

CALIFORNIA HOMELESS HOUSING ASSISTANCE AND PREVENTION PROGRAM

DEMONSTRATION OF REGIONAL COORDINATION

A. Ventura County Pathways to Home Coordinated Entry System

The Ventura County Coordinated Entry System (CES), Pathways to Home is operated by the County Human Services Agency's Ventura County Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) Administration in partnership with the Ventura County Continuum of Care. The Ventura County Continuum of Care launched Pathways to Home in October 2016 and has been continuously improving and building upon this framework to enhance access to housing and services for persons experiencing homelessness in Ventura County.

Pathways to Home is operated through a "No-Wrong Door" approach where all 29 partner agencies serve as a point of entry for persons experiencing homelessness. A common assessment is completed with the individual or household requesting assistance. Upon completion of the assessment, an eligibility module is run within the HMIS to determine which programs and services the household may be eligible for. For many programs a service provider can make a direct referral within HMIS direct to the program the client chooses. For housing programs with limited vacancies, a prioritization process is followed to ensure the most vulnerable households receive those vacancies. The prioritization process is completed with bi-weekly case conferencing meetings that require a case presentation of the potentially eligible household, a completed vulnerability assessment and documented disability (for PSH units) and length of time homeless. The provider community discusses these cases as a group and determines who is the most vulnerable and eligible household. The household determined to be the most vulnerable and eligible is offered that housing opportunity. This process is used for permanent supportive housing and transitional housing programs throughout the continuum of care. Direct referrals are made for homeless prevention services, rapid re-housing programs, emergency shelter programs and other services within the continuum.

The Continuum of Care has partnered with the County of Ventura to promote use of the coordinated entry system aside from the many programs that have funding that requires use of CES. Our system has expanded street outreach services and has included healthcare programs in the CES to make sure the most vulnerable persons and those living in remote areas such as river bottom encampments have access to services through CES. Service providers within the CES are partnering with law enforcement, public defender and other partners to reach people with high barriers to housing and other services. The CoC and HMIS staff provide talks to community groups, local government and other partners to make all partners aware of the CES and prioritization processes.

All providers participating the Ventura County CoC's Pathways to Home follow locally adopted written standards for delivering homeless and housing assistance. Within these written standards is a grievance process that details the process for persons to start their grievance with the agency where it originated and escalate that to the CoC governing body if necessary.

The system provides training to our service providers to ensure we are providing culturally competent services to people experiencing homelessness. We provide trauma-informed care trainings and bring in outside trainers to ensure providers are equipped with information and resources to meet the needs of a culturally diverse group of people needing homeless services and housing assistance. The CoC requires that each funded program have input from people experiencing homelessness in evaluating their programs and helping meet the needs of persons who are homeless. The CoC also seeks input from people who are currently or formerly homeless to improve programs and services.

Ventura County is a large geographic county with 10 unique cities and unincorporated pockets throughout the county. Homeless services are diverse in the different communities within the county. This diversity be a strength as well as a challenge. The capacity of our service providers (non-profit and governmental) is critical to the effectiveness of our CES. Some service providers with limited capacity are not screening persons and referring them through CES because it is a process that requires documentation that is difficult to access with limited staff and financial resources. Other challenges are related to the limitations of emergency beds and housing opportunities. Our system has been utilizing State, Federal and Local investments to build up capacity in our crisis response system. We strive to increase the supply of emergency placements to stabilize and engage persons in their housing plan. The CoC is informing all jurisdictions of the story the data is telling us including what types of housing we need for homeless members in our community, and how we can prevent new cases of homelessness.

B. Prioritization Criteria

The Ventura County Continuum of Care's Prioritization Policy and Procedures are attached. The coordinated entry process requires recipients of Federal, State and local funds to comply with applicable civil rights and fair housing laws and requirements. Recipients and subrecipients of CoC and ESG program funded projects must comply with nondiscrimination and equal opportunity provisions of Federal civil rights laws as specified at 24 CFR 5.105(a) including, but not limited to the following:

- Fair Housing Act prohibits discriminatory housing practices based on race, color, religion, sex, national origin, disability or familial status;
- Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act prohibits discrimination on the basis of disability under and program or activity receiving Federal assistance;

--Title VI of the Civil Rights Act prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color or national origin under any program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance; and

--Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act prohibits public entities, which includes state and local governments, and special purpose districts from discriminating against individuals with disabilities in all their services, programs and activities which include housing, and housing related services such as housing search and referral.

--Title III of the Americans with Disabilities Act prohibits private entities that own, lease and operate places of public accommodation, which include emergency shelters, social service establishments, and other public accommodations providing housing, from discriminating on the basis of disability.

In addition, HUD's Equal Access Rule at 24 CFR 5.105(a)(2) prohibits discriminatory eligibility determinations in HUD-assisted or HUD-insured housing programs based on actual or perceived sexual orientation, gender identity or marital status including any projects funded by the CoC Program, ESG program or HOPWA program. The CoC Program interim rule also contains a fair housing provision at 24 CFR 578.93.

C. Coordination of Regional Needs

The Continuum of Care collects data through its annual Point-In-Time Homeless Count and the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) to better understand the gaps and needs within the community. The CoC evaluates systemwide data sharing with all jurisdictions in the county. The CoC covers the full geography of the county and strives to make homelessness rare, brief and a one-time event for any individual or household who experiences homelessness in Ventura County. To achieve this goal, the CoC needs partners in all jurisdictions in the county. The CoC has worked to build these partnerships with the county and cities along with non-profit service providers, the business community, faith community, philanthropic partners and others to bring all partners to the table to have a true regional approach to addressing homelessness. The CoC competes annually for federal Continuum of Care funding, makes funding decisions for State Emergency Solutions Grant funding and has allocated State CESH, HEAP and now HHAP funds. The CoC is leading and coordinating efforts to prevent and end homelessness in Ventura County.

The California Homeless Housing, Assistance and Prevention funding will help address the CoC's share of the regional need by doing the following:

- Funding 110 emergency shelter/navigation center beds in the City of Oxnard (including TAY);
- Funding expanded beds at the Safe Haven shelter for persons who are chronically homeless and mentally ill in the City of Ventura (Including TAY);

- Funding street outreach services in the City of Ventura;
- Funding mobile outreach for veterans;
- Funding landlord incentives;
- Building an online training module to deliver training services to all partner agencies quickly and efficiently

D. Creating Sustainable, Long-Term Housing Solutions

The Ventura County Continuum of Care has developed and adopted The Ventura County Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness in 2019. This plan lays out seven strategic priorities:

- 1) Develop a comprehensive crisis response system;
- 2) Increase affordable housing opportunities for households who are homeless and at-risk of homelessness;
- 3) Create and provide wrap-around services to keep households stably housed;
- 4) Create opportunities for homeless persons/families to obtain sustainable income;
- 5) Community outreach and education;
- 6) Cross-systems integration;
- 7) Capacity building

Under strategic priority number two, the VC CoC is working collaboratively with the County, cities and service providers to leverage funding opportunities to increase the supply of supportive housing for persons with disabilities who are homeless. The CoC is partnering with affordable housing providers and public housing authorities to have units and vouchers filled through the coordinated entry system's prioritization process. Bringing partners together and prioritizing vacancies for the most vulnerable in a coordinated process is highlighting the continued need and types of housing resources that are needed in our community. The CoC has prioritized funding programs that implement best practices including utilizing a Housing First approach and integrating housing navigation into funded programs. The CoC recently funded the United Way of Ventura County who has launched a Landlord Engagement Program to help incentivize landlords to accept potential tenants that have been issued VASH, Mainstream and Section 8 vouchers.

The VC CoC competes annually for Federal Continuum of Care funding of just over 2 million dollars. This funding supports 156 households with supportive housing and 96 households annually with Rapid ReHousing assistance. The CoC also awards Emergency Solution Grant funding and other state funds prioritizing those programs that aim to house people as quickly as possible and prevent returns to homelessness.

The VC CoC is sharing systemwide data with all jurisdictions including the following system performance measures:

- 1) The number of persons who are homeless for the first time;
- 2) Total number of persons permanently housed;
- 3) Persons who have increased income;
- 4) Number of persons who return to homelessness after being assisted with permanent housing placement;
- 5) The length of time persons remain homeless.

Projects are evaluated on how they are contributing to overall system performance. Projects that demonstrate performance aligned with local performance benchmarks are more competitive for funding through the CoC.

The VC CoC is sharing data with all jurisdictions through a variety of mechanisms. The VC CoC routinely shares information with the County Board of Supervisors, Cities (city managers group and city councils) and housing developer partners. Through sharing of this information, the CoC is providing data on the needs within the community through the Point-In-Time Count data as well as system data. Sharing this information can help partners make informed funding and policy decisions regarding new housing and other services.

RESOURCES ADDRESSING HOMELESSNESS

A. Existing Programs and Resources

Attachments including CoC, ESG, CESH, HEAP funds

B. HHAP Funding Plans

The Ventura County Continuum of Care plans to allocate funds for the following activities:

- 1) Mercy House Oxnard Navigation Center: 1 year of operational funding (\$1,067,811) for the Oxnard Navigation Center in its temporary location. This program would not be operational without the support of this funding and provides low-barrier emergency shelter to 110 persons nightly with housing-focused services.
- 2) Ventura County Homeless Management Information System/Coordinated Entry System & User Support Project: \$105,000 to contract with vendor to develop online training for HMIS users. Online trainings will allow for increased efficiency of HMIS team staff time and quicker access to onboarding new agencies and programs.
- 3) United Way of Ventura County Landlord Engagement Program: \$83,982 to continue landlord incentives when program has exhausted HEAP funds. Program will provide incentives to house up to 40 households.

- 4) City of Ventura Proactive Outreach Program: Expanded street outreach services to link persons experiencing homelessness with Pathways to Home and eligible programs and services. Full time outreach worker with support from part-time community worker with lived experience.
- 5) Turning Point Foundation Our Place Safe Haven: Provide shelter and service to the most vulnerable persons who are homeless and struggling with mental illness. The safe haven is a small 14 bed shelter with onsite services and linkages to other behavioral health and housing services.
- 6) Gold Coast Veterans Foundation Mobile Outreach: New program with formerly homeless veteran conducting outreach and linking veterans to shelter and housing programs. The efforts of this program will help Ventura County link veterans who remain homeless into housing programs. Partnership with the United Way Landlord Engagement Program will help identify units to accept VASH vouchers and help with the goal of ending veteran homelessness in Ventura County.

The Ventura County Continuum of Care competes annually for HUD Continuum of Care (CoC) funding including CoC bonus funding, domestic violence funding and youth homelessness demonstration project funding. The VC CoC's current annual renewal demand amount is approximately \$2 million after adjusting for rent increases. The VC CoC is also eligible to apply for State Emergency Solutions Grant funding as well as CESH, HEAP and now HHAP. The CoC releases Requests for Proposals that align with the VC Plan to Prevent & End Homelessness and has a rank and review committee that ranks projects based on past performance, capacity, Housing First compliance and system impact. The committee makes recommendations to the CoC Board who makes final decisions on awards of funding.

The Ventura County Continuum of Care conducts a gaps analysis and needs assessment periodically to inform policy makers of the most critical gaps in services. Over 2/3rds of Ventura County's homeless population is living unsheltered and a growing number live in encampments without easy access to services. The VC CoC and County of Ventura have prioritized established permanent year-round emergency shelters that are low-barrier and housing-focused to create more opportunities for persons to be sheltered and begin working on a housing plan. The VC CoC has also identified gaps in utilizing available housing vouchers. These vouchers are dependent on willing landlords. The VC CoC has prioritized this need by partnering with United Way of Ventura County on a Landlord Engagement Program that incentivizes landlords to make units available for housing vouchers dedicated to serving individuals and families that are experiencing homelessness. Lastly, the need for dedicated outreach that is separate from law enforcement has been a critical need in the VC CoC service system. The VC CoC has prioritized funding street outreach that will work to engage persons living in encampments and other unsheltered situations to begin linking them to emergency shelter and other services as well as screen them for housing resources they may be eligible for through the Pathways to Home coordinated entry system.

The HHAP funds will be spent on emergency shelter capacity at the Oxnard Navigation Center and the Turning Point Foundation’s Safe Haven shelter. These operational funds will assist with keeping these facilities open and available to the most vulnerable of the homeless population. The CoC has also prioritized outreach services to link unsheltered persons to shelter and housing programs including incorporating persons with lived experience into the outreach system. Lastly, the CoC is funding landlord incentives through the United Way of Ventura County to help utilize housing vouchers in our challenging rental market.

All HHAP funded programs will be aligned with Housing First practices. The Ventura County Continuum of Care has embraced the Housing First approach including providing technical assistance for all service providers and prioritizing funding for programs that implement low barrier/housing-focused programs. The CoC’s written standards include policies and procedures that include housing first practices aligned with California Welfare and Institutions Code 8255 (b).

PARTNERS ADDRESSING HOMELESSNESS

A. Collaborating Partner Efforts

The Ventura County Continuum of Care is partnering with the following partners on HHAP funded projects:

- The Cities of Ventura and Oxnard: sharing in funding of Mercy House operated navigation centers and Street to Home initiative.
- City of Ventura: Expanded Street Outreach efforts.
- United Way of Ventura County—Landlord Engagement Program: partnering in identifying landlord partners to accept housing vouchers.
- Ventura County Homeless Information Management Systems (HMIS) and Coordinated Entry System (CES): supporting the matching process through coordinated entry, supporting service providers through training initiatives and capacity building.
- Mercy House: operator of low barrier navigation centers in Oxnard and Ventura. Providing housing navigation services for residents of Oxnard and Ventura.
- Ventura County Continuum of Care network of service providers and committees (*see CoC Governance Charter and VC Plan to Prevent & End Homelessness*): linking homeless and at-risk households to Pathways to Home services and programs; assisting with housing navigation and housing retention services throughout the system including referrals to HHAP funded programs.

SOLUTIONS TO ADDRESS HOMELESSNESS

The Ventura County Continuum Care adopted a regional plan to address homelessness in 2019 “The Ventura County Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness” This plan establishes seven strategic priorities:

- 1) Develop a Comprehensive Crisis Response System;
- 2) Increase affordable housing opportunities;
- 3) Create and provide wrap-around support services;
- 4) Create opportunities to obtain sustainable income;
- 5) Community outreach & education;
- 6) Cross-system integration;
- 7) Capacity Building

The plan recommendations include the following:

- 1) Implement a homeless prevention approach that will ensure that individuals and families most at-risk do not become homeless;
- 2) Expand street outreach and engagement;
- 3) Promote housing search;
- 4) Advance a homelessness diversion strategy;
- 5) Augment Housing Navigation;
- 6) Increase the number of low-barrier emergency shelter beds;
- 7) Augment Rapid Re-Housing Assistance;
- 8) Increase the number of permanent supportive housing units;
- 9) Ensure home-based case management

Systemwide Performance Benchmarks include the following in serving 800 beneficiaries:

- 1) Reduce the length of time persons remain homeless;
- 2) Reduce length of stay in emergency shelter (40 days)/transitional housing programs (180 days);
- 3) 85% of persons served by funded programs will be placed in permanent housing;
- 4) Reduction in the number of persons experiencing homelessness;
- 5) 20% of persons served by funded programs will obtain earned income;
- 6) 55% of persons served by funded programs will have increased total income;
- 7) 90% of persons served by funded program will be connected to mainstream benefits including food assistance, cash assistance, health benefits, housing assistance;
- 8) Less than 5% of persons assisted with housing will return to homelessness within 2 years;
- 9) 95% of funded emergency beds and housing programs will be utilized at any given time



HOMELESS HOUSING, ASSISTANCE AND PREVENTION PROGRAM (HHAP) ANNUAL BUDGET TEMPLATE

APPLICANT INFORMATION

CoC / Large City / County Name:

Ventura County CoC
County Executive Office

Receiving Redirected Funds? Y/N

No
\$ -

Administrative Entity Name:

Total Redirected Funding

HHAP FUNDING EXPENDITURE PLAN*

ELIGIBLE USE CATEGORY	FY20/21	FY21/22	FY22/23	FY23/24	FY24/25	TOTAL
Rental Assistance and Rapid Rehousing	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Operating Subsidies and Reserves	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Landlord Incentives	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 83,982.00	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 83,982.00
Outreach and Coordination (including employment)	\$ 207,118.50	\$ 207,118.50	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 414,237.00
Systems Support to Create Regional Partnerships	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Delivery of Permanent Housing	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Prevention and Shelter Diversion to Permanent Housing	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
New Navigation Centers and Emergency Shelters	\$ 621,872.00	\$ 621,872.00	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 1,243,744.00
Strategic Homelessness Planning, Infrastructure Development, CES, and HMIS (up to 5%)	\$ 49,152.27	\$ 49,152.27	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 98,304.54
Administrative (up to 7%)	\$ 41,941.07	\$ 41,941.07	\$ 41,941.07	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 125,823.21
TOTAL FUNDING ALLOCATION						\$ 1,966,090.75
Youth Set-Aside (at least 8%)	\$ 78,756.68	\$ 78,756.68	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 157,513.36

*Narrative should reflect details of HHAP funding plan

COMMENTS:

FINAL

Mike Pettit
Assistant County Executive Officer

Kaye Mand
County Chief Financial Officer

Shawn Atin
Assistant County Executive Officer/
Human Resources Director
Labor Relations

February 12, 2020

California Homeless Coordinating and Financing Council

To Whom It May Concern,

The undersigned, in accordance with requirements of Health and Safety Code 50219(a)(1), have and will continue to collaborate and coordinate with the Ventura County Continuum of Care (County of Ventura) regarding implementation of projects supported by Homeless Housing Assistance and Prevention (HHAP) funding.

Regular meetings between the County of Ventura and the Ventura County Continuum of Care (CoC)'s Data and Evaluation Subcommittee, along with staff overseeing regional coordination of homeless programs and services, will occur monthly or as needed to jointly plan and evaluate HHAP spending on projects supported with HHAP funds. I sit on the CoC Board, and employees from the County Executive Office provide staff support to the CoC. This arrangement ensures consistent, timely communication between both entities and has proven effective in facilitating strategic selection of projects to avoid duplicating recommendations that exceed project needs, helps to fill system gaps, and funds high-priority projects.

The County of Ventura has reviewed and agree with how we plan to spend our HHAP funds, and that this spending plan accurately addresses our share of the regional need to address homelessness. If you have questions, please contact Tara Carruth at (805) 654-3838 or via e-mail at Tara.Carruth@ventura.org.

Sincerely,



Michael Powers
County Executive Officer

JK
M-R