

August 31, 2023

The Honorable Michael Bowman  
Presiding Judge  
Sacramento County Superior Court  
720 9<sup>th</sup> Street  
Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: **City of Sacramento's Response to the Sacramento County Grand Jury**

Dear Judge Bowman:

The City of Sacramento provides the following responses to the Sacramento County Grand Jury, consistent with its obligations under California Penal Code section 933.05, to the two Grand Jury reports entitled "*Homeless Should Not Mean Hopeless: Homelessness Solutions Elude Elected Leaders*" and "*Mental Health Care for the Homeless: Who Cares.*"

**Grand Jury Report: Homeless Should Not Mean Hopeless: Homelessness Solutions Elude Elected Leaders**

**A. FINDINGS**

**F1:** There is no cooperative, collaborative, and coordinated effort among all eight governments in the County to create comprehensive solutions to this shared problem.

City Council's Response to F1

The City of Sacramento agrees that there needs to be a collaborative and coordinated effort among all eight governments in the County to create a regional, comprehensive approach to this shared crisis.

The City of Sacramento would point out that some efforts toward this coordinated approach have already occurred. The Sacramento Homeless Policy Council (SHPC) was launched in August 2021 at the direction of Sacramento City Council and the County Board of Supervisors. The SHPC is tasked with regional collaboration to end homelessness and currently consists of elected officials from Sacramento County and the cities of Sacramento, Citrus Heights, Elk Grove, Folsom, Galt and Rancho Cordova.

In addition, in June of 2022, Sacramento City Council and the County Board of Supervisors, and the Sacramento Countywide Continuum of Care (CoC) Board all

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adopted the Sacramento Local Homelessness Action Plan (LHAP) which is a three year, cross-jurisdictional unified approach to addressing homelessness across Sacramento County. While the other six cities did not formally adopt the LHAP, staff of each city was involved in the creation of the plan, and three of the other cities (Citrus Heights, Elk Grove, and Rancho Cordova) have staff seated on the CoC Board which adopted the LHAP.

On December 6, 2022, the City of Sacramento and the County of Sacramento entered into a Partnership Agreement that is legally binding and enforceable.

The Partnership Agreement sets forth responsibilities upon both the City of Sacramento and the County of Sacramento such as: 1) including all spaces into the Coordinated Access System (CAS) managed by Sacramento Steps Forward (SSF); 2) joint encampment engagement teams; 3) the addition of a Fourth CORE Wellness Center; 4) increased shelter capacity; 5) increased permanent housing; and 6) increased full-service partnership (FSP) capacity and referrals with a whatever it takes approach – amongst other requirements.

**F2:** The problem of homelessness in Sacramento County has drastically worsened over the past five years, as demonstrated by the dramatic increases in Point in Time counts.

#### City Council's Response to F2

The City of Sacramento agrees with the finding.

**F3:** A lack of affordable housing is the primary cause of homelessness and the most difficult one to solve due to the high cost of new development.

#### City Council's Response to F3

The City of Sacramento disagrees partially with the finding.

A recent study by University of California, San Francisco found a direct link between the cost of housing in California and homelessness.<sup>1</sup> Additionally, during the most recent Point-In-Time (PIT) count, forty-four percent of individuals experiencing homelessness surveyed identified a lack of affordable housing as the primary problem in Sacramento.<sup>2</sup>

While housing affordability and availability certainly are substantial contributing factors to generating an environment where the crisis of homelessness thrives, there are a number of other environmental, structural, interpersonal, and behavioral factors such as lack of adequate mental health care services which contribute equally and often more significantly to homelessness.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.ucsf.edu/news/2023/06/425646/california-statewide-study-investigates-causes-and-impacts-homelessness>

<sup>2</sup> <https://sacramentostepsforward.org/continuum-of-care-point-in-time-pit-count/2022-pit-count/>

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**F4:** Sacramento Steps Forward does not have any elected leaders on its Board and lacks decision-making authority over the eight governmental jurisdictions in the County, making it powerless to implement needed changes.

City Council's Response to F4:

The City of Sacramento disagrees partially with the finding.

It is correct that Sacramento Steps Forward (SSF) does not have any elected leaders on its Board. It is also correct that as presently constituted, the mechanism under which SSF operates can result in limited progress to implement the needed responses to address the homeless crisis.

Fact 1: SSF serves as Continuum of Care (CoC) that is funded by the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). SSF also receives grant funding from the State of California per Homeless Housing Assistance and Prevention (HHAP) grant program which SSF was just allocated \$12,333,090.41 in HHAP-4 funds. SSF oversees numerous programs and projects that serve individuals experiencing homelessness throughout Sacramento County per its status as the CoC for Sacramento County.

Fact 2: SSF serves as the operator of the Coordinated Access System (CAS). CAS is supposed to serve as the 'front door' to all City and County funded shelters and housing programs. CAS places all those doors and programs under one roof so a perspective client only need make one phone call to be assessed for appropriate services, resources, and placement. The City's intent in participating in this model was to have a response system in place where all homeless clients need only make one phone call or one contact to be assessed for appropriate services, resources and placement, and ensure that the most vulnerable are prioritized for placement suiting their unique needs.

Fact 3: As designed, SSF was to serve as the administrator of the Countywide Homeless Management Information System (HMIS). HMIS is the largest source of data the community has related to people experiencing homelessness and programs serving them and is nationally recognized as a best practice.

Fact 4: As designed, SSF was to serve as the lead for implementing the Local Homelessness Action Plan (LHAP), the County and City and CoC adopted strategic plan to address homelessness. The intent was to create a cross-jurisdictional unified approach to addressing homelessness across Sacramento County.

**F5:** The legally binding agreement mandated by Measure O and the Partnership Agreement is a step in the right direction, but it applies only to the City and County of Sacramento.

City Council's Response to F5:

The City of Sacramento agrees with the finding.

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The City of Sacramento would add that it stands ready and willing to collaborate and partner with the other cities in Sacramento County in addressing homelessness as the City has done with the County.

## **B. RECOMMENDATIONS**

**R1:** The 2022-2023 Sacramento County Grand Jury recommends that the County and the seven incorporated cities implement a Joint Powers Authority (JPA) to address homelessness by December 1, 2023.

### City Council's Response to R1:

The City agrees with this recommendation.

Recently enacted state requirements (AB/SB 129) for funding the region's homelessness response will require significant analysis of the potential for a regional response, which includes the creation of a JPA. In addition, working with members of the Sacramento City Council, Assemblymember Kevin McCarty has introduced AB 1086, the Joint Exercise of Powers Act: Sacramento County Partnership on Homelessness.

The Joint Exercise of Powers Act authorizes 2 or more public agencies, by agreement, to form a joint powers authority to exercise any power common to the contracting parties, as specified. Existing law requires the agreement to set forth its purpose or the power to be exercised, among other things.

This bill would authorize the County of Sacramento and the Cities of Sacramento, Rancho Cordova, Elk Grove, Citrus Heights, and Folsom to enter into a joint powers agreement pursuant to the act to create and operate a joint powers agency, named the Sacramento County Partnership on Homelessness, to assist the homeless population, to coordinate homelessness response, and to develop and manage a comprehensive strategic plan to address homelessness within the jurisdiction of its member cities and county. The bill would set forth the composition and voting procedures of the partnership's board of directors. It would require the partnership to comply with the regulatory guidelines of each specific state funding source received.

This bill would make legislative findings and declarations as to the necessity of a special statute for the County of Sacramento and the Cities of Sacramento, Rancho Cordova, Elk Grove, Citrus Heights, and Folsom.

Also, additions made to State's 2023-24 budget, include entirely new requirements of regional collaboration for jurisdictions that receive Homeless, Housing and Prevention (HHAP) funding. This work will be memorialized into a regional plan that requires (among other conditions): "Identification of roles and responsibilities for all participating jurisdictions regarding outreach and site coordination, siting and use of available land, the development of shelter, interim, and permanent housing options, and the

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coordination and connection to the delivery of services." This work will be done collaboratively with the City, County, CoC and cities, and will inform alternative organizational approaches, which may or may not include the formation of a JPA.

In addition, it is important to point out that this approach has been tried, with limited success. In the spring of 2011, the Chair of the Board and the Mayor of the City of Sacramento sent joint letters to all of the Mayors and City Managers of the cities in Sacramento County to meet on April 27, 2011, and discuss a new model for homeless service planning and management through a JPA. Unfortunately, the other cities did not indicate a desire to participate in such an endeavor. However, the City of Sacramento remains ready and willing to work with its partner agencies.

**R2:** The newly formed JPA should be governed by elected officials who are directly accountable to citizens of the County.

City Council's Response to R2:

See the City's response to Recommendation No. 1. The City agrees with this recommendation. The Joint Exercise of Powers Act authorizes 2 or more public agencies, by agreement, to form a joint powers authority to exercise any power common to the contracting parties, as specified. Existing law requires the agreement to set forth its purpose or the power to be exercised, among other things. In analyzing the new conditions imposed by AB/SB 129, the roles of elected officials in the structure of a JPA (R1), would be considered.

**R3:** The Joint Powers Authority should develop and manage a comprehensive County-wide strategic plan to address homelessness by July 1, 2024.

City Council's Response to R3:

See the City's response to Recommendation Number 1. The City agrees with this recommendation.

**R4:** The County/City Partnership Agreement should be used as a model for the other six cities as an interim measure pending the creation of a Joint Powers Authority.

City Council's Response to R4:

The City of Sacramento agrees with this recommendation and has already implemented this Recommendation by entering into the Partnership Agreement with the County of Sacramento on December 6, 2022. The City of Sacramento and County of Sacramento have also subsequently enhanced the agreement by agreeing to Collaboration Protocols that provides further guidelines to the Partnership Agreement which addresses training and data sharing, outreach and services, shelter and respite centers, funding, and planning and accountability.

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City and County staff and leadership meet regularly to ensure the effectiveness and implementation of the Partnership Agreement.

## **Grand Jury Report: "Mental Health Care for the Homeless: Who Cares."**

### **A. Findings**

**F1:** The current fragmented system of homeless services fails to serve the homeless and their mental health and substance abuse challenges for the Sacramento County community and its taxpayers.

#### City Council's Response to F1:

The City of Sacramento disagrees partially with the finding as it pertains to the efforts being undertaken the City.

On July 1, 2021, the City of Sacramento created the Department of Community Response (DCR) as a stand-alone department. DCR consists of two primary divisions. The Homeless Services Division handles numerous agreements that provide services and programming for families and individuals experiencing homelessness. Since its creation through June 30, 2023, programs funded through this division have managed to assist 5,607 people in moving off the streets of Sacramento – many of which moved on to permanent and positive temporary/transitional housing. The Community Outreach Division deploys social workers and outreach specialists who perform outreach to households experiencing homelessness and connect them to services.

The DCR Community Outreach Division currently consists of fourteen neighborhood resource coordinators, two program specialists, and one manager – all of whom provide outreach and support services to people experiencing homelessness every day. In addition, the DCR Community Outreach Division Manager works on a daily basis with County staff pursuant to the Partnership Agreement and Collaboration Protocols.

As the Grand Jury notes that the County of Sacramento is "responsible for all mental health and behavioral substance abuse treatment," which is one of the primary reasons the City pursued the Partnership Agreement with the County. Per the terms of the Partnership Agreement, there are to be eight County staff working alongside twenty-seven City DCR staff. The terms of the Partnership Agreement call for there to be additional staffing with the addition of CalAIM staff by the County. In addition, two County clinicians are to provide regular service to City-established shelter and safe ground sites/programs. Further, City of Sacramento and County of Sacramento staff and leadership meet are to meet on a regular basis to ensure the effectiveness and full implementation of the Partnership Agreement. Ensuring that there are more mental health services provided to the homeless population by the County and partner provider agencies is a principal goal under the Partnership Agreement. The City remains ready and willing to partner with other cities and agencies in the region to pursue this fundamental goal.

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**F2:** The County lacks a comprehensive strategic plan to include the mental health and substance abuse issues that face the homeless.

City Council's Response to F2:

This finding is directed to the County of Sacramento to which the City of Sacramento does not believe this finding requires a response from the City. The City supports any efforts at a regional strategic plan to address the mental health and substance abuse issues that so significantly impacts the homeless population.

**F3:** The current strategic plan, the Homeless Action Plan published by SSF, has not been successful in addressing the mental health and substance abuse needs of the homeless because goals are not quantified, accountability is not assigned, and performance is not monitored.

City Council's Response to F3:

The City of Sacramento disagrees partially with the finding.

As proposed, the Local Homelessness Action Plan (LHAP) is a cross-jurisdictional unified approach to addressing homelessness across Sacramento County. with the following quantifiable goals and assignments which includes:  
Improving staff knowledge and skills in both housing crisis response and behavioral health care systems, improving and increasing timely and direct access to behavioral health care supports in locations where they are staying and at service locations, Improving and increasing timely and direct access to prevention and homeless services for people engaged in behavioral health services, and Improving and increasing access to mobile crisis response and multi-disciplinary supports for people with more complex or severe needs. All of these activities are led by Sacramento County Behavioral Health Services, and are to be monitored by all entities supporting the LHAP.

As presently constituted, the mechanism under which SSF operates can result in limited progress to implement the needed responses to address the homeless crisis, particularly as it relates to the growing magnitude of mental health and substance abuse, needs of the homeless population

SSF serves as Continuum of Care (CoC) that is funded by the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). SSF also receives grant funding from the State of California per Homeless Housing Assistance and Prevention (HHAP) grant program which SSF was just allocated \$12,333,090.41 in HHAP-4 funds. SSF oversees numerous programs and projects that serve individuals experiencing homelessness throughout Sacramento County per its status as the CoC for Sacramento County.

**F4** The County does not have a senior executive position that holds budget and policy implementation authority for all homeless services provided in the County, including mental health and substance abuse programs.

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City Council's response to F4:

This finding is directed to the County of Sacramento to which the City of Sacramento does not believe this finding requires a response from the City. The City supports any County efforts to simplify the provision of services that address the mental health and substance abuse issues that so significantly impact the homeless population.

**F5** Lack of measurable process and outcome metrics correlated with funding and expenses of homeless mental health and substance abuse programs has resulted in lost opportunities to fund those programs that demonstrate the most success.

City Council's response to F5:

In review of the Grand Jury's Report, section "Transparent Access to Reporting of Funds and Expenses" (pages 10-11) in conjunction with this finding, the City of Sacramento believes this finding is directed to the County of Sacramento to which the City does not believe this finding requires a response. The City supports any efforts at a regional strategic plan to address the mental health and substance abuse issues that so significantly impacts the homeless population.

**F6** Lack of transparency in financial reporting of mental health and substance abuse services and access to other funding for the homeless is not publicly available and reduces public trust.

City Council's response to F6:

In review of the Grand Jury report section: "Transparent Access to Reporting of Funds and Expenses" (pages 10-11), the City of Sacramento believes this finding does not require a response from the City as this finding is directed to the Board of Supervisors. The City supports any efforts by the County that improves transparency in reporting of funds and services provided to address the mental health and substance abuse issues that so significantly impacts the homeless population.

**F7** There are too many boards, committees, and government entities which create waste and redundancy in the planning and distribution of mental health and substance abuse treatment resources.

City Council's response to F7:

The City of Sacramento agrees with the finding.

There are many excellent efforts and programs, both in the private provider sector and the government sector that could be strengthened and enhanced with a strategic, unified, regional approach.



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**F8** Mental health and substance abuse issues among the homeless are aggravated by poor government planning.

City Council's response to F8:

The City of Sacramento disagrees with the finding.

As written, the finding is somewhat overstated and therefore could be disputed that it is not supported by any reputable scientific study, whether, medical, sociological, or psychological. There are many excellent efforts and programs, both in the private provider sector and the government sector that could be strengthened and enhanced and made much more effective with a strategic, unified regional approach.

**F9** The outreach teams (County HEART teams, Sacramento PD IMPACT Team) are poorly supported and understaffed which results in lost opportunities to positively engage the homeless to accept mental health and substance abuse treatment and other services.

City Council's response to F9:

As to the City of Sacramento PD IMPACT Team, the City of Sacramento disagrees partially with the finding.

It appears that the Grand Jury has a misconception of the role of the Sacramento PD IMPACT Team, which is not related to the types of outreach described in this finding. However, on July 1, 2021, the City of Sacramento created the Department of Community Response (DCR) as a stand-alone department. DCR consists of two primary divisions. The Homeless Services Division handles numerous agreements that provide services and programming for families and individuals experiencing homelessness. The Community Outreach Division deploys social workers and outreach specialists who perform outreach to individuals experiencing homelessness and connect individuals to services.

The DCR Community Outreach Division currently consists of fourteen neighborhood resource coordinators, two program specialists, and one manager – all of whom provide outreach and support services to people experiencing homelessness every day. In addition, the DCR Community Outreach Division Manager works on a daily basis with County staff pursuant to the Partnership Agreement and Collaboration Protocols. Since its inception, DCR staff have been able to engage with over 6,000 people living outside in the City of Sacramento, and in that time, approximately fifty percent of those ended up in emergency, transitional, and permanent housing.

Additionally, on August 1, 2023, City Council updated the Homeless Protocol. Please see Item 4 of the August 1, 2023, City Council meeting.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> See [http://sacramento.granicus.com/GeneratedAgendaViewer.php?view\\_id=22&clip\\_id=5631](http://sacramento.granicus.com/GeneratedAgendaViewer.php?view_id=22&clip_id=5631).

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**F10** Poor communication between law enforcement and outreach teams erodes the trust of and negatively impacts the mental health of the unhoused population.

City Council's response to F10:

As to the City of Sacramento PD IMPACT Team, and outreach efforts of the City's Department of Community Response, the City of Sacramento disagrees partially with the finding.

It appears that the Grand Jury has a misconception of the role of the Sacramento PD IMPACT Team, which is not related to the types of outreach described in this finding. However, the Department of Community Response Outreach Division has been around since at least July 1, 2021. DCR Community Outreach Division staff work with the Sacramento Police Department on a routine basis. On October 18, 2022, the City of Sacramento created a Citywide Response Protocols and on November 28, 2002, the City of Sacramento created a sidewalk and critical infrastructure guideline.<sup>4</sup> Lastly, in effort to coordinate and communicate effectively, DCR hosts a weekly meeting which includes crucial representatives from city law enforcement partners including Sacramento Police Department, Code Enforcement, and Park Rangers.

**F11** There is a shortage of mental health professionals which continues to exacerbate the inability of the County to meet the need for mental health services for the homeless.

City Council's response to F11:

The City of Sacramento agrees with the finding.

## **B. Recommendations**

**R1** The County should complete a comprehensive strategic plan to address homelessness by July 1, 2024, to improve mental health and substance abuse services for the homeless, to include timelines and measurable goals and objectives, building on The Homeless Action Plan, using templates and examples from other communities and organizations such as the California State Association of Counties.

City Council's response to R1:

This recommendation is directed to the County of Sacramento, and so no City of Sacramento response is required. The City supports any efforts at a regional strategic plan to address the mental health and substance abuse issues that so significantly impacts the homeless population.

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<sup>4</sup> See Sacramento City Council 12:00p.m. meeting (Homeless Workshop) on June 27, 2023; which can be accessed here:  
[http://sacramento.granicus.com/GeneratedAgendaViewer.php?view\\_id=22&clip\\_id=5618](http://sacramento.granicus.com/GeneratedAgendaViewer.php?view_id=22&clip_id=5618).

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**R2** The County should immediately begin to develop and implement an interim plan that incorporates all or some of the recommendations in this report and will result in measurable improvement in the delivery of mental health and substance abuse services in the short term.

City Council's response to R2:

This recommendation is directed to the County of Sacramento, and so no City of Sacramento response is required. The City supports any efforts at a regional strategic plan to address the mental health and substance abuse issues that so significantly impacts the homeless population.

**R3** The County should appoint a new Deputy County Executive position by January 1, 2024, that holds budget and policy implementation authority for all homeless services provided in the County, including mental health and substance abuse programs, and to the extent possible, authority over other governmental entities.

City Council's response to R3:

This recommendation is directed to the County of Sacramento, and so no City of Sacramento response is required. The City supports any efforts at the county level that will serve to streamline the provision of funds and services to address the mental health and substance abuse issues that so significantly impacts the homeless population.

**R4** The County should dedicate funds in the 2023-2024 budget for innovative solutions that may not be supported by the County's flow of external funding (Ex: more CRBH sites, outreach teams, substance free transitional housing, board and care facilities).

City Council's response to R4:

This recommendation is directed to the County of Sacramento, and so no City of Sacramento response is required. The City supports any efforts at the county level that will serve to streamline the provision of funds and services to address the mental health and substance abuse issues that so significantly impacts the homeless population.

**R5** The County should immediately begin a process to establish and track outcome data related to the treatment of mental health and substance abuse for the homeless.

City Council's response to R5:

This recommendation is directed to the County of Sacramento, and so no City of Sacramento response is required. The City supports any efforts at a regional strategic plan to address the mental health and substance abuse issues that so significantly impacts the homeless population.

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**R6** The County should track funding and spending specific to support homeless, including treatment for mental health and substance abuse, and post this information at least quarterly on the County website in a manner that is easily accessible to the public by the end of 2023.

City Council's response to R6:

This recommendation is directed to the County of Sacramento, and so no City of Sacramento response is required. The City supports any efforts by the County that improves transparency in reporting of funds and services provided to address the mental health and substance abuse issues that so significantly impacts the homeless population.

**R7** Elected officials should immediately take a more active role to lead, coordinate, and consolidate various advisory boards and committees to assume direct accountability for improved outcomes in mental health and substance abuse prevalence and result in a reduction of duplicate efforts, administrative costs, and inefficiency.

City Council's response to R7:

This recommendation is directed to the County of Sacramento, and so no City of Sacramento response is required. The City supports any efforts that will serve to streamline the provision of services to address the mental health and substance abuse issues that so significantly impacts the homeless population.

**R8** Sacramento County should immediately fully staff a total of six HEART teams and the City of Sacramento should immediately establish at least two additional IMPACT Team within Sacramento PD to increase engagement with County and City homeless encampments and improve access to mental health and substance use treatment services.

City Council's response to R8:

The City agrees with this recommendation. As with most local governments, the City is suffering from severe recruitment issues and funding requirements that would make compliance with this recommendation difficult. However, as indicated above regarding the SPD IMPACT Team, the Grand Jury is operating out of a misconception of the outreach responsibilities of the Sacramento PD's IMPACT Teams. It is the DCR Community Outreach Division and a third-party contractor, Hope Cooperative, that perform outreach services to individuals experiencing homelessness. Second, the City of Sacramento and the County of Sacramento are in a Partnership Agreement which calls for County staff to assist with mental health and substance abuse treatment services. These services are already in effect, and the teams are already coordinating and collaborating with Sacramento Police Department and its Impact Team. Finally, the City believes that this recommendation is directed primarily to the County, as the County has greater resources to specifically address these types of treatment services.

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**R9** Law enforcement should communicate at least weekly with all outreach teams to collaborate in decisions as to which encampments to clear and when, and post this information on a shared web site to increase the trust of the homeless and support offered by outreach teams.

City Council's response to R9:

The first portion of this recommendation has already been implemented. Please see Sacramento City Council meeting on August 1, 2023 at 12:30p.m., Item 4 and the Citywide Homeless Response Protocol is attached hereto as Attachment A. The second portion of this recommendation will not be implemented because it is unreasonable, as it would impact the safety of Sacramento PD employees, as well as the ability of the City to effectively achieve their desired outcomes.

**R10** A communication plan should be developed to timely inform all stakeholders and staff of goals, actions, and events related to planning and execution of homeless mental health and substance abuse services.

City Council's response to R10:

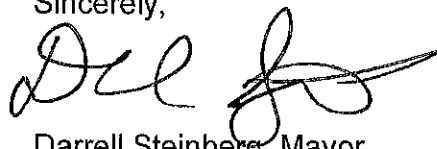
The recommendation has already been implemented between the City and County. The City of Sacramento and County of Sacramento Partnership Agreement, Collaboration Protocol includes an entire section on communication between the City and County. A copy of the Collaboration Protocol is attached hereto as Attachment B. Such collaboration is displayed by the co-deploying outreach teams, as well as the county clinicians who are holding office hours at all city-funded programs to conduct assessments and enroll those living with behavioral health issues into comprehensive services which use a "whatever it takes" approach to get and keep clients permanently housed.

**R11** The County should continue to improve incentives and hiring of mental health professionals to meet the demand for mental health services in the County.

City Council's response to R11:

While this recommendation is directed to the County of Sacramento, and so no City of Sacramento response is required, the City supports the implementation of this recommendation by the County.

Sincerely,



Darrell Steinberg, Mayor  
City of Sacramento