

**Clerk of the Board**  
Florence H. Evans



**Board of Supervisors**  
Phil Serna, District 1  
Patrick Kennedy, District 2  
Rich Desmond, District 3  
Sue Frost, District 4  
Pat Hume, District 5

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**County of Sacramento**

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August 8, 2023

SENT VIA EMAIL TO [BOWMANM@SACCOURT.CA.GOV](mailto:BOWMANM@SACCOURT.CA.GOV);  
[SCHABERG@SACCOURT.CA.GOV](mailto:SCHABERG@SACCOURT.CA.GOV); [TAPIAE@SACCOURT.CA.GOV](mailto:TAPIAE@SACCOURT.CA.GOV) & US POSTAL  
CERTIFIED MAIL

The Honorable Michael Bowman, Presiding Judge  
Sacramento County Superior Court  
720 Ninth Street  
Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: Sacramento County of Sacramento Response to the May 26, 2023, and June 9, 2023, Grand Jury Reports Titled "Homeless Should Not Mean Hopeless: Homeless Solutions Elude Local Leaders" and the June 9, 2023, Grand Jury Report, "Mental Health Care For The Homeless: Who Cares?"

Dear Judge Bowman,

The Board of Supervisors, meeting on August 8, 2023, by unanimous vote (5:0) approved the Sacramento County response to the May 26, 2023, Grand Jury Report titled, "Homeless Should Not Mean Hopeless: Homeless Solutions Elude Local Leaders" and the June 9, 2023, Grand Jury Report, "Mental Health Care For The Homeless: Who Cares?". Enclosed is a copy of the approved.

Please contact me if you have any questions at (916) 874-8150.

Respectfully, \_\_\_\_\_

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Florence Evans".

Florence Evans, Clerk  
Board of Supervisors

FE: js

cc: Gordon Schaber, Jury Commissioner  
Erendira Tapia-Bouthillier, Grand Jury Coordinator  
Chevon Kothori, Deputy County Executive, Social Services, Sacramento County

Enclosures: Approved Response to the May 26, 2023, and June 9, 2023, Grand Jury Reports

AUG 08 2023  
BY Florence Jones  
Clerk of the Board

**COUNTY OF SACRAMENTO  
CALIFORNIA**

**42**

**Revised**

For the Agenda of:  
August 8, 2023  
Timed: 11:00 a.m.

To: Board of Supervisors

Through: Ann Edwards, County Executive

From: Chevon Kothari, Deputy County Executive, Social Services

Subject: Response To Findings And Recommendations In The May 26, 2023, And June 9, 2023, Grand Jury Reports Regarding Responses To Homeless Issues Including Planning, Coordination, Funding, And Measurable Outcomes

District(s): All

**RECOMMENDED ACTION**

1. Adopt this report as Sacramento County's response to the findings and recommendations in the May 26, 2023, Grand Jury Report, "Homeless Should Not Mean Hopeless: Homeless Solutions Elude Local Leaders" and the June 9, 2023, Grand Jury Report, "Mental Health Care For The Homeless: Who Cares?"
2. Direct the Clerk of the Board to forward a certified copy of the Board letter to the Presiding Judge of the Sacramento County Superior Court no later than August 24, 2023.

**BACKGROUND**

The Grand Jury reviews and investigates the performance of county, city, and local governing entities. Investigations of governmental entities can be initiated by the grand jury itself or suggested by citizens. A public report usually follows an investigation with findings and recommendations that must be publicly addressed by the recipients as prescribed in Penal Code Sections 933 and 933.05. Responses are then directed to the Presiding Judge of the Superior Court.

Responses to findings and recommendations must follow a specific format, outlined in Penal Code section 933.05, as provided below.

*...as to each grand jury finding, the responding person or entity shall indicate one of the following:*

- (1) The respondent agrees with the finding.*

Response To Findings And Recommendations In The May 26, 2023, And June 9, 2023, Grand Jury Reports Regarding Responses To Homeless Issues Including Planning, Coordination, Funding, And Measurable Outcomes  
Page 2

*(2) The respondent disagrees wholly or partially with the finding, in which case the response shall specify the portion of the finding that is disputed and shall include an explanation of the reasons therefor.*

*...as to each grand jury recommendation, the responding person or entity shall report one of the following actions:*

*(1) The recommendation has been implemented, with a summary regarding the implemented action.*

*(2) The recommendation has not yet been implemented, but will be implemented in the future, with a timeframe for implementation.*

*(3) The recommendation requires further analysis, with an explanation and the scope and parameters of an analysis or study, and a timeframe for the matter to be prepared for discussion by the officer or head of the agency or department being investigated or reviewed, including the governing body of the public agency when applicable. This timeframe shall not exceed six months from the date of publication of the grand jury report.*

*(4) The recommendation will not be implemented because it is not warranted or is not reasonable, with an explanation therefor.*

The Penal Code also outlines the extent to which either departments/agencies or governing bodies must respond to findings and recommendations:

*...the governing body of the public agency shall comment to the presiding judge of the superior court on the findings and recommendations pertaining to matters under the control of the governing body (933(c)).*

*...if a finding or recommendation of the grand jury addresses budgetary or personnel matters of a county agency or department headed by an elected officer, both the agency or department head and the board of supervisors shall respond if requested by the grand jury, but the response of the board of supervisors shall address only those budgetary or personnel matters over which it has some decision making authority. The response of the elected agency or department head shall address all aspects of the findings or recommendations affecting his or her agency or department (933.05(c)).*

The Grand Jury issued two reports related to homelessness that require a response from the County Board of Supervisors. The Grand Jury Report, "Homeless Should Not Mean Hopeless: Homeless Solutions Elude Local Leaders" (Attachment 1) was issued on May 26, 2023. The report asserts that local governments have failed to work together effectively to address the increasing number of homeless and related issues which has resulted in millions in direct and indirect costs. The report recommends Sacramento

County leaders prioritize a formal, comprehensive approach to homelessness. The report includes five findings and four recommendations related to the information in the report along with a list of individuals and agencies required or invited to respond.

The Sacramento County Board of Supervisors was among four governing bodies required to respond, which included Sacramento City Council, Rancho Cordova City Council, and the Elk Grove City Council. Governing bodies have 90 days to respond; therefore, responses from the Board of Supervisors are due to the Presiding Judge of the Superior Court by August 24, 2023. The Grand Jury report also invites responses from numerous government officials, including individual Board Members and the County Executive. No timeframe was provided for these responses. Invitees are not required to respond.

The Grand Jury Report, "Mental Health Care For The Homeless: Who Cares?" (Attachment 2) was issued on June 9, 2023. This report asserts that mental illness and substance abuse among the homeless needs to be addressed through a streamlined, coordinated, and transparent service delivery system and approach that uses measurable, quantifiable outcomes with proven success to make meaningful change. The report includes 11 findings and 11 recommendations related to the information in the report along with a list of individuals and agencies required and invited to respond.

In addition to the Sacramento City Council, the Sacramento County Board of Supervisors and the Sacramento County Sheriff are required to respond. Governing bodies have 90 days to respond, and elected officials have 60 days to respond. Therefore, responses from the Board of Supervisors are due to the Presiding Judge of the Superior Court by September 7, 2023, and responses are due from the Sheriff by August 8, 2023. The Sheriff's response is included as attachment 3. The Grand Jury Report also invites responses from other government officials and staff including the County Executive and Deputy County Executive of Social Services. No timeframe was provided for these responses. Invitees are not required to respond.

The Board of Supervisors is requested to review the proposed responses to findings and recommendations from both reports, which are included in Attachments 4 and 5 and make any desired revisions. Any revisions to the responses will be brought back to the Board for review and approval at a subsequent meeting.

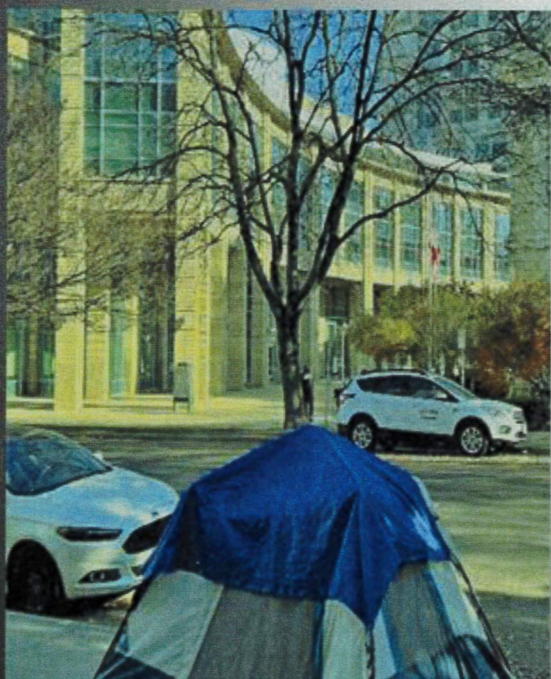


### **FINANCIAL ANALYSIS**

Departments that contributed to this report absorbed related staff costs within their respective budgets.

### **Attachments**

- Attachment 1: April 26, 2023, Grand Jury Report, "Homeless Should Not Mean Hopeless: Homeless Solutions Elude Local Leaders"
- Attachment 2: June 9, 2023 Grand Jury Report, "Mental Health Care For The Homeless: Who Cares?"
- Attachment 3: Sheriff's Response
- Attachment 4: Responses to Findings and Recommendations in the Grand Jury Report, "Homeless Should Not Mean Hopeless: Homeless Solutions Elude Local Leaders"
- Attachment 5: Responses to Findings and Recommendations in the Grand Jury Report, "Mental Health Care For The Homeless: Who Cares?"



**HOMELESS SHOULD NOT MEAN HOPELESS:**

**HOMELESS SOLUTIONS ELUDE LOCAL LEADERS**

**INVESTIGATIVE REPORT - 2022-2023 SACRAMENTO COUNTY GRAND JURY**

## SUMMARY

Nearly 10,000 unhoused men, women, and children sleep on Sacramento County streets every night. Families crammed into thread-bare tents, doubled up in the broken backseats of aging cars, huddled on sidewalks in front of local stores, state office buildings, and neighborhood churches.

The numbers skyrocket year after year and local government has failed to respond effectively. This occurs despite spending more than \$300 million on homeless services over that period. That price tag does not include the enormous cost of law enforcement, public health, sanitation, lost commerce, or the impact on the quality of life of in Sacramento County and its seven incorporated communities.

This is an endless loop of failure. Leaders in Sacramento County must prioritize a more effective regional approach to solve the burgeoning homelessness problem.

County and city leaders must band together to form a comprehensive homelessness strategy. Too often, jurisdictions work independently or informally together, spend hundreds of millions of dollars, and they fail. The current Grand Jury saw a need to revisit this idea and investigate the feasibility and effectiveness of a comprehensive organizational model.



## BACKGROUND

The 2022-2023 Sacramento County Grand Jury (SCGJ) initiated an investigation into the strategies, programs, and working relationships between the County and the seven incorporated cities (Sacramento, Rancho Cordova, Elk Grove, Citrus Heights, Galt, Isleton, and Folsom) as they sought solutions to the homelessness problem. In 2017, the homeless population Point in Time Count (PIT) was 3,665 persons. In 2019, it was 5,570; in 2022, it rose to 9,278, a 253% increase in five years.

Local leaders interviewed by the Grand Jury agreed these counts are understated. In addition, deaths among the homeless population have also risen to record levels.

Most funding for homeless programs resides with the County, but the cities experience most of the impact.

In December 2010, the County Board of Supervisors (BOS) and the Sacramento City Council each passed a resolution to form a Joint Powers Authority (JPA) intended to resolve homelessness. A JPA is an organizational model to coordinate homelessness efforts among governments. No JPA was established.

In March 2011, the BOS and the Sacramento City Council passed a resolution to endorse Sacramento Steps Forward (SSF) as a new agency to monitor and coordinate homeless programs throughout Sacramento County. This decision outsourced the management of the homeless problem and abandoned the JPA idea. The SSF Board does not have any elected officials from either the BOS or the City Councils of any of the seven cities. The governance of SSF and the plans it develops lack accountability and effectiveness to respond to community needs.

Twelve years later, the problem has worsened drastically. Despite repeated efforts among elected officials and staff throughout the region to meet and discuss the issue, there is no effective regional authority to implement decisions. Media reports in 2022 continuously pointed this out. Jurisdictions work in silos to seek solutions within their borders with no real plan for this shared problem.

In November 2022, Sacramento City voters passed Measure O which requires "the City and County of Sacramento to approve a legally-binding partnership agreement" that "would improve the homelessness crisis." The City and County adopted the agreement in December 2022. The agreement represents small steps to address the issue of the homeless on City sidewalks and impact the surrounding community. The agreement does not provide a comprehensive strategy. It fails to include the other six cities or entities such as schools, public transportation, and services agencies impacted by homelessness.



Homelessness is a regional problem that requires a regional solution. A new plan must include all seven cities and the County. The 2018-2019 SCGJ recommended a new or restructured governing authority led by elected officials directly accountable to all citizens of the County. This approach has been successful in other regions of California as will be shown below.

## **METHODOLOGY**

In its investigation, the 2022-2023 SCGJ reviewed numerous documents and conducted interviews:

### **Documents:**

1. Previous Grand Jury reports provided information on narrowly focused efforts addressing narrow aspects while assessing the effectiveness of specific strategies.
2. Media reports on ballot measures and the status of inter-agency cooperation.
3. Correspondence and documentation received from city, county, and agency leadership.
4. Website policy review and assessment for the County and the cities of Sacramento, Rancho Cordova, and Elk Grove.
5. BOS and various City Council meeting agendas, board meeting agenda packets, and board meeting minutes and recordings.
6. Annual reports and PIT counts from relevant agencies in California.
7. Existing ordinances and agreements among governing jurisdictions in the County regarding homelessness.
8. State Assembly bills and State Senate bills.
9. The investigation focused on three cities (Sacramento, Elk Grove, and Rancho Cordova) and Sacramento County.

### **Interviews:**

1. Thirteen individuals in leadership and policy positions in conjunction with a review of materials they provided.

### **Observation:**

1. Members of the Grand Jury, like other citizens of the County, witnessed the ever-increasing population of homeless living on our streets, in parks, on sidewalks, and in other open areas.

## **DISCUSSION**

### **A Common Refrain**

A common theme emerged from the SCGJ interviews with county, city, and non-profit leaders regarding the explosion in the number of homeless in Sacramento County. All believed their organization's efforts were successful, but expressed frustration with the lack of coordination with other jurisdictions. The SCGJ fails to understand why these leaders believe their organizations are successful while the homeless population has tripled in the last five years.

Previous SCGJ reports on homelessness have addressed the lack of coordination and the need for a comprehensive strategy. This will be the fourth SCGJ in the past seven years to recommend the County and cities develop a county-wide approach to homelessness. Findings were made, and recommendations were provided:

- The 2015-2016 SCGJ focused on a comprehensive plan not limited to Housing First (HF).
- The 2016-2017 SCGJ affirmed the issue of insufficient affordable housing in the County and recommended additional coordination to address the issue.
- The 2018-2019 SCGJ elaborated further on the extent of the challenge, the increase in the number of homeless, and some of the underlying causes. The Grand Jury identified the entities within the County involved in efforts to reduce homelessness. It was again emphasized there was a lack of an organizational model to coordinate efforts. The sole recommendation from this SCGJ was for the County to identify and implement a different model. A Joint Power Authority was suggested as a feasible approach.

#### Different Cities Face Vastly Different Challenges

Rancho Cordova has a unique challenge with its proximity to the American River Parkway. The Parkway is managed and policed by Sacramento County; any homeless enforcement or policy change impacts Rancho Cordova. In one example, the County removed a homeless camp only to have it reappear in other parts of Rancho Cordova. There is no governance structure to ensure a cooperative approach.

Elk Grove City leaders describe ongoing efforts to incentivize affordable housing and push developers to expand affordable housing as a part of an overall City plan. Such plan was rejected by the City which recently led the State Attorney General to warn Elk Grove of the need to follow through and expand the plan. Elk Grove is fortunate enough to have sufficient funds and staffing to understand and manage its homeless population, a fact for which city leaders are rightfully proud. Most of the other cities in the County do not have this enviable level of resources.

#### Sacramento Steps Forward (SSF) and Sacramento Housing and Redevelopment Agency (SHRA).

In 2010-2011, Sacramento County faced extreme economic fallout following the 2008 financial crisis. Tax resources dwindled, housing prices shrank, and homes were abandoned. This created a financial shortfall for the County. In response, the County outsourced the coordination of homeless services to SSF.

SSF is the designated lead agency for the federally-regulated Continuum of Care (COC). SSF uses real-time data, PIT counts, and analytics to develop best practices and recommendations to help enhance programs and services to address homelessness. SSF has the data but no authority to direct or implement solutions. There are no elected officials on the SSF board, so there is no accountability among governmental jurisdictions to propose or implement solutions.



SHRA is a Joint Powers Agency whose members include the City of Sacramento, the City Housing Authority, the County of Sacramento, and the County Housing Authority. None of the other cities are represented on the board. Representatives of each of these agencies sit on the SHRA Board. SHRA has an inventory of thousands of residential units throughout the County. Local leaders and key staff members from the cities of Sacramento, Rancho Cordova and Elk Grove expressed frustration with SHRA's extensive requirements to fund new projects that limit local leadership's access to SHRA's housing inventory. Some interviewees stated SHRA's requirements hindered new housing development and did not support a comprehensive response to homelessness. SHRA's mission is to deliver fully operational projects with complete "wrap-around services" to meet the needs of the potential occupants. These requirements are seen as too restrictive by the civic leaders because it often takes years of planning to develop this level of service.

### Measure O

Measure O provides conditional enforcement against camping in city limits, allows citizens to bring an action for damages against the City, and limits the City's annual financial support for that measure to \$5 million.



Measure O only supports the City of Sacramento. Other cities within Sacramento County have concerns and fear the problem may be pushed to less affluent and more diverse neighborhoods due to the enforcement of the new encampment regulations.

None of the requirements in Measure O were to take effect until the City of Sacramento and the County completed and adopted a legally-binding Partnership Agreement on the roles and responsibilities of each.

### City and County Partnership Agreement

On December 6, 2022, the County and the City of Sacramento approved the Homeless Services Partnership Agreement. It emphasized jurisdictions would work together to decrease the homeless population. This Partnership Agreement is designed to improve coordination and increase services and programs to meet the unhoused needs and move individuals out of homelessness in the City and the unincorporated of the County.

- The County will place all shelter beds into the upcoming Coordinated Access System; some beds may be prioritized based on population served or geography.
- The County is opening 200 new shelter beds within 12 months and an additional 200 beds within 36 months in the unincorporated County (County Funded).
- The County will operate 200 additional shelter beds in the City jurisdiction, provided the City provides a shovel-ready site (County/City funded).

### A Case of Supply and Demand

Real estate prices in Sacramento County, as well as homelessness data provided by SSF, show a severe lack of affordable housing in the County. Many of those interviewed acknowledged this

as a primary driver of initial homelessness. Housing costs in Sacramento County nearly doubled over the past decade. Homelessness has inevitably followed.

Sacramento has more unsheltered people than the entire state of New York. The majority of homeless in New York state live in transitional housing or emergency shelters. In Sacramento, the opposite is true—the majority sleep in tents, cars, and doorways.



A lack of housing can be fatal. Homeless deaths from hypothermia are rising. Eight homeless people died in Sacramento County in the unhoused community due to hypothermia in 2021.

More

recently, two individuals have died from hypothermia, a 74-year-old man and a 66-year-old woman. Analysis of deaths within the homeless community indicates underlying medical conditions can shorten the life of a homeless individual by up to a one-third when compared to the general population.



### Best Practices and Successful Models for Homelessness

The SCGJ studied other California counties that successfully coordinated efforts to address the homeless issue. They have formed JPAs through legislation to develop housing trusts. All of these JPAs use a governing board comprised of elected officials from each jurisdiction. This is a critical model of successful JPAs. These efforts reflect the best practices and solutions to homelessness as demonstrated by reductions in the PIT counts.

### Solano County

In July 1999, the Solano County Board of Supervisors established a JPA: the Community Action Partnership of Solano County (CAP Solano). This JPA commissioned the development of a five year regional plan that includes all jurisdictions of Solano County. The plan included a strategic process which defines measurable outcomes as a key element. The plan discusses strengths, weaknesses, funding, impacts, and opportunities for better homeless outcomes.

CAP Solano is a governmental agency coordinating efforts across Solano County to reduce homelessness. The decision to develop a regional strategic plan was made by the jurisdictions that realized a regional approach was necessary in order to respond effectively to homelessness.

Solano County is much like Sacramento County in several respects. It consists of seven incorporated cities within the County. The square miles, geography, and climate are similar. The total population of Solano County is about one-third of that of Sacramento County, but the percentage of homeless per capita is about one-half of that of Sacramento's. CAP Solano has

been updated to ensure each of the seats on the Board will be an elected official from each jurisdiction. This change created a high level of accountability among leaders.

Solano County 2022 PIT count showed 1.3% reduction in unhoused citizens. During this same period the Sacramento County PIT count showed a 66% increase in unhoused citizens.

#### Riverside County

Riverside County is significantly larger yet similar to Sacramento County. Its larger population and incorporated cities resulted in a 35% increase in homeless in the last four years since 2018. Riverside County presented and authored AB 687 in July 2021.

AB 687 was introduced to develop a JPA, the Riverside County Housing Finance Trust. The Bill authorizes the creation of the Western Riverside County Regional Housing Trust (Trust), a JPA, to fund housing specifically to assist the homeless population and persons and families of extremely low, very low, and low income within the County of Riverside. The Trust helps to create housing opportunities as defined in the Health and Safety Code. The Trust may receive funding from public and private sources and has the ability to authorize and issue bonds. A separate Board of Directors governs the Trust, comprised of elected officials representing the County of Riverside and cities within the County. The Bill passed both the Assembly and Senate Floors in July 2021. The Governor signed it into law in July 2021.

Riverside County 2022 PIT count showed an 8% reduction in unhoused citizens. During this same period, the Sacramento County PIT count showed a 66% increase in unhoused citizens.

#### San Gabriel Valley Regional Housing Trust

SB 751 authorized the creation of the San Gabriel Valley Regional Housing Trust (SGVRHT) as a JPA among several cities throughout the San Gabriel Valley. According to the SGVRHT, the Trust received \$1 million in matching grant funds from the Local Housing Trust Fund program for construction of 71 affordable housing units in the cities of Claremont and Pomona scheduled for completion in 2022. This Trust is in the very early stages of implementation and it is reasonable to expect it will see improvements in outcomes as the organization matures, similar to the experience of Solano County and Riverside County.

San Gabriel Valley 2022 PIT count showed a 2% increase in unhoused citizens. During this same period the Sacramento County PIT count showed a 66% increase in unhoused citizens.

#### Orange County

AB 448 authorized the creation of Orange County Housing Finance Trust (OCHFT), which is a JPA among the County of Orange and cities in the County. To date, 23 of the 34 cities in the County are members of the JPA. The JPA duplicated much of the affordable housing goals and language found in the other Southern California JPAs, but without direct tax funding mechanisms. The OCHFT and its members plan to create 2,700 permanent supportive housing and affordable housing units by June 30, 2025. As of January 2022, OCHFT began construction of 1,676 units, with another 961 awaiting sufficient funding. OCHFT funded these units by



leveraging matching grant funds from the state's Local Housing Trust Fund (LHTF) program to issue deferred payment loans to developers.

Orange County 2022 PIT count showed a 28% decrease in unhoused citizens. During this same period the Sacramento County PIT count showed a 66% increase in unhoused citizens.

#### Burbank, Glendale, and Pasadena

SB 1177 created the Burbank, Glendale, and Pasadena Regional Housing Trust (RHT) to fund the planning and construction of housing for the region's homeless and low-income people and families. The bill establishes a board of directors and governing structure for the RHT. Its governing agreement requires maximum transparency concerning public funds administered by the RHT.

The combined 2022 PIT count for Burbank, Glendale, and Pasadena showed a 10% increase in unhoused citizens. During this same period the Sacramento County PIT count showed a 66% increase in unhoused citizens.

#### Housing Trusts

The Legislature supported the counties and created the Trusts to fund housing development for homeless and low-income individuals and families. Local governments can follow these best practices by creating JPAs for a housing trust without state approval. Several bills over the last few years have provided examples for these JPAs governed by elected officials. Although these housing trusts are focused on housing, they represent a first step in the process to develop and implement county-wide coordinated homeless services.

### **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.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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.

## 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.
- R2 The newly formed JPA should be governed by elected officials who are directly accountable to citizens of the County.
- R3 The Joint Powers Authority should develop and manage a comprehensive County-wide strategic plan to address homelessness by July 1, 2024.
- 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.

## REQUIRED RESPONSES

Pursuant to Penal Code sections 933(c) and 933.05, the grand jury requests responses as follows:

From the following governing bodies of a public agency within 90 days:

Sacramento County Board of Supervisors  
700 H Street, Suite 2450  
Sacramento, CA 95814

Rancho Cordova City Council  
2729 Prospect Park Drive  
Rancho Cordova, CA 95670

Sacramento City Council  
915 I Street  
Sacramento, CA 95814

Elk Grove City Council  
8401 Laguna Palms Way  
Elk Grove, CA 95758

### Mail or deliver a hard copy response to:

The Honorable Michael Bowman  
Presiding Judge  
Sacramento County Superior Court  
720 9th St.  
Sacramento, CA 95814

### Please email a copy of this response to:

Ms. Erendira Tapia-Bouthillier  
Sacramento County Grand Jury Coordinator  
*Email: [TapiaE@saccourt.ca.gov](mailto:TapiaE@saccourt.ca.gov)*

## INVITED RESPONSES

Darrell Steinberg, Mayor  
City of Sacramento  
915 I St., 5th Floor  
Sacramento, CA 95814

Linda Budge, Mayor  
City of Rancho Cordova  
2729 Prospect Park Drive  
Rancho Cordova, CA 95670

Bobbie Singh-Allen, Mayor  
City of Elk Grove  
8401 Laguna Palms Way  
Elk Grove, CA 95758



Mr. Phil Serna, Supervisor  
District 1  
Sacramento County Board of Supervisors  
700 H Street, Suite 2450  
Sacramento, CA 95814

Mr. Patrick Kennedy, Supervisor  
District 2  
Sacramento County Board of Supervisors  
700 H Street, Suite 2450  
Sacramento, CA 95814

Mr. Rich Desmond, Supervisor  
District 3  
Sacramento County Board of Supervisors  
700 H Street, Suite 2450  
Sacramento, CA 95814

Ms. Sue Frost, Supervisor  
District 4  
Sacramento County Board of Supervisors  
700 H Street, Suite 2450  
Sacramento, CA 95814

Mr. Pat Hume, Supervisor  
District 5  
Sacramento County Board of Supervisors  
700 H Street, Suite 2450  
Sacramento, CA 95814

Ms. Ann Edwards, County Executive  
Sacramento County  
700 H Street, Room 7650  
Sacramento, CA 95814

Mr. Howard Chan, City Manager  
City of Sacramento  
915 I Street  
Sacramento, CA 95814

Mr. Jason Behrmann, City Manager  
City of Elk Grove  
8401 Laguna Palms Way  
Elk Grove, CA 95758

Ms. Porsche Middleton, Mayor  
City of Citrus Heights  
6237 Fountain Square Dr.  
Citrus Heights, CA 95621

Mr. Christopher W. Boyd, City Manager  
City of Citrus Heights  
6360 Fountain Square Drive  
Citrus Heights, CA 95621

Ms. Rosario Rodriquez, Mayor  
City of Folsom  
50 Natoma St.  
Folsom, CA 95630

Ms. Elaine Andersen, City Manager  
City of Folsom  
50 Natoma St.  
Folsom, CA 95630

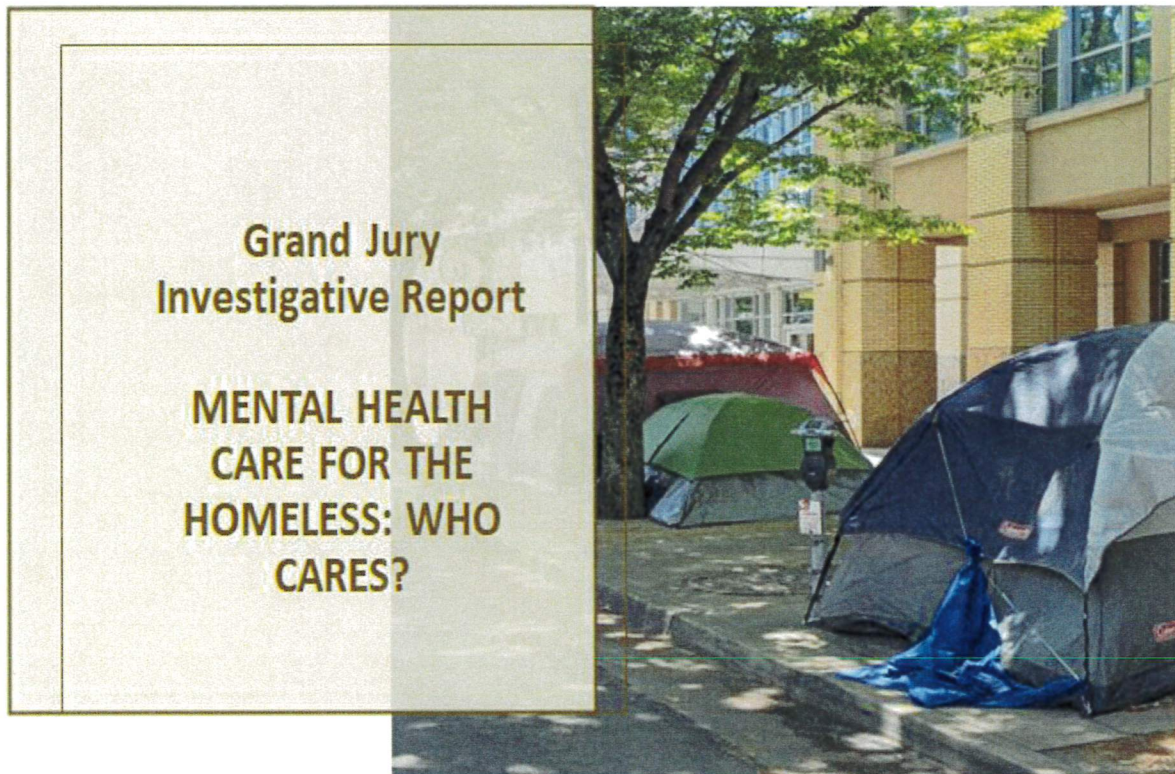
Mr. Jay Vandenburg, Mayor  
City of Galt  
380 Civic Drive  
Galt, CA 95632

Mr. Lorenzo Hines Jr., City Manager  
City of Galt  
380 Civic Drive  
Galt, CA 95632

Mr. Micah Runner, City Manager  
City of Rancho Cordova  
2729 Prospect Park Drive  
Rancho Cordova CA 95670

Ms. Pamela Bulahan, Mayor  
City of Isleton  
101 Second Street  
Isleton, CA 95641

Mr. Charles Bergson, City Manager  
City of Isleton  
101 Second Street  
Isleton, CA 95641



## SUMMARY

Drive down dozens of busy thoroughfares in Sacramento County, and you can't miss them.

Men and women, exhausted and defeated, huddled on curbs or jammed into makeshift encampments.

With no home and no immediate future, many numb that jarring reality with drugs or drift toward psychosis.

There are the mothers who hide among the bushes or in neglected cars, shielding their children from the angry streets. To stay awake at night some of these moms ingest methamphetamines, to protect their children who sleep awkwardly in crowded back seats.

Homelessness in Sacramento County has ballooned 253% in the last five years — some experts even contend that number is far too conservative. Among the nearly 10,000 men and women who sleep on the streets each night, between 50% - 80% suffer from a mental illness and/or substance abuse.

Who are these homeless people relentlessly tormented by mental illness or drug abuse? How do we fix this epidemic among our unhoused men and women?

The County of Sacramento, aided by funding from local, state, and federal sources, holds the major responsibility for the treatment of the homeless mentally ill and drug abusers.

The 2022-23 Sacramento County Grand Jury, after a months-long investigation, found the County's overall strategy to tackle this responsibility largely ineffective, scattered, and wanting better leadership. Despite millions of dollars, multiple programs, and an almost endless array of boards and commissions, mental illness and substance abuse among the homeless continues to proliferate.

Instead of meaningful progress, the Grand Jury's investigation observed political infighting among County and City of Sacramento officials, minimal coordination, and very few measurable goals and outcomes. Most glaring of all, the Grand Jury noted the absence of a comprehensive, collaborative strategic plan among the County and its seven incorporated cities to reduce homelessness and treat the mental illness and substance abuse that abounds within the Countywide homeless community.

As its investigation into homeless mental health and substance abuse unfolded, the Grand Jury realized that any findings and recommendations needed to encompass the entire system of service delivery. The system includes the stakeholders, the quality of mental health care and substance abuse programs, housing, resources and program coordination. Other critical considerations include the strategy, metrics and goals, communication, transparent access to reporting of funds and expenses, and accountability. Without such a focus, no significant improvement can be realized because successful service delivery is dependent on each part of the system flourishing together.

As the Grand Jury proceeded with its investigation, it was reminded of a favorite quote often used by the late, great UCLA basketball coach, John Wooden: "Never mistake activity for achievement." Just because dollars are flowing, boards are meeting, and new policies are being introduced doesn't guarantee substantive progress is being made.

When it comes to the battle to conquer mental illness and substance abuse among the homeless, the County is clearly "active." Lots of meetings. Lots of plans. Lots of public concern. Real achievement, however and unfortunately, remains an illusion.



## METHODOLOGY

The Grand Jury spent many hours reviewing documents, searching for helpful data, interviewing people, and visiting locations.

Documents – more than one hundred were reviewed:

Difficult searches for Information on the County web site, often without finding what should be available.

- Media articles (Opinion pieces used only when facts could be verified.).
- Web searches for information on how others in the country are addressing these issues.
- Fifty-three links to information provided by various entities.

Interviews – 22 in all:

- Elected officials.
- County department leaders and staff.
- Administrators of nonprofit entities.
- Law enforcement.
- Clinicians who provide care.
- Outreach staff.

Direct Observation - through site visits that included:

- Full-Service Partnership site.
- Community Outreach Recovery Empowerment (CORE) site.
- Sobering center.
- Homeless encampment.



## INTRODUCTION

The road to homelessness is filled with variables and yet is remarkably consistent but complicated. To understand the mental health and substance abuse crisis in the homeless, we must recognize their journey from stability to homelessness is a multi-step process including:

- Living paycheck to paycheck.
- The loss of a job.
- Inability to pay bills.
- Reliance on food banks, etc.
- Repossession of the car.
- Electricity and gas shut down.
- Finally: eviction.

These experiences don't necessarily occur in this order, but they are remarkably consistent events in the life of a person forced to live on the street. Most of these losses are often accelerated by alcohol and/or substance abuse and some mental health impairment.

Mental health and substance abuse are huge factors in the homeless dynamic. Between 50-80% of the homeless are faced with one or both issues. The most common afflictions are post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), depression, anxiety, and a small number with psychosis.

Appropriate mental health treatment for the homeless requires a roof where a substance free stable environment can be assured and proficient mental health treatment can be provided. Government rules and regulations that restrict the ability to provide that roof have not resulted in a decrease in homelessness.

Often overlooked to successfully address mental health and substance abuse issues are issues, seemingly unrelated but directly contribute to these problems. The City, and the County in particular, have made several decisions that have made the problems worse. Some glaring examples include:

- The large inventory of multiple trailers and tiny homes sitting vacant.
- The recent attempt to close the Miller Park encampment despite its success in providing basic services and getting people off the sidewalks.
- The closing of the Bannon Island camp near Discovery Park, where elderly homeless were displaced without alternative housing.

The Grand Jury began its investigation with a narrow focus on mental health issues. The relationship between mental illness and substance abuse became clear as the investigation progressed. It is apparent that government action - or inaction - has had a broad impact. The homeless population has increased along with mental health and substance abuse problems. Only treating those who are ill is not enough.



## DISCUSSION

### Stakeholder Engagement

Simply put, there are too many boards, committees and subcommittees that are stakeholders in the Sacramento County arena. Community leaders meet while the people living on the street wait. While they wait, their problems worsen. There are more tents on the sidewalks, higher rates of mental illness and drug use, and increased numbers of the homeless, especially women and children.

There are too many stakeholders presumably trying to solve the mental health and substance abuse crisis among the homeless. The Grand Jury identified at least 30 boards, committees, agencies, and entities with hundreds of individuals that include staff, elected officials' appointees and volunteers.

Most entities have members that are elected officials or their appointees. Lots of boards, lots of committees, lots of staff – more mentally ill and/or drug addicted homeless men and women. The problem is worse.

The most important stakeholder? The homeless themselves. There have been many who participate in planning who say they speak for the homeless. The Grand Jury investigation could not find any actual homeless people who were provided with a way to give formal feedback about how they got there and what it would take to get them back home.

### Strategy

A Homeless Action Plan was developed by the former Department of Homeless Services and Sacramento Steps Forward (SSF) and approved by the Sacramento County Board of Supervisors (BOS) in 2018 with total funding of \$7.8 million over 4 years.

A Gaps Analysis with a strategic plan proposed by SSF and the Continuum of Care (CoC) Board was approved by the Sacramento County Board of Supervisors (BOS) on June 28, 2022.

There were few people interviewed during the investigation that had any knowledge of the existence of these plans or of the specific strategies they contained. The plans emphasize their check-in with stakeholders in the community. Few of them were aware of these plans or their role in implementation. Nearly all of those interviewed were supportive of a comprehensive plan to address these issues.

There is a perception by those who participate in the multiple advisory boards established by the County, some mandated by state or federal government, that they only serve as a stamp of approval for whatever the County and its contracted entities propose. This perception, as opposed to a ground-up involvement in the development of strategies by the various entities represented on these boards and committees, is disheartening to community participants.

Fragmentation of efforts occurs as multiple entities pursue the same strategies, redundantly using up precious resources. There are many dedicated, selfless people who work hard to make a difference. They include most of those who are employed or volunteer in the organizations listed above. They are working hard yet not achieving positive County wide measurable results.

There are models of successful strategic plans that provide care to the homeless in California and across the nation. There is no need to start from scratch.

The California State Association of Counties recently published a template for homeless strategic planning. These include the City of Riverside in California and San Antonio in Texas. They all have a process to bring together essential stakeholders to determine and coordinate the best strategies and tactics to tackle these problems.

Lack of stakeholder engagement in strategic planning results in poor accountability and inability to achieve goals.

A recent meeting of several stakeholders resulted in the announcement of aggressive outcome goals for homeless programs. These goals are laudable but fall short of the creation of a strategic plan with the resources to implement. Perhaps these actions are a sign of real progress.

#### Quality of Mental Health Care, Substance Abuse Programs, and Housing

Between 50% and 80% of homeless people have mental health conditions and/or substance abuse issues. "People experiencing homelessness die on average at age 50 years – 27 years sooner than the average person in the US," according to an article in the Journal of the American Medical Association.

#### Tracking Progress

It is extremely difficult to assess the quality of mental health care that is provided to the homeless. The simple reason - it is not tracked in Sacramento County.

Process measures are used to assure that certain tasks are accomplished in the process of care, while outcome measures are used to determine if the care provided was effective.

County Behavioral Health Services (BHS) monitors process issues in mental health treatment programs. These measures are not tracked by homeless versus other clients. This is also true for the Sacramento County Mental Health Center (SCMHC), the facility for acute inpatient mental health care.

There are few if any outcome measures for mental health treatment being monitored by the County, either for care provided by the County or for care provided by contracted nonprofit provider organizations. There is no determination specifically for the homeless.

The lack of outcomes data, especially for the homeless, does not allow for an assessment of effectiveness. In several interviews, it was pointed out that treatment for substance abuse is hindered unless the client is in a substance free environment. Very few of the housing programs

have this requirement, and many specifically prohibit a requirement for a clean and sober environment as a qualifying criterion for housing support funding.

Care Delivery:

The County is responsible for all the mental health care and substance abuse treatment provided to County residents. This excludes those with private health insurance who must seek care with their health plan. Patients eligible for County benefits with mental health diagnoses categorized as mild or moderate receive treatment from contracted provider organizations or Medi-Cal Managed Care Plans. The County provides direct care to those with a diagnosis of severe and/or acute mental health issues when patients are at risk to harm themselves or others.

The services provided by the contracted provider organizations include program navigation, administrative assistance, and treatment for mental health and substance abuse issues.

County Homeless Engagement and Response Teams (HEART) and Sacramento Police Department IMPACT Teams, homeless outreach teams in the County and City, respectively, have been established to personally engage with those living in encampments and shelters. The teams consist of a navigator, mental health professional, peer counselor, and support staff. They do their best to provide services where the homeless reside. The HEART teams have been hampered by lack of coordination and communication with other agencies, especially law enforcement. The HEART teams are not fully staffed. The plan is for five HEART teams, but progress is slow. The current IMPACT team has difficulty in meeting the needs of those they engage.

The outreach teams are directed by the program administrator to go where the need is greatest. The Grand Jury discovered that elected officials, at times, direct the activities of the outreach teams based on constituent demands and complaints. This is despite the acute need for outreach team services in other locations.

An important feature of any mental health system is the ability to obtain an appointment in a reasonable time period. This is especially true for those with mental health challenges who are homeless. Our investigation shows that often, after intensive efforts by outreach teams to gain trust and for a person to commit to engagement with treatment, the time until appointment exceeds two weeks, and many times up to a month or more. During this interval, the commitment to engagement by the client often wanes, and the commitment to seek an appointment vanishes. An opportunity is lost.

The County has approved and is proceeding with the construction of the County Mental Health Rehabilitation Center, a step-down facility, with 64 beds, in addition to 30 acute mental health inpatient beds at SCMHC. This falls far short of the estimated need by the County for 251 such beds, documented in a RAND study in 2022. The County closing of multiple acute mental health beds in the past has had dire consequences for access to appropriate care by those most in need.

Administrative Barriers:

While this report focuses on mental health care and substance abuse for the homeless, housing is an important factor. An additional barrier to better mental health and substance abuse outcomes is the housing application process. Clients may be required to go to DMV to obtain a valid ID, but they have no transportation. They must document a permanent address they don't have, produce a birth certificate, and obtain other documents that may be required, but which are frequently lost in the decline to homelessness. Another obstacle may be the battle to escape an eviction history. They must leave their belongings and go to various locations to build this paper foundation, risking loss or destruction of what few things they possess. All of this prolongs the time they remain homeless, and increases the risk they will remain so.

Coordination of Resources and Programs

In the face of a raging mental health crisis among the homeless population in Sacramento County, no accountable party has emerged to coordinate the abundance of resources available to County decision-makers. Minimal, if any, collaboration exists among County leaders, employees, or providers.

With millions of dollars available to manage the momentous task of appropriate treatment for mentally ill homeless men and women or those locked in the desperate jaws of substance abuse, the County's approach seems clumsy and inefficient. As the crisis proliferates, the County's public response fails to match its intensity.

Providers of clean-and-sober transitional housing can provide documentation of successful programs but are denied state and federal funding while the county does little to support their efforts. The County Mental Health Board (MHB), charged with the review and evaluation of the County's mental health needs, do not have their recommendations acted upon directly by the Board of Supervisors. This uncoordinated approach fails to produce meaningful results.

Funds from the state's Homeless Housing and Assistance Prevention 3 (HHAP-3) program are not transparently allocated for services and are not tied to best performance or outcomes. Funds from the Mental Health Services Act (MHSA) are governed by a separate board that rarely communicates with the MHB or the CoC. Hospital emergency departments house homeless mental health patients for days — and sometimes weeks — while they wait for mental health bed capacity to open due to a severe shortage of inpatient and step-down unit beds.

Not surprisingly, politics sometimes interferes. Deployment of outreach service teams to homeless encampments are often determined by those elected officials whose constituents complain the loudest rather than where the highest need for services reside. Those same outreach teams, whose mission is to earn the trust of the homeless encampment residents, are often undermined when the encampments are targeted for clearing with little or no notice from law enforcement, especially when cleared by the Sacramento County Sheriff's Department.

The County contracts out more than 90-percent of its homeless mental health and substance abuse services, but typically in only one-year time frames. Such short terms create instability in relationships between County employees and providers, and fosters the notion the County is pushing its administrative costs to the providers.

If the adage, “show me your budget, and I’ll tell you what you value,” is true, the County’s general fund budget is not subtle: in the 2022 – 23 County budget, 4.9 -percent of \$529.9 million in funds to support mental health is provided directly by the County.

Think what a difference could be made for the taxpayers, the staff, and the homeless if the money available from all sources was allocated in a way that made the greatest difference to solve the problem. If all these entities could put aside their silo thinking, invest in coordination, relate to each other productively in search of solutions, then they can make a difference in mental health for the homeless.

#### Innovation in Mental Health Services for the Homeless

The homeless have many needs. What will work for some groups may not work for others. This is an expensive undertaking, which cost hundreds of millions of dollars, \$529.9 million for mental health care alone in Fiscal Year (FY) 2022/23. The amount specifically directed to homeless mental health services could not be determined.

Treatment and prevention for mental illness and substance abuse issues are not one-size-fits-all. Many solutions have been tried or are being formulated, such as wrap-around services, outreach services, one stop shops (such as, Community Outreach Recovery Empowerment, known as, CORE), mobile treatment services (treat them where they are), sobering locations, transitional housing, and Housing First.

Innovative programs can be found. For instance, the County has the Crisis Receiving for Behavioral Health (CRBH) referred to as “the crib.” This is a voluntary short-term program that is staffed 24/7 with health care professionals who provide short term recovery and recuperation from the effects of alcohol or drug intoxication. Some are homeless, and this provides a brief respite from the challenges of their lives.

Freedom to innovate helps to address complicated problems. But, innovation is often difficult in bureaucratic organizations. Best practices across the country have been developed and could be applied in Sacramento County. Fostering innovation within and among County entities may provide a way forward for some of the mental health and substance abuse problems associated with homelessness. Organizations that succeed exhibit the courage to innovate.

#### Improved Communication Among Agencies and Entities

“Alone, we can do so little; together we can do so much.”— Helen Keller.

Successful engagement, enrollment, diagnosis, and provision of homeless mental health and substance abuse services to the homeless will take collaboration and improved communication between law enforcement and the service providers. Law enforcement is responsible for clearing



homeless encampments while several different organizations provide outreach and these vital services to the men, women, and children who live in those encampments.

When one agency acts without coordination and collaboration with the other, the unintended consequences can be severe. For example, a service provider was working with unhoused individuals in an encampment and the next day the encampment was notified it was being cleared by law enforcement. This led the unhoused individuals to believe the service provider reported the encampment to law enforcement and the unhoused individuals refused future services. Their trust had been broken. Better communication may have avoided the loss of needed services for this group.

Other examples include the lack of referral to the CRBH by County agencies. As a result, those who are inebriated or high in public, but pose no other threat, are arrested and jailed, which results in increased health risk and high cost of incarceration as opposed to these alternatives.

The paltry rates of referral to the Acute Intake Center at SCMHC is another lost opportunity to manage people with acute mental health and substance abuse with an option besides incarceration to protect the public.

Whether this is lack of communication between service organizations and law enforcement, or by leadership in law enforcement to patrol officers, it is still a lack of communication.

Communication between entities does not occur at a level that influences the allocation of resources. We could find no instance where leadership in the MHB, the CoC, the MHSA Board, BHS, and Law Enforcement, ever met together to plan how to marshal and coordinate resources in support of the homeless to resolve their mental health and substance abuse problems. The same is true, until recently, of the political leadership of the County and other cities in the region.

Communication among County departments responsible for homeless mental health and substance abuse care and to outside agencies was anemic. The people in these roles are passionate and want to make a difference, but they want to do it their way. To break down the silos that exist in this sphere may improve mental health and substance abuse outcomes.

Improved transparency of communication in all facets of the programs to resolve the homeless mental health and substance abuse crisis in Sacramento County is likely to improve the trust of the community in our government to effectively address this issue.

#### Transparent Access to Reporting of Funds and Expenses

The Grand Jury could not uncover any transparent report that showed where this \$529.9 million was being spent. Instead, this information is embedded in the budget which makes it difficult to determine where the funds are being allocated.

In information provided in the Behavioral Health Services FY 2022-23 Budget Overview, the total Sacramento County mental health funding for FY 2022-23 is \$529.9 million, as shown in the table below. Funding sources for Behavioral Health are available at a high level but there are no reports that show where these millions are being spent.

<b>Behavioral Health Services Budget Overview FY22/23</b>	
Revenue Source	Revenue (Rounded in millions)
Realignment	\$165.2
Medi-Cal	\$139.1
State General Fund	\$7.6
Mental Health Service Act	\$145.8
County General Fund	\$10.9
System Partners and Grants	\$62.6
Total	\$529.9

Sacramento County government websites have little data available that allow taxpayers and decision makers to evaluate efforts to reduce homelessness or to judge the effectiveness and efficiency of mental health and substance abuse programs.

A good example that might be useful to identify specific allocations of funds relating to homeless mental health in other counties, including one being used by Yolo County. The following table specifically illustrates the sources and uses of funds being allocated towards the reduction of homelessness.

<b>Supportive Services</b>		
<b>\$6,361,075.40</b>		
<b>700 Individuals served in CY2020</b>		
Contract	Amount	Funding Source
Yolo County Children's Alliance	\$50,000.00	CESH
Yolo Wayfarer Center (Fourth & Hope)	\$75,000.00	CESH
Yolo Wayfarer Center (Fourth & Hope)	\$82,454.40	CESH Round 2
CommuniCare Health Centers	\$91,099.50	HDAP
City of Davis	\$67,304.35	Pathways to Employment
Interfaith Rotating Winter Shelter	\$11,131.83	HEAP
Resources Independent Living	\$36,521.74	HEAP
Yolo County Children's Alliance	\$41,379.31	HEAP
A1 Protective Services LLC	\$197,142.86	Project Roomkey
Allied Universal Security Services	\$220,000.00	Project Roomkey
CommuniCare Health Centers	\$1,091,172.70	Project Roomkey
Empower Yolo Inc.	\$254,514.00	Project Roomkey
Turning Point Community Programs	\$368,945.74	Project Roomkey

### Metrics and Goals

The Grand Jury could not obtain reporting specific to homeless patients and was unable to identify any specific metrics for homeless service outcomes.

As a standard practice, mental health providers typically submit process metrics as part of the contract management system, and they are well tracked. These reports are robust and are key to maintaining the quality of documentation provided by non-profits with whom the County contracts.

It was less apparent whether such data collected related to services provided by Medi-Cal Managed Care Plans, which provide mild and moderate mental health services to patients for whom the County is required to care.

The accumulation of this kind of outcome data is not a new phenomenon. In 2003, the U. S. Department of Health and Human Services developed core performance measures for homeless data tracking that could be adopted for County planning. These are useful today and easily obtained.

It is essential to specifically define achievable goals on a regular basis that are assessed and updated. Transparency is provided when key metrics are regularly updated and published.

#### Accountability

Accountability for the mental health and substance abuse programs in the County homeless population is lacking. While great sums of tax dollars are expended, the results are disappointing when large homeless encampments persist. A high number of homeless have mental health and/or substance abuse issues, and yet, integrated and coordinated treatment remains inadequate.

The County retains control over most mental health funding for the cities and the unincorporated areas of Sacramento County. They contract with many non-profit providers for approximately 90% of these services which makes it difficult to coordinate and focus on results. County programs often work in “silos” and are focused more on process rather than outcomes. Interviews with service providers conducted by the Grand Jury reflected their frustration that they were frequently stymied by the County and other government bureaucracies.

There is also a disconnect among County elected leaders, senior staff and those providing services. There are five co-equal County supervisors vying for political points with city leaders criticizing County inaction, which makes it difficult to hold specific people publicly accountable for results.

Authoritative, focused coordination of the resources of all stakeholders is desperately needed in the administration of mental health and substance abuse homeless programs. Successful administrative models within the County that have implemented this strategy include the Executive Director position of Sacramento Regional Transit and the Deputy County Executive position for Public Safety and Justice.

Under normal conditions, the treatment of mental health and substance abuse issues is extraordinarily difficult, but deeply compounded for the unhoused. More than 50% of the homeless population suffers from mental illness and/or substance abuse.

The following recommendations are not the ultimate solution to the problem. The Grand Jury is hopeful they ideas to improve service delivery and results.

**FINDINGS:**

- F1:** The current fragmented system of homeless services fails to serve the homeless and their mental health and substance abuse challenges nor the Sacramento County community and its taxpayers.
- F2:** The County lacks a comprehensive strategic plan to include the mental health and substance abuse issues that face the homeless.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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.
- F8:** Mental health and substance abuse issues among the homeless are aggravated by poor government planning.
- 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.
- F10:** Poor communication between law enforcement and outreach teams erodes the trust of and negatively impacts the mental health of the unhoused population.
- 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.



**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.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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).
- 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.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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 abuse treatment services.
- 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.
- 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.

**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.

### **Required Responses**

Pursuant to Penal Code sections 933(c) and 933.05, the grand jury requests responses as follows:

From the following governing bodies of a public agency within 90 days:

The Sacramento County Board of Supervisors	The Sacramento City Council
County Administration Building	City Hall
700 H Street, Suite 2450	915 I Street, 5th Floor
Sacramento, Ca 95815	Sacramento, CA 9581

From the following elected official within 60 days:

Jim Cooper, Sheriff  
Sacramento County  
4500 Orange Grove Avenue  
Sacramento, CA. 95841

### **Invited Responses**

Ms. Ann Edwards,  
County Executive of Sacramento County  
700 H Street, Room 7650  
Sacramento, CA 95814

Ms. Bobbie Singh-Allen, Mayor,  
City of Elk Grove  
8401 Laguna Palms Way  
Elk Grove, CA 95758

Mr. Howard Chan,  
City Manager of City of Sacramento  
915 I Street  
Sacramento, CA 95814

Mr. Jay Vandenburg, Mayor  
City of Galt  
380 Civic Drive  
Galt, CA 95632

Ms. Cathy Lester, Chief of Police  
Sacramento City Police Department  
5770 Freeport Boulevard  
Sacramento, CA 95822

Ms. Rosario Rodriquez, Mayor  
City of Folsom  
50 Natoma St.  
Folsom, CA 95630

Ms. Chevon Kothari,  
Deputy County Executive, Social Services  
700 H Street, Room 7650  
Sacramento, CA 95814

Ms. Porsche Middleton, Mayor  
City of Citrus Heights  
6237 Fountain Square Drive  
Citrus Heights, CA 95621

Ms. Linda Budge, Mayor  
City of Rancho Cordova  
2729 Prospect Park Drive  
Rancho Cordova, CA 95670

**Mail or deliver a hard copy response to:**

The Honorable Michael Bowman  
Presiding Judge  
Sacramento County Superior Court  
720 9<sup>th</sup> Street  
Sacramento, CA 95815

**Please email a copy of this response to:**

Ms. Erendira Tapia-Bouthillier  
Sacramento County Grand Jury Coordinator  
Email: [TapiaE@saccourt.ca.gov](mailto:TapiaE@saccourt.ca.gov)



**2022 – 2023 Grand Jury of Sacramento County**



# SACRAMENTO COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

*Jim Cooper*  
*Sheriff*

July 5, 2023

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

Subject: Response to Sacramento Grand Jury Report: Mental Health Care for the Homeless: Who Cares?

Dear Judge Bowman:

Pursuant to Penal Code Sections 933 and 933.05, the following response is respectfully submitted to you regarding the 2022-2023 Grand Jury's Findings and Recommendations on the report titled: Mental Health Care for the Homeless: Who Cares?

## INTRODUCTION

The 2022-2023 Sacramento County Grand Jury's Report found the County's overall strategy to tackle its responsibility for treating the homeless mentally ill and drug abusers largely ineffective, scattered, and wanting better leadership. Despite millions of dollars, multiple programs, and an almost endless array of boards and commissions, mental illness and substance abuse among the homeless continues to proliferate.

The majority of findings and recommendations in this report are directed toward the departments responsible for treatment and service delivery within the County. The Grand Jury made one finding and one recommendation that referenced law enforcement.

## RESPONSE

**Finding 10: Poor communication between law enforcement and outreach teams erodes the trust of and negatively impacts the mental health of the unhoused population.**

The Honorable Michael Bowman  
July 5, 2023  
Page 2

Response to Finding 10: Agree with finding

The Sheriff's Office is committed to working collaboratively with the outreach teams serving the unhoused population. Consistent communication and a clear understanding of everyone's roles and responsibilities assist in mitigating feelings of mistrust or negative impacts on the mental health of homeless individuals.

**Recommendation 9: 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 website to increase the trust of the homeless and support offered by outreach teams.**

Response to Recommendation 9: Partially agree with recommendation

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, the Sacramento Sheriff's Office's (SSO) Homeless Outreach Team's (HOT) staffing levels were reduced dramatically due to increased deputy sheriff vacancies. The lack of HOT staffing resulted in limited proactive engagement with the homeless population and collaboration with homeless outreach service providers. In February of 2023, our patrol staffing deployment model was modified to be more efficient, allowing the deputy sheriff vacancies in HOT to be filled.

Collaboration and communication between SSO HOT and outreach service teams have improved in conjunction with the increased staffing and a renewed focus on addressing the public safety concerns and criminal behavior occurring within the homeless encampments in the County. The County-wide SSO HOT supervisor communicates at least weekly with a designated liaison from the County's Department of Homeless Services and Housing (DHS) to collaborate in deciding which encampments to clear.


It is essential to recognize law enforcement is responsible for more than merely clearing homeless encampments. We agree with DHS's guiding principle that unsheltered individuals, as all citizens, are deserving of the same access to public services and protection by law enforcement. The Sheriff's Office's interactions with the unsheltered population include offering and coordinating service referrals, addressing complaints of victimization through criminal investigations, and identifying and enforcing criminal laws by issuing citations and making arrests. These interactions may include clearing encampments if appropriate.

The potential benefits of increasing the trust of the homeless and support offered by outreach teams by posting preplanned law enforcement operational information about homeless encampments on a shared website are outweighed by the harm it would cause. Making this information publicly available would enable criminals to avoid detection and enforcement, hindering law enforcement's effectiveness in serving the community and protecting the unhoused population.



The Honorable Michael Bowman  
July 5, 2023  
Page 3

Sincerely,

  
JIM COOPER, SHERIFF

Copy: Ms. Erendira Tapia-Bouthillier  
Sacramento County Grand Jury Coordinator  
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Responses to Findings and Recommendations in the Grand Jury Report,  
"Homeless Should Not Mean Hopeless: Homeless Solutions Elude Local  
Leaders"

**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.

Board of Supervisors Response:

The Board of Supervisors disagrees wholly with the finding.

Starting in August, 2021, Sacramento Steps Forward (SSF) began convening the Sacramento Homeless Policy Council, at the direction of the Board of Supervisors and Sacramento City Council. This Council includes elected representatives from each of the seven cities in the County as well as the Board of Supervisors. The Council is tasked with engaging in broad-based, collaborative, and strategic discussions in response to Sacramento's homelessness crisis. In addition, in June of 2022, the County Board of Supervisors, the Sacramento City Council, and the Sacramento Countywide Continuum of Care (CoC) Board all 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. Finally, with approximately 95% of the County's unsheltered homeless population residing in either the City of Sacramento (67%), the unincorporated County (20%) or the American River Parkway (8%) which is managed by Sacramento County, the most intense need for on-going coordination and collaboration is between the County and City of Sacramento. Recognizing this, in December of 2022, the County and City entered into a legally binding Homeless Partnership Agreement that lays out responsibilities of each jurisdiction and sets specific requirements for increased outreach and services, shelter capacity, and permanent housing over five years. City and County elected officials meet regularly in the City/County Homeless 4x2 to direct the work under the Partnership Agreement and staff of both jurisdictions meet regularly to operationalize

the Agreement. Outcomes and efforts of the Partnership Agreement are publicly shared in Board and Council workshops and on both County and City websites.

**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.

Board of Supervisors Response:

The Board of Supervisors 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.

Board of Supervisors Response:

The Board of Supervisors disagrees partially with the finding.

National studies confirm that the most correlated factor in communities with high rates of homelessness is lack of available, affordable housing<sup>1</sup>. California has the second largest gap (only second to Hawaii) between rental rates and average worker wages.<sup>2</sup> California lacks almost 1 million affordable housing units to meet the need of low-income residents, meaning that more people are falling into homelessness due to affordability issues, and the path out of homelessness is limited due to lack of affordable housing.<sup>3</sup>

The voices of those experiencing homelessness echo these challenges; in the 2022 Sacramento Point in Time (PIT) Count, the most common thing asked for by those living unsheltered (44%) was 'more affordable housing'.

However, homelessness is also exacerbated and often extended due to other structural and personal challenges those living unsheltered face. While it is difficult to fully know which is the cause and which is the symptom, data on the homeless population also indicates disproportionate rates of behavioral health issues, chronic health conditions, involvement in the child welfare system, domestic violence, and involvement in the criminal justice system. While access to affordable housing can make treatment of these other issues

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<sup>1</sup> <https://view.genial.ly/62b8abe56affd600115642f2/presentation-homelessness-is-a-housing-problemv2>

<sup>2</sup> <https://nlihc.org/oor/state/ca>

<sup>3</sup> [https://nlihc.org/sites/default/files/SHP\\_CA.pdf](https://nlihc.org/sites/default/files/SHP_CA.pdf)

easier, to truly address the causes and impacts of homelessness, it is necessary to also address these other challenges.

**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.

Board of Supervisors Response:

The Board of Supervisors disagrees partially with the finding.

The Board agrees that Sacramento Steps Forward (SSF) does not have any elected leaders on its Board and lacks decision-making authority over the eight governmental jurisdictions. However, the Board disagrees that SSF, therefore, is 'powerless' to implement needed changes.

SSF serves multiple roles in the County that are critical to the success of County and City initiatives, and which the County and City rely on to help effectuate change in programs directly administered by both jurisdictions:

- SSF serves as the lead applicant for the Countywide collaborative application for Continuum of Care (CoC) funding from the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). In federal fiscal year 2022 the Sacramento CoC grant was awarded \$30,512,102, and supports 33 projects, primarily permanent affordable housing projects for households exiting homelessness. SSF's oversight of this process and the resulting contracts is a critical component in our community's overall strategy to prevent and end homelessness.
- SSF serves as the operator of the Countywide Coordinated Access System (CAS). CAS is the 'front door' to virtually all County and City funded shelters and housing programs, as well as others funded privately or from other governmental partners. A strong and inclusive CAS is critical to ensuring that the most vulnerable individuals are prioritized for services, and that clients are quickly and transparently referred to the most appropriate intervention for their unique needs.
- SSF serves as the administrator of the Countywide Homeless Management Information System (HMIS). HMIS is the largest source of data the community has of people experiencing homelessness and programs serving them. SSF has made significant investments recently to improve the span of programs included in HMIS and the functionality of HMIS to provide community data. Without this data,

programs administered by local jurisdictions cannot be consistently measured for efficacy.

- Finally, SSF serves as the lead for implementing the Local Homelessness Action Plan (LHAP), the County and City adopted strategic plan to address homelessness.

**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.

Board of Supervisors Response:

The Board of Supervisors agrees with the finding, but notes that 95% of the unsheltered homeless population per the 2022 PIT is within geographic areas that either the City or County of Sacramento are responsible for, and, therefore, subject to the Partnership Agreement.



**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.

Board of Supervisors Response:

This recommendation will not be implemented because it is not reasonable due to new state requirements for funding that would need to be analyzed alongside implementation of the JPA, which would exceed the timeframe for additional analysis provided in the penal code.

As the grand jury report notes, in 2010, when the Continuum of Care (CoC) administration was leaving Sacramento County, there was consideration of forming a Joint Powers Authority (JPA) to administer the CoC. At that time, creation of a JPA was deemed to not be feasible, and the CoC functions were shifted instead to a non-profit, Sacramento Steps Forward (SSF). Since this time, both the conditions around homelessness and funding available for programs and services has significantly changed. In the State's 2023-24 budget, there are new requirements for jurisdictions drawing down Homeless, Housing and Prevention (HHAP) funding for strong regional collaboration. This work will be memorialized into a regional plan that (among other things) must include: "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 coordination and connection to the delivery of services". This work which will be done collaboratively with the County, CoC and cities, will inform alternative organizational approaches, including, but not limited to the forming of a JPA.

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

Board of Supervisors Response:

This recommendation will not be implemented because it is not reasonable due to new state requirements for funding that would need to be analyzed alongside implementation of the JPA, which would exceed the timeframe for additional analysis provided in the penal code.

The recommended research into most effective structure (R1, above), should include the roles of elected officials in the structure.

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

Board of Supervisors Response:

This recommendation will not be implemented because it is not reasonable due to new state requirements for funding that would need to be analyzed alongside implementation of the JPA, which would exceed the timeframe for additional analysis provided in the penal code.

The recommended research into most effective structure (R1, above), should lay out roles and responsibilities, including oversight of the current comprehensive County-wide strategic plan, the Local Homelessness Action Plan (LHAP).

**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.

Board of Supervisors Response:

The recommendation will not be implemented because it is not warranted or is not reasonable.

The Partnership Agreement has proven to be an effective tool for managing the responsibilities between the City of Sacramento and County of Sacramento, who, collectively, oversee 95% of the unsheltered homeless population in Sacramento. While it is important to have and maintain strong working relationships with the other six cities, the size of the issues in those cities (with Isleton and Galt having no unsheltered count in 2022) does not warrant such a formal arrangement. As research into the best overall governance structure to address homelessness is explored (R1, above), the County will explore the need for additional partnership agreements with other cities in the County.

Responses to Findings and Recommendations In the Grand Jury Report,  
"Mental Health Care for the Homeless: Who Cares?"

## Findings

**F1:** The current fragmented system of homeless services fails to serve the homeless and their mental health and substance abuse challenges nor the Sacramento County community and its taxpayers.

### Board of Supervisors Response:

The Board of Supervisors disagrees partially with the finding because the services needed to support people experiencing homelessness, especially those living with behavioral health issues, is bigger than any one governmental entity.

Homelessness is a symptom of challenges in many social safety nets, many of which are outside of government. While the County strives to provide access to services and treatment, the private market and the decision to access services and treatment play the biggest roles. Most notably, the lack of affordable, accessible housing is key to helping people end their homelessness and connect into social services; the primary driver of housing availability is the private market.

The County has made efforts to streamline County services for those experiencing homelessness, including creating a new Department of Homeless Services and Housing (DHS) and increasing access to behavioral health services for those experiencing homelessness by embedding clinicians and peers into outreach teams, and opening 11 community-based CORE (Community Outreach Recovery Empowerment) centers with outreach capacity geographically spread out throughout the County. Each CORE site includes an outpatient clinic, a peer operated walk-in wellness center that anyone can access, and outreach staff to engage with the unhoused proximal to their location. All CORE sites are able to directly admit individuals into their programs and have access to flexible housing funds to assist those they serve with housing resources. The Mental Health Urgent Care program expanded operations to 24 hours, 7 days a week and the Board of Supervisors approved the development of a second Mental Health Urgency Care in the FY 2023-24 budget. Three new Full Service Partnership (FSP) programs have opened. While these access points increase opportunities for engagement with the behavioral health system, except for in limited circumstances, these services must be voluntarily accessed by the participants.

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

Board of Supervisors Response:

The Board of Supervisors disagrees wholly with the finding. In June of 2022, the County Board of Supervisors, the Sacramento City Council, and the Sacramento Countywide Continuum of Care (CoC) Board all adopted the Sacramento Local Homelessness Action Plan (LHAP) which is a three year, cross-jurisdictional unified approach to addressing homelessness across Sacramento County. The LHAP includes a strategy specifically about connecting homeless populations to behavioral health services as well as key activities with timelines and measurable goals for each of four sub-strategies under this strategy.<sup>1</sup>

**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.

Board of Supervisors Response:

The Board of Supervisors disagrees wholly with the finding. As described in the previous response, in June of 2022, the County Board of Supervisors, the Sacramento City Council, and the Sacramento Countywide Continuum of Care (CoC) Board all adopted the Sacramento Local Homelessness Action Plan (LHAP) which is a three year, cross-jurisdictional unified approach to addressing homelessness across Sacramento County. The LHAP includes a strategy specifically about connecting homeless populations to behavioral health services as well as key activities with timelines and measurable goals for each of four sub-strategies under this strategy.<sup>1</sup>

**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.

Board of Supervisors Response:

The Board of Supervisors disagrees wholly with the finding. The County has an existing Deputy County Executive (DCE) position over Social Services;



Chevon Kothari currently serves in this position. This DCE oversees the following social services departments, including budgets, policies and programs administered by each department:

- Department of Health Services (DHS), which includes Behavioral Health, Public Health, Primary Health
- Department of Human Assistance (DHA)
- Department of Child, Family and Adult Services (DCFAS)
- Department of Homeless Services and Housing (DHSB)
- Environmental Management Department (EMD)
- Child Support Services (CSS)

Ms. Kothari also serves as the County's lead for coordination with the First Five Commission, the Sacramento Housing and Redevelopment Agency (SHRA) and the Sacramento Employment Training Association (SETA).

**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.

Board of Supervisors Response:

The Board of Supervisors disagrees wholly with the finding. Mental Health Services Act (MHSA) Full-Service Partnership programs have measurable outcomes demonstrating the success in reducing homelessness. The other outpatient programs all have access to flexible housing funds to support individuals they serve. Reports are published annually in accordance with the MHSA legislation and requirements.

The County pursues and takes advantage of all available funding opportunities. In FY 2022-23, Behavioral Health invested \$59 million in housing and services for unhoused individuals. For example, the County recently applied for and received \$43 million in Behavioral Health Bridge Housing, which is a new unique funding source specifically targeting transitional housing solutions for individuals receiving behavioral health services.

Given that over 90% of Behavioral Health services are delivered through community providers (contracts), the Behavioral Health Services (BHS) division actively monitors and works with providers to ensure goals and outcomes are being met. It is important to note that there is a historically unprecedented number of Behavioral Health initiatives being introduced in



the State of California, both currently and over the last three years. Sacramento County has been engaged in all of the new initiatives because we recognize that untreated serious mental illness is a risk factor for homelessness. The County remains open to all new initiatives and works closely across other County departments and community providers to ensure successful implementation of these measures.

**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.

Board of Supervisors Response:

The Board of Supervisors disagrees partially with the finding.

The Board of Supervisors disagrees with the finding of the lack of financial reporting. The Mental Health Services Act (MHSA) plan is published annually demonstrating how funds are used and the performance of the funded programs, including those programs serving people experiencing homelessness.

In relation to the finding around public availability of data on funding, while the MHSA plan is publicly available, it does not break down funding specific to the homeless population. However, the Department of Homeless Services and Housing (DHS), recently completed and published a full accounting across County departments on funding allocated in FY 2022-23 to homeless programs. Behavioral health services were included in this analysis, but a specific breakout of behavioral health services was not a part of the public presentation. Staff recommend that in subsequent reports (at least annually), behavioral health allocations be called out specifically.

**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.

Board of Supervisors Response:

The Board of Supervisors disagrees partially with the finding. While the Board agrees there are many boards and committees with overlapping areas, they do not create waste and redundancy in the planning and distribution of resources. Existing boards and committees provide specific

functions and expertise and inform the entire system on multiple levels. Additionally, the County is actively working to prevent redundancies.

There are four different advisory boards/committees that provide direction and oversight to Behavioral Health, those are:

- Mental Health Board
- Alcohol and Drug Advisory Board,
- MHSA Steering Committee
- Youth Advisory Board

Each board/committee provides direction within a specific area of funding, service, or population of focus. All provide valuable information to the Board of Supervisors and the Department regarding service delivery. The boards/committees meet frequently, though that does not impede Behavioral Health from providing critical services to the community. All boards/committees require individuals with lived-experience, helping to better inform service delivery.

In addition to these behavioral health focused boards and committees, within the homeless system of care, the Sacramento Continuum of Care (CoC) is a 30+ member Board, that includes representatives from organizations serving individuals experiencing homelessness or who were formerly homeless and other interested, relevant organizations within Sacramento County. The Sacramento CoC covers all the cities, towns and unincorporated areas of Sacramento County. The CoC has multiple subcommittees, including a lived expertise committee, who provided on-going input on the development of the Local Homelessness Action Plan (LHAP), including the behavioral health strategy, and will continue to provide input and direction during implementation.

The Human Services Coordinating Council (HSCC), which includes members from many of the other advisory boards/committees, is working to determine strategies to avoid duplicative work by multiple advisory bodies researching the same issues and not coordinating how that is done.

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

Board of Supervisors Response:

The Board of Supervisors partially disagrees with the finding.

The County agrees there are significant challenges in meaningfully coordinating funding and the expectations of our various funders at the local, State and Federal levels; however, mental health and substance abuse issues are exacerbated by the lack of affordable housing, over which the County has very limited control.

At the County level, the County is continually evaluating funding and program goals based on available information to inform decision making. In making decisions about funding for Behavioral Health beds, the County commissioned a RAND study to ensure that investments were strategic. The results of this study informed priorities for applying for Behavioral Health Continuum Infrastructure Program funds for a Mental Health Rehabilitation Center, a youth crisis facility, and Substance Use Disorder Residential bed capacity.

In spite of the pandemic, Behavioral Health moved forward with a transformational redesign of the mental health delivery system to better meet the needs of the community. This resulted in 11 CORE sites, 3 new FSP contracts, and expanded hours of operation for the Mental Health Urgent Care program as described in an earlier response. \$20 million in Prevention and Early Intervention funding was delivered to a broad array of Community Based Organizations with a range of interventions specifically addressing the unique needs of various culturally diverse communities within Sacramento County.

Treating mental illness and substance use disorders in the unhoused population cannot happen without all system supports, across the State, City, and CoC in alignment. A recent study conducted at University of California, San Francisco, concluded that homelessness was the result of high housing costs and low income. Mental health and substance abuse issues are aggravated by the lack of affordable housing. In the past four years, the County has increased funding in Behavioral Health from \$367 million in FY2018-19 to \$675 million in FY 2023-24, which is an 84% increase.

**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.



Board of Supervisors Response:

The Board of Supervisors disagrees wholly with the finding.

The County HEART teams as well as the County's contracted homeless navigators (staffed through a local community-based organization) are supported by leadership of both DHS and DSHS. County staff meet weekly with the outreach teams to discuss deployment, strategize on service connections and 'case conference' around client needs. The teams are funded to allow for sufficient follow-up time with clients and provided flexible funding to help address immediate needs and coordinate transitions from homelessness to shelter and/or housing. In a recent review of the first six months of co-deployment of HEART teams with the City Department of Community Response (DCR), of those who agreed to be screened by the HEART team for linkage to behavioral health, 94% were referred to a provider for assessment and linkage to ongoing treatment 96% of people engaged by the HEART teams were enrolled in behavioral health services. Ultimately, 28.4% of the unsheltered population that HEART engaged with agreed to be linked to a provider and to receive ongoing behavioral health services. The HEART teams were just developed in the FY 2022-23 budget; when the teams were initially funded, there was a ramp up time to hire, but teams are fully staffed now, and able to meet community needs.

The HEART teams have been in service for just over a year. While initial outcomes from their efforts are good, the County will continue to assess for additional needs and adjust responses accordingly.

The Board cannot comment on the support and staff for the Sacramento Police Department.

Sheriff's Response:

The Sheriff sent his response to the presiding judge in a separate correspondence per Penal Code section 933.05 and 933(c). The response has been included as part of the Board's report as Attachment 3.

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

Board of Supervisors Response:

The Board of Supervisors disagrees partially with the finding.

As leadership in the Sheriff's office changed, including re-establishing the full Homeless Outreach Team (HOT), and outreach responsibility has shifted to the new Department of Homeless Services and Housing (DHS), there were some opportunities for better coordination. The Sheriff is a response-oriented department, which sometimes can be challenging to overlay intensive services which, to be most effective, require time to establish rapport and trust; however, in recent months, leadership in DHS meets weekly with the Sergeant of the HOT and County Park Rangers to discuss needs of people living in encampments in the unincorporated County. County staff also meet with City of Sacramento Police IMPACT team when requested to coordinate deployment support from County behavioral health within the City of Sacramento. In the other cities, County staff are available as requested to deploy behavioral health outreach teams with locally funded navigators.

Top leadership of the County and the City of Sacramento also meet regularly to identify challenges and ensure resources are being adequately distributed to each of the organization's respective teams.

Sheriff's Response:

The Sheriff sent his response to the presiding judge in a separate correspondence per Penal Code section 933.05 and 933(c). The response has been included as part of the Board's report as Attachment 3.

**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.

Board of Supervisors Response:

The Board of Supervisors agrees. There is a Statewide / Nationwide behavioral health workforce crisis.



Recognizing this challenge, the County has worked to remain competitive with historically rapid increases in compensation for the behavioral health workforce, while increasing recruitment and retention strategies.

For County contracted providers, the provider contract rates were increased 35% since the pandemic.

The following are increases in compensation for County Behavioral Health Workforce positions for Senior Mental Health Counselors (SMHC) and Mental Health Counselors (MHC):

- All Classification Salary Increases: 4% in FY 2022-23 + 4% in FY 2023-24
- Equity Increases for SMHC and MHC: 7% in FY 2022-23 + 3% in FY 2023-24
- Incentive Pay of 2.5% for employees with 10 years of full-time service

Additionally, team specific incentives were established or increased for employees assigned to the following groups:

- Wellness Response Team (new special pay): 10%
- Mobile Crisis Unit: Increased from 5% to 10%
- Community Support Team, Homeless Encampment Unit (new special pay): 5%

Before factoring in any team or longevity pay, the total two-year compensation increases for SMHC and MHCs is 18%.

## 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.

### Board of Supervisors Response:

The recommendation has been implemented.

In June of 2022, the County Board of Supervisors, the Sacramento City Council, and the Sacramento Countywide Continuum of Care (CoC) Board all adopted the Sacramento Local Homelessness Action Plan (LHAP) which is a three year, cross-jurisdictional unified approach to addressing homelessness across Sacramento County. The LHAP includes a strategy specifically about connecting homeless populations to behavioral health services as well as key activities with timelines and measurable goals for each of four sub-strategies under this strategy.<sup>1</sup>

While the LHAP serves as the community wide comprehensive plan, there are additional collaborative spaces. Most notably, on December 2, 2022, the City Council and County Board of Supervisors both adopted the Partnership Agreement to address homelessness within the City of Sacramento. Among other things, the Partnership Agreement commits the County to create and fund additional outreach capacity to provide clinical assessment and linkages to County behavioral health services as well as to stand up an additional Community Outreach Recovery Empowerment (CORE) center in the central city (bringing the total CORE centers to eleven countywide). The partnership agreement also requires bi-annual reports on progress towards these goals at publicly noticed meetings of both the City Council and County Board of Supervisors.

In addition, the Board of Supervisors signed on to a proposal, AT HOME, presented by the California State Association of Counties (CSAC) that would call for greater coordination by jurisdictions within a region - a plan that ultimately informed the State Budget and Homeless, Housing and Prevention (HHAP) funding requirements.

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<sup>1</sup> [https://sacramentostepsforward.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/Year-One-Activities-2023\\_LHAP\\_FINAL-FINAL.pdf](https://sacramentostepsforward.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/Year-One-Activities-2023_LHAP_FINAL-FINAL.pdf) Strategy 6 (Ensure adequate behavioral health services), along with the key activities, timelines and measurable goals can be found starting on page 26.

**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.

Board of Supervisors Response:

This recommendation has been implemented.

As detailed in R1, the County has an existing comprehensive strategic plan with measurable outcomes. Therefore, there is no need for an interim plan.

**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.

Board of Supervisors Response:

This recommendation has been implemented.

The County has an existing Deputy County Executive (DCE) position over Social Services; Chevon Kothari currently serves in this position. This DCE oversees the following social services departments, including budgets, policies and programs administered by each department:

- Department of Health Services (DHS), which includes Behavioral Health, Public Health, Primary Health
- Department of Human Assistance (DHA)
- Department of Child, Family and Adult Services (DCFAS)
- Department of Homeless Services and Housing (DHSB)
- Environmental Management Department (EMD)
- Child Support Services (CSS)

Ms. Kothari also serves as the County's lead for the First Five Commission, the Sacramento Housing and Redevelopment Agency (SHRA) and the Sacramento Employment Training Association (SETA). Given that services and supports to the unhoused span across multiple Departments and entities, the County believes this is the right position to oversee all of these complimentary Departments.



**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).

Board of Supervisors Response:

This recommendation has been implemented.

In the past four years, the County has increased funding in Behavioral Health from \$367 million in FY 2018-19 to \$675 million in FY 2023-24, which is an 84% increase. This includes funding for the full array of behavioral health services from Prevention, Early Intervention up through outpatient programs and including substance use disorder residential and mental health acute and subacute beds.

In FY 2023-24, the Board of Supervisors approved \$78 million in new Behavioral Health Services (BHS), adding 23 positions and expanding contracted services by over \$51 million dollars. An additional \$23.5 million was included specifically to expand sub-acute adult beds and youth crisis care and residential beds. As a result of investments of the FY 2023-24 budget, the County contracted to open up 11 CORE centers within the County and city jurisdictions, including an additional investment of \$7,380,000 to add the 11<sup>th</sup> site and incorporating community navigators into the CORE sites, specifically focused on outreach and engagement to the unhoused population.

BHS is always looking for innovative best-practices to support the needs of the community. Over the last three years, BHS has leveraged MHSA funding across the entire behavioral health continuum of care to fund innovative practices. As an example, the County recently applied for and received over \$43 million in Behavioral Health Bridge Housing, which is a new unique funding source specifically targeting transitional housing solutions for individuals receiving behavioral health services.

In addition to the specific investments in the Behavioral Health system, the County's overall commitment to expansion of funding and services to support people experiencing homelessness has increased significantly. Of the \$300 million that Sacramento County received in American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding, \$94 million (31%) has been dedicated to homeless and housing programs and services, the largest allocation across all funding categories. In addition, the Board of Supervisors recently created the new Department of Homeless Services and Housing (DHS), consolidating many services and programs that serve homeless populations under one

department to increase coordination with community partners and to improve transparency and accountability.

DHSH will oversee over \$50 million in funding to community organizations to provide outreach, shelter and re-housing services. While DHSH will be the County's lead for homeless services, other County departments will remain involved in delivering services and supports to this complex issue. Overall, in FY 2022-23, the County allocated over \$177 million to provide services to address the homeless crisis throughout Sacramento County.

**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.

Board of Supervisors Response:

This recommendation has been implemented.

The Behavioral Health Services (BHS) division releases an annual Mental Health Services Act (MHSA) report, which provides a comprehensive summary of activity and services provided across all of BHS.

Additionally, over the coming years, the Social Health Information Exchange (SHIE) is expected to go live, which presents an opportunity to better highlight outcomes and metrics across all participating providers, including BHS. The SHIE will leverage multiple data sources, including HMIS, the BHS case management systems, and data from Managed Care Plans to better evaluate outcomes across populations. Given the significant investment in the SHIE, it will be important to leverage what is already in development rather than creating an alternative system or reporting mechanism.

Finally, the Local Homelessness Action Plan (LHAP) includes a strategy for increasing access to behavioral health services for people experiencing homelessness. The LHAP includes measurable outcomes and requires regular reporting on progress towards meeting these goals.

**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.



Board of Supervisors Response:

This recommendation will not be implemented, due to the timeline requested to post quarterly information.

As part of the FY 2023-24 discussion, the Department of Homeless Services and Housing (DHS) prepared an analysis of allocations for programs and services that address homelessness across all departments in FY 2022-23 and has committed to doing this annually to help aid in budget recommendations. In subsequent years, in addition to adding information from external partners (such as SHRA and SSF), this analysis will include more specific call outs and analysis of behavioral health funding supporting housing development and re-housing efforts.

As previously noted, the MHSA annual report also incorporates information on funding specific to behavioral health services, including information on programs serving people experiencing homelessness.

**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.

Board of Supervisors Response:

This recommendation has been implemented.

Elected members of the Board of Supervisors do take an active role in accountability for outcomes of County lead programs. Board Members regularly engage with staff, community members and boards and commission around designing, funding and implementation of programs. County staff are responsible for programmatic outcomes and report up through departmental leadership to the Board of Supervisors. The County agrees that continually monitoring and evaluating outcomes is essential to ensure the needs of the unhoused population are being met. Beyond existing reports such as the MHSA Annual Report, the Department of Homeless Services and Housing (DHS) published a report on all funding allocated to homeless services across the County, helping policy-level decisions on services. The County's development of the Social Health Information Exchange is in part aimed at providing a more robust mechanism to coordinate service delivery and also provide more comprehensive information around outcomes. Developing better outcome measures and



tracking is a continual work in progress, as the challenges and needs of the unhoused community evolve.

**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 abuse treatment services.

Board of Supervisors Response:

This recommendation has been implemented.

As part of the City/County Partnership Agreement, the County committed to dedicating ten HEART team members (both clinicians and peer advocates) to work in the City of Sacramento to participate as part of multi-disciplinary teams lead by the City's Department of Community Response. Additional HEART staff work in the unincorporated County and within the shelter system. The Board of Supervisors approved an additional six HEART team positions in the FY 2023-24 budget, bringing the total to 20 encampment team members. This creates ten HEART teams, with a counselor and a peer comprising one team.

The HEART team is constantly interviewing and working to fill all vacant positions. At the time of this writing, there are seven vacant positions, including the six positions that were added in the FY 2023-24 budget. Hiring is on-going for the team and it is expected that the majority of positions will be filled by December 2023.

It is also important to note that the HEART is one part of the BHS continuum providing direct service to the unhoused community. The Board of Supervisors approved the addition of community navigators to all CORE centers in the FY 2023-24 budget, expanding critical linkages to those in encampments or otherwise unhoused within the geographic area of the CORE center.

The Board cannot comment on the City's decision to establish additional IMPACT teams.

**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.

Board of Supervisors Response:

This recommendation requires further analysis.

The Board of Supervisors is fully committed to integration of outreach teams with law enforcement. Contracted outreach staff and HEART outreach staff regularly work with County Park Rangers on outreach in priority areas within the Parkway system and as part of a response team when there is inclement weather, dangerous conditions, or the area needs to be cleared for construction, fire fuel mitigation, etc.

These same outreach teams remain committed to similar partnerships with the Sacramento County Sheriff's office. Currently, DSHS staff and Sheriff's HOT members meet frequently to share priority areas and plan for coordinated deployment, as appropriate.

Sheriff's Response:

The Sheriff sent his response to the presiding judge in a separate correspondence per Penal Code section 933.05 and 933(c). The response has been included as part of the Board's report as Attachment 3.

**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.

Board of Supervisors Response:

This recommendation has been implemented.

Staff of the Department of Homelessness and Housing (DSHS) and Health Services (DHS) have multiple vehicles for regular reporting on policies, programs and outcomes.

The Local Homelessness Action Plan (LHAP) is a living document, regularly updated and shared in formal and informal venues with the public and local elected officials. The DSHS makes an annual presentation to the Board of Supervisors on outcomes and investments to address homelessness, to include progress under the LHAP.

Additionally, the City/County Partnership Agreement requires bi-annual public reports and a publicly noticed presentation to both the City Council and County Board of Supervisors.

Finally, the Mental Health Services Act (MHSA) plan requires an annual report which is heard in open session at the Board of Supervisors.

**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.

Board of Supervisors Response:

This recommendation has been implemented.

As previously noted, there is a State and national behavioral health workforce shortage. Recognizing the need to attract strong candidates, in April 2023, the Board of Supervisors approved accelerating equity increases to behavioral health clinical staff and approved a referral incentive program for existing staff who refer successful candidates to the County.

The total compensation for Senior Mental Health Counselors (SMHC) and Mental Health Counselors (MHC) has been increased by 18% over the last two years, before factoring in any incentive or longevity pay increases.

The County continues to monitor and adjust team specific incentive pays for behavioral health workers serving in a few different community-based settings or programs. As previously noted, incentives for the following teams were established or increased over the last two years:

- Wellness Response Team (new special pay): 10%
- Mobile Crisis Unit: Increased from 5% to 10%
- Community Support Team, Homeless Encampment Unit (new special pay): 5%

In order to ensure that behavioral health contracted providers are also able attract strong candidates, the County has increased contract provider rates by approximately 35% since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic.

In addition to this, County Behavioral Health and Correctional Health have been working with the Department of Personnel Services to conduct hiring fairs and attend more career events on college campuses to increase our outreach efforts for key positions.

**COUNTY OF SACRAMENTO  
CALIFORNIA**

For the Agenda of:  
August 8, 2023  
Timed: 11:00 a.m.

To: Board of Supervisors

Through: Ann Edwards, County Executive

From: Chevon Kothari, Deputy County Executive, Social Services

Subject: Response To Findings And Recommendations In The May 26, 2023, And June 9, 2023, Grand Jury Reports Regarding Responses To Homeless Issues Including Planning, Coordination, Funding, And Measurable Outcomes

District(s): All

**RECOMMENDED ACTION**

1. Adopt this report as Sacramento County's response to the findings and recommendations in the May 26, 2023, Grand Jury Report, "Homeless Should Not Mean Hopeless: Homeless Solutions Elude Local Leaders" and the June 9, 2023, Grand Jury Report, "Mental Health Care For The Homeless: Who Cares?"
2. Direct the Clerk of the Board to forward a certified copy of the Board letter to the Presiding Judge of the Sacramento County Superior Court no later than August 24, 2023.

**BACKGROUND**

The Grand Jury reviews and investigates the performance of county, city, and local governing entities. Investigations of governmental entities can be initiated by the grand jury itself or suggested by citizens. A public report usually follows an investigation with findings and recommendations that must be publicly addressed by the recipients as prescribed in Penal Code Sections 933 and 933.05. Responses are then directed to the Presiding Judge of the Superior Court.

Responses to findings and recommendations must follow a specific format, outlined in Penal Code section 933.05, as provided below.

*...as to each grand jury finding, the responding person or entity shall indicate one of the following:*

- (1) The respondent agrees with the finding.*



Response To Findings And Recommendations In The May 26, 2023, And June 9, 2023, Grand Jury Reports Regarding Responses To Homeless Issues Including Planning, Coordination, Funding, And Measurable Outcomes  
Page 2

*(2) The respondent disagrees wholly or partially with the finding, in which case the response shall specify the portion of the finding that is disputed and shall include an explanation of the reasons therefor.*

*...as to each grand jury recommendation, the responding person or entity shall report one of the following actions:*

*(1) The recommendation has been implemented, with a summary regarding the implemented action.*

*(2) The recommendation has not yet been implemented, but will be implemented in the future, with a timeframe for implementation.*

*(3) The recommendation requires further analysis, with an explanation and the scope and parameters of an analysis or study, and a timeframe for the matter to be prepared for discussion by the officer or head of the agency or department being investigated or reviewed, including the governing body of the public agency when applicable. This timeframe shall not exceed six months from the date of publication of the grand jury report.*

*(4) The recommendation will not be implemented because it is not warranted or is not reasonable, with an explanation therefor.*

The Penal Code also outlines the extent to which either departments/agencies or governing bodies must respond to findings and recommendations:

*...the governing body of the public agency shall comment to the presiding judge of the superior court on the findings and recommendations pertaining to matters under the control of the governing body (933(c)).*

*...if a finding or recommendation of the grand jury addresses budgetary or personnel matters of a county agency or department headed by an elected officer, both the agency or department head and the board of supervisors shall respond if requested by the grand jury, but the response of the board of supervisors shall address only those budgetary or personnel matters over which it has some decision making authority. The response of the elected agency or department head shall address all aspects of the findings or recommendations affecting his or her agency or department (933.05(c)).*

The Grand Jury issued two reports related to homelessness that require a response from the County Board of Supervisors. The Grand Jury Report, "Homeless Should Not Mean Hopeless: Homeless Solutions Elude Local Leaders" (Attachment 1) was issued on May 26, 2023. The report asserts that local governments have failed to work together effectively to address the increasing number of homeless and related issues which has resulted in millions in direct and indirect costs. The report recommends Sacramento

County leaders prioritize a formal, comprehensive approach to homelessness. The report includes five findings and four recommendations related to the information in the report along with a list of individuals and agencies required or invited to respond.

The Sacramento County Board of Supervisors was among four governing bodies required to respond, which included Sacramento City Council, Rancho Cordova City Council, and the Elk Grove City Council. Governing bodies have 90 days to respond; therefore, responses from the Board of Supervisors are due to the Presiding Judge of the Superior Court by August 24, 2023. The Grand Jury report also invites responses from numerous government officials, including individual Board Members and the County Executive. No timeframe was provided for these responses. Invitees are not required to respond.

The Grand Jury Report, "Mental Health Care For The Homeless: Who Cares?" (Attachment 2) was issued on June 9, 2023. This report asserts that mental illness and substance abuse among the homeless needs to be addressed through a streamlined, coordinated, and transparent service delivery system and approach that uses measurable, quantifiable outcomes with proven success to make meaningful change. The report includes 11 findings and 11 recommendations related to the information in the report along with a list of individuals and agencies required and invited to respond.

In addition to the Sacramento City Council, the Sacramento County Board of Supervisors and the Sacramento County Sheriff are required to respond. Governing bodies have 90 days to respond, and elected officials have 60 days to respond. Therefore, responses from the Board of Supervisors are due to the Presiding Judge of the Superior Court by September 7, 2023, and responses are due from the Sheriff by August 8, 2023. The Sheriff's response is included as attachment 3. The Grand Jury Report also invites responses from other government officials and staff including the County Executive and Deputy County Executive of Social Services. No timeframe was provided for these responses. Invitees are not required to respond.

The Board of Supervisors is requested to review the proposed responses to findings and recommendations from both reports, which are included in Attachments 4 and 5 and make any desired revisions. Any revisions to the responses will be brought back to the Board for review and approval at a subsequent meeting.



### **FINANCIAL ANALYSIS**

Departments that contributed to this report absorbed related staff costs within their respective budgets.

### **Attachments**

- Attachment 1: April 26, 2023, Grand Jury Report, "Homeless Should Not Mean Hopeless: Homeless Solutions Elude Local Leaders"
- Attachment 2: June 9, 2023 Grand Jury Report, "Mental Health Care For The Homeless: Who Cares?"
- Attachment 3: Sheriff's Response
- Attachment 4: Responses to Findings and Recommendations in the Grand Jury Report, "Homeless Should Not Mean Hopeless: Homeless Solutions Elude Local Leaders"
- Attachment 5: Responses to Findings and Recommendations in the Grand Jury Report, "Mental Health Care For The Homeless: Who Cares?"

Responses to Findings and Recommendations In the Grand Jury Report,  
"Mental Health Care for the Homeless: Who Cares?"

**Findings**

**F1:** The current fragmented system of homeless services fails to serve the homeless and their mental health and substance abuse challenges nor the Sacramento County community and its taxpayers.

Board of Supervisors Response:

The Board of Supervisors disagrees partially with the finding because the services needed to support people experiencing homelessness, especially those living with behavioral health issues, is bigger than any one governmental entity.

Homelessness is a symptom of challenges in many social safety nets, many of which are outside of government. While the County strives to provide access to services and treatment, the private market and the decision to access services and treatment play the biggest roles. Most notably, the lack of affordable, accessible housing is key to helping people end their homelessness and connect into social services; the primary driver of housing availability is the private market.

The County has made efforts to streamline County services for those experiencing homelessness, including creating a new Department of Homeless Services and Housing (DHS) and increasing access to behavioral health services for those experiencing homelessness by embedding clinicians and peers into outreach teams, and opening 11 community-based CORE (Community Outreach Recovery Empowerment) centers with outreach capacity geographically spread out throughout the County. Each CORE site includes an outpatient clinic, a peer operated walk-in wellness center that anyone can access, and outreach staff to engage with the unhoused proximal to their location. All CORE sites are able to directly admit individuals into their programs and have access to flexible housing funds to assist those they serve with housing resources. The Mental Health Urgent Care program expanded operations to 24 hours, 7 days a week and the Board of Supervisors approved the development of a second Mental Health Urgency Care in the FY 2023-24 budget. Three new Full Service Partnership (FSP) programs have opened. While these access points increase opportunities for engagement with the behavioral health system, except for in limited circumstances, these services must be voluntarily accessed by the participants.

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

Board of Supervisors Response:

The Board of Supervisors disagrees wholly with the finding. In June of 2022, the County Board of Supervisors, the Sacramento City Council, and the Sacramento Countywide Continuum of Care (CoC) Board all adopted the Sacramento Local Homelessness Action Plan (LHAP) which is a three year, cross-jurisdictional unified approach to addressing homelessness across Sacramento County. The LHAP includes a strategy specifically about connecting homeless populations to behavioral health services as well as key activities with timelines and measurable goals for each of four sub-strategies under this strategy.<sup>1</sup>

**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.

Board of Supervisors Response:

The Board of Supervisors disagrees wholly with the finding. As described in the previous response, in June of 2022, the County Board of Supervisors, the Sacramento City Council, and the Sacramento Countywide Continuum of Care (CoC) Board all adopted the Sacramento Local Homelessness Action Plan (LHAP) which is a three year, cross-jurisdictional unified approach to addressing homelessness across Sacramento County. The LHAP includes a strategy specifically about connecting homeless populations to behavioral health services as well as key activities with timelines and measurable goals for each of four sub-strategies under this strategy.<sup>1</sup>

**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.

Board of Supervisors Response:

The Board of Supervisors disagrees wholly with the finding. The County has an existing Deputy County Executive (DCE) position over Social Services;

Chevon Kothari currently serves in this position. This DCE oversees the following social services departments, including budgets, policies and programs administered by each department:

- Department of Health Services (DHS), which includes Behavioral Health, Public Health, Primary Health
- Department of Human Assistance (DHA)
- Department of Child, Family and Adult Services (DCFAS)
- Department of Homeless Services and Housing (DHSB)
- Environmental Management Department (EMD)
- Child Support Services (CSS)

Ms. Kothari also serves as the County's lead for coordination with the First Five Commission, the Sacramento Housing and Redevelopment Agency (SHRA) and the Sacramento Employment Training Association (SETA).

**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.

Board of Supervisors Response:

The Board of Supervisors disagrees wholly with the finding. Mental Health Services Act (MHSA) Full-Service Partnership programs have measurable outcomes demonstrating the success in reducing homelessness. The other outpatient programs all have access to flexible housing funds to support individuals they serve. Reports are published annually in accordance with the MHSA legislation and requirements.

The County pursues and takes advantage of all available funding opportunities. In FY 2022-23, Behavioral Health invested \$59 million in housing and services for unhoused individuals. For example, the County recently applied for and received \$43 million in Behavioral Health Bridge Housing, which is a new unique funding source specifically targeting transitional housing solutions for individuals receiving behavioral health services.

Given that over 90% of Behavioral Health services are delivered through community providers (contracts), the Behavioral Health Services (BHS) division actively monitors and works with providers to ensure goals and outcomes are being met. It is important to note that there is a historically unprecedented number of Behavioral Health initiatives being introduced in

the State of California, both currently and over the last three years. Sacramento County has been engaged in all of the new initiatives because we recognize that untreated serious mental illness is a risk factor for homelessness. The County remains open to all new initiatives and works closely across other County departments and community providers to ensure successful implementation of these measures.

**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.

Board of Supervisors Response:

The Board of Supervisors disagrees partially with the finding.

The Board of Supervisors disagrees with the finding of the lack of financial reporting. The Mental Health Services Act (MHSA) plan is published annually demonstrating how funds are used and the performance of the funded programs, including those programs serving people experiencing homelessness.

In relation to the finding around public availability of data on funding, while the MHSA plan is publicly available, it does not break down funding specific to the homeless population. However, the Department of Homeless Services and Housing (DHS), recently completed and published a full accounting across County departments on funding allocated in FY 2022-23 to homeless programs. Behavioral health services were included in this analysis, but a specific breakout of behavioral health services was not a part of the public presentation. Staff recommend that in subsequent reports (at least annually), behavioral health allocations be called out specifically.

**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.

Board of Supervisors Response:

The Board of Supervisors disagrees partially with the finding. While the Board agrees there are many boards and committees with overlapping areas, they do not create waste and redundancy in the planning and distribution of resources. Existing boards and committees provide specific



functions and expertise and inform the entire system on multiple levels. Additionally, the County is actively working to prevent redundancies.

There are four different advisory boards/committees that provide direction and oversight to Behavioral Health, those are:

- Mental Health Board
- Alcohol and Drug Advisory Board,
- MHSA Steering Committee
- Youth Advisory Board

Each board/committee provides direction within a specific area of funding, service, or population of focus. All provide valuable information to the Board of Supervisors and the Department regarding service delivery. The boards/committees meet frequently, though that does not impede Behavioral Health from providing critical services to the community. All boards/committees require individuals with lived-experience, helping to better inform service delivery.

In addition to these behavioral health focused boards and committees, within the homeless system of care, the Sacramento Continuum of Care (CoC) is a 30+ member Board, that includes representatives from organizations serving individuals experiencing homelessness or who were formerly homeless and other interested, relevant organizations within Sacramento County. The Sacramento CoC covers all the cities, towns and unincorporated areas of Sacramento County. The CoC has multiple subcommittees, including a lived expertise committee, who provided on-going input on the development of the Local Homelessness Action Plan (LHAP), including the behavioral health strategy, and will continue to provide input and direction during implementation.

The Human Services Coordinating Council (HSCC), which includes members from many of the other advisory boards/committees, is working to determine strategies to avoid duplicative work by multiple advisory bodies researching the same issues and not coordinating how that is done.

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

Board of Supervisors Response:

The Board of Supervisors partially disagrees with the finding.

The County agrees there are significant challenges in meaningfully coordinating funding and the expectations of our various funders at the local, State and Federal levels; however, mental health and substance abuse issues are exacerbated by the lack of affordable housing, over which the County has very limited control.

At the County level, the County is continually evaluating funding and program goals based on available information to inform decision making. In making decisions about funding for Behavioral Health beds, the County commissioned a RAND study to ensure that investments were strategic. The results of this study informed priorities for applying for Behavioral Health Continuum Infrastructure Program funds for a Mental Health Rehabilitation Center, a youth crisis facility, and Substance Use Disorder Residential bed capacity.

In spite of the pandemic, Behavioral Health moved forward with a transformational redesign of the mental health delivery system to better meet the needs of the community. This resulted in 11 CORE sites, 3 new FSP contracts, and expanded hours of operation for the Mental Health Urgent Care program as described in an earlier response. \$20 million in Prevention and Early Intervention funding was delivered to a broad array of Community Based Organizations with a range of interventions specifically addressing the unique needs of various culturally diverse communities within Sacramento County.

Treating mental illness and substance use disorders in the unhoused population cannot happen without all system supports, across the State, City, and CoC in alignment. A recent study conducted at University of California, San Francisco, concluded that homelessness was the result of high housing costs and low income. Mental health and substance abuse issues are aggravated by the lack of affordable housing. In the past four years, the County has increased funding in Behavioral Health from \$367 million in FY2018-19 to \$675 million in FY 2023-24, which is an 84% increase.

**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.

Board of Supervisors Response:

The Board of Supervisors disagrees wholly with the finding.

The County HEART teams as well as the County's contracted homeless navigators (staffed through a local community-based organization) are supported by leadership of both DHS and DSHS. County staff meet weekly with the outreach teams to discuss deployment, strategize on service connections and 'case conference' around client needs. The teams are funded to allow for sufficient follow-up time with clients and provided flexible funding to help address immediate needs and coordinate transitions from homelessness to shelter and/or housing. In a recent review of the first six months of co-deployment of HEART teams with the City Department of Community Response (DCR), 96% of people engaged by the HEART teams were enrolled in behavioral health services. The HEART teams were just developed in the FY 2022-23 budget; when the teams were initially funded, there was a ramp up time to hire, but teams are fully staffed now, and able to meet community needs.

The HEART teams have been in service for just over a year. While initial outcomes from their efforts are good, the County will continue to assess for additional needs and adjust responses accordingly.

The Board cannot comment on the support and staff for the Sacramento Police Department.

Sheriff's Response:

The Sheriff sent his response to the presiding judge in a separate correspondence per Penal Code section 933.05 and 933(c). The response has been included as part of the Board's report as Attachment 3.

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

Board of Supervisors Response:

The Board of Supervisors disagrees partially with the finding.

As leadership in the Sheriff's office changed, including re-establishing the full Homeless Outreach Team (HOT), and outreach responsibility has shifted to the new Department of Homeless Services and Housing (DSHS), there were some opportunities for better coordination. The Sheriff is a response-

oriented department, which sometimes can be challenging to overlay intensive services which, to be most effective, require time to establish rapport and trust; however, in recent months, leadership in DSHS meets weekly with the Sergeant of the HOT and County Park Rangers to discuss needs of people living in encampments in the unincorporated County. County staff also meet with City of Sacramento Police IMPACT team when requested to coordinate deployment support from County behavioral health within the City of Sacramento. In the other cities, County staff are available as requested to deploy behavioral health outreach teams with locally funded navigators.

Top leadership of the County and the City of Sacramento also meet regularly to identify challenges and ensure resources are being adequately distributed to each of the organization's respective teams.

Sheriff's Response:

The Sheriff sent his response to the presiding judge in a separate correspondence per Penal Code section 933.05 and 933(c). The response has been included as part of the Board's report as Attachment 3.

**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.

Board of Supervisors Response:

The Board of Supervisors agrees. There is a Statewide / Nationwide behavioral health workforce crisis.

Recognizing this challenge, the County has worked to remain competitive with historically rapid increases in compensation for the behavioral health workforce, while increasing recruitment and retention strategies.

For County contracted providers, the provider contract rates were increased 35% since the pandemic.

The following are increases in compensation for County Behavioral Health Workforce positions for Senior Mental Health Counselors (SMHC) and Mental Health Counselors (MHC):

- All Classification Salary Increases: 4% in FY 2022-23 + 4% in FY 2023-24

- Equity Increases for SMHC and MHC: 7% in FY 2022-23 + 3% in FY 2023-24
- Incentive Pay of 2.5% for employees with 10 years of full-time service

Additionally, team specific incentives were established or increased for employees assigned to the following groups:

- Wellness Response Team (new special pay): 10%
- Mobile Crisis Unit: Increased from 5% to 10%
- Community Support Team, Homeless Encampment Unit (new special pay): 5%

Before factoring in any team or longevity pay, the total two-year compensation increases for SMHC and MHCs is 18%.



## 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.

### Board of Supervisors Response:

The recommendation has been implemented.

In June of 2022, the County Board of Supervisors, the Sacramento City Council, and the Sacramento Countywide Continuum of Care (CoC) Board all adopted the Sacramento Local Homelessness Action Plan (LHAP) which is a three year, cross-jurisdictional unified approach to addressing homelessness across Sacramento County. The LHAP includes a strategy specifically about connecting homeless populations to behavioral health services as well as key activities with timelines and measurable goals for each of four sub-strategies under this strategy.<sup>1</sup>

While the LHAP serves as the community wide comprehensive plan, there are additional collaborative spaces. Most notably, on December 2, 2022, the City Council and County Board of Supervisors both adopted the Partnership Agreement to address homelessness within the City of Sacramento. Among other things, the Partnership Agreement commits the County to create and fund additional outreach capacity to provide clinical assessment and linkages to County behavioral health services as well as to stand up an additional Community Outreach Recovery Empowerment (CORE) center in the central city (bringing the total CORE centers to eleven countywide). The partnership agreement also requires bi-annual reports on progress towards these goals at publicly noticed meetings of both the City Council and County Board of Supervisors.

In addition, the Board of Supervisors signed on to a proposal, AT HOME, presented by the California State Association of Counties (CSAC) that would call for greater coordination by jurisdictions within a region - a plan that ultimately informed the State Budget and Homeless, Housing and Prevention (HHAP) funding requirements.

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<sup>1</sup> [https://sacramentostepsforward.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/Year-One-Activities-2023\\_LHAP\\_FINAL-FINAL.pdf](https://sacramentostepsforward.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/Year-One-Activities-2023_LHAP_FINAL-FINAL.pdf) Strategy 6 (Ensure adequate behavioral health services), along with the key activities, timelines and measurable goals can be found starting on page 26.

**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.

Board of Supervisors Response:

This recommendation has been implemented.

As detailed in R1, the County has an existing comprehensive strategic plan with measurable outcomes. Therefore, there is no need for an interim plan.

**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.

Board of Supervisors Response:

This recommendation has been implemented.

The County has an existing Deputy County Executive (DCE) position over Social Services; Chevon Kothari currently serves in this position. This DCE oversees the following social services departments, including budgets, policies and programs administered by each department:

- Department of Health Services (DHS), which includes Behavioral Health, Public Health, Primary Health
- Department of Human Assistance (DHA)
- Department of Child, Family and Adult Services (DCFAS)
- Department of Homeless Services and Housing (DHSB)
- Environmental Management Department (EMD)
- Child Support Services (CSS)

Ms. Kothari also serves as the County's lead for the First Five Commission, the Sacramento Housing and Redevelopment Agency (SHRA) and the Sacramento Employment Training Association (SETA). Given that services and supports to the unhoused span across multiple Departments and entities, the County believes this is the right position to oversee all of these complimentary Departments.

**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).

Board of Supervisors Response:

This recommendation has been implemented.

In the past four years, the County has increased funding in Behavioral Health from \$367 million in FY 2018-19 to \$675 million in FY 2023-24, which is an 84% increase. This includes funding for the full array of behavioral health services from Prevention, Early Intervention up through outpatient programs and including substance use disorder residential and mental health acute and subacute beds.

In FY 2023-24, the Board of Supervisors approved \$78 million in new Behavioral Health Services (BHS), adding 23 positions and expanding contracted services by over \$51 million dollars. An additional \$23.5 million was included specifically to expand sub-acute adult beds and youth crisis care and residential beds. As a result of investments of the FY 2023-24 budget, the County contracted to open up 11 CORE centers within the County and city jurisdictions, including an additional investment of \$7,380,000 to add the 11<sup>th</sup> site and incorporating community navigators into the CORE sites, specifically focused on outreach and engagement to the unhoused population.

BHS is always looking for innovative best-practices to support the needs of the community. Over the last three years, BHS has leveraged MHSA funding across the entire behavioral health continuum of care to fund innovative practices. As an example, the County recently applied for and received over \$43 million in Behavioral Health Bridge Housing, which is a new unique funding source specifically targeting transitional housing solutions for individuals receiving behavioral health services.

In addition to the specific investments in the Behavioral Health system, the County's overall commitment to expansion of funding and services to support people experiencing homelessness has increased significantly. Of the \$300 million that Sacramento County received in American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding, \$94 million (31%) has been dedicated to homeless and housing programs and services, the largest allocation across all funding categories. In addition, the Board of Supervisors recently created the new Department of Homeless Services and Housing (DHS), consolidating many services and programs that serve homeless populations under one

department to increase coordination with community partners and to improve transparency and accountability.

DHSH will oversee over \$50 million in funding to community organizations to provide outreach, shelter and re-housing services. While DHSH will be the County's lead for homeless services, other County departments will remain involved in delivering services and supports to this complex issue. Overall, in FY 2022-23, the County allocated over \$177 million to provide services to address the homeless crisis throughout Sacramento County.

**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.

Board of Supervisors Response:

This recommendation has been implemented.

The Behavioral Health Services (BHS) division releases an annual Mental Health Services Act (MHSA) report, which provides a comprehensive summary of activity and services provided across all of BHS.

Additionally, over the coming years, the Social Health Information Exchange (SHIE) is expected to go live, which presents an opportunity to better highlight outcomes and metrics across all participating providers, including BHS. The SHIE will leverage multiple data sources, including HMIS, the BHS case management systems, and data from Managed Care Plans to better evaluate outcomes across populations. Given the significant investment in the SHIE, it will be important to leverage what is already in development rather than creating an alternative system or reporting mechanism.

Finally, the Local Homelessness Action Plan (LHAP) includes a strategy for increasing access to behavioral health services for people experiencing homelessness. The LHAP includes measurable outcomes and requires regular reporting on progress towards meeting these goals.

**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.

Board of Supervisors Response:

This recommendation will not be implemented, due to the timeline requested to post quarterly information.

As part of the FY 2023-24 discussion, the Department of Homeless Services and Housing (DHS) prepared an analysis of allocations for programs and services that address homelessness across all departments in FY 2022-23 and has committed to doing this annually to help aid in budget recommendations. In subsequent years, in addition to adding information from external partners (such as SHRA and SSF), this analysis will include more specific call outs and analysis of behavioral health funding supporting housing development and re-housing efforts.

As previously noted, the MHSA annual report also incorporates information on funding specific to behavioral health services, including information on programs serving people experiencing homelessness.

**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.

Board of Supervisors Response:

This recommendation has been implemented.

Elected members of the Board of Supervisors do take an active role in accountability for outcomes of County lead programs. Board Members regularly engage with staff, community members and boards and commission around designing, funding and implementation of programs. County staff are responsible for programmatic outcomes and report up through departmental leadership to the Board of Supervisors. The County agrees that continually monitoring and evaluating outcomes is essential to ensure the needs of the unhoused population are being met. Beyond existing reports such as the MHSA Annual Report, the Department of Homeless Services and Housing (DHS) published a report on all funding allocated to homeless services across the County, helping policy-level decisions on services. The County's development of the Social Health Information Exchange is in part aimed at providing a more robust mechanism to coordinate service delivery and also provide more comprehensive information around outcomes. Developing better outcome measures and



tracking is a continual work in progress, as the challenges and needs of the unhoused community evolve.

**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 abuse treatment services.

Board of Supervisors Response:

This recommendation has been implemented.

As part of the City/County Partnership Agreement, the County committed to dedicating ten HEART team members (both clinicians and peer advocates) to work in the City of Sacramento to participate as part of multi-disciplinary teams lead by the City's Department of Community Response. Additional HEART staff work in the unincorporated County and within the shelter system. The Board of Supervisors approved an additional six HEART team positions in the FY 2023-24 budget, bringing the total to 20 encampment team members. This creates ten HEART teams, with a counselor and a peer comprising one team.

The HEART team is constantly interviewing and working to fill all vacant positions. At the time of this writing, there are seven vacant positions, including the six positions that were added in the FY 2023-24 budget. Hiring is on-going for the team and it is expected that the majority of positions will be filled by December 2023.

It is also important to note that the HEART is one part of the BHS continuum providing direct service to the unhoused community. The Board of Supervisors approved the addition of community navigators to all CORE centers in the FY 2023-24 budget, expanding critical linkages to those in encampments or otherwise unhoused within the geographic area of the CORE center.

The Board cannot comment on the City's decision to establish additional IMPACT teams.

**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.

Board of Supervisors Response:

This recommendation requires further analysis.

The Board of Supervisors is fully committed to integration of outreach teams with law enforcement. Contracted outreach staff and HEART outreach staff regularly work with County Park Rangers on outreach in priority areas within the Parkway system and as part of a response team when there is inclement weather, dangerous conditions, or the area needs to be cleared for construction, fire fuel mitigation, etc.

These same outreach teams remain committed to similar partnerships with the Sacramento County Sheriff's office. Currently, DSHS staff and Sheriff's HOT members meet frequently to share priority areas and plan for coordinated deployment, as appropriate.

Sheriff's Response:

The Sheriff sent his response to the presiding judge in a separate correspondence per Penal Code section 933.05 and 933(c). The response has been included as part of the Board's report as Attachment 3.

**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.

Board of Supervisors Response:

This recommendation has been implemented.

Staff of the Department of Homelessness and Housing (DSHS) and Health Services (DHS) have multiple vehicles for regular reporting on policies, programs and outcomes.

The Local Homelessness Action Plan (LHAP) is a living document, regularly updated and shared in formal and informal venues with the public and local elected officials. The DSHS makes an annual presentation to the Board of Supervisors on outcomes and investments to address homelessness, to include progress under the LHAP.

Additionally, the City/County Partnership Agreement requires bi-annual public reports and a publicly noticed presentation to both the City Council and County Board of Supervisors.

Finally, the Mental Health Services Act (MHSA) plan requires an annual report which is heard in open session at the Board of Supervisors.

**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.

Board of Supervisors Response:

This recommendation has been implemented.

As previously noted, there is a State and national behavioral health workforce shortage. Recognizing the need to attract strong candidates, in April 2023, the Board of Supervisors approved accelerating equity increases to behavioral health clinical staff and approved a referral incentive program for existing staff who refer successful candidates to the County.

The total compensation for Senior Mental Health Counselors (SMHC) and Mental Health Counselors (MHC) has been increased by 18% over the last two years, before factoring in any incentive or longevity pay increases.

The County continues to monitor and adjust team specific incentive pays for behavioral health workers serving in a few different community-based settings or programs. As previously noted, incentives for the following teams were established or increased over the last two years:

- Wellness Response Team (new special pay): 10%
- Mobile Crisis Unit: Increased from 5% to 10%
- Community Support Team, Homeless Encampment Unit (new special pay): 5%

In order to ensure that behavioral health contracted providers are also able attract strong candidates, the County has increased contract provider rates by approximately 35% since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic.

In addition to this, County Behavioral Health and Correctional Health have been working with the Department of Personnel Services to conduct hiring fairs and attend more career events on college campuses to increase our outreach efforts for key positions.