Partnership and Innovation to Prevent and Combat Homelessness
February 7, 2019
## Table of Contents

2. **Welcome**

3. **State of the Homeless Initiative**

6. **Summary of the Plenary and Breakout Sessions**
   - Homelessness in Context – Racism, Poverty, and Housing Scarcity
   - Communicating from the Front Line: Cultivating Your Organization’s Voice
   - Rapid Re-Housing: A Way Forward
   - Diversion: A Widened Lens
   - Walking the Walk: Race and Gender Equity in Homeless Service Organizations
   - Hearing from the Lawyers: What H-Funded Legal Services Have Taught Us About Needed Policy Changes
   - Managing Transformational Growth and Capacity Building: Are We There Yet?
   - Innovation! Creative Service Delivery Across the County
   - Housing Innovation: Building Faster and Cheaper
   - Prevention: Looking Beyond the Homeless Services System
   - Workforce Development and Integration: Employment Services in Homeless Services System
   - Creating Avenues for Career Advancement
   - Targeting Services for Special Populations
   - No Wrong Door: Balancing Access and Supply
   - Incarceration and Homelessness

27. **Housing Innovation Challenge**

28. **Turning Reflection into Action**

31. **Thank You**
Dear Partners,

ON FEBRUARY 7, THE LA COUNTY HOMELESS INITIATIVE held the 3rd Annual Homeless Initiative Conference, themed Transformative Power of Community: Changing Lives. We convened more than 800 key stakeholders, including elected officials, County departments, cities, homeless service providers, business sector, faith-based organizations, academics, foundations, formerly homeless residents, and community members. At this countywide event, we reflected on our collective achievements, discussed successes, innovations, and challenges in the implementation of Measure H, and strategized for the future - reinforcing the need to continue the coordinated regional approach to delivering vital services, housing and programs to prevent and combat homelessness.

This Conference Report highlights the day-long forum’s key activities and discussions.

Together, our movement has made significant progress. Thousands of our neighbors have been served through Measure H-funded outreach and programs that are directly helping our neighbors to avert homelessness and exit homelessness into stable housing. The Conference shined a light on the real human stories behind these numbers—individuals, families and communities whose lives have been transformed.

We have built a broad and powerful coalition of diverse public-private partners to address this complex humanitarian crisis. As we move forward, everyone has a role to play in being part of the solution. Thanks to you, there is a powerful sense of community and hope across Los Angeles County that we can bring our homeless neighbors home and enact lasting change. Thank you for your steadfast commitment.

Phil Ansell
Director,
Homeless Initiative
County of Los Angeles

Chris Ko
Director,
Homeless Initiatives
Home for Good,
United Way of Greater Los Angeles
State Of The Homeless Initiative

Section One

COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES

3rd Annual Homeless Initiative Conference
State of the Homeless Initiative

Since the passage of Measure H in March 2017, the County has accelerated its critical work to combat and prevent homelessness. The Los Angeles County Homeless Initiative, with funding from Measure H, has helped thousands of families and individuals at-risk or already facing homelessness - including veterans and young people—with robust permanent housing placements, rental subsidies, benefits assistance, intensive case management, an expansion of interim housing beds and an increase in outreach teams who connect our most vulnerable residents with a broadening array of services.

The Promise and Progress of Measure H

The County is on track to meet our initial five-year goal of Measure H providing permanent housing for 45,000 families and individuals. Among the most important successes so far in the first 21 months of Measure H-funded implementation include (note: outcomes have been updated since the Conference and cover July 2017 – March 2019):

- **14,241 homeless individuals and family members** have moved into permanent housing.
- **28,458 people** entered crisis, bridge and interim housing.
- **15,890 people** were newly engaged by outreach workers.
- **More than 350 Measure H-funded outreach workers**, including members of 35 multidisciplinary outreach teams, are now working across the County.
- Since December 2017, homeless service providers have **filled 2,400 new jobs** with staff that are now serving people experiencing homelessness across the County.
State of the Homeless Initiative (CONT.)

Additional Programmatic and Initiative Highlights:

- **Leading technology companies** are joining and advancing our effort and will support the development of technology applications based on a Request for Information and Request for Proposal.
- With funding from the County, **41 cities from across the County** have developed city-specific homelessness plans.
- The Housing Innovation Challenge has **awarded $4.5 million** for creative and scalable permanent housing solutions.
- **Innovative programs/tools have been launched** including:
  - The mobile-friendly online Los Angeles Homeless Outreach Portal (LA-HOP.org) to help the public request outreach support.
  - Criminal records-clearing program by the Public Defender’s Office.
  - Mobile showers.
  - Plans for an expanded safe parking program.
- **New public health permit and licensing requirements** have been established to ensure uniform Countywide standards for interim housing facilities.
- Specific recommendations will be implemented to assist **older adults experiencing homelessness** and to address the inequities impacting **black people experiencing homelessness**.
- **Diversion and prevention will be systematically incorporated** into the homeless services delivery system.
- **Employment and Homelessness Taskforce recommendations** will be implemented.

"The theme of this conference is the transformative power of the community and changing lives, and the power of your work can be seen all across the County. And, this is an important time to reflect on all the lessons that have been learned, and for us to come together and develop new solutions to the complex challenges we face ahead."

- Sachi A. Hamai, CEO, County of Los Angeles
Summary of the Plenary Sessions and Breakouts

Section Two

County of Los Angeles
3rd Annual Homeless Initiative Conference
PLENARY AND BREAKOUT SESSIONS
Summaries capture comments made by the presenters and audience.

Morning Plenary Session:
Homelessness in Context – Racism, Poverty, and Housing Scarcity

Breakout Sessions:
1. Communicating from the Front Line: Cultivating Your Organization’s Voice
2. Rapid Re-Housing: A Way Forward
3. Diversion: A Widened Lens
4. Walking the Walk: Race and Gender Equity in Homeless Service Organizations
5. Hearing from the Lawyers: What H-Funded Legal Services Have Taught Us About Needed Policy Changes
6. Managing Transformational Growth and Capacity Building: Are We There Yet?
7. Innovation! Creative Service Delivery Across the County
8. Housing Innovation: Building Faster and Cheaper
9. Prevention: Looking Beyond the Homeless Services System
10. Workforce Development and Integration: Employment Services in Homeless Services System
11. Creating Avenues for Career Advancement
12. Targeting Services for Special Populations
13. No Wrong Door: Balancing Access and Supply
14. Incarceration and Homelessness
PLENARY PANEL: Homelessness in Context – Racism, Poverty, and Housing Scarcity

Panel Key Points:

**HISTORICAL CONTEXT**

- To have effective interventions around race, class, housing, homelessness, etc., we need a deep understanding and true acknowledgement of our history.
  - Redlining, food deserts, and healthcare deserts have systemically set back black and brown people for generations.

**CURRENT LANDSCAPE**

- Overrepresentation of African Americans among people experiencing homelessness is not just an LA problem.
- 50,000 students in LA County are experiencing homelessness; this includes doubling up, which doesn’t count as “homeless” according to U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). This definition distinction creates challenges for service delivery for this highly vulnerable group.
- We need to think about homelessness in schools and early on to ensure young people don’t fall into homelessness as adults.
- Young people in foster care system are disproportionately black. 24% of Department of Children and Family Services-involved families are black, 27% of children in out-of-home placement are black, and the jail population is 30% black. This systemic racism is directly correlated with the disproportionality of black people experiencing homelessness in Los Angeles County.
- 64% of black unsheltered population reported having history of jail/incarceration.
- LA has a deficit of 500,000+ affordable housing units.

**RECOMMENDED CHANGES**

- We need to address the trauma that people experience as a result of system involvement.
- Social determinants of health should be viewed through an equity lens, with accountability measures built in to prevent the influence of implicit bias.
- For permanent supportive housing (PSH), we need to give more than lip-service to wraparound services; we need to ensure that we understand that homelessness is not monolithic, it is intersectional, and services need to recognize that as well.
- Young people are not in career pathways with sustaining wages; they often connect to benefits which will be cut off if they exceed income limits. Benefit cliffs need to be amended to prevent long-term system involvement.

Moderator
Christine Margiotta, Social Venture Partners

Panelists
Teresa Chandler, City of Long Beach
Earl Edwards, Black Male Institute, UCLA
Monique King-Viehland, Los Angeles County Development Authority
Angela LoBue, Coalition for Responsible Community Development
Peter Lynn, Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority (LAHSA)

Panel Description:
The panel discussed racism, poverty, and housing scarcity, and how we acknowledge and work to diminish these institutionalized roots of homelessness, both in the current service delivery system and also upstream, where people enter systemic tracks that lead to homelessness.
CALLS TO ACTION:

- Connection is critical! Many people want to get involved but don’t know how, and getting people to understand that our neighbors living outside are in fact our neighbors, is crucial. It is all our responsibility, and we need personal connections to change hearts and minds.

- We need to carefully consider how we are developing leaders who have experienced homelessness and how many people in leadership/board positions have experienced homelessness. There are many people with lived experience at entry-level positions, but we need to ensure that people don’t get stuck in those positions that don’t pay a living wage.

- Go see exhibit called Undesign the Redline at LA Trade Tech.

- Talk to your state legislator about protection against source of income discrimination for housing voucher holders.

- Partner up on this work, because none of us does this work alone.

- Combat discrimination, and don’t let system involvement be a proxy for discrimination.

Redlining has spurred enormous wealth outside of African American hands in the 20th century. Community Based Organizations in these communities have less charitable contributions, and therefore less infrastructure and operational support. As a result, they are often less well-situated to get Continuum of Care (CoC) grants. Funders need to be cognizant of this, and philanthropy can and should provide operating support to these organizations.

"Measure H has ignited collaboration and shared purpose. We have done this because it was the right thing to do, the prudent thing to do, and the morally correct thing to do."

- Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas, District Two
BREAKOUT 1: Communicating from the Front Line: Cultivating Your Organization’s Voice

Moderator
Tommy Newman, United Way of Greater LA

Panelists
Eddie Anderson, LA Voice
Ann English, Corporation for Supportive Housing, CSH
Sage Johnson, Lived Experience Advisory Board, LAHSA

Panel Description:
Measure H has expanded resources dramatically but has also increased demand and expectations of the homeless service system. This panel looked at how we successfully create and disseminate shared messaging, expectations, and success, with a focus on the leadership of people with lived experience.

Panel Key Points:
• Not-In-My-Backyard (NIMBY) attitudes are a major barrier to citing and building new shelters. Education of the local community is required to succeed with shelter citing and development.
• People with lived experience should be called on to communicate with local communities, and we must include this population in efforts to site facilities and combat homelessness.
• People with lived experience who have been off the streets for an extended period need to embrace newly housed homeless persons and help them with developing skill sets to help them maintain their housing and self-sufficiency.
• When including people with lived experience in promoting how the homeless services system works, always be sure to create a long-term relationship, not just a process where a “waiver is signed,” an initial story is told, and an image is used. When people with lived experience share their story, they need to have ongoing after-care services because when they retell their story, they relive their trauma.
• People with lived experience who work with transitional age youth (TAY) need to ensure that the TAY they are working with stay focused towards their self-sufficiency and can help to encourage this movement.
• We can have a positive impact on combating homelessness if “we take care of our neighbors.”
• When people with lived experience are part of promoting the system, it is important that it is not only to share their successes and the positive things that worked for them, but that they’re also engaged as leaders and partners in developing a better system.

Panel Potential Follow-Up Items:
• When combating homelessness, we must always ask ourselves, “are we truly standing up to what we say we believe?”
• To end homelessness, we need to get to know people for who they are, aside from their (homeless) circumstances.
• To end homelessness, we need to acknowledge that there is no “cookie cutter” approach; different people have different needs.
Panel Key Points:

- Success in RRH can take many different forms – we cannot have a single set of expectations for all participants.
- Landlord engagement and retention is critical to the success of RRH programs. It is important for case managers to work closely with landlords in order to address any concerns quickly.
- Landlord mitigation funds are critical, particularly for landlords with smaller properties.
- Coordinated Entry System (CES) is moving toward prioritizing higher acuity clients for RRH. In turn, there will be lower case manager-to-client ratios, so providers can better support clients. This is likely to result in longer stays in RRH.
- Shallow subsidies will play an important role in implementing this new prioritization policy.
- Over-enrollment has been a challenge for some providers; though they are trying to meet the needs of clients by enrolling them, data show that over-enrollment results in worse outcomes.
- It is important for the system to support landlords after the end of a client’s rental subsidy, as this can be a period of disruption for both clients and landlords.
- In order to address the affordable housing crisis, some providers are shifting from being solely providers to also becoming developers of affordable housing.

Panel Potential Follow-Up Item:

- Explore tools to help providers match clients together for shared housing.

"We want to do recuperative care, we want to provide sobering centers, affordable housing and treatment facilities for people. Help us think how we can repurpose old buildings. Whether they’re in your cities or in other parts of the County, help us think outside-of-the-box."

- Supervisor Hilda Solis, District One
BREAKOUT 3: Diversion: A Widened Lens

Panel Key Points:

- While diversion is often cited as a new program, it really should be thought of as an intervention. This session was meant to focus on pre-system diversion, which is used to help prevent people from entering the homeless system.

- Diversion is a strategy to help families that are dealing with a crisis. Problem solving conversations are an opportunity to empower a family to think about “out of the box” solutions to deal with the challenges they face. It is creating the space to allow people to be able to think through the issues, and the various options that they may have before entering the homeless system.

- Diversion should take place at any point that a family or youth is potentially entering the homelessness, including in schools, when probation youth are leaving camps, and when a family is involved with the foster care system and/or Department of Children and Family Services. Diversion is meant to engage people when they are at the turning point and at a place where things could go bady unless there is an intervention.

- Financial resources for diversion help create incentives for family or friends to continue housing a family/person who is staying with them, allowing for more time to work with the family or individual.

- The most impactful thing that you can do when dealing with someone in crisis is to be transparent and to listen to their story. You are there to ask questions and help piece the puzzle together. Being present, actively listening, and allowing the person to be heard, helps to build trust and allows people to think clearly about solutions.

- There is some value in having a script or set of questions, which can help staff become more comfortable with the engagement, but it is ideal to help staff become more familiar with the skills that are useful with diversion.

- Diversion approach can be a 30-minute conversation, or an on-going conversation. For example, engaging conversations can happen when an individual does not meet the scoring threshold on the VI-SPDAT to qualify for CES housing resources. That may be a good time to help individuals see what options are available.

- Diversion should be imbedded in conversations with anyone who is at-risk of homelessness so that individuals are not entering into the homeless system. Ideally, this means that mainstream system partners are fully leveraging their resources, having problem-solving conversations with people at-risk of or literally homeless, and only referring them to the homeless service system as a last resort. The way to best utilize diversion is to ensure that it is being used across all systems.

Panelists
Christian Gale, The Whole Child
Alynn Gausvik, LA Family Housing
Eric Rice, Ph.D., USC

Panel Description:
Diversion is a newly-funded approach to combatting homelessness in Los Angeles County that is really more of a philosophy than an established program. The session sought to explore what diversion is, where it should be done, and how diversion can be applied to the work we do daily.
BREAKOUT 3: Diversion: A Widened Lens (CONT.)

Panel Potential Follow-Up Items:

• Diversion is currently funded under Homeless Initiative Strategies A1 and A5 and future funding will be made available via the State Homeless Emergency Assistance Program (HEAP) and the California Emergency Solutions and Housing (CESH), which are State-funded initiatives.

• Effective diversion is fueled by better communication between the various institutions and before someone enters the homeless system.

• Ensure that there is data around how diversion is working to help prevent people from falling into homelessness because it can help inform what is working and what is not.
BREAKOUT 4: Walking the Walk: Race and Gender Equity in Homeless Service Organizations

Panel Key Points:

- There was a strong focus on how the organization can support diversity in leadership by opening up leadership opportunities and creating positive environments for leaders to grow within organizations.
- The panel highlighted the importance of mentorship experiences that are both formal and informal.
- Panelists discussed the importance of seeing other women of color in leadership positions and receiving their advice and support when managing struggles.
- Having outside help and a community network to guide new leaders through new experiences is critical.
- Being able to rely on a shared purpose to create alignment is helpful when working through differences and making necessary changes.
- There should be more emphasis on training and being able to have open conversations about implicit bias and structural racism that lead to challenges in achieving equity within organizations.
- There was discussion regarding naturally developing hierarchies between staff with degrees and staff with lived experience and some discussion on how to reduce those hierarchies and value each team member’s expertise.
- There was an emphasis throughout the panel on the differing demographics between the people working in the field, especially in leadership, and the population experiencing homelessness.
- There are barriers to people with lived experience being able to serve in leadership roles including degree requirements for many leadership positions.
- Panel noted lower retention rates for staff with degrees, highlighting the importance of investing in and building up people with lived experience, who are dedicated to the work and finding alternative routes to leadership.
- The panel discussed the potential benefit of lifting up specialty populations that are overrepresented in the homeless system, such as transgender people, in hiring. This would be beneficial both in expanding expertise and offering opportunities to this population.

Panel Potential Follow-Up Items:

- Explore the creation of built-in mentorship opportunities within organizations, especially if they may lead to leadership opportunities for people of color and people with lived experience.
- Make efforts to hire and promote staff who are more demographically reflective of the populations that are being served.

Panel Description:
As we work to address racial disparities in the homeless population and homeless service delivery system, we must also look at equity within our own organizations. This session discussed the importance of developing a diverse workforce at all levels of an organization, including leadership, and aimed to provide a roadmap toward equity.

Moderator
Amita Swadhin, Mirror Memoirs

Panelists
Va Lecia Adams Kellum, Ph.D., St. Joseph’s Center
Celina Alvarez, Housing Works
Hazel Lopez, The People Concern
• Create support networks within organizations for people with lived experience to increase successful employment and retention.
• Continue active conversations about structural racism and implicit bias and incorporate related trainings.
• Reduce barriers to employment created by strict background checks that limit people with lived experience who have criminal records from qualifying for job opportunities.
• Work with agencies that specialize in supportive employment for additional support around hiring people with lived experience.
• Lift up hiring of transgender people who may have specific expertise by working with organizations that specialize in finding employment opportunities for this population.

"We know that when we come together sharing our ideas, our stories, our resources, we can build a stronger community where all people may have the opportunity to live with respect and dignity... finding solutions."

- Pastor Lisa Williams, San Pedro United Methodist Church
BREAKOUT 5: Hearing from the Lawyers: What H-Funded Legal Services Have Taught Us About Needed Policy Changes

Panel Key Points:
• Legal services for homeless clients consist of a vast array of services. Service types include legal advocacy for homeless clients, eviction services, housing preservation, benefits eligibility, criminal justice legal assistance, and legal document assistance, including driver’s license and birth certificates.
• Legal aid services for homeless clients are located in all the County’s Service Planning Areas (SPA).

However, homeless service providers are still referring a low number of clients, so legal service providers are outreaching to homeless service providers so that they know where to access services for clients.

• There are several Measure H-funded strategies that have legal services as a program component to support clients. Attorneys can support homeless clients beyond issues with housing, such as with family law guidance, credit help and connections to County services for clients that may have barriers to services.
• There need to be more pathways to legal services to increase accessibility. Outreach to clients is key because we are dealing with a population that is more prone to miss appointments and court dates. Attorneys can be a part of a homeless client’s success story by working in conjunction with case managers, housing navigators, and other key players in the client’s housing journey.

Panel Potential Follow-Up Items:
• County should be looking at areas where mass gentrification is occurring, to be able to better target prevention assistance, and to identify policy solutions to prevent displacement.
• County should be engaging with cities on ordinances that may cause harm to the homeless population such as strict overnight parking laws, and other homeless-related criminalization.
• County should be looking into right to counsel for eviction cases, to address broader issues causing and prolonging homelessness.
BREAKOUT 6: Managing Transformational Growth and Capacity Building: Are We There Yet?

Moderator
Emily Bradley, United Way of Greater LA

Panelists
Claire Knowlton, Nonprofit Finance Fund
Alison Korte, LAHSA
Veronica Lewis, HOPICS

Panel Description:
As many homeless service providers’ capacities have increased by up to 300% since the passage of Measure H, it is important to reflect on what we have learned from this transformational growth and discuss best practices on capacity building. In this session, we heard from a service provider that has experienced dynamic growth, and from organizations that have provided technical assistance and grant support for capacity building.

Panel Key Points:
- The investments Measure H is making need to be enough to perpetuate infrastructure growth.
  - Measure H is not set up to fund growing organizations.
  - Organizations need growth capital.
  - The capacity to help organizations build is not present.
- There is a need for more qualified licensed professionals to respond to the constant shifts in resources.
- Inflow of new homeless population needs to be considered as funding is allocated. The homeless service system needs to be nimble to respond quickly to changes in the needs of the population, and agencies need infrastructure funding to be nimble.

- Organizations require liquidity and predictability.
- There is a need to align County contracting processes with philanthropic contracting and Request for Proposal processes.
- Collaborations and Partnerships - Facilitating processes and having real-time communication and collaboration with sub-contractors is critical.

"I’m very grateful to all the service providers, as well as the many County and city agencies, who have dramatically ramped up our homeless services systems over the last two years. One person at a time, men and women experiencing homelessness are being re-housed. It’s slow work that requires patience and commitment, and I’m proud that we are beginning to see positive results from our efforts."

- Supervisor Sheila Kuehl, District Three
BREAKOUT 7: Innovation! Creative Service Delivery Across the County

Moderator
Kris Freed, LA Family Housing

Panelists
Marie-Aimee Brajeux, Consultant
Andrew Gutierrez, Safe Place for Youth
Jennifer Lee, PATH

Panel Description:
As agencies manage the operational challenges of expansive growth, innovation in the service delivery system is critical. This session drew on panelists’ service delivery expertise and experience to frame the various innovations they have helped to spearhead, as well as help to create a guidebook for other agencies to follow.

Panel Key Points:
• Technology makes systems more efficient, and can provide competitive advantages, such as more human-centered design of services.
• New, creative programs come with unexpected challenges, and service providers must be able to respond quickly and effectively.
• You cannot just create something for the sake of creating something. Innovation must be centered around the unique needs of the population served.
• We cannot assume that people experiencing homelessness are unable to use technology to access information and utilize services.
• Social media can be leveraged to tell stories, develop a connection with the target population, and spread knowledge.
• Technology can be used to track data and move away from time-consuming, cumbersome data collection methods.

• Training staff to use technological tools develops sustainable solutions that are quick and easy to use.
• Deploying technological innovation requires iteration and constant learning; we cannot wait to have a perfect solution to implement new services and tools.
• The benefit of getting an outside technology consultant is that they can translate problems into technology needs and solutions; often providers don’t know how to identify their technology needs.
• Online platforms save time and can more efficiently connect clients with housing resources.
• Philanthropic partners can be key to experimenting and implementing creative service deployment methods.

Panel Potential Follow-Up Items:
• Service providers can look into hiring a technology consultant to identify their technology needs and recommend solutions.
• Develop social media campaigns to increase impact and engagement.
BREAKOUT 8: Housing Innovation: Building Faster and Cheaper

Panel Key Points:

- The biggest barriers to creating supportive housing units are the high cost and lengthy process of development.
- The current pathway for development occurs in a constrained and broken system.
- Traditional financing sources come with many requirements and strict timelines, making it difficult to develop quickly and efficiently.
- Different types of construction are not necessarily cheaper and/or faster; it requires a lot of coordination to achieve efficiencies.
- Smaller sites/projects lend themselves to by-right development, which is one method to save time in the development process.
- Prefabricated (prefab) modular projects with state certification require only grading and foundation permit, saving time on the permitting process.
- Whatever new construction methods/materials are utilized, developers must be conscientious so as to not compromise quality and durability of housing.
- Private funding is out there, but investors need an avenue to invest.
- Public dollars create constraints and increase the cost to developers (i.e. prevailing wage). Non-tax credit deals can significantly reduce time and cost of a project.
- Private dollars allow developers to be more nimble, which is important when dealing with numerous unexpected hurdles that occur during the development process.
- Private dollars allow developers to take more risks, which enables innovative thinking and experimentation.

Panel Potential Follow-Up Items:

- Streamline coordination between all of the departments and agencies involved in the development process (i.e. Planning, DPW, Fire, Architects, Lenders, etc.).
- Need to work toward answering these questions:
  - How can we make it easier to fulfill the various, sometimes conflicting, requirements of multiple sources of funding?
  - How can we make funding more flexible?
  - How can we bring more private investors into this space? We need to develop a sound mechanism through which private equity can be invested.
  - How can we bring more architects into this space who can develop thoughtful designs so as not to give up important living space or compromise quality/durability?
  - How can we reduce some of the constraints attached to public dollars?
  - How can we incentivize more prefab modular development?
BREAKOUT 9: Prevention: Looking Beyond the Homeless Services System

Panel Key Points:

- Root causes of homelessness, such as historical policies (e.g. redlining and slavery) that caused displacement, are embedded in the issue of homelessness.
- The number of people becoming homeless in any given year is more on the magnitude of 55,000 because many people enter and exit homelessness during the same year, and therefore never appear in a homeless count.
- California Policy Lab has created a model to predict how many people that the County is serving and are at the highest risk of returning to homelessness:
  - 64% of those that are predicted as being of highest risk have had some jail stay in the last five years.
  - 66% have a history of mental health services; there is a huge intersection between criminal justice and mental health.
- It is critical to provide supportive services to people once they are placed in permanent housing.
- Families are extremely stretched financially and rent increases can make them homeless. For example, in the City of Inglewood, some organizations have purchased property and have doubled or tripled people’s rent, which has led to displacement.

Panel Potential Follow-Up Items:

- The panelists offered the following policy recommendations:
  - More protection for renters
  - More anti-tenant harassment ordinances
  - Work on expanding rent stabilization
  - Prohibit Section 8 discrimination
  - More time for voucher holders to find housing (the current policy is 180 days, which is insufficient)
  - Poor credit scores should not be a barrier for renters
  - Giving income/reparations directly to communities that have been impacted
- We all need to have conversations with our neighbors to mobilize and put pressure on civic leaders. We need to change hearts and minds because the biggest challenge is that most people do not want homeless people in their backyards. Examples of important community engagement efforts include reaching out to neighbors about what they can do, and going to neighborhood council meetings, city council meetings, or phoning your local elected officials to voice your support for affordable and permanent supportive housing.
- Arm yourself with information and have key pieces of information ready when having conversations to help change perspectives.
- We need to have real conversations about the things that matter, like what is happening in our communities, and about our history.
BREAKOUT 10: Workforce Development and Integration: Employment Services in Homeless Services System

**Moderator**
Sarah Mahin, LAHSA

**Panelists**
Luther Evans, Jr., County Department of Public Social Services
Dara Papel, CSH
Amiyouko Shabazz, Housing Works
Otto Solorzano, County Workforce Development, Aging and Community Services

**Panel Description:**
Jobs are a critical component of homelessness prevention and successful housing retention. This panel explored the work being done now to increase access to jobs for currently and formerly homeless people, and discussed next steps in building a more robust and integrated workforce development system.

**Panel Key Points:**
- The County and partners are undertaking a significant effort to align the homeless, public benefits, and workforce systems to better serve homeless jobseekers.
- It is important to target our efforts in a way that meets the needs of businesses that have a labor force shortage.
- The current economy and client needs have led the workforce development system to shift its focus from dislocated workers to vulnerable workers, including people experiencing homelessness.
- We need to streamline systems so that clients can navigate more easily, accessing services to support employment and housing.
- In aligning the systems serving homeless jobseekers, there is a clear need for staff training, development of shared language, and adoption of evidence-based practices regarding employment for people experiencing homelessness.
- Racial discrimination plays a critical role in barriers to employment for people experiencing homelessness.
- The homeless service system needs to navigate the tensions between “housing first” and “employment first,” finding ways to meet clients’ needs in both arenas. “Employment first” doesn’t need to mean that people have to find a job before they find housing, but rather that there is a presumption that they will get a job.
- Peer support is a valuable part of the homeless services system – and an opportunity for employment for people with lived experience.
- Social enterprises are acting as a bridge between vulnerable populations and the workforce development system, which hasn’t always met these populations’ needs.

**Panel Potential Follow-Up Item:**
- Continue to integrate workforce development and homeless service systems to better serve people experiencing homelessness.
BREAKOUT 11: Creating Avenues for Career Advancement

Moderator
Vanessa Rios, CSH

Panelists
John Horn, LA Family Housing
Dennis King Speak Up! Advocate, Skid Row Housing Trust
Lola Smallwood Cuevas, Los Angeles Black Worker Center

Panel Description:
The Los Angeles County homeless services delivery system has grown dramatically over the past two years, and recruitment and retention continue to be significant challenges for our work. This panel explored ideas on how to create and expand opportunities to cultivate tomorrow’s leaders, today.

Panel Key Points:
- Needing to choose between parenthood and livelihood is a serious problem.
- In the past, churches were on the front line to deliver homeless services. These were peer workers and paraprofessionals, but in the 90’s there was a professionalization of the non-profit sector. Agencies started looking at universities to hire people with degrees, leaving peer workers behind.
- According to the LA Black Worker Center, the average job tenure in homeless services is two years in LA County.
- There’s a 300-year history of black people being brought to the US as slaves and 50 years of Jim Crow; this free labor helped to build the US economy.
- According to analysis conducted by the Center for Social Innovation regarding American homelessness, “although Black people comprise 13% of the general population in the United States and 26% of those living in poverty, they account for more than 40% of the homeless population, suggesting that poverty rates alone do not explain the overrepresentation.”
- According to a report by the University of California, Los Angeles Labor Center, Los Angeles Black Worker Center, and
UCLA Institute for Research on Labor and Employment, 17% of Black workers in Los Angeles County were unemployed, compared to 9% of White workers. The study found that while education helped bridge the gap, it did not completely erase it, because 9% of Black workers with at least a bachelor’s degree were unemployed, compared to 7% of White workers. Racial bias was evident in the study’s findings and consistent with listening session comments: whether working full- or part-time, Black workers earned less than three-quarters of what White workers earned. For women, the pay gap was even greater, with Black women earning only 67% of what White men earn.

- According to the same study mentioned above, 30% of all Black full-time workers in Los Angeles County were low-wage workers who earned less than $13.49 per hour. (The median wage in Los Angeles County is $20.24.) Moreover, Black households in Los Angeles County also had the lowest median income and were more likely to live in poverty than any other racial group.
- In Los Angeles County, Black people represent 30% of the overall population in county jails.
- Retention could be improved by recognizing experience on the streets as expertise.
- Leadership needs to care about what they are doing, and how they are doing it.
- CEOs have life coaches, networks, and executive coaches. Why don’t we offer the same level of support to entry level staff? The trauma of unemployment doesn’t stop once the job begins.
- If we are creating opportunities but not recognizing skills, we are building harm.

Panel Potential Follow-Up Items:
- Look at removing degree requirements from job descriptions and consider what skills can be substituted for education. Bilingual language requirements should be relaxed.
- Robust pipelines should be built within the sector and living wages offered. Sector-wide standardized requirements could be set.
- Ideas to address the issue of literacy included bringing in writing coaches, creating peer mentorship programs, partnering with community colleges, and making sure documents are user friendly.
- Recommendations on how to recruit more diverse staff, including those with lived experience, were shared by the panelists. Some of these recommendations were to hold job fairs, and to create employee referral programs.
- A peer support group may be beneficial.
Panel Key Points:

• There are several efforts in progress to better tailor services to special populations:
  - City of LA adopted a strategy to look at domestic violence services and the County funded a Domestic Violence (DV) Rapid Re-Housing Pilot.
  - LAHSA hired a DV coordinator to better connect with DV providers and increase collaboration and are hiring DV coordinators within each SPA.
• There is no voice in the media, success stories, etcetera, from people receiving DV services because of obvious safety concerns, so there is less recognition of the impact and unique challenges of domestic violence.
• There were prior conversations around the fact that there was no strategy specifically addressing the needs of older adults at-risk of or experiencing homelessness. That lead to the formation of a workgroup to look at what is being done and to address specific needs of older adults. The workgroup developed strategies that the County is implementing to address the needs of homeless older adults.

Panel Potential Follow-Up Items:

• There is a challenge with how things are tracked within the DV system and having multiple data systems that do not communicate with each other makes it more challenging to coordinate with other services within the system. There needs to be more discussion on how to best serve this population given these data constraints.
• Need to increase outreach workers’ understanding of how to engage people experiencing DV.
• Pets and service animals should not be barriers for people in accessing services and housing.
• In the past, when older adults were losing their housing, they were often going into nursing homes, but now we are seeing older adults falling into homelessness. Nursing homes are serving the most vulnerable because of the limited beds and high level of need. County and City need to look further at this issue and identify opportunities to expand nursing homes.
• The County and LAHSA are looking at the role of minor cash assistance and shallow subsidies in preventing homelessness for older adults. This new intervention should be closely studied to determine efficacy and scalability.

Panel Description:
As we strive to increase access to our system, the unique needs of special populations must not be overlooked. This panel discussed the special needs of older adults, survivors of domestic violence, and transition aged youth, and what’s being done to tailor services to meet their unique needs.
BREAKOUT 13: No Wrong Door: Balancing Access and Supply

Moderator
Josh Hall, LAHSA

Panelists
LaRae Cantley, Speak Up! Advocate, Domestic Violence Coalition
Ryan Izell, Union Station Homeless Services
Leepi Shimkhada, County Department of Health Services

Panel Description:
Measure H funding alone is not enough to meet the homeless services and housing demand. As we strengthen a "no wrong door" system that increases access to services, the reality of limited housing resources necessitates prioritization and targeting. This session explored the challenge of balancing increased access and adequately serving those most in need, while not allowing vulnerable and other populations to go unserved.

Panel Key Points:
• There is a significant gap between the number of people experiencing homelessness coming into the system and the resources available.
• There is a need to get out into the cities and communities, to engage people and build relationships to expand the housing pipeline and educate the community.
• Different access points and access centers can increase access to systems.
• There should be basic expectations for all access centers.
• Prioritization must be considered from the beginning of engagement of people experiencing homelessness, given the limited resources.
• Having efficient communication is key to making a more efficient referral process that builds upon and maximizes everyone’s strengths.
• Both adult and youth systems do not have a clear front door; and funding access centers for these populations is necessary.

"Whether you are a service provider, a policy maker, an outreach worker, a community member, or an individual who has lived through homelessness, we are grateful for your contribution to this crisis. You are an integral piece of the solution to an incredibly complicated problem."
- Supervisor Kathryn Barger, District Five

Panel Potential Follow-Up Items:
• All three systems, Family, Single Adult, and TAY, started at different times and with different goals and features, but consistency across all three systems is important.
BREAKOUT 14: Incarceration and Homelessness

Moderator
Isaac Bryan, UCLA

Panelists
Kristen Ochoa, County Office of Diversion and Re-Entry
Reba Stevens, Lived Experience Advisory Board, LAHSA
Yusef-Andre L. Wiley, Timelist Group, Inc.

Panel Description:
We are making strides in decriminalizing homelessness, diverting people from jails, and reaching out to people who self-identify as homeless when they’re in jail; yet, we have a long way to go. Once a person is justice-involved, their likelihood of experiencing homelessness increases; once a person is homeless, their likelihood of becoming justice-involved increases. This breakout discussed the work of the Ad Hoc Committee On Black People Experiencing Homelessness, and next steps in implementing a more comprehensive systemic intervention to break the cycle of incarceration and homelessness.

Panel Key Points:
• There is a strong connection between homelessness and incarceration. While arrests in LA County have been on the decline, homeless arrests are increasing. The #1 reason for homeless arrests is “failure to appear”; failure to appear is a result of barriers homeless persons face such as a lack of transportation.
• The daily County Jail population includes 5,200 persons with mental illness. People with serious mental health issues tend to have longer County jail stays due to a need for more complex discharge plans and a need for more community-based resources.
• There is a lack of sufficient employment opportunities for formerly incarcerated individuals. Compounding this dearth of employment is employment discrimination towards formerly incarcerated people, and specifically African Americans.
• When a person completes an on-the-job training program, it should culminate in that person being hired to work, if possible, by the agency that provided the training.
• Robust discharge planning is necessary to move inmates to housing and services, not the streets; this also reduces recidivism.
• Jail In Reach programs are effective, they provide inmates with hope. Jail In Reach programs need to ensure that upon release, inmates have a strong discharge plan for a successful handoff to the housing/providers where clients will continue to work on their self-sufficiency.
• Services need to meet the needs of individual clients, i.e., specialized services.
• Providers in the jails need space to have open dialogue with clients to minimize trauma and allow for a more open dialogue. Providers need to work in a compassionate and caring manner when working with the jail population.

Panel Potential Follow-Up Items:
• We need better skills and job training for formerly incarcerated black people and improved cultural sensitivity training to relieve the stigma against the formerly incarcerated population.
• People with lived experience need the opportunity to share their experiences with their peers; there’s a need for more people with lived experience at the planning table.
• The County needs to relax the jail entry clearance process to allow more people with lived experience to work with inmates.
• No new jails, spend the money on services to keep people out of jail.
Housing Innovation Challenge

Thinking outside the box to address homelessness, L.A. County has awarded $4.5 million for game-changing, creative and scalable permanent housing solutions to the winners of the first-ever Housing Innovation Challenge. The Housing Innovation Challenge has made four awards at the $1 million level and one at the $500,000 level for faster, cost-effective construction/rehabilitation and/or creative finance models to produce permanent housing for the County’s most vulnerable residents.

At a time of heightened collaboration in the region, this effort was designed to activate stakeholders and creative strategists across the region to contribute sustainable solutions to homelessness. The Challenge received more than 50 proposals, which were evaluated by a panel of experts in urban planning, real estate development, affordable housing and architecture. Each awarded project will result in the production of permanent housing for homeless families or individuals in Los Angeles County.

The Funded Projects are:

- **Brooks + Scarpa Architects, Inc.** – NEST: A Prefab Modular, Sustainable Kit of Parts that can be assembled on any typical 50 x 150 parcel ($1 million)
- **Flyaway Homes, LLC** – Modular Permanent Supportive Housing Communities, to scale their model of leveraging private equity to develop supportive housing faster and at $1/4 the cost per person ($1 million)
- **LifeArk, SPC** – LifeArk Micro-Communities, a kit-of-parts building system that is developable on any lot size or shape ($1 million)
- **United Dwelling** – Detached Garage Conversion into Affordable Studios, for its institutional development of beautifully-designed garage-converted Accessory Dwelling Units ($1 million)
- **Restore Neighborhoods Los Angeles** – South LA Bungalow Project for its neighborhood shared equity model for accessible units built by-right in a traditional bungalow style courtyard ($500,000)

Learn more at housinginnovationchallenge.com.

"I experience an incredible sense of hope and inspiration because of the people in this room, and the thousands more like us who are out in our communities today, helping to bring our homeless neighbors home."

- Phil Ansell, Director, LA County Homeless Initiative
County of Los Angeles
3rd Annual Homeless Initiative Conference

Section Three

Turning Reflection into Action
The 3rd Annual Homeless Initiative Conference Report

Turning Reflection Into Action – Plenary Discussion

In the afternoon plenary session, Turning Reflection into Action, conference attendees were asked to sit together in groups of 8-10 people: 1) to discuss their thoughts on the 3rd Annual Conference, 2) how what they learned at the Conference will inform their work, and 3) what the goals of the countywide movement to prevent and combat homelessness should be in the coming year. Small groups then reported out in writing, verbally, and through sli.do (mobile phone-based survey tool). Below are the common themes and suggestions that were identified for each discussion question.

QUESTION #1

What was the most interesting / compelling thing you heard today?

1. The opening plenary, Homelessness in Context: Racism, Poverty, and Housing, and specifically having the role of racism in homelessness front and center was an amazing way to start the conference.
2. Urban Voices’ Choir was such an uplifting and meaningful performance!
3. The historical context of homelessness, including redlining, incarceration, and structural racism.
4. Voices, stories, and leadership of people with lived experience.
5. Policy change is needed to address homelessness and actually prevent homelessness.
6. The innovations taking place in housing construction and funding.
7. Cultural competency and trauma-informed care are essential to effectively understand, tailor services, and engage vulnerable people.
8. Changing hearts and minds of people about homelessness is critical.

QUESTION #2

What, from today, do you plan to incorporate into your work tomorrow?

1. Take every opportunity to change hearts and minds about homelessness, by telling stories and engaging your neighbors and friends.
2. Build a system of accountability to ensure homeless services and outcomes are equitable.
3. Prioritize equity in organizational structure to cultivate leaders from all backgrounds.
4. Look at how we can recruit, support, and promote people with lived experience.
5. Start referring more people to legal services funded by Measure H.
6. Make data-driven decisions in everyday program operations.
7. Learn more about policy/advocacy opportunities, such as right to counsel and source of income discrimination, in order to respond to and inform policy.

"Because of Measure H, because of you, and because of the work we have done together, thousands of people have been lifted off of the streets and into permanent homes."
- Supervisor Janice Hahn, Chairperson, District Four

"Because of Measure H, because of you, and because of the work we have done together, thousands of people have been lifted off of the streets and into permanent homes."
- Supervisor Janice Hahn, Chairperson, District Four
QUESTION #3
What should a primary goal for our movement be in the coming year?

1. Focus on innovation and technology to move toward faster, more efficient solutions to addressing and preventing homelessness.

2. Conversations about institutionalized racism need to be normalized, with discussions at every level.

3. Expand focus on homelessness prevention, including a focus on eliminating discharges from jail, foster care, and hospitals into homelessness.

4. Focus on data analysis and data-driven decisions about funding, programs, and policy.

5. Better integrate workforce development into homeless and housing retention services.

6. Include leadership of people with lived experience at all tables and decision-making bodies.

7. Focus on community information and education campaign about homelessness and housing.

8. Build more housing by streamlining the permit process, repurposing vacant buildings, and continuing to innovate/test new models.

QUESTION #4
What was the most interesting/compelling thing you heard today?

1. Increase construction of non-tax credit housing/innovative methods of building housing.

2. Implementation of a comprehensive homelessness prevention approach.


4. Increase in diversity in homeless service sector leadership, including people of color and people who have experienced homelessness.

5. Create a goal to decrease inflow into homelessness.

6. Increase the number of people who move into permanent housing and people who get jobs.

7. Integration of workforce development and homeless service provider networks.

"The work of ending homelessness can often be hard and lonely. But gathering reminds us that we are not alone, and ultimately this sense of belonging must be something we create for every single resident of LA County."

- Chris Ko, Director, Homeless Initiatives, Home for Good, United Way of Greater LA
Thank you all for your sustained support and creativity, and for making the 3rd Annual Homeless Initiative Conference possible.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

EVENT SPONSORS

Conrad N. Hilton Foundation
Home for Good, United Way Greater LA

California Community Foundation
The California Endowment

Millennium Biltmore Los Angeles
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS (CONT.)

RESOURCE TABLES AND ACTIVITIES

County Departments and Agencies
Department of Children & Family Services
Los Angeles County Community Development Authority
Department of Health Services
Department of Mental Health
Department of Public Health
Department of Public Social Services
Department of Regional Planning
Sheriff’s Department

Service Providers
SPA 1: Valley Oasis
SPA 2: LA Family Housing; Ascencia; The Village Family Services
SPA 3: Union Station Homeless Services; Volunteers of America Los Angeles
SPA 4: Homeless Health Care LA; The People Concern; LA LGBT Center; People Assisting the Homeless (PATH)
SPA 5: St. Joseph’s Center; Safe Place for Youth; The People Concern; PATH
SPA 6: Southern California Health & Rehabilitation Program
SPA 7: PATH
SPA 8: Harbor Interfaith; PATH

Community Organizations
Domestic Violence Homeless Services Coalition
Urban Voices Project
United Way of Greater Los Angeles - Everyone In!
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS (CONT.)

SHINING A LIGHT ON HOMELESS FACES

Look Into Their Eyes And See Yourself
Stuart D. Perlman, Ph.D.
Psychoanalyst, Psychologist and Artist

One of Us
David Blumenkratz
Documentarian and Street Photographer;
Associate Professor, Dept. of Journalism,
California State University, Northridge

CONFERENCE PLANNING COMMITTEE

Community
Lynnette Jenkins, CRCD
Kristin Aldana-Taday, Conrad N. Hilton Foundation
Kris Freed, LA Family Housing
Jennifer Hark Dietz, PATH
Alison Hurst, Safe Place for Youth
Marion Sanders, SSG/HOPICS
LaCheryl Porter, St. Joseph Center
Micki Charley, The Whole Child
Anne Miskey, Union Station Homeless Services
Emily Bradley, Home for Good,
United Way of Greater LA

County
Ashlee Oh, Meredith Berkson and
Naomi Goldman, County Homeless Initiative, CEO
Libby Boyce, Dept. of Health Services
Priscilla Moore, Dept. of Mental Health
Bill Taylor, Dept. of Public Social Services
Heather Anderson, Dept. of Regional Planning
Evert Cordova, Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority