



## **SACRAMENTO COUNTY GRAND JURY NEWS RELEASE**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**June 9, 2023**

### **MEDIA CONTACT**

Norval Wellsfry, 2022-2023 Grand Jury Foreperson

[Wellsfn@saccourt.ca.gov](mailto:Wellsfn@saccourt.ca.gov) or (916) 874-7559

### **Mental Illness and Substance Abuse Proliferates Among Area's Homeless; Sacramento County's Response Falls Far Short**

Sacramento County leaders have failed to offer adequate treatment to thousands of homeless men and women who suffer from mental illness or substance abuse, according to a report issued by the Sacramento County Grand Jury after a months-long investigation.

Nearly 10,000 men, women, and children sleep on Sacramento County streets every night, and 50% to 80% of the men and women suffer from mental illness and/or substance abuse. Homelessness in the County has ballooned 253% since 2018.

“Even though the County of Sacramento has the financial responsibility for the unhoused mentally ill or substance abusers, their use of federal, state, and local funds has lacked a comprehensive, coordinated strategy and has developed very few measurable goals and outcomes” said Norv Wellsfry, Grand Jury Foreperson.

Wellsfry said, “The public approach to homelessness is diluted and ineffective because it’s dominated by political infighting between the County and City of Sacramento officials and watered down with too many boards and committees.”

The Grand Jury noted that millions of dollars are being spent to treat the homeless mentally ill and substance abusers. Multiple programs have been instituted with little coordination or cooperation among the providers. Yet mental illness and substance abuse among the homeless continues to proliferate.

“There are lots of meetings,” Wellsfry said, “lots of plans, lots of special commissions, and lots of public concern. But real change remains an illusion.”

Among the Grand Jury's 11 recommendations, it calls for the immediate development of a countywide strategic plan with specific goals and outcomes to address homelessness, and especially those who are mentally ill or abusing illegal substances.

The report also recommends the creation of a new Deputy County Executive position who would have budgetary and implementation authority in the County's efforts to reduce homelessness.

"There is a real leadership void in the local homelessness arena," Wellsfry said. "It's dominated by the political infighting between the County and City of Sacramento officials and watered down with too many boards and committees."

Another recommendation offered by the Grand Jury urges the County to dedicate more funds to innovative homeless programs, especially transitional housing that requires participants to be clean-and-sober.

Wellsfry said, "It is time for the County and other government entities to step up to the plate and address the problem, giving it the serious attention it deserves."

*The Sacramento County Grand Jury is the independent watchdog over public entities within the county. Concerned citizens can contact the Grand Jury on a confidential basis through written complaints that alert the Grand Jury to issues within public entities; we would like to hear from you at [www.sacgrandjury.org](http://www.sacgrandjury.org).*