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# ORANGE COUNTY CONTINUUM OF CARE

April 10, 2026

Honorable Sheila F. Hanson  
Presiding Judge of the Superior Court of California  
700 Civic Center Drive West  
Santa Ana, CA 92701

Subject: "Homelessness: Is Orange County Moving in the Right Direction?" Grand Jury Response

Dear Judge Hanson:

Per your request, and in accordance with Penal Code 933, please find the Orange County Continuum of Care (CoC) response to the subject report as approved by the CoC Board. The respondents are the CoC Board Officers and Members.

If you have any questions, please contact Maricela Rios-Faust, Chair, Orange County CoC Board, at [mrios@humanoptions.org](mailto:mrios@humanoptions.org).

Sincerely,

DocuSigned by:

*Maricela Rios-Faust*

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Maricela Rios-Faust, Chair  
Orange County CoC Board

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# ORANGE COUNTY CONTINUUM OF CARE

Signed by:

*Nishtha Mohendra*

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Nishtha Mohendra, Vice Chair  
Orange County CoC Board

Signed by:

*Dr. Tiffany Mitchell*

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Dr. Tiffany Mitchell, Secretary  
Orange County CoC Board

Enclosure

Cc: 2024-25 Orange County Grand Jury Foreman

Jessica Witt, Chief Operating Officer

Lisa Fernandez, Assistance Chief Deputy Operating Officer

Elizabeth Guillen-Merchant, Assistant Chief Deputy Operating Officer

# ORANGE COUNTY CONTINUUM OF CARE BOARD

## Voluntary Response to the 2024–2025 Orange County Grand Jury Report

“Homelessness: Is Orange County Moving in the Right Direction?”

### INTRODUCTORY STATEMENT

The Orange County Continuum of Care (CoC) appreciates the work of the 2024–2025 Orange County Grand Jury and provides this **voluntary response** pursuant to Penal Code §933.05 as a requested responder to Findings F1–F7 and Recommendations R1–R5.

The CoC’s statutory authority is defined by the federal Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). The Orange County Continuum of Care administers HUD CoC, Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG) and California’s Homeless Housing, Assistance and Prevention (HHAP) funds, operates the HUD-mandated Coordinated Entry System (CES), oversees the regional Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) through 2-1-1 Orange County, and conducts the HUD Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) competition. The CoC does not issue vouchers (this is the responsibility of Public Housing Authorities), does not control Regional Housing Needs Assessment (RHNA) planning, and does not have authority over County discretionary funds.

The CoC submits these responses in a collaborative spirit to support regional understanding of the roles, responsibilities, and funding structures governing the homelessness response system.

### RESPONSES TO FINDINGS

**F1. Finding:** Homelessness continues to rise despite significant investments.

**Response:** The CoC **agrees in part** with this finding.

There has been a measurable increase in homelessness and inflow continues to exceed outflow. The CoC also acknowledges substantial progress made countywide, including thousands of individuals housed annually. The CoC’s ability to influence total system trends is limited by federal and state funding restrictions, which prioritize individuals experiencing chronic homelessness with disabling conditions and constrain eligible activities.

**F2. Finding:** Many at-risk residents are unaware of 2-1-1 Orange County.

**Response:** The CoC **agrees in part** with this finding.

Within the CoC network, 2-1-1 Orange County is widely utilized by those providing services to our unhoused neighbors. However, general public awareness varies. The CoC supports expanded awareness efforts, noting that any increase in demand must be paired with corresponding operational resources, which the CoC is not funded to provide.

**F3. Finding: Voucher waitlists and difficulty finding landlords accepting vouchers contribute to homelessness.**

**Response:** The CoC **agrees** with this finding.

Housing Choice Vouchers are administered by local Public Housing Authorities, not the CoC. The CoC supports voucher utilization through collaboration with PHAs.

**F4. Finding: Orange County’s homelessness response is reactive rather than preventive.**

**Response:** The CoC **agrees in part** with this finding.

The CoC supports prevention as a critical system component. HUD funding requirements, however, mandate prioritization of individuals who are chronically homeless, which limits the flexibility of CoC funds for broad prevention. The CoC has used HHAP funds for early intervention and diversion, though HHAP is awarded annually and allowable uses vary each round, making it an unstable long-term source of prevention funding.

**F5. Finding: The Commission to Address Homelessness has not adequately informed the Board of Supervisors regarding prevention.**

**Response:** The CoC **disagrees in part** with this finding.

The CoC acknowledges the Commission’s work, including the Pillars Report and involvement in County-led prevention efforts. Two CoC Board members serve as formal liaisons to the Commission, ensuring efforts are shared and strategy alignment between bodies.

**F6. Finding: Lack of affordable housing and voucher acceptance are primary barriers to reducing homelessness.**

**Response:** The CoC **agrees in part** with this finding.

The CoC has no authority over housing production. The CoC has applied for and allocated available state and federal capital funds—such as Project Homekey and HUD CoC Builds—to expand housing opportunities tied to supportive services.

F7. Finding: Seniors and disabled individuals relying on vouchers are at increased risk of homelessness.

**Response:** The CoC agrees in part with this finding.

While Housing Choice Vouchers are not specifically targeted to seniors or people with disabilities, CoC HMIS data indicates rising vulnerability among these populations. The CoC supports engaging senior-serving partners such as the OC Council on Aging and CalOptima to strengthen early identification and stabilization.

## RESPONSES TO RECOMMENDATIONS

R1. Recommendation: Prioritize discretionary funding for prevention rather than crisis response.

**Response:** The recommendation will not be implemented because it is not warranted or reasonable for the CoC.

The CoC does not allocate County discretionary funds nor does it have discretionary funding. CoC-administered HUD funds prioritize people experiencing homelessness, particularly those who are chronically homeless with disabling conditions. HHAP funds include prevention as an eligible activity but allowable categories shift annually and funding is not guaranteed, making HHAP an unstable foundation for sustained prevention programming.

R2. Recommendation: Prepare a detailed homelessness prevention plan by December 31, 2025.

**Response:** The recommendation has been implemented.

The CoC participates in development of prevention strategies through its two appointed liaisons to the Commission to Address Homelessness, contributes HMIS data, and collaborates with County-led prevention efforts such as ERAP and the Homelessness Prevention and Stabilization Pilot Program.

R3. Recommendation: Partner with nonprofits in each supervisorial district to expand homelessness prevention efforts.

**Response:** The recommendation has been implemented.

The CoC maintains a broad network of nonprofit partners, including many operating outside of CoC direct funding. Through the HUD NOFO process, the CoC ranks providers based on HUD

eligibility and performance criteria. Across Orange County, nonprofits deliver prevention, housing, and supportive services in all supervisorial districts.

**R4. Recommendation: Develop a contingency plan to protect seniors and disabled voucher holders in the event of funding reductions.**

**Response: The recommendation requires further analysis.**

The CoC does not administer vouchers; PHAs hold this authority. The CoC can contribute HMIS data and coordination support, but additional analysis is necessary to determine roles, responsibilities, and feasible actions.

**R5. Recommendation: Launch a public awareness campaign to promote 2-1-1 Orange County.**

**Response: The recommendation will not be implemented because it is not warranted or reasonable for the CoC.**

The CoC does not have authority or funding to conduct public-facing marketing campaigns. 2-1-1 Orange County serves as the HMIS Lead Agency, and any expanded awareness initiative must be supported by operational funding outside the CoC's scope.

Prepared by: **Orange County Continuum of Care Board**

Date Approved: December 5, 2026

Final Revisions Confirmed: April 2026