



County of San Diego Homeless Solutions and Prevention Action Plan

Phase One – Local Homelessness Action Plan

COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES AGENCY (HHSA)

Department of Homeless Solutions and Equitable Communities (HSEC)

Office of Homeless Solutions (OHS)

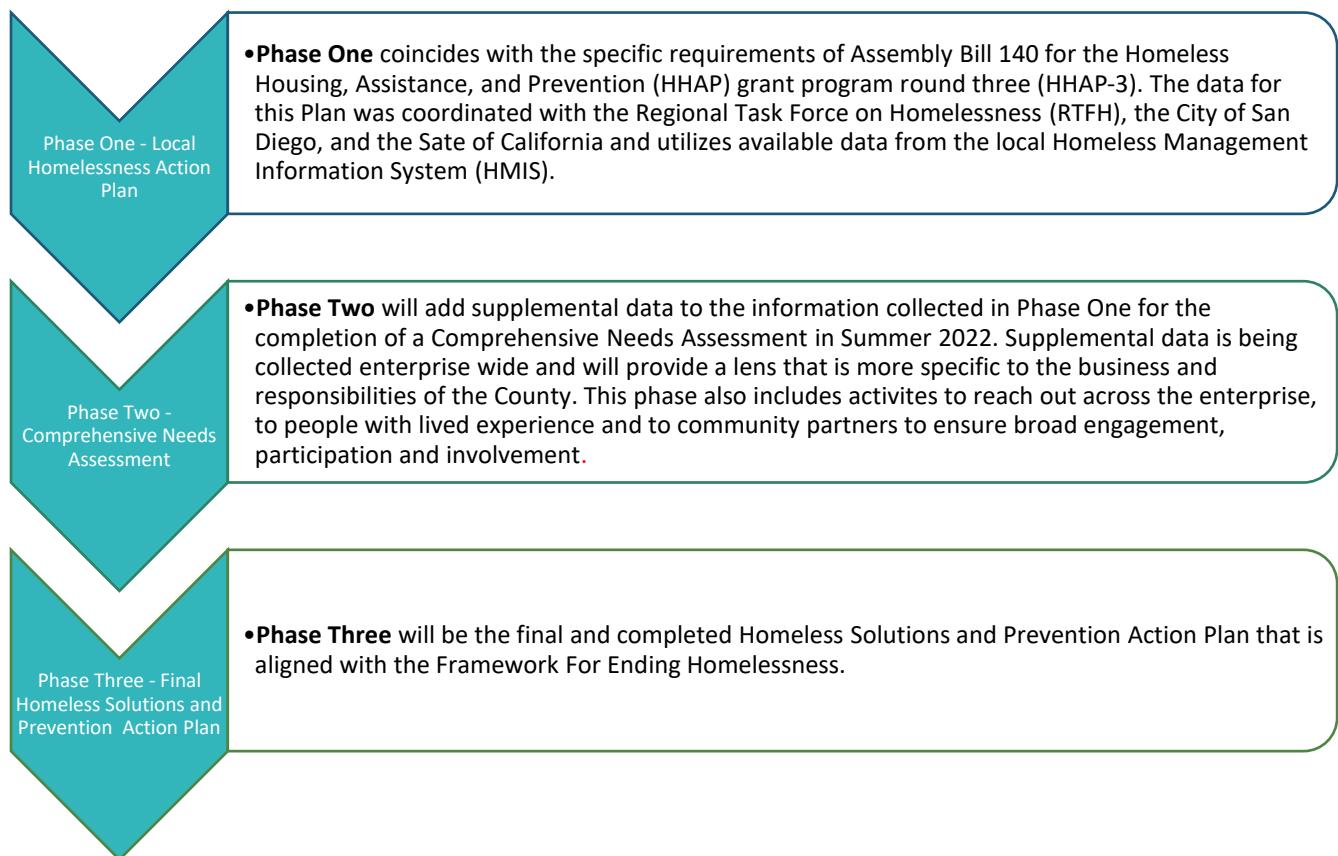
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Our Phased Plan

County governments have more complex and interconnected roles in preventing and ending homelessness than any other entity. Addressing homelessness at the time someone is experiencing a housing crisis is more expensive and less effective than working upstream which involves approaches to service provision that reduce risk factors. Properly oriented, counties can work with cities and other partners to prevent homelessness early on and move away from managing crises.

Phased Homeless Solutions and Prevention Action Plan (Plan)

The process to complete the final Homeless Solutions and Prevention Action Plan (Plan) will be through three distinct phases in order to both meet the State requirements and to utilize the information provided by County of San Diego (County) departments to support identification of service gaps and strategies and to be able to engage a broad range of stakeholders.



Phase One – Local Homelessness Action Plan

Phase One of the Plan focuses on the current needs and short-term actions the County can take in response to addressing homelessness. It aligns with the specific requirements of Assembly Bill 140 and the HHAP-3 funding, which includes: (1) Landscape Analysis of Needs and Demographics; (2) Landscape Analysis of People Being Served; (3) Landscape Analysis of State, Federal and Local Funding; (4) Outcome

Goals; and (5) Strategies to Achieve Outcome Goals. The strategies focus on moving people experiencing homelessness off the street and connecting them to shelter and/or permanent housing.

In addition, Phase One of the Plan is intended to serve as a foundation for a more comprehensive needs assessment and sets the baseline for a more robust upstream response by identifying preliminary coordination efforts, partnerships, outcome goals and strategies needed to build a system-based approach to preventing and ending homelessness. The Plan is a living document that will change and be updated to reflect new conditions. We have seen during the pandemic that circumstances can change quickly, and we must be able to adapt while continuing to act.

Phase Two – Comprehensive Needs Assessment

Phase Two of this Plan will focus on the completion of a comprehensive needs assessment. Phase Two will build on the information presented in Phase One through mixed methods data analysis and comprehensive feedback from key stakeholders across the County enterprise, the RTFH, and existing plans within other County jurisdictions. The purpose of this assessment is to help identify gaps and needs across the strategic domains in the County's the Framework for Ending Homelessness (see page 6). This will allow recommended changes to further cross-system and cross-sector efforts to develop homeless solutions. While the local landscape analysis in Phase One focuses on understanding regional data on homelessness in the crisis response system, Phase Two will expand on Phase One and bolster the understanding of regional homelessness data by analyzing County specific data across the County enterprise for people at risk of or experiencing homelessness. The goal of Phase Two is to determine how County departments can have the most impact in responding to homelessness.

Phase Three – Final Homeless Solutions and Prevention Action Plan

Phase Three of the Plan will focus on the robust and interconnected infrastructure of the County government which includes: behavioral health, physical health, criminal justice, housing, and social services, together with health plans, our local Continuum of Care, cities, service providers and the people in our communities. Homes end homelessness, but poverty, racism, lack of opportunity and violence – together with insufficient supply of affordable housing – all cause or exacerbate it. A coordinated plan that includes upstream responses to address these interconnected challenges is at the center of Phase Three. Planned for release in Fall 2022, the third phase of this Plan acknowledges that an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure through a focus on upstream strategies and responses.

Foundational Concepts & Frameworks

Several foundational concepts and frameworks, described below, will inform the overall Plan.

Live Well San Diego

The County Health and Human Service Agency (HHS), supports the *Live Well San Diego* vision of building better health, living safely and thriving. *Live Well San Diego*, developed by the County, is a comprehensive, innovative regional vision that combines the efforts of partners inside and outside County government to help all residents be healthy, safe, and thriving.

- *Building Better Health* focuses on improving the health of residents and supporting healthy choices.
- *Living Safely* seeks to ensure residents are protected from crime and abuse, neighborhoods are safe, and communities are resilient to disasters and emergencies.
- *Thriving* focuses on promoting a region in which residents can enjoy the highest quality of life.

The Plan aligns with *Live Well San Diego's* vision.

Framework for Ending Homelessness

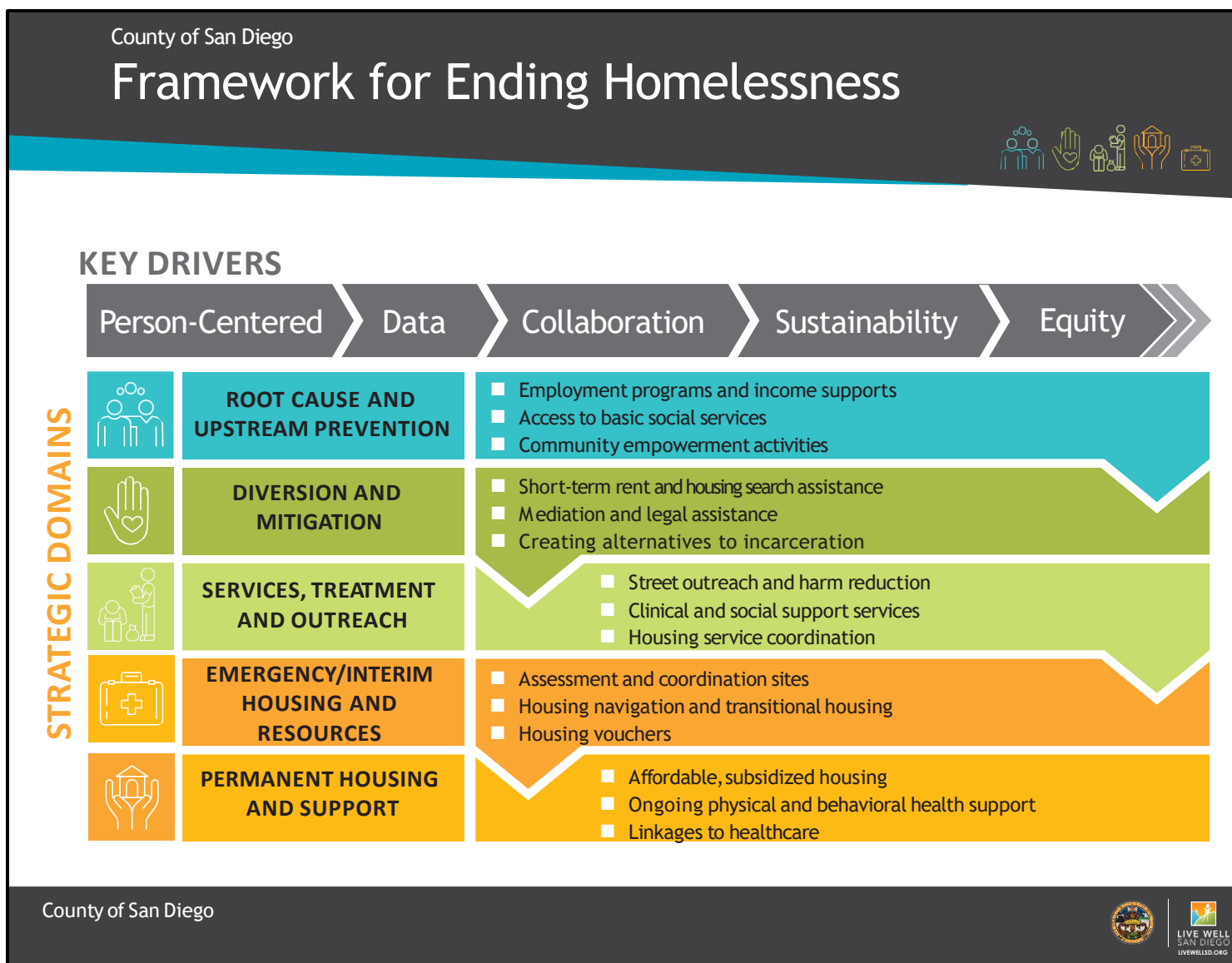
Over the last several years, the County of San Diego Board of Supervisors (Board) has demonstrated their commitment to housing and supportive services that address the needs of people experiencing or who are at-risk of homelessness.

The Board adopted the Framework for Ending Homelessness (Framework) to operationalize the Board's guiding principles on homelessness that align the existing and future work throughout the region with the goal of ending homelessness. The Framework demonstrates the County's commitment to moving from a focus on crisis management to a focus on housing solutions.

The Framework is anchored in five strategic domains: (1) Root Cause and Upstream Prevention, (2) Diversion and Mitigation, (3) Services, Treatment and Outreach, (4) Emergency/Interim Housing and Resources, (5) Permanent Housing and Support. These five strategic domains represent the continuum of opportunities to end homelessness by preventing it when possible and reducing the length of time experienced by strengthening ways to remain housed. More detail regarding the strategic domains is outlined in Phase One of the plan below.

Additionally, each of the five strategic domains is driven by five key drivers that guide the County's approach: That services be person-centered; our work uses data for decision-making; we practice and value regional collaboration; we strive for sustainability both in programming and for the people we serve; and we address disparities by keeping equity at the forefront of our work.

All parts of this phased Plan are structured around the five strategic domains established by the County's Framework.



Population Health and Healthcare

True cross-sector planning to address homelessness necessitates a deeper focus on population health. The nature of addressing complex housing needs for those with physical or behavioral health needs, for example, requires deeper information sharing and early, consistent integration. The system learned two critical lessons during the pandemic that also inform our work: (1) Chronic disease and disability are dramatically more prevalent among persons experiencing homelessness than the public at large, and (2) There is a connection between infectious diseases and development of these chronic conditions. Transforming how we think about population health will improve our ability to end the dual housing and health crisis experienced by people experiencing homelessness and help them thrive. The County is addressing the nexus of housing and healthcare through the San Diego Advancing and Innovating in Medical (SD AIM) initiative bringing together strategic healthcare partners to reach people and provide them with needed support and treatment. SD AIM presents a new opportunity with long-term sustainability for supports that can assist people with significant health issues retain a home. It also offers an opportunity to break down silos between the health, homeless response and housing sectors and an opportunity to bring prevention further into the strategies for solutions.

County of San Diego Homeless Solutions and Prevention Action Plan: Phase One

Phase One of the Plan focuses on understanding current need and action to address that need. For this initial phase, the County is using the required State data and template for the HHAP-3 application due June 30, 2022. The State template has five tables that provide data for: (1) Landscape Analysis of Needs and Demographics; (2) Landscape Analysis of People Being Served; (3) Landscape Analysis of State, Federal and Local Funding; (4) Outcome Goals; and (5) Strategies to Achieve Outcome Goals. All parts of Phase One align with the Framework's strategic domains.



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Local Homeless Action Plan Template

Local Landscape Analysis of Need and People Served

The County, in partnership with the RTFH and the City of San Diego, has completed a local landscape analysis that assessed:

- **Need:** The current number of people experiencing homelessness and existing programs and funding that address homelessness in San Diego County.
- **People Served:** The number of individuals and families served in San Diego County (including the unincorporated areas), including demographic information, intervention types and demographic subpopulations to assist with identifying the number that are underserved relative to the proportion of individuals experiencing homelessness.
- **Funding:** The County has identified funds currently being used and budgeted to be used, to provide housing and homeless-related services to persons experiencing homelessness or at imminent risk of homelessness. It also identifies how this funding serves subpopulations, and types of interventions funded.

Please see Attachment B for more detailed information regarding the landscape of need, people being served, and funding in San Diego County.

Next Steps: Phase Two: Comprehensive Needs Assessment

In December 2021, County, HHSA, Department of Homeless Solutions and Equitable Communities' Office of Homeless Solutions (HSEC-OHS) contracted with Homebase – a nationally-recognized technical assistance provider – through a competitive procurement, regarding integrated issues related to housing and homelessness and to assess homelessness and housing needs in San Diego County. The purpose of this assessment is to help identify opportunities across strategic domains and recommend changes to further homelessness solutions. Phase Two of the Plan will focus on completion of a comprehensive needs assessment that includes enterprise-wide data and will build on the information presented in the Phase One Plan.

Landscape Analysis of Funding

The County has identified funds currently being used and budgeted to be used, to provide housing and homeless-related services to persons experiencing homelessness or at imminent risk of homelessness. It also identifies how this funding serves subpopulations, and types of interventions funded.

Please see Attachment B Outcome Goals and Strategies

This section of the Plan outcomes is required by the State as part of the HHAP-3 application. The measures around which the outcome goals and strategies are built are the six federal Housing and Urban Development System Performance Measures that San Diego and other communities across the nation are being held to and measured against, as defined below:

1. Reducing the number of persons experiencing homelessness.

2. Reducing the number of persons who become homeless for the first time.

3. Increasing the number of people exiting homelessness into permanent housing.

4. Reducing the length of time persons remain homeless.

5. Reducing the number of persons who return to homelessness after exiting homelessness to permanent housing.

6. Increasing successful placements from street outreach.

Developing measurable outcomes involves a coordinated effort using the regional HMIS data, state homeless data, and local county data sources and analysis. Measurable outcomes are based on changing and evolving data estimates and will need to be revisited and revised both as the phases of the Plan evolve and over time. Due to timing constraints regarding availability of data and the State timeline, the outcome goals in this plan are preliminary and will evolve during subsequent phases. The State of California Interagency Council on Homelessness has released the baseline data for outcome goals, which provides the initial basis for our planning. Future work will include committed, integrated work around data and will include coordination with partners.

Strategies for Achieving Outcome Goals

Within the context of the Framework, the County developed the following strategies that will be implemented to meet the outcome goals identified above. As we move forward with the phases of the Plan the strategies will be refined.

These strategies align with the emerging needs and gaps from the initial needs assessment for the County. The following strategies will be updated during Phases Two and Three of the Plan as part of the County's comprehensive assessment of needs and upstream action planning processes.



Root Cause & Upstream Prevention

The robust, interconnected nature of the County makes it uniquely positioned to identify and respond to the upstream factors that can lead to and exacerbate – or prevent – homelessness. The County's efforts will follow the lead of the Board in its updated Comprehensive Homeless Policy A-128 by adding the Social Determinants of Health (the conditions in which people are born, grow, live, work and age) to prevention work.

Upstream interventions involve approaches with the potential to affect the large populations that County departments and community services providers interact with daily. Finding ways to align diverse

sectors with housing stability outcomes and provide social, economic, environmental, and equitable interventions to vulnerable people before they fall into homelessness is crucial for reducing inflow into the homeless response system. This includes strong, early childhood supports and family strengthening, reducing poverty, and ensuring access to tools that help community members thrive. Focusing on an asset-based framework for upstream work to help people thrive is critical. Use of data to identify the risk factors early on is an essential part of our work.

Phase Three of this Plan will expand on the County's commitment to preventing homelessness through upstream responses, designed to address the County's role in confronting the interconnected challenges that systemically cause and exacerbate homelessness, and those that can prevent it. Addressing poverty and ensuring household stabilization and enrichment through employment programs and income support services, along with access to basic social services and community empowerment activities.



Diversion and Mitigation

When homelessness is not able to be prevented upstream, there is still an opportunity to intervene and provide housing stability for people who are on the brink of homelessness. Departments across the County interact with people who are facing housing instability and the risk of homelessness, although this may not be their primary reason for engagement in services. It is important for County departments and programs across sectors to be able to identify people who need housing assistance and to be equipped to intervene while the housing crisis can be resolved.

Diversion and mitigation efforts require coordination to mobilize County resources quickly and effectively, which may include short-term rental assistance, mediation, housing search and connections, legal assistance, and creating alternatives to incarceration for people experiencing homelessness. Diversion and mitigation also involve integrating homeless prevention and response into other systems, including schools, the justice system, and physical, and behavioral health facilities.

Phase Three of this Plan will further address the cross-sector interventions and coordination needed to effectively divert people from experiencing homelessness and mitigate the impact of housing instability as it occurs.



Services, Treatment & Outreach

The County plays a crucial role in ensuring that services, treatment, and outreach for people experiencing homelessness reach throughout the entire county, including rural and unincorporated areas. The County offers a wide array of services and treatment options that address the comprehensive needs of people experiencing homelessness, provided by over a dozen County departments, that each have their own specialized resources.

Services and treatment include the needed intersection of the County’s behavioral health, healthcare, housing, and homelessness systems working together to create collaborative and multi-disciplinary interventions that provide person-centered resources and services. Street outreach and case management are being significantly expanded in partnership with 18 local jurisdictions and offer important engagement points for people in unsheltered situations to access services and treatment, and a starting point for the journey to permanent housing and support.

The County is uniquely structured and resourced to ensure that homeless services, treatment, and outreach are robust and aligned across the region, maximizing countywide efforts to prevent and end homelessness.

Phase Three of this Plan will provide greater detail about the ways in which the County can expand and effectively mobilize its homeless services, treatment options and outreach efforts.



Emergency/Interim Housing & Resources

Homelessness is an emergency, and as such, often requires emergency or interim housing and resources before a person can exit to safe, stable, and permanent housing. Interventions for emergency and interim housing should include assessment of a person’s needs, wants and barriers to housing, supportive services coordination, shelter, safe parking, sleeping spaces, transitional and temporary housing, housing subsidy vouchers and housing navigation.

The County must help identify and fill the gaps that exist in providing low-barrier emergency housing options at the local and regional levels. This will involve coordination with various County departments, local jurisdictions, and people with lived experience to plan for the development of new sites. It will also require the exploration of innovative approaches and utilization of space in order to meet the significant emergency response needs identified across the County. The County has embarked on a variety of compassionate emergency housing solutions, which range from hotel vouchers and safe parking to sleeping cabins, harm reduction interventions and housing, joint ventures with city jurisdictions and other innovative approaches to ensure those experiencing homelessness have a choice that meets their needs.

Phase Two of this Plan will outline the County’s planned homeless emergency response efforts, which will include mapping emergency resources and housing needs across the County and identifying where County resources are uniquely suited to help fill these gaps, in coordination with nonprofit and other governmental partners.



Permanent Housing and Support

The goal of housing affordability is anchored in ensuring that housing is accessible to individuals and households at all income levels, with a focus on households earning less than 30% of area median income that are considered extremely low-income.

The County must work with cities and other partners to address a variety of types of housing that match the current and future needs of people experiencing homelessness. The County is leveraging a variety of State and federal funding sources to create new affordable units and currently is funding 890 units currently under construction and 1,675 units in the planning pipeline that will serve low-income families, veterans, seniors, and people with Serious Mental Illness.

In Phase Three of this Plan, it will be clear that as the County's prevention efforts increase, the ability to convert specialty housing supply intended for crisis needs into more long-term uses will be part of the long-term strategy for housing supply.

Equity Impact Statement

Local Equity Context

The RTFH We All Count Point-in-Time Count identifies the number of individuals living on the streets or in emergency shelters on one specific designated day of the year. In the 2020 We All Count Point-in-Time Count, 7,638 individuals were identified as living on the streets or in shelters throughout the county. Of those who were unsheltered, 58% reported having a disability, which includes 37% of the population who reported having a mental health condition. A youth count was conducted, and 659 youth were counted. Of those youth, 41% reported experiencing homelessness for a year or longer. Unified under a County of One approach, the County is dedicated to addressing the root causes of homelessness and providing preventative and supportive services to the most vulnerable residents.

People of color are disproportionately impacted among those experiencing homelessness, with 27.2% identifying as Black or African American, roughly five times the proportion of African Americans in the region; 3.4% identifying as American Indian or Alaska Native, which is nearly three times the proportion in the region; 2.8% identifying as Asian; and 28% Hispanic. In general, the incidence of Black, Native Americans and other persons of color experiencing homelessness mirrors the disparities found at the broader community levels.

Commitment to Racial and Social Equity

Ensuring racial and social equity in all aspects of homelessness prevention and response is one of the key principles that guide the Framework and all items that fall under the strategic domains. Additionally, securing equitable housing, supports and funding will assist those who are experiencing homelessness or at-risk of homelessness throughout San Diego County. The recommended actions in Phase One of

the Plan, and the upcoming Phases, will provide needed housing and support to individuals countywide, including youth and those who are disproportionality represented in the homeless system; justice involved individuals; individuals with a range of health and social needs; as well as Black, Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC). This Plan also lays the groundwork for establishing measurable outcome goals and strategies to track progress on meeting these needs, which will be refined and expanded upon in upcoming Plan Phases.

Next Steps

Comprehensive Needs Assessment

HSEC-OHS is working with Homebase to continue the comprehensive needs assessment as part of the Plan. The comprehensive needs assessment will build on the information in the Phase One and will include mapping; system modeling for upstream prevention; and an assessment of needs based on a review of community plans, guidance documents, stakeholder interviews, focus groups, and surveys.

Including Upstream Prevention

HSEC-OHS will continue to work closely with Homebase throughout 2022 to develop upstream responses as part of the Plan, which will build on and support the ongoing items laid out in the Phase One of the Plan. These upstream response strategies will detail specific strategies and action steps across the five strategic domains and five key drivers of the Framework, that the County will take in order to effectively make homelessness rare, brief, and non-recurring for all people in San Diego County, across all regions and unincorporated areas.

The Plan will detail cross-systems partnerships and system-based approaches to preventing homelessness upstream, with a focus on social determinants of health, racial and health inequities and disparities, community and family violence prevention, and long-term housing supply sustainability.

Data-Driven Decision-Making

There are critical opportunities for data quality improvements and better sharing that can enable more effective interventions for both prevention and action once a person is experiencing homelessness. Key examples for improvement include:

- Mechanisms for longitudinal data collection;
- Aligning definitions across sectors to maximize funding streams;
- Shared analytics and outcome goals to improve program design and reporting; and,
- Coordinating care and data sharing between homeless services, health services, child welfare, justice system partners, and other partners in preventing and ending homelessness.

The Plan will incorporate strategies for data quality improvements, sharing, and outcomes and will establish a commitment to outcomes reporting on an ongoing and annual basis.

Conclusion

The information in Phase One of the Plan is not intended to represent a comprehensive set of strategies for preventing and ending homelessness in the County. Rather, this Plan represents a starting point and a groundwork for the County's continued planning and commitment to identifying local needs and developing comprehensive goals, strategies, and partnerships to effectively respond to homelessness countywide. The Framework will be the guide that frames the final plan.