



AFTER THE EXIT

**REPORTING ON YEAR THREE OF THE
EVALUATION OF JEWISH FAMILY SERVICE OF
SAN DIEGO'S SAFE PARKING PROGRAM**

June 2023

PREPARED BY

Leslie R. Lewis, Ph.D., M.P.H.
Mirle Rabinowitz Bussell, Ph.D.
Stacey Livingstone, M.A.

The Homelessness Hub

Department of
Urban Studies and Planning

UC San Diego

June 2023



TABLE OF CONTENTS

04	Executive Summary
07	Scope of the Study
13	Year Three Findings
25	Implications
28	Recommendations
32	References

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



KEY FINDINGS

The Jewish Family Service Safe Parking Program Fulfills a Specific Need in the County of San Diego Continuum of Care

The Jewish Family Service Safe Parking Program (JFS SPP) provides a valuable alternative to the shelter system for those people who have a vehicle. For clients who work, the JFS SPP allows them to more easily hold onto their most valuable resource (their vehicle) while they save enough to move into housing. For clients who do not or cannot work, the JFS SPP provides a sense of safety and privacy that they feel they lack in a shelter.

Older Individuals Specifically Benefit from the JFS SPP

Older adults who do not have the same ability to work as their younger peers and are living on fixed incomes derive particular benefits from the JFS SPP. It provides them with a safe place to wait while they find housing assistance with the added benefit of a sense of community on the lots.

Structural Racism Hinders Many Black, Indigenous, Latinx, or People of Color Clients in their Search for Housing

JFS SPP clients who identify as Black, Indigenous, Latinx, or People of Color (BILPOC) experience housing and employment discrimination as well as bias while attempting to use services and regain permanent housing in San Diego. These additional challenges make it harder for them to exit homelessness compared to white San Diegans.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

Continue to Expand Hours of Operation for Safe Parking Programs

The JFS SPP now operates two sites that are available 24/7. We recommend that JFS (as well as other safe parking program providers) continue to expand their hours of operation. Expanded hours would provide clients with an opportunity to accommodate nontraditional work schedules, save money in gas, meet with their case managers, access showers, and benefit from the sense of community that frequently arises on the lots.

Provide Trainings and Promote Practices That Increase Staff Knowledge and Are Explicitly Anti-Racist

Clients are best served when staff are both up-to-date on what resources and services are available, and when they are aware of the ways that implicit bias and structural racism operate across our systems. BILPOC clients would specifically benefit from interactions with staff who both recognize and have tools to respond to the prejudice and discrimination clients are likely to face in service provision and in seeking permanent housing.

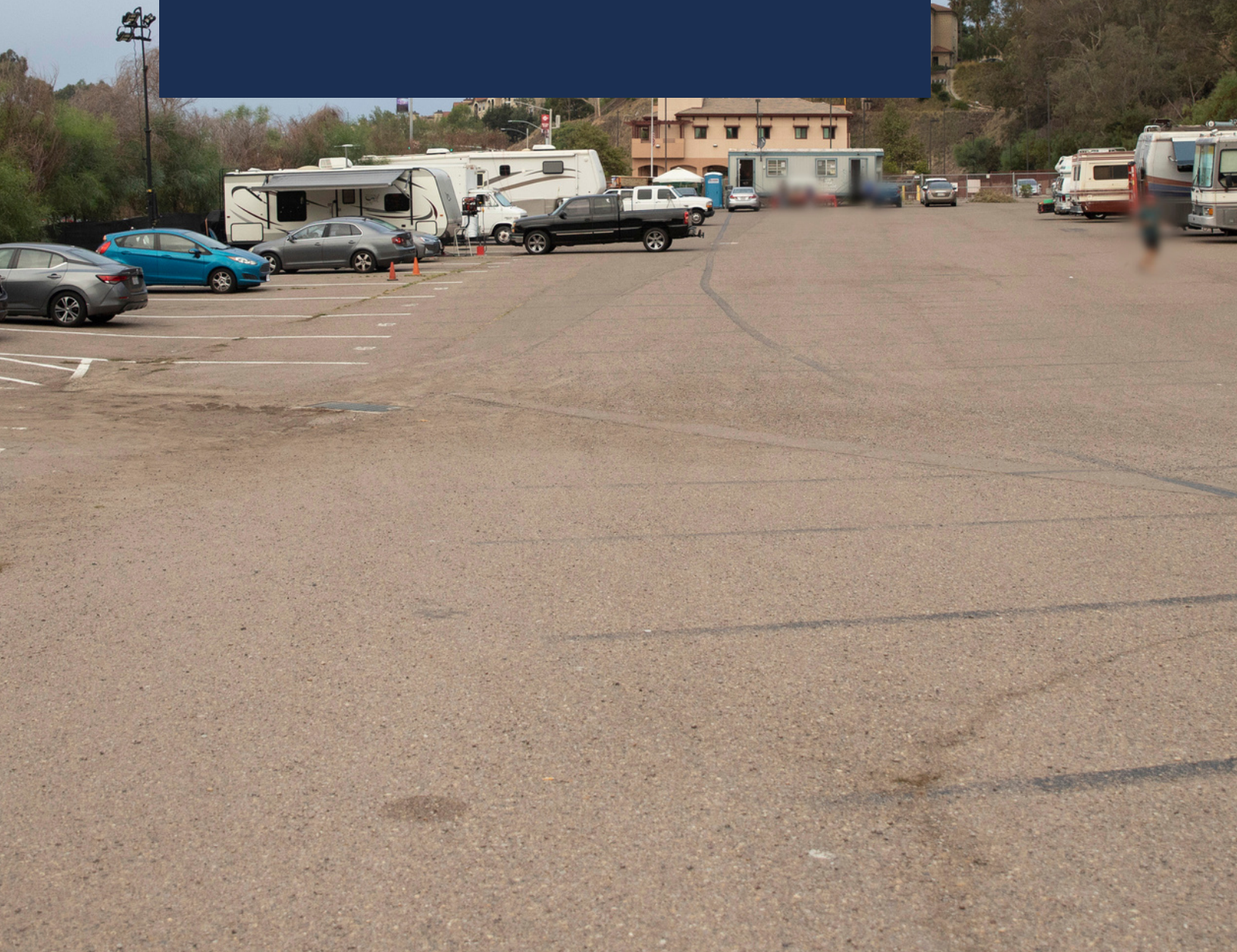
Implement Innovative Temporary Housing Solutions While Increasing Production of Affordable Housing

According to a 2019 report from Corporation for Supportive Housing, the city of San Diego severely lacks affordable housing, a reality that is mirrored across the county and that both pushes more individuals into homelessness and makes it difficult for them to exit from this situation. While we advocate for more affordable housing to be built, the San Diego Continuum of Care (CoC) must get creative. The construction of more affordable housing is a years-long undertaking. In the meantime, people's immediate needs must be met. We recommend that San Diego test out multiple interventions, including safe havens, sanctioned encampments and tiny homes. We recommend that JFS and other safe parking providers, given their knowledge of client trajectories and needs, have a strong voice in advocating for innovative housing solutions.

Support Legislative Efforts to Increase Funding for Safe Parking Programs

At the federal level, the Safe Parking Programs Act, H.R. 2956 and S. 3788 (Section 301) were introduced in 2021 and 2022 respectively and would require the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to provide grants of up to \$5 million to local governments to start or expand safe parking programs. Support for this legislation by local elected officials as well as homelessness services and housing providers would strengthen its chances of being passed. We recommend that JFS and other safe parking providers on the frontline of this issue serve as central figures in reshaping the narratives around vehicular homelessness, individuals who benefit from safe parking programs, and the utilization of federal funds.

SCOPE OF THE STUDY



OVERVIEW OF OBJECTIVES, METHODS, AND FINDINGS FROM 2019-2021

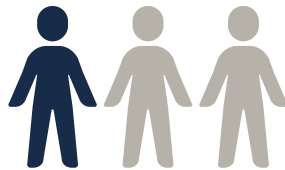
During the first two years of this three year evaluation of the JFS SPP, a mixed-methods approach was used to determine client demographics, causes of vehicular homelessness, and household characteristics associated with types of client exits. In the first two years of the study, data from the Homelessness Management Information System was analyzed and individual and group interviews were conducted with both JFS SPP clients and staff.

Over the first two years of the evaluation, it was determined that JFS SPP clients are disproportionately older and have higher rates of disability than the general population. On the other hand, they have disproportionately lower rates of mental illness and substance use disorder compared to the general population, which runs counter to common presumptions about people experiencing homelessness. Similar to patterns we see across the broader homelessness services sector, there are disproportionately high rates of Black, American Indian/Alaska Native, and Pacific Islander/Native Hawaiian clients when compared to the percentage of individuals from these racial/ethnic groups in the general population of San Diego. Finally, while financial crises were the primary reason people came to experience vehicular homelessness, certain factors, including client income, age, gender, racial and ethnic identity, and prior histories of homelessness, impacted whether or not clients had positive exits into housing or negative exits into emergency shelters or experiences of unsheltered homelessness after leaving the program.

For a full review of the prior evaluations, please read the [Year Two Research Summary Report](#) and the [Frontline Staff Listening Sessions Report](#).



**45% of Clients are
Older than 50**



**Almost One in Three
Have a Physical Disability**

**Average Income of Clients
Based on Exit Type**

Permanent Housing	\$1,477
Temporary Housing	\$1,364
Unsheltered	\$1,243
Emergency Shelter	\$1,166

THE PURPOSE OF YEAR THREE: WHAT HAPPENS TO CLIENTS AFTER THEY EXIT?

While qualitative interviews conducted in the first two years of the evaluation helped us to understand pathways into vehicular homelessness and analysis of quantitative client data allowed for a comprehensive review of JFS SPP client demographics as well as a large-scale analysis of client exits, many questions remained at the end of the second year of the evaluation regarding the specific variables that account for positive and negative exits from the program. In the third and final year of the evaluation (which occurred from January to September of 2022), attention was focused on collecting quantitative and qualitative data on former clients of the JFS SPP in order to better understand variation among client exits based on differences in income, age, racial, ethnic, or gender identity, and histories of homelessness. Through both surveys and interviews with former clients, we were able to gain deeper insights into some of the questions that remained from the first two years of the evaluation.

Although findings from the first two years of the evaluation revealed that the strongest predictors of exit type were age and income, these factors only accounted minimally for differences in client outcomes over the longer term. As such, our qualitative data collected in year three became integral to better understanding client exit types. Beyond deepening our understanding of why some clients have positive or negative exits from the program, our interviews offered an opportunity to ask former clients about the strengths of the JFS SPP as well as how the program could be improved to maximize its potential benefits. This information served as an important foundation for the evaluation conducted during this last phase of the project.

A FOCUS ON FORMER CLIENTS

In the final year of the evaluation, we relied heavily on feedback from former JFS SPP clients. We used surveys and interviews to better understand why some clients have quicker and more positive exits into permanent housing.

The data collection took place in two phases. During the first phase of the research, we surveyed and interviewed former JFS SPP clients who had utilized and exited the program prior to 2022. Former clients in this phase of our research could have exited anytime in the prior three years since JFS officially took over the SPP in 2019.

During the second phase of the research, we turned our attention to former clients who had very recently exited the program. Participants in this second phase of our research had exited the program anytime between January 1, 2022 and the end of April of 2022. We followed former clients for six months after they had exited the JFS SPP. This longitudinal aspect of the research design allowed us to determine how conditions change for former clients over time.

THE SURVEYS

During year three, we surveyed 224 former JFS SPP clients who had used and exited the program prior to 2022. Former clients were queried about their current housing and financial situations, as well as their sense of resilience, social ties, future goals, and experiences in the JFS SPP.

Questions driving our analysis of survey data included:

- **What percentage of former JFS SPP clients report being in permanent housing?**
- **What percentage of former clients became unhoused at any point in time after leaving the JFS SPP?**
- **Why did people who exited to “destinations unknown” leave the JFS SPP?**
- **What JFS SPP services and supports did former clients find the most helpful?**
- **What is the relationship between remaining stably housed and the age, race, and/or gender of former clients?**

224 Survey Responses were Analyzed



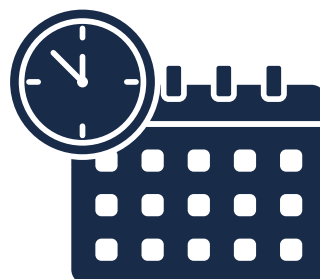
THE INTERVIEWS

In year three, we conducted interviews with 30 former clients who had exited the JFS SPP prior to 2022 and with 39 former clients who had more recently exited the program in the first few months of the new year. Across all 69 interviews, we were able to create a representative sample of former clients, with one important exception. We intentionally oversampled former clients over the age of 50. Given that our prior research established the unique challenges of older adults in the JFS SPP, this sampling strategy enabled us to better understand the trajectories of older clients once they exit the program.

We interviewed former clients who exited the JFS SPP prior to 2022 at only one point in time. Additionally, we conducted longitudinal interviews with the 39 former clients who had more recently exited the program (between January and April of 2022). We invited half of this latter group (19 former clients) to participate in an interview one month after exiting the program (reasoning that one month was not enough time for significant changes to occur in former clients' lives). We invited all 39 initial interviewees to participate in follow up interviews at three-months and six-months post-departure from the program.

The purpose of interviewing former clients over time was to consistently follow up with them in their first six months out of the JFS SPP to learn more about the longitudinal dimensions of former client trajectories. From the original group of 39 interviewees who exited the program in 2022, 31 former clients agreed to participate in interviews three months after leaving the JFS SPP and 29 agreed to participate in interviews six months after leaving the JFS SPP. We used the survey instrument for former clients to guide our initial interviews for the longitudinal interviews conducted in year three.

**69 Former Clients were Interviewed,
39 of them over 6 months**



YEAR THREE FINDINGS



HOUSING SITUATIONS AFTER LEAVING THE JFS SPP

Survey data reveal a story that is at once heartening and discouraging. Of the 224 surveys analyzed, 50.7% of former clients responded that they were now in long term housing. This is a significant jump from the percentage of clients (13.7%) exiting directly to permanent housing from the JFS SPP in the first two years of this study and could reflect a trend of positive exits into housing requiring longer time out of the JFS SPP than was chronicled in years one and two. It could also reflect the fact that the year three survey teased out the housing locations of clients who had exited to “destinations unknown.” While this presents a far brighter picture, it is still the case that 46% of former clients surveyed had experienced homelessness again at some point after leaving the JFS SPP.

From survey responses, we learned that the most common barriers to obtaining and remaining in permanent housing were the following:

- **stable and adequate income**
- **housing affordability**
- **issues with procuring a Section 8 voucher**
- **credit score**
- **health**
- **criminal record**
- **mental health**

**51% of Former
Clients are in
Long Term Housing**



INCOME AND EXITS

In the survey responses, income was an important predictor of long-term housing stability. Survey respondents who could pay their bills on time (61% of respondents) were 2.8 times more likely to be living in permanent housing than those who could not pay on time.

Interviews consistently revealed that inadequate income was one of the greatest barriers to becoming stably rehoused, whether this was due to working for minimum wage or limited income from benefits. Additionally, 20% of the survey respondents reported being unable to work due to older age, poor health, or disability. For these respondents, fixed incomes from benefits were not enough to cover expenses.

While a lack of financial resources is a contributing factor to homelessness across the nation, in San Diego this debilitating constraint is coupled with the additional barrier of high and increasing rents. Even though the "magic number" that enabled many former clients to move into housing came in around \$2,000/month, for those fortunate enough to achieve this income level, living options were nevertheless limited. Typically, these individuals rented SROs or studio apartments, or shared space with a roommate.

61% of Former Clients Can Pay their Bills On Time



20% of Former Clients are Unable to Work Due to Health or Disability



Across the six months that Kirk was interviewed by the research team, he worked full time earning \$2,300 a month. This was high compared to the average income for people on the JFS SPP lots (approximately \$1,200). It was enough for Kirk to rent a small SRO unit for \$900 a month. However, he was never able to move out of this cramped space despite his desire to do so. It was his dream to live in an apartment that would offer more privacy.

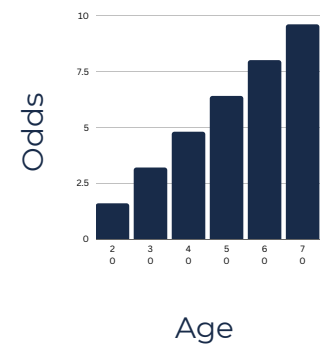
"When jobs are gonna pay you \$15, \$16 an hour you can never build up a lot of money... it is going to take at least 80 to 90% of your money just to have a roof over your head... Some of the apartments that I have looked at, one bedrooms, they were \$1,500 to \$1,800 a month. What am I supposed to do?"

AGE, RESOURCES, AND EXITS

Survey analysis revealed that, for every additional 10 years of age, former clients were 1.6 times more likely to experience homelessness again after leaving the JFS SPP. The vast majority of former clients interviewed who were 50 years old or older lived on very limited fixed incomes. Many of these former clients shared dispiriting stories of trying to make ends meet on a fixed income, whether it came in the form of disability benefits, part-time employment, retirement funds, or full-time employment at minimum wage. For the majority of former clients in this age group, having a very limited fixed income (or sometimes no income at all; many were waiting for their disability status to be approved or social security payments to begin) meant that the only way out of homelessness was by finding a housing voucher or program for which they qualified.

Those who did not qualify for assistance had little option but to continue to reside in their vehicles, either at the JFS SPP or elsewhere.

As Age Increases, Odds of Experiencing Homelessness Increase

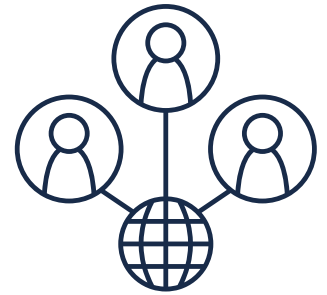


Tony is 66. He is on disability and lives on a fixed income. Although Tony has been identified as someone experiencing homelessness, it has been determined that he is not vulnerable enough to receive assistance. Furthermore, he is on the long waitlist for Section 8 in San Diego. During the six months that Tony was interviewed by the research team, he was never able to get out of his RV, which he parks on a side street in the city.

Tony left the JFS SPP because he could not afford the gas to leave the lot every morning. However, as his parking tickets pile up, he is considering returning to the program as he waits for housing assistance.

GENDER, RESOURCES, AND EXITS

Women who exited the JFS SPP prior to 2022 were more likely than men to exit into permanent housing. Further, women and men shared diverging stories about what resources helped them to become stably rehoused. While men were more likely to recount stories of adequate financial resources getting them back on their feet (such as a small raise), women were more likely to tell stories of rich social networks that aided them in regaining their housing (such as family members providing monthly stipends).



Many older men specifically expressed a belief that they were “not really homeless.” Instead, they asserted that they “chose to live in their vehicles.” Invariably, these older men lived on fixed incomes that made it impossible for them to rent in San Diego without housing assistance. Generally, these men had very little social support.



Since his divorce, Eric, who is 61, has been living out of his car.

The money he makes from sporadic, part-time work is not enough for him to rent a place on his own. When he exited the JFS SPP to move in with family, his intent was that this would only be a temporary situation. His family had made this point clear. With his children in college, Eric had no family to turn to for long term housing assistance.

Over the six months of interviews, Eric consistently framed his situation as a lifestyle choice and a travel adventure, whether driving around the country, or making frequent trips overseas to live cheaply in other countries during the winter months.

RACIAL IDENTITY AND EXITS

In years one and two of this study, analysis of HMIS data revealed that BILPOC clients had more positive exits from the JFS SPP compared to white clients. Surveys and interviews from the third year showed this trend continuing. This may seem unexpected given that BILPOC individuals are more likely to experience housing insecurity and homelessness — as well as poorer outcomes once they are unhoused — due to employment and housing discrimination.

In our initial (two-year summary) report, we theorized that this disparity in outcomes by racial/ethnic identity likely had to do with the fact that white clients trend significantly older (50 yrs+) and report more disabling conditions compared to BILPOC clients on the lots. Findings in year three would seem to support this hypothesis, given that those BILPOC clients who countered the trend and did have negative exits were significantly older (70 yrs+) or over the age of 50 and living with a disability.



BILPOC former clients who had negative exits were invariably much older or living with a disability.

Ramon, who identifies as Latino, is 62 years old. He has significant income constraints due to his child support payments and a recent disability that he experienced while on the job. He used the JFS SPP for a few days when the RV parks that he usually resides in were at full capacity.

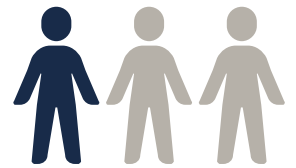
In his assessment for housing need, Ramon was not deemed vulnerable enough for assistance despite his age and disability status. As such, he continues to reside in RV parks, but worries about his future as his vehicle is getting older. The RV parks he uses do not allow vehicles that are older than 20 years on their sites.

HISTORIES OF HOMELESSNESS AND EXITS

Approximately one third of the former clients interviewed had histories of homelessness. The histories of these former clients followed a few patterns. Some had recovered from substance abuse disorders or had histories of severe mental illness. Others had fled domestic violence or were former foster children with limited financial or social resources. A unifying theme across all of these scenarios was a dearth of both financial and social resources.

This prior history of homelessness, and its precipitating factors, tended to predict poorer outcomes. Of the 21 former clients interviewed in year three who recounted histories of homelessness, approximately two-thirds of them had negative exits from the JFS SPP. Many in this group continued to reside in their vehicles. These conditions stemmed from limited financial resources (the highest monthly income in this particular group was \$1,400), very few social ties, and a lack of fit with programs that assist unhoused San Diegans.

One in three former clients had prior histories of homelessness



Two in three of these clients had negative exits from the SPP



Amanda experienced a history of homelessness prior to entering the JFS SPP. She had been in foster care, and when her foster parents declined to adopt her, she became unhoused as a young adult. Although she is close with her daughter and her grandchildren, they are also currently residing out of their vehicle and are not in a position to assist Amanda financially. Having no social resources to rely on for monetary support, when Amanda lost the ability to work due to an injury incurred on the job, she came to experience homelessness yet again.

"I lack family support. I was adopted so I don't have any family, except my daughter. My adoptive parents gave me up for adoption. They gave me back to the state of California when I was 16. So I have experienced chronic homelessness since I was 16."

STRUCTURAL RACISM AND BILPOC CLIENTS

Many former clients who identify as BILPOC highlighted obstacles to exiting homelessness rooted in racism. They shared incidents of bias and discrimination they faced while attempting to utilize services in San Diego. These experiences eroded their trust in service providers.

In addition to experiencing bias and discrimination while utilizing services, many former clients highlighted the discrimination they faced when attempting to rehouse. One former client who identifies as Black, theorized that he had a hard time finding housing in San Diego because landlords neither want to rent to people with Section 8 nor to BILPOC individuals. He felt this discrimination had become more pronounced during the pandemic due to landlords falsely believing that lower-income and BILPOC people were more likely to contract COVID-19.

These findings are in step with a larger body of literature that has documented persistent racism-based housing discrimination that BILPOC individuals experience: discrimination that is exacerbated when BILPOC individuals are seeking housing with a Housing Choice Voucher.



Another former client recounted memories of trying to help her unhoused daughter locate housing to no avail.

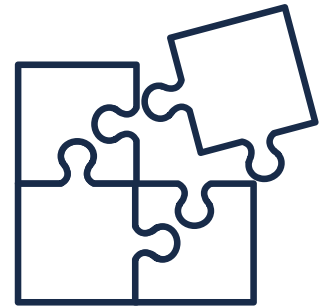
"My daughter is Black and she's tattooed everywhere. And I participate in seeking resources for her. But as soon as we show up somewhere looking for an apartment they take one look at her and it's like she's not going to be able to get an apartment. That's what it's going to be like."

THE IMPORTANCE OF PROGRAM FIT IN A HIGH COST REGION

Many former clients who were interviewed in year three who exited into permanent housing had incomes well below \$1,477 a month, the average income of individuals who exited to permanent housing calculated during the first two years of the evaluation. Approximately one-third of former clients interviewed, regardless of exit type, reported living on a fixed income close to \$1,000 to \$1,200 a month. Yet, some managed to become rehoused. For former clients with lower incomes who successfully exited the JFS SPP into permanent housing, theirs was resoundingly a story of programmatic fit.

These former clients were veterans, low-income seniors, persons with documented disabilities, and/or individuals with a Section 8 voucher who, through help from either the JFS SPP or another provider, discovered that they qualified for certain types of assistance.

Former clients who did not qualify for any form of housing assistance could earn as much as \$1,700 a month and still not have enough income to exit into permanent housing. Many of the former clients in this situation found their way back into the JFS SPP after temporary exits or left the program but continued to reside in their vehicles.



For those on fixed incomes, finding program assistance was key to becoming stably rehoused

One such individual, Rachel, who is 80 years old and lives on a fixed income of approximately \$1,700 a month, exited the JFS SPP into a motel through Project Roomkey during the COVID-19 pandemic only to return to the lots a short while later. Rachel laments the fact that, while she does not make enough money to rehouse on her own, she makes too much to qualify for other forms of housing assistance.

**“I have one foot in the grave and another on a banana peel.
How am I not vulnerable?”**

FEWER EXITS TO PERMANENT HOUSING IN 2022

Importantly, the observed pattern of women having more positive exits than men (seen in the data from 2019-2021 as well as in our phase one interviews for year three) diminished as interviews were conducted with former clients who had more recently exited the program. During interviews with people who exited the JFS SPP in 2022, we discovered the opposite: that women had fewer positive exits than men. Not only did we witness a reversal of the connection between gender and exits in our 2022 interviews, but there was also a significant drop in positive exits all around.

While 51 percent of the survey respondents and 63 percent of the interviewees who left the program prior to 2022 were in permanent housing at the time of their interview, only 38 percent of interviewees who left the program in 2022 were in permanent housing at the end of the longitudinal interviews. This was most likely due to the fact that those who had most recently left the JFS SPP had significantly less time to make changes to their financial and housing situations. It is a long path out of homelessness in an expensive city like San Diego.

Another likely factor contributing to fewer positive exits among more recent former clients of the JFS SPP has to do with the rental market: clients exiting the JFS SPP in 2022 encountered an even more expensive rental market than was true in prior years. A recent report from rent.com shows that the average price for a studio apartment in San Diego County increased by 23% since 2021 and was \$2,417 a month in 2022.



CLIENT PERSPECTIVES ON JFS SPP STRENGTHS

Former clients repeatedly noted that the JFS SPP gave them a sense of safety in a time of upheaval. Inside the fenced-in and patrolled lots, clients were protected from potential vehicle break-ins while sleeping, and were also able to avoid being ticketed by the police. Many former clients additionally noted that the JFS SPP was a welcome alternative to the shelter system, which many found to be dangerous and paternalistic.

Access to basic necessities including bathrooms, showers, and meals was consistently highlighted as a critical resource. Former clients repeatedly shared that being able to meet their most basic needs freed them up to focus on other important tasks, such as improving their physical and mental health, staying focused at work, and finding housing. Many clients mentioned that an additional strength of the JFS SPP was its ability to foster social ties.

Clients frequently noted that friendly interactions with other clients and with staff created a sense of community and comfort and often resulted in the sharing of resources. Former clients made it clear that personal relationships were fundamental to their wellbeing. Relationships not only supported good mental health through an emotional support system, but the social ties clients developed in the JFS SPP sometimes generated pathways to important resources, including material aid and information on relevant services.

Program Strengths:

- **Safety**
- **Avoid tickets**
- **Alternative to shelters**
- **Bathrooms**
- **Showers**
- **Meals**
- **Community**



CLIENT RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE JFS SPP

Despite the many positive features former clients identified about the JFS SPP, they also shared important suggestions for improving the program.

Many former clients wanted more engagement with their case managers. Others recounted instances where misinformation on the part of staff led to broken promises. Many former clients expressed a desire to see greater access to showers on the lots as they were not available at every site or every day. Former clients similarly shared that they desired greater access to meals, which are donated and only occur three nights a week on average. Additional funding would help with many of these requests.

Former clients also expressed interest in more flexible program entrance and exit requirements. For clients who work unconventional shifts, getting onto the lot by 9pm was an impossibility. Former clients who work late additionally lamented that they were expected to wake up and leave by 7am.

Finally, the need to be enrolled in the program across consecutive days was identified as a roadblock to using the program by many former clients who either had romantic partners they would occasionally stay with or by clients who had family nearby whom they would occasionally visit.

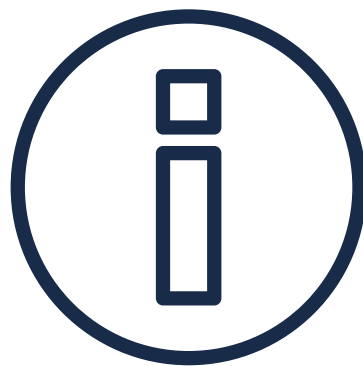
Program Opportunities:

- **More case management**
- **Transparency**
- **Greater access to showers and meals**
- **More flexible entrance and exit times**
- **More flexible enrollment**



IMPLICATIONS



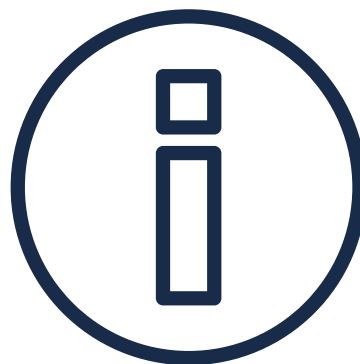


The JFS SPP is an Important and Distinctive Safety Net

The findings from the third year of the evaluation suggest that the JFS SPP is a critical safety net. For San Diegans attempting to weather a crisis with limited financial or social resources in a region with a significant lack of affordable housing, the JFS SPP provides a valuable alternative to parking on the streets or using emergency shelters. Clients who are employed have the opportunity to save money while staying on the lots. Clients who are no longer able to work have a safe place to park while they identify programs for which they are eligible. The JFS SPP is a valuable “pause point” and bridge to rehousing. The space, staff, services, connections, and access to resources combine to help people move forward. Data from the surveys and interviews show significant positive outcomes: 51 percent of the survey respondents and 63 percent of our interviewees who exited the JFS SPP prior to 2022 moved into permanent housing after leaving the program. These findings paint a much more positive picture of client trajectories than was found during the first two years of the evaluation when very high percentages of clients were exiting to unknown destinations.

The JFS SPP Specifically Benefits Older Adults

Given that older adults are the fastest growing subpopulation of unhoused Americans, and that growing numbers of older San Diegans are unable to make the economics work between low fixed incomes and rising rents, the JFS SPP has become an important safety net for older adults. As previously indicated, a substantial number of clients are over 60 years old (27.6%) and close to half (44.6%) are over 50 years old. Older adults on the JFS SPP lots tend to be living on very limited fixed incomes. Many older women, in addition to gaining physical safety and access to resources, find emotional support and relational networks. Older men, who are no longer able to work and who do not have as many social resources on whom they can rely, benefit from their time in the JFS SPP as well. While there, they have a safe and legal place to park and a reprieve from parking violations, tickets, and other hits to their savings. Through case management, either onsite or provided elsewhere, many older clients are able to locate housing programs for which they are eligible.



Sense of Community on the Lots Supports Clients

Exits into long term housing are not the only measure of the program's success. Former clients frequently recounted their positive experiences in the JFS SPP. Many benefited from case management. Many more highlighted the salubrious effects of community as it was created on the lots. Positive interactions with staff and other clients provided friendship, mutual support, and a sense of normalcy that reduced their anxiety and helped them feel equipped to take on the next day.

Clients Seek More Access to the Lots

Many former clients expressed a desire for more case management as well as for more flexible entrance and exit times, in part so that persons with nowhere to go during the day had a safe and free place to be and more opportunity to engage with their case managers.

A Need for Consciously Anti-Racist Case Management

Many former clients shared experiences of racial discrimination that hindered their ability to rehouse themselves. While experiences of racial discrimination were infrequently mentioned as happening on the JFS SPP lots, many BILPOC former clients described their experiences with discrimination in other arenas, including in emergency shelters and while seeking housing. During their interviews, approximately 30 percent of BILPOC former clients discussed experiences of racial discrimination that they experienced while either utilizing services within the San Diego CoC or attempting to secure housing.

RECOMMENDATIONS



RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SAFE PARKING PROGRAMS



Expand Operating Hours and Flexibility

Interviews with former clients of the JFS SPP strongly supported the need for at least one parking lot to be accessible 24/7. In the summer of 2022, JFS received funding from the City of San Diego to operate one of its sites 24 hours a day/7 days a week. This has allowed clients who work unusual hours to benefit from the JFS SPP and serve those who have nowhere to go during the day by connecting them to on-site case management and helping them to reduce their gas costs. This has specifically benefited older clients living on fixed incomes, particularly men who additionally lack social supports as they can tap into the community provided by the JFS SPP. Additionally, in May of 2023, another 24/7 JFS SPP site was opened in partnership with the City of San Diego and with support from the County of San Diego.

From our findings, we recommend that safe parking programs not only operate one or more 24/7 site, but that they should additionally enhance access to on-site showers and meals at all sites. Former clients of the JFS SPP constantly noted that access to showers serves both their mental health and their ability to get and maintain a job.

Finally, we recommend that safe parking programs offer clients more flexibility in terms of their comings and goings from the lots. While a 24/7 site will help achieve this goal, as there will no longer be a need for strict entrance and exit times, we additionally recommend that safe parking programs consider allowing clients to stay at their lots sporadically, as their need arises, rather than requiring that they stay across consecutive days.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SAFE PARKING PROGRAMS



Increase Staff Training to Build Up Knowledge, Foster Anti-Racist Practices, and Promote Transparency

We recommend that safe parking program staff receive ongoing training in order to keep clients up-to-date on regional services and resources. Training of this nature will allow staff to remain constantly transparent as they will be aware of what options and resources are available both on-site and elsewhere in the county for their clients. Former clients of the JFS SPP benefited the most when their case managers were knowledgeable about available housing options and services in the area. Conversely, former clients were upset when case managers did not seem to know how to assist them or when they made promises that they later had to break.

Safe parking programs should additionally strive to become explicitly anti-racist organizations. To this end, staff can be trained in anti-racist practices that they can deploy on-site. Such practices can include learning how to build inclusive community on the lots as well as how to cultivate and display empathy in ways that reflect awareness of past and current harms rooted in racism. Safe parking program staff can also learn how best to help BILPOC clients navigate discrimination they may face across a host of arenas including in their search for housing and employment. This specific training can focus on informing staff of the various forms of legal recourse available to their clients should they encounter racism in any of the many ways it manifests.

PRIORITIZING THE CALL TO ACTION

1. Meeting the Immediate Needs of Clients

Clients of safe parking programs need greater access to showers and meals. Many clients need to be able to stay on the lots for longer periods of time as many cannot work and are wasting valuable resources traveling to parks and other parking lots during the day.



2. Connecting Clients to Available Resources

Clients of safe parking programs benefit from greater access to case management. Case managers in turn need more and ongoing training so that they can be consistently up-to-date regarding available housing, occupational resources, and social benefits programs, as well as knowledgeable about ways to identify and address racism in all its forms and resulting harms to clients. Greater access to case management will be specifically beneficial to clients who are unable to work, are living on fixed incomes, and are unable to rehouse on their own. Enhanced access to case management can assist such clients in identifying housing assistance programs for which they may qualify.



3. Building Up Innovative Approaches to Temporary Housing

We currently face a significant lack of affordable housing across this country. A large swath of the population is extremely rent burdened (spending more than 50% of household income on rent). Many families and individuals need and qualify for rental assistance yet they are unable to procure vouchers because funding for voucher programs is so limited. We need bold policies to respond to this crisis that so many of our neighbors are facing. We need funding and incentives to support the construction of housing that is affordable to people living at low-incomes. Yet, even if such supports become available, building affordable housing is a long process. People need real assistance right now. As such, we recommend that diverse, innovative, temporary and permanent housing solutions be piloted quickly, and evaluated to understand their effectiveness. Innovative solutions might include the construction of tiny home villages, offering shallow rental subsidies, placing mobile homes or trailers in safe parking lots, creating shared housing pilots, and building and preserving SRO units.



4. Advocating for Continued Legislation and Funding to Support Safe Parking Programs

At the federal level, the Safe Parking Programs Act, H.R. 2956 and S. 3788 (Section 301) were introduced in 2021 and 2022 respectively and would require HUD to provide grants of up to \$5 million to local governments to start or expand safe parking programs. This legislation should be supported by local elected officials and homelessness services and housing providers.



REFERENCES



REFERENCES

Corporation for Supportive Housing. (2019). The city of San Diego community action plan on homelessness. https://www.sdhc.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/SD_Homeless_CSH_report_final_10-2019.pdf

Focus Strategies. (2018). San Diego temporary bridge shelter evaluation. https://voiceofsandiego.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/Bridge-Shelter-Evaluation-Report_Phase-One.pdf

Frias, A. (2022, May 15). San Diegans struggle with rising rent prices. NBC San Diego. <https://www.nbcsandiego.com/news/local/san-diegans-struggle-with-rising-rent-prices/2946865/>

Giamarino, C., Blumenberg, E., & Brozen, M. (2022). Who lives in vehicles and why? Understanding vehicular homelessness in Los Angeles. Housing Policy Debate. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10511482.2022.2117990>

Homelessness Policy Research Institute. (2018). Safe parking programs. <https://socialinnovation.usc.edu/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/Safe-Parking-Literature-Review.pdf>

McElwain, L., Schiele, D., & Waheed, L. (2021). Smart practices for safe parking: A nationwide review of safe parking programs for people sheltering in vehicles. The Center for Homeless Inquiries. <https://priceschool.usc.edu/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/Smart-Practices-for-Safe-Parking-USC-2021.pdf>

National Alliance to End Homelessness. (2023, April). Homelessness and racial Disparities. <https://endhomelessness.org/homelessness-in-america/what-causes-homelessness/inequality/>

Adjaye-Gbewonyo, D., & Boersma, P. (2020). Early release of selected estimates based on data from the 2020 National Health Interview Survey. National Center for Health Statistics. <https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/nhis/earlyrelease/EarlyRelease202108-508.pdf>

REFERENCES

National Institute of Mental Health. (n.d.). Mental health information - statistics.
<https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/statistics>

National Law Center on Homelessness and Poverty. (2019). No safe place: The criminalization of homelessness in U.S. cities.
https://homelesslaw.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/No_Safe_Place.pdf

Pruss, G. (2012). Seattle vehicular residency research project 2012 advisory report. Seattle University Department of Communication.
http://clerk.seattle.gov/~public/meetingrecords/2012/hhshc20120926_8a.pdf

Pruss, G., Knight, K. R., Resnikoff, N., & Kushel, M. (2022). The long road home: Housing and service needs of people who inhabit oversized vehicles in Oakland's public parking. Benioff Homelessness and Housing Initiative.
<https://homelessness.ucsf.edu/sites/default/files/resources/UCSF%20BHII%20Oversized%20Vehicle%20Report.pdf>

Serving Seniors. (2021). Senior homelessness: A needs assessment.
https://servingseniors.org/news-events/senior-homelessness-a-needs-assessment.html?gclid=CjwKCAjwsvujBhAXEiwA_UXnAJOD2NyVlpufDzrYRLlucs71STW-QubbbMIQdFN-5QZJ88LSGtrb7vhoCJQYQAvD_BwE

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. (2021). 2021 national survey of drug use and health releases. https://www.samhsa.gov/data/release/2021-national-survey-drug-use-and-health-nsduh-releases?gclid=CjwKCAjwsvujBhAXEiwA_UXnAJejcLMsR_sHy-iUNKcOr2LkDqu8zdWpO2yvTzwLKHfmLYTxuEQJZhoC0uEQAvD_BwE#annual-national-report

Wakin, M. (2013). Otherwise homeless: Vehicle living and the culture of homelessness. FirstForumPress.