

Orange County Continuum of Care's
Response to the Findings and Recommendations to the 2021-22 Grand Jury Report,
"How is Orange County Addressing Homelessness?"

On June 23, 2022, the Grand Jury released a report entitled "How is Orange County Addressing Homelessness?" This report requested responses to findings and recommendations to the Orange County Continuum of Care Continuum of Care. The responses are below:

Findings and Responses

<p>Finding #1:</p> <p>South Orange County SPA cities lack low-threshold emergency shelters resulting in more homeless encampments and individuals living on the streets.</p>	<p>Agrees with the finding.</p> <p>The Orange County Continuum of Care (CoC) Board agrees that increased capacity and access to emergency shelter beds in the South Service Planning Area (SPA) is needed to address unsheltered homelessness in the region-</p> <p>The South SPA has some notable shelter assets, including the Alternative Sleeping Location (ASL) Emergency Shelter and Bridge Housing Program operated by Friendship Shelter providing a total of 70 beds for individuals, and emergency shelters in that serve families (households with at least one minor child) experiencing homelessness and survivors of domestic violence.</p>
<p>Finding #2:</p> <p>Too many of the homeless who are severely and persistently mentally ill and those with addiction issues end up incarcerated instead of more appropriate placements.</p>	<p>Disagrees partially with the finding.</p> <p>The Orange County Continuum of Care (CoC) Board is committed to assisting individuals experiencing homelessness in accessing permanent housing resources, appropriate supportive services, and/or achieving more appropriate placements. The Orange County CoC Board collaborates and coordinates with the OC Health Care Agency, the OC Sheriff's Department, and City Police Departments to better understand the available resources and programs that can be accessed to support people experiencing homelessness who are also severely and persistently mentally ill be supported appropriately.</p> <p>The Orange County CoC Board is interested in maximizing available funding that supports the above goal, but currently does not receive sufficient resources or funding that can be allocated to behavioral health services.</p>
<p>Finding #3</p> <p>The County of Orange and cities within Orange County have been inconsistent in collaboration for support of shelters and services,</p>	<p>Disagrees partially with the finding.</p> <p>The Orange County Continuum of Care (CoC) has a seventeen-member governing board whose purpose and scope is to implement CoC programs and to generally promote countywide</p>

<p>which has resulted in missed opportunities to end homelessness.</p>	<p>collaboration in support of homeless shelters and services, including permanent housing.</p> <p>The CoC Board includes broad representation in accordance with the Homeless Emergency Assistance and Rapid Transition to Housing Act of 2009, including at least one member from the Emergency Solutions Grant entitlement jurisdictions and at least one member representing of the public housing authorities. This broad representation assists CoC stakeholders in promoting a deep knowledge and understanding of the needs of the homeless populations and opportunities in the community.</p> <p>The Orange County CoC Board has worked collaboratively with the County of Orange (County) and Cities to implement new approaches to increasing emergency shelter capacity, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaborating with cities to open new shelters such as the Buena Park and Placentia Navigation Centers in the North Service Planning Area (SPA); and the Yale Navigation Center and Costa Mesa Bridge Shelter in the Central SPA • Implementing Homekey Program sites in the Cities of Stanton, Costa Mesa, Anaheim and Huntington Beach to create interim housing programs • Delivering regional implementation of rapid rehousing services <p>The County, Orange County CoC, and Cities of Anaheim and Santa Ana have collaborated on the Homeless Emergency Aid Program (HEAP), and the Homelessness Housing, Assistance and Prevention (HHAP) Rounds 1, 2 and 3, state funding opportunities to align efforts and ensure the funding is complementary of the regional solutions needed to address homelessness in the Orange County community.</p> <p>The Orange County CoC Board understands that there is ongoing work to be accomplished and is committed in continuing to engage and work collaboratively with the County and the Cities to make progress on addressing homelessness.</p>
<p>Finding #4</p> <p>There are insufficient number of rental units available to those exiting Emergency Shelters, resulting in the majority returning to homelessness when leaving the shelters.</p>	<p>Agrees with finding.</p> <p>The Orange County Continuum of Care (CoC) Board recognizes the challenges of the housing market and barriers to housing that individuals and families experiencing homelessness face. The Orange County CoC Board whenever possible and feasible has supported the County of Orange (County) and the Cities in the development of affordable housing and/or permanent supportive housing.</p>
<p>Finding #5</p>	<p>Agrees with the finding.</p>

<p>The Office of Care Coordination, in collaboration with the Continuum of Care Board, provides an effective community-based system of setting priorities to address homelessness, learning best practices, awarding and monitoring contracts, and overseeing a comprehensive system of care. However, the challenge of housing all our homeless requires much more.</p>	<p>The County of Orange’s (County) Office of Care Coordination, in collaboration with the Orange County Continuum of Care (CoC) and its Board, provides an effective community-based system of setting priorities to address homelessness and oversee a comprehensive system of care.</p> <p>The Office of Care Coordination and Orange County CoC also coordinate with the Orange County Housing Authority and the three other public housing authorities in Orange County regarding the use of vouchers for people experiencing homelessness. The most recent example of this coordination and collaboration is the implementation of the Emergency Housing Voucher program, a total of 1,041 vouchers to provide rental assistance, housing navigation and move in costs for people experiencing homelessness or at risk of homelessness.</p> <p>Finally, the CoC Board recognizes and acknowledges that the need for further investments in shelter, housing, and supportive services, and more robust systems to administer these investments are needed to successfully achieve the larger goal of ending homelessness in Orange County.</p>
<p>Finding #6</p> <p>Transitional Aged Youth who age out of the Foster Care system are a vulnerable population that often become homeless and need assistance in finding housing. There are insufficient resources to adequately serve these young people.</p>	<p>Agrees with the finding.</p> <p>The Orange County Continuum of Care (CoC) Board recognizes the challenge in serving transitional aged youth experiencing homelessness, including those exiting the foster care system, and as such has worked to improve the collaboration amongst transitional aged youth service providers and increase the availability of transitional aged youth resources. The Orange County CoC Board’s efforts to address transitional aged youth homelessness are not limited to youth exiting the foster care system, but also youth experiencing literal homelessness, unstably housed, and at-risk of homelessness.</p> <p>Most recently, the Office of Care Coordination on behalf of the Orange County CoC submitted an application for the Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program, a funding opportunity from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) designed to reduce the number of transitional aged youths experiencing homelessness through a coordinated community approach. This is an opportunity that looks beyond the transitional aged youth exiting the Foster Care system but is inclusive of all in this age group.</p>

Recommendations and Responses

<p>Recommendation #1</p> <p>By July 1, 2023, the CoC and County of Orange should leverage funding to persuade South Orange County cities to open a regional, low-threshold emergency shelter for the homeless, in addition to the Laguna Beach Friendship Shelter.</p>	<p>Agrees with finding, but the recommendation requires further analysis.</p> <p>The Orange County Continuum of Care (CoC) and County of Orange (County) strive for the community-wide commitment of ending homelessness through regional coordination and collaboration, as well as adopting a coordinated approach to funding opportunities.</p> <p>On April 27, 2022, the Orange County CoC Board with the support of the County issued a Request for Proposals (RFP) to seek proposals from qualified organizations to provide Emergency Shelter Operations and Services across the three Service Planning Areas (SPAs) in Orange County and for different segments of the homeless population including individuals, families, transitional aged youth and survivors of domestic violence. The primary goal of the Emergency Shelters Operations and Services program is to ensure accessible, streamlined entry to emergency shelter and providing robust supportive services that assist participants in obtaining permanent housing and increased income. These contracts were approved and began providing services on October 15, 2022.</p>
<p>Recommendation #2</p> <p>By July 1, 2023, South OC SPA cities should collaborate in siting and funding a low-threshold emergency shelter for the homeless, in addition to the Friendship Shelter in Laguna Beach.</p>	<p>Agrees with finding, but the recommendation requires further analysis.</p> <p>The Orange County Continuum of Care (CoC) Board is a willing and enthusiastic partner in establishing low-threshold shelters in the South Service Planning Area (SPA).</p> <p>Further analysis is required for recommendation R2 as outlined by the Orange County Grand Jury. The siting of a low-threshold emergency shelter for people experiencing homelessness in the South SPA of Orange-County requires collaboration amongst the cities, the County of Orange (County), and the Orange County CoC.</p>
<p>Recommendation #3</p> <p>The CoC should fund programs in fiscal year 2022-23 for people with severe and persistent mental illness and addiction issues to receive supervised care and treatment.</p>	<p>The recommendation will not be implemented because it is not warranted or is not reasonable.</p> <p>The Orange County Continuum of Care (CoC) Board recognizes the need for a higher level of care for people experiencing homelessness with severe and persistent mental illness and addiction issues. It is important to recognize that the Orange County CoC's role is to coordinate with the appropriate components of the System of Care, including behavioral health and healthcare, to address homelessness and not replicate or overlap programs that provide supervised care and treatment for</p>

	<p>people with severe and persistent mental illness and addiction issues. As such, the Orange County CoC Board’s ongoing coordination and collaboration with the OC Health Care Agency’s Mental Health and Recovery Services and CalOptima Health is key in meeting the needs of individuals experiencing homelessness who have severe and persistent mental illness and addiction issues.</p>
<p>Recommendation #5</p> <p>By July 1, 2023, the County of Orange, cities and CoC should collaborate to encourage the development of housing affordable to individuals exiting the emergency shelters in Orange County.</p>	<p>The recommendation has been implemented.</p> <p>The County of Orange (County), cities and the Orange County Continuum of Care (CoC) have been working together to encourage the development of affordable housing and permanent supportive housing that supports the needs of people experiencing homelessness and accessing the system of care. This includes the development of housing opportunities that support participants exiting from emergency shelters into permanent housing.</p> <p>The Orange County CoC and the four public housing authorities – Orange County, Santa Ana, Garden Grove and Anaheim – have worked together to support the Emergency Housing Voucher program. The Emergency Housing Voucher program provides a total of 1,041 special purpose vouchers for people experiencing homelessness or at risk of homelessness as identified by the service providers in the Orange County CoC.</p> <p>The Orange County CoC Board will continue to work with all cities and the County in various capacities to collaborate and encourage the development of affordable housing and permanent supportive housing as part of the system of care.</p>
<p>Recommendation #6</p> <p>By December 1, 2022, the County of Orange, cities and CoC should collaborate to increase the number of housing opportunities for Transitional Aged Youth.</p>	<p>The recommendation has been implemented.</p> <p>Since June 2020, Orange County Continuum of Care (CoC) in collaboration and partnership with the County of Orange’s (County) has worked to improve the homeless service delivery for transitional aged youth experiencing homelessness or at risk of homelessness. Some examples include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Coordinated Entry System and has worked to implement a separate process for transitional aged youth to be prioritized for available housing resources in Orange County. This has resulted in the implementation of a Transitional Aged Youth Registry, composed of youth participants experiencing homelessness in Orange County regardless of their household composition. • Transitional aged youth service providers are invited to attend a collaborative case conferencing meeting to discuss individual cases, available housing resources, and

	<p>dynamic prioritization through the Coordinated Entry System to ensure that the most vulnerable participants are receiving the most appropriate housing referrals.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Tracking outcomes in the form of transitional aged youth-focused dashboard to understand the housing needs and analyze trends. The Office of Care Coordination and the Orange County CoC have utilized this information to inform the implementation of housing resources and the solicitation of new housing resources specifically designed to meet the needs of the transitional aged youth experiencing homelessness or at risk of homelessness in Orange County. <p>Lastly, the State of California's Homeless, Housing Assistance and Prevention (HHAP) Program, which provides funding to the County, Orange County CoC, and cities of Anaheim and Santa, require recipient jurisdictions to allocate a minimum percentage of the funding to create housing opportunities and resources for transitional aged youth. This focused funding resource has proven helpful in the planning and design of a homeless service system that meets the needs of transitional aged youth.</p>
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