualified households at imminent risk of homelessness when the household can prove they are 14 days away from losing their housing due to inability to pay rent. City staff explained that including prevention as one of seven strategies to address homelessness in Vista was vital to its elevation as a program. Staff explained, "We're trying to keep people out of homelessness. We're trying to get people off the street into our navigation center. We're trying to set up transitional housing, permanent supportive housing. Ideally in the big picture, we're trying to create a system that people can get out of homelessness and into [supports] that can lead them to successful housing or successful jobs or both."

In addition to Vista, the City of San Diego, County of San Diego, and City of Carlsbad all elevate prevention as a vital area of focus

in their plans to address homelessness and have implemented them in accordance with those plans.

**Local, state, and/or federal funding** can make plans into realities, particularly when cities can rely on multiple or ongoing sources. The City of San Diego has worked with the San Diego Housing Commission (SDHC), the City's public housing agency, to oversee the Housing Instability Prevention Program (HIPP). Established in 2022, HIPP provides targeted levels of rental support as well as assistance with overdue rent and utility bills for qualified households for up to 24 months.<sup>14</sup> The HIPP program has successfully reduced average rent burdens for over 500 program beneficiaries.<sup>15</sup> While a total of 5.8 million dollars for HIPP has been approved through June 2026; the San Diego City Council will need to approve new funds for the program to continue in Fiscal Year 2026-27.<sup>16</sup>

The County of San Diego also promotes prevention efforts and implemented a "pilot" shallow rental subsidy program for seniors in 2022, funded by federal and County funds.<sup>17</sup> The federal funds supporting this program were from the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA). Flexibility in how local governments could use ARPA funds enabled this particular use.<sup>18</sup> However, the federal government has not provided any source of funds to continue or replace ARPA; therefore, programs funded from this source will end once funds run out or the ARPA expenditure deadline is reached in December 2026.<sup>19</sup>

In 2024, Vista allocated nearly \$1.2 million in ARPA funds to prevention, which were initially approved in 2021 and aimed to stimulate the economy after the COVID-19 pandemic. The 2024 effort served 132 Vista households. In the final four months of

2025, Vista expended \$180,000 of city revenue to prevent 18 Vista households from losing their housing.

**Local governments and non-profits that adopted prevention programs early have leveraged their experiences to encourage other entities to adopt and fund prevention programs.** Building off the success and experiences of other local jurisdictions and non-profits has raised the efforts of city elected officials to make the case for implementation in their own communities. In 2025, the cities of Chula Vista and La Mesa implemented shallow subsidies for seniors. For Chula Vista, funding came from the city's Housing Asset Fund<sup>20</sup> and is modeled on shallow rental subsidy programs implemented by the non-profit Serving Seniors and the County of San Diego.<sup>21</sup> Other cities in the County that have more recently increased efforts to address and end homelessness, such as Carlsbad and Oceanside, are moving in this same direction.<sup>22</sup>

In addition to government-financed programs, regional non-profits fill important gaps by reaching populations who may struggle to access government-funded prevention programs. For example, City Heights Community Development Corporation previously had the One Month Away program which assists with rent for people who are on the verge of housing loss in the City of San Diego.<sup>23</sup> Jewish Family Services implemented a temporary, one-time payment to families and seniors to prevent homelessness.<sup>24</sup> In the City of Oceanside, which is considering a city-funded rental assistance program, Brother Benno's—a non-profit organization serving people in need—funds an eviction-prevention rental assistance program.<sup>25</sup> Brother Benno's staff explained that program funds are depleted quickly every month with need far outpacing

supply. For example, Brother Benno's can provide support to 30 individuals per month but has received at least twice as many applications from July 2025 to December 2025. Brother Benno's staff reported that the organization received 150 applications in December 2025 and ran out of funding in one day, a first in the program's history. As Oceanside prepares to update its homeless action plan and propose a rental assistance program, they could consider looking to Brother Benno's for insights.

### ***Factors impeding prevention***

**Competing priorities in homeless services** can prevent cities from directing resources toward prevention efforts. For example, El Cajon city staff understand the value of prevention efforts but, with limited resources, have opted to fund homeless outreach and shelter beds. According to a city staff member in El Cajon, “The only challenge that we have is that we don't have an active program that helps with homeless prevention. The funding that we get doesn't allow for that. That's our challenge right now that we're only focusing on Rapid Re-Housing, case management outreach, and some rental assistance. The rental assistance that we have it's for moving to a new apartment, not helping you stay in place. That's a funding source that we need to expand, seek other funding sources or apply for a source that allows for homeless prevention to help people stay in place, or a shallow subsidy program.” While coordination cannot solve large budgetary problems, they could decrease the costs of establishing and managing prevention programs if done collaboratively with neighboring cities or the County.

**Inconsistent federal and state funding makes sustainable program development challenging for local agencies.** Some San Diego region governments used time-limited

ARPA funds for rental subsidies, which helped them build programs. The County of San Diego, which has more diverse revenue streams and larger budget reserves than many municipalities, used ARPA<sup>26</sup> funds for this purpose and was able to extend the size and length of time for its pilot shallow subsidy program. Despite this, the County's program is also temporary, reflecting the expiration of program fund sources and difficulty sustaining programs.<sup>27</sup> The challenges with building temporary programs, especially for smaller jurisdictions, was summed up well by a representative of the El Cajon City Manager's office: "We did not use [ARPA] for homeless programming because once the ARPA funds went away, we would not have a funding source for the ongoing need."



## By-Name Lists and Coordinated Case Management

Solving homelessness for an entire city, county, or region requires extensive coordination between providers and local agencies. A vital tool for cross-sector collaboration and case management is the "by-name list," (BNL). A BNL is a shared list of all the individuals experiencing homelessness in a community, often broken down by subpopulation and/or specific geographies, which partners use to comprehensively address the health and housing needs of each person or household while reducing duplication of effort.<sup>28</sup> BNLs are effectively used when all providers convene to determine the welfare of each client and identify their specific housing and other service needs on a routine basis. Consent and trust are key to BNL use so that people experiencing homelessness can be assured that as they speak with service providers and share personal information that information will be used to move them

into housing. In San Diego, BNL efforts are sometimes coordinated by city staff who do not always have direct access to Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) records or do not provide housing assessments or coordinated entry. Ideally, the project manager leading BNL efforts should have HMIS access. Finally, BNLs can become a productive way for law enforcement and emergency response personnel to work alongside providers in ways that lead to service uptake rather than ticketing or repeated visits to jail or the emergency room.

### ***Factors supporting by-name lists and coordinated case management***

**Regional Continuum of Care leadership** from the Regional Task Force on Homelessness (RTFH) has enabled multiple cities to implement BNL case management strategies by hiring technical assistance to teach city staff and support implementation. For example, Carlsbad, Oceanside, Vista, and Lemon Grove have been able to develop tailored strategies for community members experiencing homelessness after training and guidance from RTFH.

According to interviews with several leaders, RTFH has not, and cannot, act alone in this capacity. Coordination with other agencies is vital. Leadership from the County of San Diego has enabled RTFH's ability to convene cities at the regional level because the County Board of Supervisors and staff made the effort a priority and funded a specialist consultant to lead BNL implementation guidance. While this has not led to universal adoption of this evidence-based approach, cities continue to be brought onboard. For example, a city employee in El Cajon reported: "We go over best practices [as city staff] because everything's changing, and there's also different models. I know right now they're

rolling out this by-name list. We're educating ourselves [on] how that is going to work if we implement that here in El Cajon.”

**State funding that requires by-name lists** have led to more rapid implementation in some cities. Specifically, California Encampment Resolution Funds (ERF), which have been available to local governments since 2022 in multi-year cycles, have expanded city and service staff capacity in the cities of Carlsbad, Chula Vista, Lemon Grove, National City, San Diego, Santee, Vista, Oceanside, and the unincorporated communities of Lakeside and Bonita, which has enabled the creation and use of BNLs in many. ERF requires that local government staff and contracted providers approach people living unsheltered in a specific geographic zone with offers of shelter, interim housing, permanent housing, or treatment (if needed). Interviewees from Carlsbad, which innovated early with BNLs, report that BNLs facilitate informed and personalized outreach, cross-agency coordination, medical interventions when necessary, and improved housing connections.

State ERF data suggests that ERF funding recipients within the County which have concluded their granting periods have successfully connected some encampment residents with permanent housing, although on average most people have been provided with services only and/or interim housing, which includes shelter or access to other temporary programs.<sup>29</sup> The use of sanctioned encampments in the City of San Diego, and rapid rehousing programs in San Diego and other area cities that have obtained state ERF grants, should be assessed in 2026 to determine whether clients were able to obtain and/or retain housing after 12 and 24 months.

**Regional coordination** is vital for BNLs in San Diego County, where people may move among jurisdictions by choice or necessity. The City of Vista is piloting efforts to coordinate case management using BNLs with other North County cities. This initiative was made possible due to a long-standing effort from North County cities to collaborate, spearheaded by the Alliance for Regional Solutions, a North County organization that coordinates around various policies, programs, and issues, particularly homelessness.<sup>30</sup> A representative of the Alliance explained that previously North County cities tried to go it alone but have learned that the region must work together. They noted that, “...a lot of the city council members were kind of like, we're going to only help our own people. And I think they're now realizing they can't do that... [For example], most people that are experiencing homelessness...aren't just in Oceanside. They might travel to Carlsbad. They might travel to Vista. They might, it's more regional than just one specific city...we really need to all work together.” According to Vista city staff, they were motivated to make this change as their challenges to address homelessness grew after the COVID-19 pandemic and as new funding became available to increase staffing that could focus on homelessness issues. City staff positions dedicated to addressing homelessness have enabled most jurisdictions in the County to more proactively address homelessness on a regional basis and coordinate around tracking clients through BNL across jurisdictions. Two people who have held positions across multiple agencies noted that most cities did not have such a position in 2020. Five years later, most do.

Regional coordination can also support targeted outreach events where a range of

services are offered to people experiencing, or at risk of, homelessness. In the South Bay, the City of Chula Vista works with the County of San Diego and service providers to host weekly, coordinated outreach events. These events bring together a range of different services with a consistent schedule to increase engagement. People new to the area or new to homelessness may have their first face-to-face engagement with service providers at such outreach events, making them known to providers and integrated into BNL and similar efforts. In addition, the diversity of services on offer, due to coordination across government and non-profit entities, means that people can address the varied challenges they may face (e.g., income eligibility, document loss, healthcare access, housing assessments) as they work to exit homelessness.

### ***Factors impeding by-name lists and coordinated case management***

Interviews and analysis of local plans revealed that three primary factors impede the creation and utilization of BNLs and coordinated case management.

**Criminalizing homelessness** can undermine BNL work and coordinated case management by abruptly relocating individuals or encampments and issuing tickets for sleeping, sitting, or lying in public, which can make it difficult for outreach workers to maintain contact and relationships with clients.<sup>31</sup> Research suggests that when case management and behavioral health professionals replace or work alongside law enforcement when responding to community concerns about homelessness, outcomes such as service engagement are improved.<sup>32</sup>

Funding from the State of California is supporting city and County efforts to have outreach staff lead efforts to address

unsheltered homelessness. State ERF require that each applicant “details the controls in place to not ‘penalize homelessness’” (HCD NOFA),<sup>33</sup> which cities have interpreted as having outreach workers and healthcare professionals at the forefront of grant activities while law enforcement are on hand in a supporting role only.<sup>34</sup> In the San Diego region, some cities that have approved bans on sleeping, lying, and/or camping in most public places (e.g., Oceanside and the City of San Diego) are also recipients of ERF. Law enforcement in these cities may carry out enforcement actions outside of ERF zones but, per staff in these cities, are not taking a leading role within those zones. Guidance and funding from the federal government may undermine efforts to deemphasize criminalization, but HUD is continuing to revise this policy.<sup>35</sup>

**Insufficient city staff capacity** makes it difficult to manage multiple projects or facilitate coordination across departments or with other cities. It also makes adopting or implementing new strategies like BNL difficult. Finally, it hampers efforts to develop proposals for funding, present them to city lawmakers, and administer funds if acquired. An Escondido city staff person explained, “What has really impacted us has been just a lack of staff resources because it takes not only resources to administer the money once you get it, but it takes staff time to apply for it. I would say that has really been our biggest obstacle is we've identified sources of funding that we think our council would support...and our public safety departments would support.... We're going to wait until next year because we don't have the resources necessary to apply for it.” Insufficient staff capacity has meant that Escondido staff focus on the housing aspects of their work with less attention to homelessness, relying instead on law enforcement and sanitation to take the lead.

A former mayor of Escondido explained that insufficient staff capacity was largely attributable to insufficient city revenues. Escondido voters have rejected new tax measures multiple times, sometimes with encouragement from elected leaders, leading to deep cuts to city staff and programming. This changed in 2024 when Escondido voters approved Measure I, a sales tax increase that funds various city functions.<sup>36</sup>

The City of Vista, which has increased staff capacity in recent years, identified insufficient staffing and expertise as central problems in previous efforts to address homelessness. City staff pointed to a specific example. Prior to 2021, the city entered a contract with an outreach provider. Given city staff's lack of capacity and specific expertise around homelessness, the contract specified a rate of pay for frontline workers that was too low, resulting in rapid turnover within the outreach agency. Rapid turnover meant that outreach workers were unable to build relationships with clients and the outreach effort did little to move people into housing or temporary solutions. After this experience, and the addition of staff focused specifically on homelessness, city workers have the capacity to collaborate more closely with providers and regional experts to set contract terms.

**Insufficient affordable, permanent housing options** undermine BNL and other coordinated management approaches. As one provider explained, if case management, even when coordinated around a BNL, is not moving people into housing, it has very limited utility. Another provider said, "I don't think 90 days or 30 days [of shelter or housing assistance] does anything for anybody other than get you off the street." For local governments to end homelessness, rather than contain it, they must combine coordinated case management *and* deeply

affordable housing options. A representative from the Alliance for Regional Solutions noted: "[If] we want to get to a point where we don't need shelters, we just need more affordable housing."

In San Diego County, renters need to earn \$49.44 per hour (or \$8,570 /Month) to earn an income that is three times the average monthly asking rent of \$2,571. That is 2.9 times the City of San Diego minimum wage (\$17.75 per hour or \$3,077/Month) or 83.55% of income at minimum wage towards housing alone, and thus far out of reach for many San Diegans.<sup>37</sup>



## Trauma-Informed and Person-Centered Programming

Over a quarter of people experiencing homelessness have histories of traumatic life events, such as child abuse or neglect, intimate partner violence, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) related to military service, and other incidents.<sup>38</sup> The process of becoming homeless and events associated with being unhoused can be retraumatizing or newly traumatizing for people without histories of traumatic life events.<sup>39</sup> Due to this, researchers recommend that programs in the homelessness service ecosystem be trauma-informed. Trauma-informed care programs, or person-centered care, refer to an approach to client engagement which centers the strengths of clients to understand how their actions may be responses to trauma. Trauma-informed care emphasizes physical, psychological, and emotional safety and provides clients an opportunity to feel a sense of control over their own lives by encouraging participation and choice by

the client.<sup>40</sup> One former Vista staff person summarized the research evidence on the need for trauma-informed care when they said, “there isn't one type of homelessness and we shouldn't be addressing homelessness [with] everybody under one basket. I don't think that's helpful. I understand the intentions of it, but I don't think that a one-size-fits-all program is what people need all the time.”

Local agencies are better able to be trauma-informed when they solicit early input on program design and ongoing program feedback from people with lived experience of homelessness including its different subpopulations (e.g., veterans, households with children, and older adults, unsheltered versus sheltered, urban versus suburban, etc.) and/or people currently utilizing homeless services. Training by qualified experts is also critical for local government and other agency staff who write the contracts that program providers must execute. Coordination between RTFH and regional governments and other entities for training or contract review can support improved adherence to trauma-informed programming. Agencies that write contracts for homeless service delivery should set clear expectations that frontline workers and program directors understand trauma-informed practices and center clients in their work.

### ***Factors supporting trauma-informed programming***

**Establishing channels for communication from lived-experience groups and program clients** to public agencies can increase awareness of how city staff can support person-centered and trauma-informed programming. We highlight the efforts of the San Diego Housing Commission (SDHC) in taking a proactive approach to incorporating lived experiences

by soliciting input during the planning or revision stages of program and policy development. In interviews, SDHC staff described their commitment to think *with* advocates who have lived experience of homelessness, housing precarity, and homeless system navigation about new or revised policies and programs. The text box below describes these efforts from the standpoint of lived experience advocates who participated in SDHC solicitations regarding policy and program redesign.

#### ***Shelter Redesign Working Group***

In early 2025, San Diego Housing Commission (SDHC) solicited feedback on the design and programming of a shelter that was being repurposed for a new use. SDHC convened a group of lived experience experts and provided an overview of the space and potential plans, then sought input on services offered, shelter layout and amenities, and other methods for increasing feelings of safety and program engagement among shelter clients. Because SDHC is committed to funding low barrier shelters, the new shelter needed to work for people of different gender identities, people dealing with mental illness and/or substance use disorders, and varied ages and physical mobility challenges. Lived experience advocates with attributes or experiences that matched the populations SDHC anticipates serving were able to advocate for secure storage, increased privacy, and improved quality of case management. Advocates hope SDHC can report on how their input was implemented at a future date.

Some smaller cities in the region do not have such robust processes for engagement of people with lived experience and may struggle to compensate people for doing so.

We recommend that SDHC share insights into how to go about lived experience engagement by sharing the processes they follow. We also suggest that SDHC share key insights they have gained about shelter and other city programming over the years. In addition, we suggest that the County of San Diego, which has made efforts to survey and interview people with current and past lived experience, provide insights about their work to smaller jurisdictions that may struggle to routinely convene lived experience experts.

Several of the cities where we conducted interviews had shelter grievance policies in place that they use to improve service delivery. For example, the City of Vista uses a shelter grievance policy to identify challenges with providers and create feedback loops between city staff and leadership and people experiencing homelessness who utilize city programs. The grievance policy “Allows clients to reach out to the cities directly if the operator is not able to sufficiently...address their concerns.... That's one way for us to...receive client feedback and make sure that we're aware of some of the issues that they're experiencing inside the program when we are not [there] because we have that operator. It's certainly something that is a priority for city council. ... We have been able to make some substantial changes based on that feedback,” one staff person explained.

Ongoing, routine feedback was also done through survey tools. For example, shelters funded by the City of San Diego through the SDHC use a “Pulse for Good” survey which shelter clients can fill out at any time to provide feedback. SDHC staff reported that they require providers to submit quarterly reports about operations and that they directly monitor the Pulse for Good data for

direct insight on shelter operations. However, the extent to which clients use the survey kiosks and which issues might be raised there, rather than the city’s shelter grievance policy, is unclear.<sup>41</sup>

Representatives from the cities of El Cajon, Escondido, and Chula Vista all described soliciting feedback through more informal channels. Feedback sometimes came directly from people in programs or people experiencing street homelessness, such as when El Cajon Police who were conducting homeless outreach asked their contacts how they could improve client engagement. More often, city staff relied on shelter and other program operators to identify the good and bad of current city-supported work. For example, Chula Vista staff rely on their close working relationship with a local provider to understand client satisfaction because the provider requests ongoing feedback.

Ideally, all local agencies will implement methods to gain feedback from a diversity of people with lived experience during program inception, implementation, and evaluation. It is critical that any efforts to engage lived experience to enhance trauma-informed programming include a diversity of perspectives, including people who have been able to secure housing as well as people who are currently navigating the homelessness service ecosystem. Engaging with specific lived experience advocate networks, such as the Homeless-Experienced Action Leadership (HEAL) Network at the San Diego Housing Federation and Lived Experience Advisors, is especially valuable as these entities support members in thinking about how their personal experiences fit within the broader service ecosystem.

**Leadership from city and County leaders and staff** can support a trauma-informed approaches among program providers. This may be accomplished by requiring ongoing training or requiring trauma-informed approaches in city/county contracts. On the importance of leadership, a Chula Vista staff person explained, “It was our management and our council members, everybody, on the same page.... If you don't have that message coming from the top, it's going to be extremely difficult.” Through interviews with staff and review of service provider contracts, it is clear that when programmatic goals and orientations toward homelessness center trauma-informed approaches consistently over time it enables government staff to fully understand concepts, incorporate standards into service provider contracts, and to have trauma-informed approaches put into practice by frontline staff.<sup>42</sup>

While some staff and organizations may center these approaches regardless of service contracts, leadership in this area increases the likelihood that sensitivity to past trauma will become a standard practice across the homelessness service ecosystem. When this commitment is combined with feedback loops from program clients or people with lived experience, it is more likely that local agencies will improve service delivery on an ongoing basis, as described by a City of Vista staff person: “Sometimes we do hear some client feedback that is troubling and demonstrates a lack of...trauma-informed care or anything else. We address that with the operator and make sure-- ‘Hey, maybe it's time for some more training,’ or whatever it is.”

**Engaging with experts to support implementation** can provide city staff who have minimal experience in homelessness services insights into how to approach their

work. In San Diego County, RTFH provides region-wide leadership on trauma-informed programming and many other topics. Staff from numerous cities described the ways that they rely on RTFH to provide training and guidance on case management approaches. For example, a staff person from City of Vista explained, “The past year, RTFH has really stepped up and involved itself with North County and Vista in particular by helping the city understand community standards, including trauma-informed programming.” This staff person said that RTFH assessed their work and told them, “Hey, you're missing services. You're receiving CoC funds. You should be abiding by these community standards for outreach or sheltering or whatever else it is.” Because complying with evidence-based practices is fully voluntary, it took leadership from Vista’s city council and staff to pursue feedback and be open to input from RTFH. El Cajon staff looked to guidance from RTFH as well to understand how they might better balance support for a diversity of programming in the East County region, including prevention, outreach, shelter, and permanent housing.

Regional coordinating entities can help with expert insights as well. The Alliance for Regional Solutions supports trauma-informed training for regional service providers, typically provided by RTFH staff. This has informed efforts by the cities of Carlsbad, Oceanside, and Vista to hire service providers as city staff to guide contract processes and support other city staff in understanding a strengths-based approach.<sup>43</sup>

Two coordinated groups in the region are implementing trauma-informed programming by convening representatives from a range of agencies, in recognition of the fact that homelessness has a diversity of

causes and consequences. For example, the Alliance for Regional Solutions' Bridge to Housing group includes "about 60 to 70 outreach workers and shelter providers and all sorts of different people that work with people that are on the streets." They meet to share insights and resources within their specific sectors, but also connect with County representatives, staff representing employment, substance abuse treatment, and food distribution services. Leadership by the City of Chula Vista has led to a weekly outreach event in the city where people can access County of San Diego eligibility workers for benefits registration, behavioral health supports, ways to address basic needs (e.g., hygiene, food), how to access shelter programs, and more.

### ***Factors impeding trauma-informed programming***

**Insufficient workforce training, understaffing, and low pay** can complicate the ability of service provider organizations to provide high-quality care. Providing clients with compassionate, trauma-informed services is difficult when staff face financial difficulties due to low wages and are overwhelmed in their work environments due to understaffing.<sup>44</sup> This can result in poor case management outcomes and staff burnout which has negative ramifications for clients. Understanding the principles of trauma-informed programming are not sufficient on their own; service providers also need sufficient remuneration and personal stability to be better equipped to draw on the understanding and compassion needed to provide quality services.

The City of Vista has experimented with housing some frontline staff at its Buena Vista Navigation Shelter on site. Per a former City of Vista staff person, offering housing has allowed "new people coming

into the field some stability as they gain the skill set needed to earn more in this field."

In the City of San Diego, SDHC commissioned a report about pay levels in 2023 which lays out the challenges and consequences of insufficient staff pay.<sup>45</sup> Consequences include difficulty recruiting and retaining staff, who are themselves often on the brink of homelessness. Despite some attention to this issue, it is an area where regional progress has been insufficient or stalled. For example, the City of San Diego requires that contractors for homeless services adhere to living wage standards.<sup>46</sup> However, these pay rates are still well below the hourly wage needed to pay rent in the City. The County of San Diego does not specify wage standards, besides requiring that contractors follow applicable law, in Notices of Funding Availability for homeless service providers.<sup>47</sup> Many local governments do specify staff to client ratios, however. When public agencies and philanthropic funders do not set wage expectations but do specify staffing levels, providers tend to underinvest in management-level positions and set wages for frontline providers at the lowest possible level to meet contract requirements.<sup>48</sup>

**Ordinances to ban sleeping, lying, or camping in public places**, which have been adopted at various levels of government in the state and locally, contradict expert guidance on how to address homelessness.<sup>49</sup> This punitive approach may provide local entities with a new policy mechanism for clearing encampments or people but does nothing to address the underlying causes of homelessness; it merely relocates people experiencing unsheltered homelessness and imposes additional barriers on them and the providers attempting to reach them. Numerous jurisdictions in the San Diego region have enacted policies that ban

sleeping or lying in public, a trend Homelessness Hub researchers document (see endnote).<sup>50</sup>

Encampment bans enforced without coordination between social workers, healthcare providers, and law enforcement contradict the guidelines provided by regional entities, specifically the County of San Diego and RTFH, whose regional plans to address homelessness state that outreach should be primarily conducted by social workers with law enforcement playing a supporting role. Criminalization reduces trust in the homelessness services ecosystem and separates people from service providers.<sup>51</sup> Researchers document that encampment sweeps push people into more isolated and potentially dangerous areas, increase stress, exacerbate substance use, burden people with citation fines they cannot pay, and expose people to other harmful conditions.<sup>52</sup> Encampment bans and clearances are often justified as necessary for public health, but as one group of physicians writes, “the health hazards of living outside should be weighed against the health hazards of involuntary displacement. Otherwise, attempts to eliminate one set of health concerns may unintentionally introduce new ones.”<sup>53</sup>

Medical providers who administer medical care in unincorporated areas and on the streets of the City of San Diego reported that encampment clearances can be extremely disruptive, and even dangerous, when providers are working to engage a person in care. Staff with the County Office of Homeless Solutions explained that encampment abatements are scheduled after multi-disciplinary coordinated outreach events to provide services to encampment residents and there are efforts to bring street medicine providers into this coordinated effort. However, providers in street

medicine continue to feel they are often a step behind abatement actions and would like to see a better notification system established. Their goal is to move more people into care settings or housing and hopefully reduce health emergencies or other “unintended consequences of sweeps.” If they can be systematically aware of impending abatement or enforcement actions, they can go to an area where patients are staying and make sure patients know how to contact them and “find out where they're going to go after the sweep so we can make sure there's that continuity of care.”

State ERF grants have enabled the use of a multi-disciplinary, coordinated approach to address encampments, one that follows the evidence in offering trauma-informed care and housing resources, and where punitive measures are a last resort.



## Ending Homelessness by Prioritizing Housing Solutions

Nationally, communities that are making progress in addressing homelessness have found ways to prioritize affordable housing placement for unhoused residents.<sup>54</sup> The ability of people experiencing homelessness to increase their income, recover their health, address legal or substance use issues, and reconnect with friends and family are all vastly improved when they are stably housed.<sup>55</sup> Without safe, stable housing, it is very difficult to get sufficient sleep or escape the traumas of homelessness and housing precarity. Critically, it is also cost effective to place people exiting homelessness in permanent housing, compared to emergency shelters and medical institutions.<sup>56</sup>

Providing sufficient housing that is affordable to people with extremely-low incomes is a major challenge in high-cost housing markets like San Diego. Despite this, San Diego local governments have innovated and begun or completed numerous projects that support people by ending their homelessness.

### ***Factors supporting prioritization of housing solutions***

**Federal and state funds that enable acquisition, conversion, and/or construction** have helped cities expand permanent supportive housing (PSH). HUD defines PSH as “permanent housing in which housing assistance (e.g., long-term leasing or rental assistance) and supportive services are provided to assist households with at least one member (adult or child) with a disability in achieving housing stability.”<sup>57</sup> For households with disabled family members and histories of homelessness, permanent housing may only be achievable with the combination of rental assistance and case management, therefore the State of California and federal government incentivized cities to increase their stock of PSH during the past 5 years. Doing so is costly and requires that cities combine numerous federal, state, and local funding sources together. We describe how three cities are combining funding sources to accomplish housing goals below but note that other cities in the region are also making progress on PSH and affordable housing construction in much the same way.

> New PSH, with 20 units for individuals and 7 units for veterans, is coming online in Chula Vista with the conversion of the Palomar Motel. Per city staff, this project requires significant costs for property acquisition and upgrades which are being funded through a combination of local, state, and federal sources stemming from ARPA, Community Development

Block Grant (CDBG), California Department of Housing and Community Development’s Homekey+, and Housing Successor Agency funds.<sup>58</sup> Ongoing funding for operations will come from 20 Project-Based Vouchers (PBV) and 7 Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing (VASH) vouchers.<sup>59</sup> Financing is not yet complete for another project in Chula Vista, Paseo del Rey, but the structure will be similar with a combination of federal, state, and local funds facilitating the creation of 23 units for individuals and 25 VASH units.<sup>60</sup>

> Staff in El Cajon identified PSH as an ongoing need that was starting to be addressed: “We have naturally occurring affordable housing and several affordable housing complexes. The issue is the permanent supported ones. There’s only one or two complexes here in El Cajon that recently came online because the new funding was available.” One source of new funding, “No Place Like Home” loans financed through state bonds, explicitly support investment in PSH.<sup>61</sup>

> In the City of Vista, approximately 150 new PSH units are in progress, about half dedicated to seniors. Funding comes from the city’s Housing Successor Agency funds to finance development on city-owned lots identified via the Surplus Land Act process.<sup>62</sup> Other funding sources include Federal and State Low Income Housing Tax Credit equity (LIHTC), County of San Diego Affordable Housing NOFA funds that come from state and federal sources, and local city funds for gap financing.

### ***Factors impeding prioritization of housing solutions***

**The complexity and high cost of building affordable housing and PSH** makes progress in this area slower than staff in some cities would like. For example, a staff person in El Cajon mentioned that providing housing options for people exiting

homelessness was the city’s “biggest challenge” due to insufficient funding. “We do have a lot of services that I think provide temporary assistance to our homeless population, but I think our biggest challenge is that we’re still struggling to see more of that permanent housing solution.”

Shifting funding and policy priorities at the state and federal level are slowing progress on PSH construction. For example, presentations by the leadership of three regional housing authorities at RTFH’s 2025 Harnessing the Power of Purpose conference revealed the impact of lessened federal support through housing vouchers.<sup>63</sup> PBV, a relative of Housing Choice Vouchers (i.e., Section 8), are used by regional housing authorities to fund operating costs for PSH buildings. Without these operating subsidies, most PSH properties would not be financially viable, given the extremely low incomes of tenants, some of whom have no income sources at all due to long-term disabilities. The federal government has not updated the value of PBVs to reflect rental conditions, although rental costs have increased over 40%.<sup>64</sup> The consequence is that every unit with a PBV is costing more than HUD is reimbursing. Oceanside and the City of San Diego are facing large budget deficits as a result. Both cities and the County housing authorities do not plan to initiate more PSH in the near future, with the possible exception of some programs the County may be able to build with veteran PBVs.

We urge continued dialogue and coordination between regional housing authorities and local governments so that when agencies identify new options or pathways forward those can be shared widely.



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## Recommendations for Local Agencies to Expand the Use of Evidence-Based Efforts to Reduce Homelessness

### Build on Regional Plans to Improve Coordination

Regional leaders recognize that coordination and collaboration are critical to address and end homelessness, but no local agency has the resources to respond to the homelessness crisis alone. Moving forward with a coordinated effort to end homelessness requires that *regional entities, under the united leadership of the County of San Diego and the Continuum of Care, administered by the Regional Task Force on Homelessness, create a robust regional plan for ending homelessness that includes measurable goals in the critical domains of prevention, effective case management and programs, and housing affordability.* The County and City of San Diego have led the way in adopting well-researched plans, but neither sets regional targets toward which the 18 jurisdictions and other entities within the CoC can move as a coordinated whole because they lack jurisdiction. However, working together to set a unified agenda could improve coordination and communication.

Additionally, we recommend a holistic regional plan that includes an annual operating guide and harmonized budget reporting for the region's homelessness, behavioral health, and supportive housing ecosystems. Some California local governments have struggled to transparently track expenditures on homeless services.<sup>65</sup> Local government expenditures on homelessness are spread across city departments, including housing and

homelessness, public works, parks, and law enforcement, making it difficult to measure expenditures and anticipate future needs. However, every local government completes annual fiscal reviews and operational plans. Extracting information about homelessness and centralizing that information for every entity in the County—using common terminology—can support better understanding about what local governments collectively spend. From that basis, regional leaders can set benchmarks for the fiscal commitments needed across a variety of scenarios, such as what changes in operations and funding would be necessary to provide sufficient housing opportunities and behavioral health treatment beds countywide.

### *Collaborating and coordinating around a regional plan requires ongoing willingness to share data within and across agencies.*

Efforts to do so have been successful in some limited domains. For example, the San Diego Community Information Exchange (CIE) and RTFH have coordinated to connect data sources in order to assess the impact of a one-time homeless prevention program.<sup>66</sup> Because data across entities like the County of San Diego, CIE, and RTFH are not regularly linked and analyzed, it is not possible to understand how efforts across service ecosystems (i.e., health, law enforcement, homeless services, public benefit enrollment) can be leveraged to help more people avoid or exit homelessness.<sup>67</sup>

An interviewee who has worked in healthcare and government told us that robust data integration and analysis is “probably more achievable in San Diego than many other communities, because we are ahead in a lot of ways” with the existence of the CIE, Health Information Exchange (HIE), a well-established Coordinated Entry System through the CoC, and interest from numerous government and

health partners. This interviewee suggested that there were ways to “pull out what you need” from these sources “without harming anybody's privacy rights, and that you could pair that with the County's data set and that on top of that would sit this governance board that would answer thorny problems and deal with issues that no one hospital, no one doctor, nobody, no one department could actually solve.” We urge further progress in this area. For example, with the right data from varied agencies, it is possible to determine whether the various prevention programs implemented in the San Diego region during the past several years have slowed the number of people who fall into homelessness annually. Other CoCs are showing how to overcome privacy challenges to support data integration and analysis that allow diverse institutions and programs to work together to support the health and housing needs of unhoused neighbors.<sup>68</sup>

Regional data coordination and evaluation could be further leveraged to help staff in County subregions (i.e., east, south, north County, and City of San Diego) understand the value and shortcomings of different approaches to homelessness. One city staff person advocated for increased data availability or, in its place, “a centralized organization [that could] do analyses that are relevant to the County of San Diego, the City of San Diego, the City of Carlsbad, the City of Chula Vista, etc.” In addition, ongoing analysis of linked data systems could better identify regional needs in vital services that are connected to homelessness, such as income support and behavioral health.<sup>69</sup>

## Support City Staff with Trainings and Information About State and County Policies and Resources

In many cities in the San Diego region, staff positions in homelessness management are relatively new. Some cities have hired experienced case managers into city roles, bringing valuable expertise to the position, but other times city staff must learn the intricacies of homelessness-related challenges and programming. This inexperience among staff has been partially addressed by RTFH which, as described above, has staff and consultants dedicated to professional development and education around evidence-based practices, such as by-name lists. However, *city and other regional leaders identified a need for more support for city staff as they work with service providers to create programs. Specifically, interviewees pointed to a need for training in the areas of effective, trauma-informed outreach methods and accurate HMIS data entry.*

Local government staff and leadership could also benefit from additional information about the role of land use planning and permitting processes, both of which can be used to promote the construction of affordable housing.<sup>70</sup> While we review the efforts of the region to build affordable housing above, research suggests a continued disconnect between homelessness and land use policies in many cities.<sup>71</sup> We found less of a disconnect in interviews of San Diego region's government staff. However, staff feel pressure to respond to homelessness, particularly visible homelessness, under emergency orders that effectively remove people experiencing homelessness from public spaces. While immediate responses can, and should, meet basic needs and protect the health and wellbeing of all, prioritizing short-term

emergency responses over long-term efforts to sufficiently house people at prices they can afford will never prevent or end homelessness. ***We recommend that cities and other local entities that are successfully incorporating land use planning into their homelessness responses find ways to share their efforts so other local entities can consider similar options.***

Our research suggests that local city staff could also benefit from education about behavioral health resources in the county. This information is known to some personnel, but not all. For example, the North County cities participating in the Alliance for Regional Solutions frequently hear reports from County representatives about programs and resources. In other cities, staff felt that mental health was being insufficiently addressed by the County of San Diego's programs, the County being the only regional entity funded for countywide programs in behavioral health. ***By participating in harmonized budget reporting, County Behavioral Health Services could help regional entities understand the extent of their services. County Behavioral Health Services should also identify forums in other regions of the County in which they can share what they do and improve collaboration to support community members experiencing homelessness and behavioral health challenges.***

While additional communication could help increase program awareness among local agencies, several medical providers who thoroughly understood the work and capacity of County Behavioral Health Services felt that insufficient resources were being directed to behavioral health given the level of need. ***We recommend that the County undertake a detailed needs assessment to understand how well the***

***homelessness services and behavioral health ecosystems—as entities that both play a role in behavioral health—are addressing the needs of people experiencing homelessness, or at risk of homelessness, who struggle with addiction, mental illness, and related disabling conditions.***<sup>72</sup>

## **Commit Regional Leaders to By-Name Lists and Centering Lived Experience**

Adoption of by-name lists (BNLs) can be a tool for recentring the homelessness service ecosystem on people. Because BNLs are meant to facilitate housing placements for individuals in a region, they orient programs toward tracking and enumerating who on the list, and how many people on the list, have exited homelessness. This stands in contrast to program tracking that may use program beds offered or outreach contacts as metrics of success, which measure effort rather than outcomes.

Numerous regional cities and the County have received ERF grants which support the use of BNLs. Using BNLs in combination with enhanced housing resources—which are funded under ERF—shows promise in reducing unsheltered homelessness.<sup>73</sup> In addition, ERF grants have facilitated methods that move away from criminalization toward a collaborative approach among case managers, social workers, and law enforcement. ***Regional and state leaders should advocate for the state to continue funding such projects. Locally, they should build on CoC General Membership meetings where lessons learned have been discussed based on ERF implementation thus far. Experienced leaders can disseminate information about existing efforts and the practices that are***

*most successful and sustainable in the future.*

As local agencies continue to innovate and explore ways to improve services, they should invite feedback from people with lived experience of homelessness. ***They should do this by eliciting routine feedback through surveys and focus groups, and not relying exclusively on providers or law enforcement as intermediaries for program feedback.*** Intermediaries may, intentionally or not, act as gatekeepers of program information. In addition, power dynamics may reduce what clients in programs are willing to share with providers or law enforcement. Given past traumatizing experiences in homeless service organizations and with law enforcement, giving people experiencing homelessness who utilize city resources the ability to advocate for what they need outside of those specific settings is vital.<sup>74</sup>

It is critical that local agency staff recognize that there is not one type of person with lived experience or one pathway into or out of homelessness. For this reason, ***local entities should incorporate lived experience insights by inviting policy and program feedback from lived experience groups.*** Soliciting input from a group of lived experience advocates, rather than relying on insights from a single individual, can support local government staff to identify ideal program design to address a diversity of needs and concerns. Seeking ongoing feedback as policy contexts and program funding opportunities become available is also critical. While some insights from lived experience advocates will remain consistent over time (e.g., a need for compassionate case managers<sup>75</sup>), other observations will change. Coordination across entities can further the reach of information gleaned by any one agency.

## **Pursue Locally-Generated Revenue Measures to Support Housing Solutions**

Discussions by federal leaders and some state leaders are questioning the value of prioritizing permanent housing solutions and instead suggesting funding pivots toward “interim housing”<sup>76</sup> or “transitional housing” with work requirements<sup>77</sup> as solutions to homelessness. These funding pivots may diversify the range of options available at the local level to address homelessness, but increasing the supply of short-term solutions is unlikely to provide participants with a sufficient off-ramp from homelessness to be sustainable, particularly given the high cost of housing in the San Diego region. One regional non-profit leader argued that programs should support individuals’ “right to self-sustainment,” or programming that gives people sufficient, quality housing support so they can regain financial autonomy or register for long-term subsidies to make ends meet.

Given flagging willingness to fund permanent housing at the federal level, and insufficient funding to meet the need for affordable housing at the state level, ***the San Diego region should look to locally generated revenue sources to produce the amount of deeply affordable housing needed. Efforts to raise local revenue to boost affordable housing production have hit roadblocks in the past, but politicians, government leaders, and CoC leadership should continue looking for opportunities.***

Several counties in California have shown how this could be done. For example, Alameda County presented voters with a proposal for a half-cent sales tax increase to fund general revenue. In their messaging about the measure, County leadership and advocates promoted the measure as a means

to expand the region’s ability to support lasting solutions to homelessness, including projects that range from prevention to emergency services and social supports to deeply affordable housing. After the measure was approved, County leadership retained this framework and are moving forward with promised projects.<sup>78</sup> Los Angeles County voters approved a citizen’s initiative to adopt a quarter-cent sales tax to support services and housing to prevent and end homelessness in 2017. In 2024 Los Angeles voters approved a half-cent sales tax to replace the original measure. Similar to Alameda County, the measure is being used to construct affordable housing, prevent homelessness, and improve case management and service delivery.<sup>79</sup> Advocates in the City of San Diego unsuccessfully pushed for a property tax measure to fund affordable housing construction in 2018 and 2020.<sup>80</sup> A hotel tax measure was successful in 2020 but has only been implemented this year due to litigation that delayed the measure from going into effect. Forty-one percent of the revenue generated from this measure will be directed to emergency shelters and PSH.<sup>81</sup>

Ideally, at least one new revenue source will be county-wide and used to enable smaller cities to support housing goals for reducing homelessness. Any measure passed should be used to provide gap financing for PSH and support operating expenses for PSH, the need for which has grown as HUD has failed to update its housing choice voucher allocations.<sup>82</sup>

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## Conclusion

San Diego’s local governments and other regional agencies already possess much of the expertise, data, and processes needed to build a more robust homelessness service ecosystem. In this report, we document how they are approaching this work in four key areas: prevention, coordinated case management, trauma-informed programming, and prioritizing housing solutions. Evidence supporting these approaches has been building for decades and has been championed by state and national leaders. Although these four areas do not represent every evidence-based practice related to homelessness, and this report does not capture the ways every public or quasi-public agency in the San Diego region is implementing them, we cover some of the significant progress being done regionally.

Existing plans to address homelessness in the region provide important guidelines for the benchmarks and principles that regional entities should adopt. We build on these plans by making additional recommendations that can bolster efforts to implement evidence-based solutions through regional coordination.

## Appendix

The following table provides a breakdown of the policies or programs in place by jurisdiction as of January 2026.

	Plan to Address Homelessness (<5 years old)	Homeless Prevention Program	Limits on Encampments*	Encampment Resolution Fund Grant(s)
<b>Carlsbad</b>	<a href="#">Yes - February 2023</a>	<a href="#">Rental Assistance</a>	Yes (4)	Round 2R - \$2.3 million for Carlsbad Village Round 3R - \$3 million for Village and Barrio Round 3R - \$11.4 million for Buena Vista Creek (in collaboration with Oceanside)
<b>Chula Vista</b>	<a href="#">In development</a>	<a href="#">Older Adult Shallow Subsidy</a>	Yes	None
<b>Coronado</b>	No	No	Yes (4)	None
<b>Del Mar</b>	No	No	Yes	None
<b>El Cajon</b>	No	No	Yes	None
<b>Encinitas</b>	<a href="#">Yes - February 2021</a>	No	Yes	None
<b>Escondido</b>	No	No	Yes (1) (3)	None
<b>Imperial Beach</b>	No	No	Yes	None
<b>La Mesa</b>	<a href="#">Yes - 2021</a>	<a href="#">Older Adult Rental Assistance</a>	Yes (5)	None
<b>Lemon Grove</b>	<a href="#">Yes - September 2025</a>	No	Yes (5)	Round 4L - Part of \$7.8 mil
<b>National City</b>	No	No	Yes	None

<b>Oceanside</b>	No	No	Yes	Round 3R - \$11.4 million for Buena Vista Creek (in collaboration with Carlsbad)
<b>Poway</b>	No	No	Yes (5)	None
<b>San Diego</b>	<a href="#">Yes - October 2019, updated in 2025</a>	<a href="#">Rental Assistance</a>	Yes (1) (3)	Round 2L - \$2.4 million for East Village Round 3L - \$3.1 million for I-15 Corridor Round 4L - \$8.4 million for State Route 94 (in collaboration with SD County and Lemon Grove)
<b>San Marcos</b>	No	No	Yes (2)	None
<b>Santee</b>	No	No	Yes (2)	None
<b>Solana Beach</b>	No	<a href="#">Shallow Subsidy Program</a>	Yes	None
<b>Vista</b>	No - <a href="#">Last updated in March 2020</a>	<a href="#">Emergency Housing Assistance</a>	Yes (1)	Round 1 - \$1.8 million for East Emerald Drive and West Melrose Drive Round 4L - \$7.8 million along State Route 78
<b>San Diego County</b>	<a href="#">Yes - February 2024</a>	<a href="#">Rental Assistance, Shallow Rental Subsidy Program for Seniors</a>	Yes	Round 2R - \$17 million for Riverbed Corridor Round 3L - \$5.1 million for Plaza Bonita Round 4L - \$8.4 million for State Route 94 (in collaboration with SD City and Lemon Grove)

\* 1 - enforced regardless of shelter availability; 2 - enforced during daytime hours; 3 - enforced around schools, parks, and transit stops; 4 - enforced during nighttime hours; 5 - not enforced if no shelter is available

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<sup>i</sup> Visotzky, Alex. 2023. “What Can (and Can’t) Local Government Do to Address Homelessness?” National Alliance to End Homelessness. January 24, 2023. <https://endhomelessness.org/blog/what-can-and-cant-local-government-do-to-address-homelessness/>.

<sup>ii</sup> Ajeen, R., Ajeen, D., Wisdom, J. P., Greene, J. A., Lepage, T., Sjoelin, C., Melvin, T., Hagan, T. E., Hunter, K. F., Peters, A., Mercer, R., & Brancu, M. (2023). The impact of trauma-informed design on psychological well-being in homeless shelters. *Psychological Services*, 20(3), 680–689. <https://doi.org/10.1037/ser0000724>; Rosenheck R, Kaspro W, Frisman L, Liu-Mares W. Cost-effectiveness of Supported Housing for Homeless Persons With Mental Illness. *Arch Gen Psychiatry*. 2003;60(9):940–951. doi:10.1001/archpsyc.60.9.940; overview of research on prevention <https://fr.bfzcanada.ca/wp-content/uploads/Microsoft-Word-evidence-page-prevention-10.29.18rev-opt2.pdf>

<sup>iii</sup> The Trump administration has passed an executive order and changed HUD policies that move decidedly away from trauma-informed programming, prevention, and housing, toward criminalization, punishment, and work requirements. While the situation is evolving, previous reporting gives a sense for how these policies undermine evidence about how to effectively address homelessness. See Ludden, Jennifer. Nov 14, 2025. The Trump administration plans a major shift away from long-term housing for homelessness. National Public Radio.

<https://www.npr.org/2025/11/14/nx-s1-5553561/homelessness-housing-funding-trump-administration-hud> and Trump, Donald J. July 24, 2025. Ending Crime and Disorder on America’s Streets. Executive Order.

<https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/07/ending-crime-and-disorder-on-americas-streets/>.

California state policymakers are arguing for greater funding for short-term solutions, specifically shelters,  
<sup>iv</sup> See 2022 guidance from the National Alliance to End Homelessness about building an effective homelessness response system: <https://endhomelessness.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/20220506SystemNOFOLaunch.pdf> ; Mackie, Peter, Sarah Johnsen, and Jenny Wood. 2019. Ending street homelessness: what works and why we don’t do it. *European Journal of Homelessness* 13 (1) , pp. 85-96. <https://orca.cardiff.ac.uk/id/eprint/135333>

<sup>v</sup> Burt, M.R., Pearson, C. & Montgomery, A.E. Community-Wide Strategies for Preventing Homelessness: Recent Evidence. *J Primary Prevent* 28, 213–228 (2007). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10935-007-0094-8>; Einstein, K.L., Willison, C.E. 2022. Cities, Zoning, and the Fragmented Response to Homelessness.

[https://community.solutions/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/Zoning\\_Homelessness-Brief\\_Jan-2023.pdf](https://community.solutions/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/Zoning_Homelessness-Brief_Jan-2023.pdf)

<sup>vi</sup> City of Vista: <https://www.vista.gov/home/showpublisheddocument/22665/637238432318370000>.

City of Carlsbad: [https://issuu.com/carlsbadcity/docs/homelessness\\_action\\_plan](https://issuu.com/carlsbadcity/docs/homelessness_action_plan)

City of Encinitas: <https://www.encinitasca.gov/home/showpublisheddocument/600/637986790921930000>

City of La Mesa: <https://www.cityoflamesa.gov/DocumentCenter/View/17134/Homeless-Action-Plan>

City of Lemon Grove: <https://www.lemongrove.ca.gov/media/h5nhnp5/city-of-lemon-grove-approved-hap9022025.pdf>

City of San Diego: <https://www.sandiego.gov/homelessness-strategies-and-solutions/about/strategic-plan>

County of San Diego: [https://www.sandiegocounty.gov/content/dam/sdc/sdhcd/new-](https://www.sandiegocounty.gov/content/dam/sdc/sdhcd/new-docs/OHS/County_of_San_Diego_Homeless_Solutions_and_Prevention_Action_Plan_February_2024.pdf)

[docs/OHS/County of San Diego Homeless Solutions and Prevention Action Plan February 2024.pdf](https://www.sandiegocounty.gov/content/dam/sdc/sdhcd/new-docs/OHS/County_of_San_Diego_Homeless_Solutions_and_Prevention_Action_Plan_February_2024.pdf)

As lead agency for the San Diego Continuum of Care, RTFH is the collaborative applicant to Housing and Urban Development (HUD), is responsible for this region’s annual Point in Time Count (PITC), and hosts a Homeless Management Information System (HMIS), among other duties <https://www.rtfhsd.org/about-rtfh/our-purpose/>

<sup>vii</sup> Our team interviewed staff working for the cities of Carlsbad, Chula Vista, El Cajon, Escondido, San Diego (Homelessness Strategies and Solutions Department and the San Diego Housing Commission), and Vista, as well as current and former staff working in multiple departments for the County of San Diego. We also interviewed staff in the following non-profit organizations: 211 San Diego, Alliance for Regional Solutions, Brother Benno’s, Interfaith Community Service, and Regional Task Force on Homelessness.

<sup>8</sup> See pp. 29-32 U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness (2018). *Ending Homeless Before IT Starts: A Federal Homelessness Prevention Framework*.

[https://www.usich.gov/sites/default/files/document/Federal%20Homelessness%20Prevention%20Framework\\_2.pdf](https://www.usich.gov/sites/default/files/document/Federal%20Homelessness%20Prevention%20Framework_2.pdf)

<sup>9</sup> Short-term cash infusions, whereby an individual or household receives a one-time payment, can disrupt downward spirals that result in homelessness and have been proven successful, see David C. Phillips, James X. Sullivan; Do Homelessness Prevention Programs Prevent Homelessness? Evidence from a Randomized Controlled Trial. *The Review of Economics and Statistics* 2025; 107 (5): 1187–1196. doi: [https://doi.org/10.1162/rest\\_a\\_01344](https://doi.org/10.1162/rest_a_01344). Shallow subsidies can be provided to participants over a year-long period or indefinitely. Both have been shown to effectively reduce the incidence of homelessness. See Dasinger, L.K., Speigman, R. Homelessness Prevention: The

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Effect of a Shallow Rent Subsidy Program on Housing Outcomes among People with HIV or AIDS. *AIDS Behavior* (Suppl 2), 128–139 (2007). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10461-007-9250-7> and <https://fr.bfzcanada.ca/wp-content/uploads/Microsoft-Word-evidence-page-prevention-10.29.18rev-opt2.pdf>. Additional information about rental subsidies can be found here <https://www.cbpp.org/research/housing/state-and-local-policymakers-should-invest-in-rental-assistance-to-reduce>

<sup>10</sup> Piña, G., & Pirog, M. (2018). The Impact of Homeless Prevention on Residential Instability: Evidence From the Homelessness Prevention and Rapid Re-Housing Program. *Housing Policy Debate*, 29(4), 501–521. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10511482.2018.1532448>

<sup>11</sup> Carlsbad: <https://www.carlsbadca.gov/departments/housing-homeless-services/affordable-housing/rental-assistance>

Chula Vista: <https://www.chulavistaca.gov/departments/housing-and-homeless-services/shallow-rental-subsidy-program-for-55-adults>

La Mesa: <https://www.cityoflamesa.gov/1867/Older-Adult-Rental-Assistance-Program>

San Diego: <https://sdhc.org/housing-opportunities/help-with-your-rent/>

Solana Beach: <https://www.cityofsolanabeach.org/en/news/shallow-rental-subsidy-program>

Vista: <https://www.vista.gov/home/showpublisheddocument/33000/638913744965270000>

<sup>12</sup> Read about Serving Seniors’ program here <https://servingseniors.org/what-we-do/programs-services/shallow-rental-subsidy-program.html>; more on the County of San Diego program below.

<sup>13</sup> <https://www.vista.gov/city-services/housing-homeless-services/resources-for-residents>

<https://www.vista.gov/home/showpublisheddocument/33000/638913744965270000>

<sup>14</sup> <https://sdhc.org/housing-opportunities/help-with-your-rent/>

<sup>15</sup> <https://sdhc.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/SDHC-at-a-Glance-Housing-Instability.pdf>

<sup>16</sup> [https://sdhc.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/06/Attachment-2\\_SDHC\\_FY26-Budget-Report\\_052225.pdf](https://sdhc.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/06/Attachment-2_SDHC_FY26-Budget-Report_052225.pdf);

[https://www.sandiego.gov/sites/default/files/2025-08/fy26ab\\_v1cbo.pdf](https://www.sandiego.gov/sites/default/files/2025-08/fy26ab_v1cbo.pdf), pp. 41-45.

<sup>17</sup> The County’s plan to prevent and end homelessness outlines the need for prevention. It is accessible here:

[https://www.sandiegocounty.gov/content/dam/sdc/sdhcd/new-](https://www.sandiegocounty.gov/content/dam/sdc/sdhcd/new-docs/OHS/County_of_San_Diego_Homeless_Solutions_and_Prevention_Action_Plan_February_2024.pdf)

[docs/OHS/County of San Diego Homeless Solutions and Prevention Action Plan February 2024.pdf](https://www.sandiegocounty.gov/content/dam/sdc/sdhcd/new-docs/OHS/County_of_San_Diego_Homeless_Solutions_and_Prevention_Action_Plan_February_2024.pdf). A

description of the shallow rental subsidy program is here <https://www.countynewscenter.com/county-expands-pilot-shallow-rental-subsidy-program-for-older-adults/>. The first round of subsidies was funded by the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) under the Biden administration. The second round was funded by County General Purpose Revenue.

<sup>18</sup> For information on how county governments spent ARPA funds, see

<https://www.naco.org/resources/featured/american-rescue-plan-act-funding-breakdown> and

<https://www.brookings.edu/articles/how-u-s-cities-are-using-federal-american-rescue-plan-act-funds-to-tackle-housing-affordability/> for how cities spent funds.

<sup>19</sup> <https://home.treasury.gov/system/files/136/SLFRF-Compliance-and-Reporting-Guidance.pdf>

<sup>20</sup> Housing Asset Funds, which go by other names in other jurisdictions, derive from the funds remaining after the dissolution of regional development agencies (RDAs). Learn more about RDA dissolution here

<https://www.greatcommunities.org/wp-content/uploads/rdasuccessionsurpluslandcheatsheet.pdf> and Chula Vista’s program here <https://pub-chulavista.escribemeetings.com/FileStream.ashx?DocumentId=50562>

<sup>21</sup> Chula Vista looked to the county’s model, and another shallow subsidy program implemented by a regional non-profit, for guidance when designing their program <https://pub-chulavista.escribemeetings.com/filestream.ashx?DocumentId=53988>. For information on Chula Vista’s program, see <https://www.chulavistaca.gov/departments/housing-and-homeless-services/shallow-rental-subsidy-program-for-55-adults>. For information on La Mesa’s program, see <https://www.cityoflamesa.gov/1867/Older-Adult-Rental-Assistance-Program>.

<sup>22</sup> <https://thecoastnews.com/carlsbad-to-shift-priorities-in-addressing-homelessness/>

<sup>23</sup> <https://www.cityheightscdc.org/one-month-away>

<sup>24</sup> <https://www.jfssd.org/our-services/economic-mobility-opportunity/family-income-for-empowerment-program/>

<sup>25</sup> <https://brotherbenno.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/09/Flyer-for-rental-assistance-9.10.25.pdf>

<sup>26</sup> County of San Diego staff also referenced HHAP and Home Safe Program funding as sources for this program.

<sup>27</sup> Final monthly subsidies for the county’s program went out November 2025 for initial enrollees; others will receive their final support in January or June of 2026, per information from the County Office of Evaluation,

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Performance, and Analytics. County staff from the Office of Homeless Solutions explained that the temporary nature of the pilot will allow time to study the impact of the evaluation after its conclusion, providing insights into whether the program prevents homelessness. Such an evaluation can be used to garner support for directing emergency funds toward a program of this kind in the future.

<sup>28</sup> <https://community.solutions/what-is-a-by-name-list/>

<sup>29</sup> Based on author calculations of data posted by the California Department for Housing and Community Development. See ERF recipient outcomes here <https://www.hcd.ca.gov/funding/erf>

<sup>30</sup> See the Alliance’s website here <https://www.regionalsolutions.net/>

<sup>31</sup> “Criminalizing Substance Use and Homelessness Harms Public Health and Safety.” *Health Affairs Forefront*, April 2025. <https://doi.org/10.1377/forefront.20250423.658060>

<sup>32</sup> Irving, Doug. 2021. “Rethinking How Police Respond to Homelessness.” *RAND*. March 4, 2021. <https://www.rand.org/pubs/articles/2021/rethinking-how-police-respond-to-homelessness.html>.

<sup>33</sup> California Interagency Council on Homelessness, *Encampment Resolution Funding Program, Round 3, Rolling Application (ERF-3-R) Notice of Funding Availability (NOFA)* (Sacramento, CA: California Department of Housing and Community Development, November 27, 2023), 14, [https://www.hcd.ca.gov/sites/default/files/docs/grants-and-funding/calich/erf\\_3r\\_nofa.pdf](https://www.hcd.ca.gov/sites/default/files/docs/grants-and-funding/calich/erf_3r_nofa.pdf).

<sup>34</sup> See e.g., the City of San Diego’s successful ERF proposal from 2023

<https://www.hcd.ca.gov/sites/default/files/docs/grants-and-funding/calich/erf-r2-lookback-city-san-diego.pdf>

<sup>35</sup> See recent announcement to pause the release of HUD’s notice of funding opportunities for CoCs

<https://www.hud.gov/hud-partners/community-coc>

<sup>36</sup> <https://www.escondido.gov/1219/Measure-I>

<sup>37</sup> McPherson, Ray, et al. *San Diego County 2025 Affordable Housing Needs Report*. California Housing Partnership, May 2025. [https://chpc.net/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/San-Diego\\_Housing\\_Report-2.pdf](https://chpc.net/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/San-Diego_Housing_Report-2.pdf).

<sup>38</sup> Ayano, G., Solomon, M., Tsegay, L. et al. (2020). A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis of the Prevalence of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder among Homeless People. *Psychiatric Quarterly*: 91, 949–963.

<https://doi.org/10.1007/s11126-020-09746-1>

<sup>39</sup> Tsai, J., Schick, V., Hernandez, B., & Pietrzak, R. H. (2020). Is homelessness a traumatic event? Results from the 2019–2020 National Health and Resilience in Veterans Study. *Depression and Anxiety*, 37(11), 1137–1145.

<sup>40</sup> Crawford, K. (2022). Evaluating Trauma-Informed Care Practices in an Interdisciplinary Homeless Service Collaboration. *Journal of Evidence-Based Social Work*, 19(2), 212–227.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/26408066.2022.2026267>. See this overview from the Trauma-Informed Care

Implementation Resource Center <https://www.traumainformedcare.chcs.org/what-is-trauma-informed-care/>

<sup>41</sup> Per the City of San Diego and SDHC, shelter participants’ rights include the right to file a grievance with the city about city-funded shelter operators. City policy dictates: “Shelter Grievance and Appeals processes should be explained in detail during the intake process, and instructions on how to submit a grievance should be posted in common areas” (p. 4, <https://www.dreamsforchange.org/wp-content/uploads/Universal-Terms-of-Service.pdf>)

<sup>42</sup> See e.g., [https://sdhc.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/04/HCR25-021-Family-Shelter-Program\\_Final.pdf](https://sdhc.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/04/HCR25-021-Family-Shelter-Program_Final.pdf)

<sup>43</sup> Interview with City of Vista staff and observation of Alliance for Regional Solutions activities.

<sup>44</sup> Moses, Joy. (2023). Working in Homeless Services: A Survey of the Field. National Alliance to End Homelessness. [https://endhomelessness.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/Working-in-Homeless-Services-A-Survey-of-the-Field\\_12-5-23\\_FINAL-1.pdf](https://endhomelessness.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/Working-in-Homeless-Services-A-Survey-of-the-Field_12-5-23_FINAL-1.pdf); Finnigan, Ryan. (2024). Stretched to Capacity: The Challenges Facing California’s Homelessness Service Providers. Turner Center for Housing and Innovation.

<https://turnercenter.berkeley.edu/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/Homelessness-Service-Providers-Feb-2024.pdf>

<sup>45</sup> <https://www.sdhc.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/SDHC-Compensation-Benchmarking-Report-Final.pdf>

<sup>46</sup> See e.g., the City’s contract language for a randomly selected service contract with Dreams for Change, an organization that manages the City’s “Safe Sleeping” program, here:

<https://www.sandiego.gov/sites/default/files/dfc-safe-sleeping-program.pdf>. See the City’s Office of Labor

Standards and Enforcement compliance information about wages here:

<https://www.sandiego.gov/sites/default/files/2025-06/fy26-living-wage-rates.pdf>

<sup>47</sup> Email communication with representative from County of San Diego Office of Homeless Solutions (OHS). An example of a recent County NOFA, not written by OHS staff, can be found here:

[https://www.sandiegocounty.gov/content/dam/sdc/sdhcd/new-docs/CD/State\\_ESG\\_NOFA\\_2025\\_FINAL.pdf](https://www.sandiegocounty.gov/content/dam/sdc/sdhcd/new-docs/CD/State_ESG_NOFA_2025_FINAL.pdf)

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- <sup>48</sup> Abraham, Lisa, Sarah B. Hunter, Samantha Matthews, and Alex Sizemore. 2023. Living Wages in Los Angeles County’s Homeless Response Sector. [https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/research\\_reports/RRA2200/RRA2266-1/RAND\\_RRA2266-1.pdf](https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/research_reports/RRA2200/RRA2266-1/RAND_RRA2266-1.pdf)
- <sup>49</sup> <https://endhomelessness.org/blog/what-can-and-cant-local-government-do-to-address-homelessness/>
- <sup>50</sup> See webpage showing regional adoption of encampment bans here <https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/08abe4974fc640e2b931568a6aaec16c>
- <sup>51</sup> National Health Care for the Homeless Council. 2022. Impact of encampment sweeps on people experiencing homelessness. National Health Care for the Homeless Council. <https://nhchc.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/NHCHC-encampment-sweeps-issue-brief-12-22.pdf>
- <sup>52</sup> Barocas JA, Nall SK, Axelrath S, et al; NHBS Study Group. Population-level health effects of involuntary displacement of people experiencing unsheltered homelessness who inject drugs in US cities. *JAMA*. 2023;329(17):1478-1486. [10.1001/jama.2023.4800](https://doi.org/10.1001/jama.2023.4800); Meehan AA, Milazzo KE, Bien M, et al. Involuntary displacement and self-reported health in a cross-sectional survey of people experiencing homelessness in Denver, Colorado, 2018-2019. *BMC Public Health*. 2024;24(1):1159. doi:[10.1186/s12889-024-18681-w](https://doi.org/10.1186/s12889-024-18681-w)
- <sup>53</sup> Meehan Ashley A., Leisl M Hagan, Jay C. Butler. 2025. Homeless Encampments and Involuntary Displacement. *JAMA*, 333(10):845–846. doi:10.1001/jama.2024.22989
- <sup>54</sup> U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. 2023. Housing First: A Review of the Evidence. *Evidence Matters*. <https://archives.huduser.gov/portal/periodicals/em/spring-summer-23/highlight2.html>
- <sup>55</sup> Peng Y, Hahn RA, Finnie RKC, Cobb J, Williams SP, Fielding JE, Johnson RL, Montgomery AE, Schwartz AF, Muntaner C, Garrison VH, Jean-Francois B, Truman BI, Fullilove MT. 2020. Community Preventive Services Task Force. Permanent Supportive Housing With Housing First to Reduce Homelessness and Promote Health Among Homeless Populations With Disability: A Community Guide Systematic Review. *J Public Health Manag Practice*, 26(5):404-411. doi: 10.1097/PHH.0000000000001219. PMID: 32732712; PMCID: PMC8513528.; Tsemberis, S & Gulcur L & Nakae M. (2004). Housing First, Consumer Choice, and Harm Reduction for Homeless Individuals With a Dual Diagnosis. *American Journal of Public Health*. 94. 651-6. [10.2105/AJPH.94.4.651](https://doi.org/10.2105/AJPH.94.4.651); Chung TE, Gozdzik A, Palma Lazgare LI, To MJ, Aubry T, Frankish J, Hwang SW, Stergiopoulos V. 2018. Housing First for older homeless adults with mental illness: a subgroup analysis of the At Home/Chez Soi randomized controlled trial. *Int J Geriatric Psychiatry*, 33(1):85-95. doi: 10.1002/gps.4682.
- <sup>56</sup> National Prevention Science Coalition. 2023. “Fact Sheet: Cost of Homelessness.” April 6, 2023. <https://www.npscoalition.org/post/fact-sheet-cost-of-homelessness>.
- <sup>57</sup> See <https://www.hudexchange.info/homelessness-assistance/coc-esg-virtual-binders/coc-program-components/permanent-housing/permanent-supportive-housing/>
- <sup>58</sup> For information on ARPA funds see <https://home.treasury.gov/policy-issues/coronavirus/assistance-for-state-local-and-tribal-governments/state-and-local-fiscal-recovery-funds>; for information on ARPA funded ERA2 funds see <https://home.treasury.gov/policy-issues/coronavirus/assistance-for-state-local-and-tribal-governments/emergency-rental-assistance-program>; for information on the California Department of Housing and Community Development’s Homekey funds see <https://www.hcd.ca.gov/grants-and-funding/homekey-plus> for information on Chula Vista’s range of federal and state funding sources and its use of Housing Successor Funds, see <https://www.chulavistaca.gov/departments/housing-and-homeless-services/funding-and-reporting> and <https://www.chulavistaca.gov/departments/development-services/housing/successor-housing-agency>;
- <sup>59</sup> For information on project-based vouchers see <https://www.hud.gov/helping-americans/housing-choice-vouchers-project> and for information on VASH see <https://www.hud.gov/helping-americans/housing-choice-vouchers-homeless-veterans>
- <sup>60</sup> For this project, Chula Vista is committing Housing Successor Agency and federal HOME American Rescue Plan (HOME-ARP) funds, plus securing Project-Based Voucher and VASH vouchers. See <https://www.hcd.ca.gov/funding/home-arp> for information on HOME-ARP.
- <sup>61</sup> <https://www.hcd.ca.gov/grants-and-funding/programs-active/no-place-like-home-program>
- <sup>62</sup> <https://www.hcd.ca.gov/planning-and-research/public-lands/surplus-land>
- <sup>63</sup> “The PHA Power Hour: Real Talk on Funding, Shortages, & Solutions.” Moderator: Dijana Beck; Speakers: Leilani Hines (Oceanside), Lisa Jones (San Diego Housing Commission), Nicholas Martinez (County of San Diego). December 10, 2025. San Diego Convention Center.
- <sup>64</sup> <https://lao.ca.gov/LAOEconTax/Article/Detail/793>

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<sup>65</sup> Auditor of the State of California. 2023. Homelessness in California: San José and San Diego Must Do More to Plan and Evaluate Their Efforts to Reduce Homelessness. <https://www.auditor.ca.gov/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/2023-102.2-Report.pdf>

<sup>66</sup> <https://ciesandiego.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/RTFH-Paper-10.7.24.pdf>

<sup>67</sup> The County's ability to lead in this area has grown with the establishment of the Office of Evaluation, Performance, Analytics, but data siloing continues to be a challenge, per interviews with various stakeholders.

<sup>68</sup> Broffman, Andi, Ben Bradley, Meghan Arsenault. September 6, 2023. Learning Brief: Data-Sharing Between Homelessness and Health Systems.

<https://community.solutions/research-posts/learning-brief-data-sharing-between-homelessness-and-health-systems/>

<sup>69</sup> Several interviewees representing one county agency, one city, and one drug rehabilitation program reported that County resources in behavioral health resources may not be sufficient to meet regional needs. A person affiliated with 211 and the CIE explained that coordination through CIE of county and CoC programming could enable better tracking across systems. Data sharing with RTFH and the County of San Diego could be used to inform providers about where clients are, when their eligibility for programs may be expiring, and how to connect them with a wider range of resources.

<sup>70</sup> Visotzky, Alex. 2023. "What Can (and Can't) Local Government Do to Address Homelessness?" National Alliance to End Homelessness. National Alliance to End Homelessness. January 24, 2023.

<https://endhomelessness.org/blog/what-can-and-cant-local-government-do-to-address-homelessness/>.

<sup>71</sup> Einstein, Katherine L., & Charley E. Willison. 2024. Planning for Homelessness: Land Use Policy, Housing Markets, and Cities' Homelessness Responses. *Urban Affairs Review*, 61(2), 375-405.

<https://doi.org/10.1177/10780874241258446>

<sup>72</sup> The RAND Corporation shows how to conduct a needs assessment for psychiatric bed capacity that could be looked to as a model. [https://www.rand.org/pubs/research\\_briefs/RBA1824-1.html](https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_briefs/RBA1824-1.html)

<sup>73</sup> ERF programs have not been evaluated yet, but the combination of by-name lists and offers of housing are shown to be effective in other settings. Grainger, G. L. (2025). "What benefits do homeless systems get from by-name data?" *Journal of Social Distress and Homelessness*, 34(2), 388-400.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/10530789.2024.2411862>

<sup>74</sup> There is no peer-reviewed research about the effectiveness of lived experience expertise in improving homeless programming, but studies in public health suggest that health services are improved when designed with input from impacted community members (see Haldane, V., Chuah, F. L., Srivastava, A., Singh, S. R., Koh, G. C., Seng, C. K., & Legido-Quigley, H. (2019). Community participation in health services development, implementation, and evaluation: A systematic review of empowerment, health, community, and process outcomes. *PloS one*, 14(5), <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0216112>). A non-peer reviewed study reviews the evidence for involving lived experience in mental health treatment and other programs where homelessness is a common challenge, Barrow, S., McMullin, L., Tripp, J., & Tsemberis, S. (2007). Consumer integration and self determination in homelessness research, policy, planning, and services. *Washington, DC*.

[https://aspe.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/migrated\\_legacy\\_files/139166/report.pdf](https://aspe.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/migrated_legacy_files/139166/report.pdf)

<sup>75</sup> Homelessness Hub and HEAL Network. 2023. Examining Client and Provider Needs in San Diego.

<https://homelessnesshub.ucsd.edu/files/Examining-Client-and-Provider-Needs-in-San-Diego.pdf>;

Lived Experience Focus Group Report: Los Angeles Homelessness Governance. 2023. Redstone and the Corporation for Supportive Housing. <https://theangelenoproject.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/Lived-Expertise-Focus-Group-Report-of-People-Who-Experienced-Homelessness-in-Los-Angeles-County-April-2022.pdf>

<sup>76</sup> Interim housing refers to traditional emergency shelters as well as tents, sleeping cabins, and safe parking lots where program enrollees can access basic needs services (e.g., portable toilets, mobile shower and laundry trailers, and food) but are not housed in any meaningful or sustainable sense. See statements by California State Senator Catherine Blakespear on interim housing here <https://sd38.senate.ca.gov/news/interim-housing-could-give-thousands-more-homeless-californians-shelter>

<sup>77</sup> See HUD's pivot toward transitional housing with work requirements under the Trump administration here <https://www.hud.gov/news/hud-no-25-132>. The federal move to increase spending on transitional housing is positive because transitional housing programs can provide participants with housing for up to 24 months, a time period that can be substantial enough to recover from the trauma of homelessness and reestablish connections to employment, healthcare, public benefits, and family. However, the desire to require work in exchange for this housing may not be

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feasible for many people, particularly given high rates of disability and old age among people experiencing homelessness.

<sup>78</sup> See an overview of the Alameda County’s plans here

[https://www.acgov.org/board/bos\\_calendar/documents/MeasureWAllocationPresentation.pdf](https://www.acgov.org/board/bos_calendar/documents/MeasureWAllocationPresentation.pdf)

<sup>79</sup> An overview of this measure can be found here: <https://homeless.lacounty.gov/news/the-facts-about-measure-a/>.

<sup>80</sup> In 2018, the measure was not placed on the ballot because advocates it would have better chances in 2020.

<https://www.sandiegouniontribune.com/2018/02/08/tax-increase-of-900-million-to-fund-affordable-housing-in-san-diego-moves-one-step-closer-to-ballot/>. The 2020 effort was unsuccessful because it was a special tax which requires support from two-thirds of voters.

[https://ballotpedia.org/San\\_Diego,\\_California,\\_Measure\\_A,\\_Housing\\_Bond\\_Issue\\_\(November\\_2020\)](https://ballotpedia.org/San_Diego,_California,_Measure_A,_Housing_Bond_Issue_(November_2020))

<sup>81</sup> See news release from City of San Diego laying out revenue uses here

<https://www.sandiego.gov/sites/default/files/2025-03/2025-3-20-city-of-san-diego-hotel-room-tax-to-increase-starting-may-1.pdf>

<sup>82</sup> Johnson, Kim and Alayna Calabro. November 17, 2025. Federal Government Reopened; Congress Must Now Pass FY26 HUD Spending Bill to Protect Vouchers and Housing Assistance for Over 170,000 People who Have Experienced Homelessness—Take Action! National Low-income Housing Coalition.

<https://nlihc.org/resource/federal-government-reopened-congress-must-now-pass-fy26-hud-spending-bill-protect-vouchers>