



Action Plan to Address Homelessness

2011 - 2014

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 2008, the City Council adopted the first *Action Plan to Address Homelessness*, which identified key priorities and specific steps that the City would implement with the goal of reducing the impact of homelessness on the community. The past two years have been marked by significant improvements in our coordination of care, the re-alignment of our funding to reflect the priorities established in the Plan, a renewed emphasis on data collection and evaluation, and a strong Housing First focus. These changes have resulted in successfully housing 90 of our most vulnerable service registry participants and the reduction of homelessness in our community by 19%.

The intention of this revised Action Plan is to continue the successful strategies of Year 1 and Year 2 while also developing a more long-term approach that is reflective of significant new federal policies that will impact the resources and program areas in homeless services and homeless prevention over the next five to ten years.

The first of these new policies is the major overhaul of the federal legislation that authorizes homeless program funding, the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act. The McKinney-Vento Act was amended in 2009 by S.896, The Homeless Emergency Assistance and Rapid Transition to Housing (HEARTH) Act. The HEARTH Act makes several major changes, including re-defining who is eligible for homeless assistance, re-configuring existing homeless program funds, placing new emphasis on homeless prevention, and increasing the emphasis on grantee performance.

The second major change in federal policy occurred in November 2009, when Department of Veterans' Affairs Secretary Eric Shinseki announced the VA's plan to prevent and end homelessness among veterans within 5 years. The VA has committed to partnering with state and local governments as well as private community-based partners to accomplish this goal.

Most recently, in May 2010, the U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness released the first Federal Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness: *Opening Doors*. The ICH has laid out four goals: 1) Finish the job of ending chronic homelessness; 2) Prevent and end homelessness among Veterans in five years; 3) Prevent and end homelessness for families, youth and children in ten years; 4) Set a path for ending all types of homelessness.

In an effort to foster synergy and ensure the City's Action Plan supports and affirms the federal plan, the Action Plan for 2010 has been updated to mirror the five key themes of Opening Doors, while retaining the unique application of these themes to remain relevant to our City:

- Increase Leadership, Collaboration and Civic Engagement
- Increase Access to Stable and Affordable Housing
- Increase Economic Security
- Improve Health and Stability
- Retool the Homeless Crisis Response System

The City recognizes our community partners in this joint effort, and we appreciate their compassion, energy and dedication to providing care and housing to our most vulnerable residents. The City is also grateful for our residents and business owners who continually identify addressing homelessness as a top priority, and their enthusiasm for volunteering, educating and reaching out to help those in need.

VISION

We will transform Santa Monica to a place where our effective action and compassion end the impact of homelessness on our community.

Through collaboration and cooperation, the City of Santa Monica, non-profit agencies, housing providers, governmental partners, business, and faith communities will focus on intensively serving the most vulnerable and chronically homeless people – those who have been homeless in Santa Monica for many years – so that they obtain and sustain housing. The City will also coordinate services to prevent homelessness by promoting stability in housing, income and family relationships. We will work with our neighboring communities and partners to form collaborations that address the regional nature of homelessness and promote the development of housing and services throughout Los Angeles County.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

- Success is measured by reducing street homelessness.
- Santa Monica is committed to doing its “fair share” of providing essential and effective services to homeless individuals in our community¹.
- New and existing resources should be focused on priority populations:
 - Individuals that have been homeless in Santa Monica for five or more years
 - Homeless individuals and families whose last permanent address is in Santa Monica
 - Vulnerable members of Santa Monica’s workforce (homeless individuals and families with a household member who has worked full-time within the City of Santa Monica for over six consecutive months)
 - Homeless individuals on the Santa Monica Service Registry
 - Homeless individuals identified by City staff (i.e. Santa Monica Police Department, Santa Monica Fire Department) as high users of City resources and services
- All services will be directly linked to facilities and programs which are directed to ending participants’ homelessness or that prevent new episodes of homelessness.
- Targeted services should use interdisciplinary teams with low staff to client ratios, including, but not limited to, clinical mental health and substance abuse support.
- Resources – human and financial – should be re-evaluated, shifted, or expanded to support program models that are consistent with the Plan and its Vision and recognize the intensity of services required by the priority populations.
- A range of permanent housing options for homeless persons should be developed, with a focus on permanent supportive housing linked to services, consistent with fair share.
- Evaluation of services should be data-driven.
- The City’s efforts should involve increased communication, education and involvement of the public.

¹ **Defining Santa Monica’s Fair Share:** A series of methodologies can be employed to quantify a fair share for Santa Monica:

- Per Capita: Based on Santa Monica’s proportion of the general population of the county area covered by the Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority’s (LAHSA) 2009 Homeless Count, Santa Monica’s per capita share of the regional homeless population would be **414** at any point in time.
- Street Count: The number of people directly enumerated on the streets of Santa Monica during the 2010 Homeless Count was **319**.
- Capacity for Temporary Housing: According to ServicePoint, in FY2009-10 there were **256 households** placed into temporary housing placements in Santa Monica.
- In Santa Monica 5+ Years: An analysis of ServicePoint data reveals that in FY2009-10, **720** individuals met the new definition for “Santa Monica priority population”. **321** (45%) of those individuals have been in Santa Monica for 5 years or longer.

THE ROAD AHEAD – SHAPING ACTIONS FOR FISCAL YEARS 2011-2014

In keeping with the themes of *Opening Doors*, the federal plan to end homelessness, action areas for FY2011 – 2014 have been re-aligned to create synergy and ensure smooth implementation of Federal priorities at a local level. In addition, the outcomes and actions have been developed taking into consideration the goals of the HEARTH Act – specifically targeting the performance measures that are used to evaluate “High Performing Communities”, which include reducing the length of each episode of homelessness, ensuring that households do not return to homelessness, and the extent to which the community as a whole is pro-active in engaging households who become homeless. In addition, there is a strong emphasis on evaluating performance, not just of individual programs, but of the Continuum of Care as a community, and using evaluations as a means of directing resources towards the most effective solutions.

The City of Santa Monica is part of the Los Angeles County Continuum of Care, which applies jointly for HUD homeless program funds for most of the county; therefore, it is imperative that the City work closely with the Continuum of Care lead agency, the Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority, as well as other regional leaders such as the United Way of Greater Los Angeles and the Westside Council of Governments, to ensure that other communities are equally committed to achieving these outcomes.

The Action Plan also focuses on targeting and aligning resources. Beyond just funding services or securing more dollars for our local programs, it is also critical that the City engage other entities that invest resources locally to ensure that they are aware of the City’s priorities and secure their help in aligning their resources to support this Action Plan. This includes federal, state and local funders, private foundations, faith communities and business partners.

The *Action Plan to Address Homelessness* has been reframed to provide an over-arching view of what we intend to accomplish based on the key themes of *Opening Doors*. More specific outcomes and benchmarks will be established for each fiscal year starting in FY2011.

Increase Leadership, Collaboration and Civic Engagement

- Increase agency capacity through education and collaboration
- Increase civic engagement through opportunities for positive involvement and education
- Improve collaboration with county and regional cities to promote “fair share” principles and reduce practices that result in non-Santa Monica residents being referred into City-funded programs
- Improve City inter-departmental collaboration

Increase Access to Stable and Affordable Housing

- Identify new local, state and federal resources to make housing affordable and service enriched
- Decrease the amount of time between engagement and housing placement
- Improve access to affordable and supportive housing for the priority populations
- Develop protocols and incentives to help people who achieve stability in housing to move into non-supportive affordable housing if they so choose, in order to free up supportive units

Increase Economic Security

- Increase access to meaningful and sustainable employment for those experiencing or most at-risk of homelessness
- Improve access to mainstream programs, such as public benefits, health services, food assistance and vocational services, to reduce people's vulnerability to homelessness

Improve Health and Stability

- Enhance hospital discharge coordination
- Develop / re-align resources to promote long-term stabilization services for homeless people placed in permanent housing
- Improve access to primary health care, mental health care and substance abuse treatment

Retool the Homeless Crisis Response System

- Redesign outreach services to promote improved outcomes and housing placements
- Continued alignment of emergency services and transitional housing to the priority populations
- Expand prevention services, including programs that promote economic stability and housing retention through short-term assistance.
- Establish a baseline and seek to reduce average stay in emergency shelter and transitional housing by 30% annually using Housing First and Rapid Rehousing strategies
- Develop resources and incentives to promote improved housing retention
- Expand the use of non-City funding for homeless and prevention programs to support the goals of the Action Plan.
- Continue to connect individuals to support systems and permanent housing in their community of origin

REGIONAL COLLABORATION

The City of Santa Monica will continue to work with key partners to bolster advocacy and regional coordination in order to advance the priorities and goals of the Plan.

- The City will remain focused on working closely with the West Los Angeles Veterans Affairs to coordinate care for homeless veterans in Santa Monica and to support resources on the West LA Campus that will lead to housing and support for our most vulnerable veterans.
- As a partner in the Los Angeles Continuum of Care, the City will continue to generate support for Santa Monica priorities with the Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority (LAHSA), and coordinate regional policies that align with those set forth in this plan. The effectiveness of our participation in the Continuum and the impact on our local agencies will be the subject for continued evaluation.
- The City of Santa Monica will participate in national and regional planning efforts that support the Action Plan, such as the efforts by the United Way of Greater Los Angeles that would modernize the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's (HUD) funding formula and *Home for Good*, the United Way plan to end chronic and veteran homelessness in Los Angeles County.
- The City will continue to work with service providers, regional partners, SMMUSD and others to connect non-Santa Monica residents to services, family, and resources in their community of origin.

ACCOUNTABILITY

A recurring theme of the HEARTH Act is greater accountability through frequent evaluation and meaningful data collection. Measuring the effectiveness of our activities and sharing the results of our evaluations with the public will be critical to ensuring our limited resources are directed to programs and services that achieve results.

In order to measure effectiveness in a fair and transparent way, the City has begun to streamline program outcomes to create consistency and target specific activities that will help us accomplish the goals of this Plan. When this consistency is achieved, we will identify key benchmarks against which future improvements can be measured. Consistency will also allow the City to begin to analyze costs for services based on the outcomes achieved and provide reports on program efficiencies and cost avoidance benefits in order to evaluate the City's "return on investment".

These benchmarks will be made available to the public on a semi-annual basis through "report cards" of our accomplishments to date overall as a community and the accomplishments of City-funded programs. These report cards will be available through the monthly "Bringing it Home" e-newsletter and on the City's website, as well as presented at public meetings.

The overall community indicator of success is a sustainable reduction in street homelessness. This will be measured each year through the annual city-wide Homeless Count, conducted during the last week of January each year. The City will publicly report upon and post the results of each year's Homeless Count.