

Homelessness Prevention Program

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY

May 23, 2023

1. Background

Over the past few years, the San Diego County Board of Supervisors (Board) has made significant investments to address the regional homelessness crisis in San Diego County. As the County of San Diego (County) continues to make enterprise-wide historic investments in programs for people experiencing or at risk of homelessness, there is a need to identify the most effective avenues for critical resource allocation, with special focus on upstream efforts to prevent individuals from becoming homeless in the first place. The Regional Task Force on Homelessness (RTFH) reported in December 2022, that on average over the past year, 10 people found housing for every 13 people who experienced homelessness for the first time. Prevention is a crucial strategy in reducing the inflow to the homeless system and people will continue to become homeless, unless our region can support more house opportunities.

Based on the County's review of a similar homelessness prevention program piloted in Los Angeles County, as designed, the County's proposed Homelessness Prevention Program (HPP) would prevent homelessness for certain at-risk households (individuals and families) by leveraging the use of existing data through a Predictive Analytics Model (PAM). A PAM would allow the County to leverage a comprehensive integrated data system to address a potential housing crisis for an identified household. Additionally, a PAM for homelessness would allow the County to be proactive in identifying households with particular risk factors that indicate the likelihood of becoming homeless and provide an intervention to prevent homelessness from occurring.

2. Identifying Cost and Funding

The HPP is comprised of two projects:

- a. The County Office of Evaluation, Performance and Analytics (OEPA) will develop an integrated data platform, which will have capacity to support the predictive analytics needs of the HPP. Led by OEPA, the integrated data system will be an enterprise-wide solution that will serve departments across the County and is not solely related to HPP efforts. OEPA will fund the estimated development cost of \$2.2M using Fiscal Year (FY) 2022-23 resources included in its budget. Estimates of annual maintenance and operational costs will be determined during development and implementation. The integrated data system will be an enterprise-wide solution and the HPP would only be one component of it. The appropriate allocation of costs to the HPP would be determined at a later date once more information is available.
- b. After development of the integrated data platform and if a sustainable funding source is identified, the next steps would include an incorporation of PAM and creation of a Homelessness Prevention Unit (HPU) within the County's Health and Human Services Agency (HHSA), Department of Homeless Solutions and Equitable Communities – Office of Homeless Solutions (HSEC-OHS). The HSEC-OHS has estimated costs for establishing and operating the HPU, to serve a minimum of 280 households (236 individuals and 44 families) per year to be approximately \$3.8 million annually. In addition, there is a one-time cost of \$0.3 million for the implementation of an evaluation framework for the HPP. The HPU budget would include 12 County staff. Once established, HPU staff would review the at-risk list provided by OEPA to confirm eligibility, then provide outreach, housing navigation, housing stability services including flexible funding to prevent their housing crisis.

Currently there is no funding identified to support ongoing costs associated with the HPU. Funding to cover costs associated with the HPU will need to be identified by the HHSA prior to further action. HSEC will monitor its budget and return to the Board with mid-year action to adjust the budget if necessary and/or incorporate in future operational plans as funding becomes available.

3. Identifying Predictive Analytics Risk Factors Specific to the San Diego County Model

HSEC in partnership with OEPA, undertook a preliminary review of risk factors for homelessness to identify at-risk households and determine predictive analytics risk factors and assembled a multidisciplinary cross-department workgroup to develop the HPP Implementation Strategy. The risk factors for households facing homelessness would be built into the PAM and focus on households (1) who make a housing hotline call for assistance; (2) who have applied for additional benefits in the last six months; and/or (3) who have increased healthcare appointments or hospitalizations. Specific risk factors are being refined based on on-going research and the availability and relevance of the data to San Diego County.

4. Developing an Integrated Data System

OEPA and the County Technology Office (CTO) engaged Gartner, Inc., a technology research and consulting firm, to develop a roadmap to build the technical capacity necessary to operationalize its primary use cases, including predictive analytics. The roadmap identifies the technology requirements for the development of an integrated data platform that will enable predictive modeling using linked data from County departments and external sources. As an enterprise-wide solution, the integrated data system is led by OEPA and not solely tied to HPP-related efforts. It is expected that the system will be operational by December 2023 and the initial version of the predictive model is anticipated to be completed by June 2024.

In addition to technology investments, OEPA will need to establish partnerships with County and community stakeholders to collect data on factors that can be used to assess an individual's risk of experiencing homelessness. As part of these efforts, a thorough review of data privacy and security considerations and regulations will be completed and necessary agreements will need to be established with each partner to support data sharing between involved parties. OEPA's initial focus will be on establishing partnerships with HHSA departments. OEPA intends to continue to establish additional partnerships with other County departments and external stakeholders to enrich the data in the integrated data platform and ultimately improve the quality of the predictive model.

5. Establishing Homelessness Prevention Unit (HPU) within County HHSA, HSEC

It is envisioned that the HPP would include seven core components to provide housing stabilization services to households in need of assistance. These core components include proactive screening, eligibility determination, outreach and engagement, system coordination and navigation, housing assistance and placement, financial stability, and outcome measures. Upon identification of sustainable funding to cover the costs of the HPU, HSEC would establish the HPU to administer assistance to households identified by the predictive analytics model as at risk for homelessness. Using a multi-disciplinary team approach, HPU staff would be comprised of Data and Outreach Specialists, Housing Navigators, and Case Managers, who would act as advocates and provide financial assistance and support households with navigating the system and accessing existing community supports. Services would be provided countywide and would serve a minimum of 280 households (236 individuals and 44 families each year). As noted, sufficient funding will need to be identified to cover costs associated with the sustainable implementation of this unit prior to taking further action.

Homelessness Prevention Unit Core Components



Proactive Screening

This program uses PAM to detect early signs of risk for homelessness made possible by the development of an integrated data system.

Eligibility Determination

Upon receiving the list of households identified by PAM as having high scores for being at-risk of homelessness, HPU Data Specialists would review County and non-County data systems to determine eligibility for the HPP. Upon determination of eligibility for the households on the list, HPU Data Specialists would share the list of eligible households with HPU Outreach Specialists.

Outreach and Engagement

Upon receipt of a curated list of eligible households, HPU Outreach Specialists would engage prospective individuals and families to complete enrollment into the program. Enrolled households would then be referred to Case Managers who would connect with assigned households to build rapport and collaboratively complete a comprehensive assessment to determine immediate needs.

Service Coordination and System Navigation

Identifying needs and linking individuals to appropriate treatment and services is critical to help resolve a crisis and assist with achieving housing stability. There are community supports currently available to households in need of assistance, however these supports can be fragmented and independent of one another, posing risk of disruption to the continuum of services households receive. To address this issue, HPU Case Managers would create a Comprehensive Stabilization Plan (CSP) based on each household's input and assessed needs to stabilize individuals and families by addressing immediate housing-related needs, offering supports tailored to each household's unique situation, and prioritizing linkages to appropriate community supports. This plan would be updated regularly to track progress, and adjustments would be made as needed with the goal of graduating households from the program.

Flexible housing funds would be available to pay for services/expenses that support housing stability. Services provided would include transportation expenses, childcare, reunification/relocation assistance, and linkages to community supports such as legal advocacy, mental health treatment, substance abuse treatment, health care, and any other needs identified in the CSP for each household. Other funding would be leveraged, and households could access additional resources including CalAIM, Social Security Income, and public benefits.

Housing Assistance and Placement

When housing navigation services are required, Case Managers would make a referral to HPU Housing Navigators to identify both immediate and long-term housing-related resources needed to prevent households

from experiencing homelessness. They would also provide landlord advocacy and assist with housing searches and placement based on their unique needs and preferences. HPU Housing Navigators would identify and leverage existing housing resources and programs, including Rapid Rehousing, Permanent Supportive Housing, Section 8 Housing Choice Vouchers, Recovery Residences, as well as leveraging housing resources through other County departments and health plans.

Alternatively, if existing resources are deemed insufficient, the HPP would provide flexible housing funds to help with expenses related to rehousing individuals and families and removing barriers to housing options. The goal is to help stabilize households and prevent them from experiencing homelessness. Flexible housing funds would pay for housing-related expenses, including security deposits, rental arrears, rental assistance, utility deposits, utilities assistance, utilities arrears, move-in and moving expenses, and essential furnishing expenses. Other support needed to achieve housing stabilization would be considered on a case-by-case basis.

Financial Stability

A common need for households in crisis is financial stability, which may involve finding or maintaining employment that provides livable wages. As needed, HPU Case Managers would help households enroll in educational programs, workforce training, and apprenticeship opportunities to support obtaining or maintaining employment. HPU Case Managers would also assist eligible households with applying for self-sufficiency benefits, such as Social Security Income, Social Security Disability, or Cash Assistance Program for Immigrants, as applicable. Additionally, HPU Case Managers would collaborate with training and employment agencies to assist households with enrolling in job training, finding apprenticeships, and link households to community supports such as payee services, money management classes, financial literacy classes, career centers, aging and disability services, and any other relevant community supports. Pending identification of funds, flexible funds would be built into the budget to cover the costs of books, supplies, uniforms, clothing, parking, transportation, and tuition fees.

Outcome Measures

Outcomes and goals would be measured through multiple data points collected weekly and monthly by the program. Data would be used to inform current and future program design. Measuring the effectiveness of the PAM and the services provided through the HPP will determine if the interventions lead to increased housing stability, increased connections to services, increased financial stability, and a decrease in households entering the homeless system. The table below identifies the program goals with which the outcomes measures will be aligned.

Program Goals:
1. Prevent households at risk of homelessness from becoming homeless
2. Improve housing stabilization
3. Facilitate connections to supportive services
4. Increase financial stability

6. Looking Forward

The design and implementation of the County's HPP would focus on utilizing risk assessment tools tailored to local community needs and dynamics, with the primary goal of preventing households from entering the homeless system. A successful implementation of the HPP strategy requires the County to create the host data infrastructure, the PAM, and the HPU, and to build the relationships needed to support vulnerable households. The HPU would utilize the PAM to detect early signs that a household may be at risk of homelessness and provide supports tailored to each household's situation. The program would use a short-term, rapid response, coordinated approach, to provide outreach, case management, housing navigation and financial services support to prevent housing crises that could lead to homelessness. As part of these collaborative efforts with OEPA and prior to program implementation, an evaluation framework would be developed to include a review of enrolled households to determine the effectiveness of the program. It is critical to acknowledge that while funding exists for the initial part of creating the comprehensive integrated data system at this time, funding has not been identified for costs of operating and maintaining it beyond FY 2023-24 or for establishing the HPU. HHSA will continue to explore funding opportunities that could support the implementation of this program in the future.