



CALIFORNIA HOMELESS COORDINATING AND FINANCING COUNCIL

Business, Consumer Services and Housing Agency
Gavin Newsom, Governor | Lourdes M. Castro Ramírez, Secretary



April 17, 2020

Dear Members of the Homeless Coordinating and Financing Council:

First, let me take a moment to thank all of you for your leadership in our work to end homelessness in California, especially during these trying times. The work you're doing is truly making a difference.

Since our last meeting on March 25, we have been very busy with numerous state efforts to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic. I would like to provide an update on the Council's efforts, in partnership with other state agencies, to protect those experiencing homelessness from COVID-19.

As you are aware, on March 18, 2020 the Governor took [emergency actions](#), signing an [executive order](#) and authorized \$150 Million in funding to protect individuals experiencing homelessness from COVID-19. This included \$100 million for the Homeless Coordinating and Financing Council (HCFC) to directly allocate to local governments and Continuums of Care for shelter support and emergency housing to prevent and mitigate the spread of COVID-19 among the homeless population.

On March 23, just 5 days after the Governor's announcement, award letters for the \$100 million were distributed to 13 large cities, 58 counties, and 44 Continuums of Care (CoCs) to invest in COVID-19 prevention and containment efforts for those experiencing homelessness. To date, over 50 percent (\$54 million) of these funds have been dispersed to local communities. Eligible uses for this funding include increasing congregate and non-congregate shelter capacity to allow for social distancing and isolation, increasing street outreach efforts, and the purchase of equipment and supplies to prevent the spread of infection amongst those experiencing homelessness and service providers.

HCFC is also providing ongoing technical assistance to local jurisdictions on their COVID-19 response for those experiencing homelessness. Efforts include supporting communities to achieve social distancing in shelters, to administer symptom screenings, and to ensure each homeless provider and outreach team has a clear process in place to safely isolate symptomatic or COVID+ individuals.

HCFC is also providing technical assistance on how existing HCFC funding can be used to protect those experiencing homelessness from COVID-19.

In addition to these efforts, the state has identified a clear need to provide non-congregate shelter for sick and medically vulnerable Californians who are unable to self-isolate. As a result, the Governor also announced an investment of \$50 million for Project Roomkey, an effort to establish occupancy agreements and secure rooms in hotels, motels and other facilities, including trailers.

Project Roomkey will provide emergency housing for immediate protection for people experiencing homelessness and minimize the strain on the healthcare system. The majority of Project Roomkey expenditures are federally reimbursable under FEMA at a 75% federal share of cost. This effort is being administered by the California Department of Social Services (CDSS), with close partnership and support from HCFC, the California Department of General Services and numerous other state agencies. Local governments and CoCs are strongly encouraged to use their portion of the \$100 million made available by HCFC toward this effort.

CDSS has released a number of resources to better assist local jurisdictions in understanding how Project Roomkey works, including:

- A Project Roomkey [Fact Sheet](#)
- The Project Roomkey FEMA [Approval Letter](#)
- Additional FEMA [Guidance](#)

In addition to these unprecedented efforts around immediate crisis response, HCFC is also continuing to ensure our other essential work continues. To that end, we are thrilled to inform you that the statewide [Homeless Data Integration System](#) is progressing at a rapid pace. Data Use Agreements were sent to all Continuums of Care recently. To support the effort, I wrote a public letter (attached below) to local leaders fighting to end homelessness that explains the project and the importance of local engagement.

Finally, the HCFC has released award letters and standard agreements to all Homeless Housing, Assistance and Prevention Program (HHAP) grantees for the \$650 million in funding. This money will be distributed as block grants that provide local jurisdictions with funding to support regional coordination and expand or develop local capacity to address homelessness. We are working closely with our state partners to ensure that funding is dispersed quickly to assist with ongoing needs.

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This massive statewide effort to protect Californians experiencing homelessness from COVID-19 is nothing short of extraordinary, and we would like to share our sincere gratitude to our state partners and all of you working tirelessly at the local level to protect and assist our most vulnerable neighbors.

In Partnership,



Lourdes Castro Ramirez, Secretary
Council Chair



State of California
BUSINESS, CONSUMER SERVICES AND HOUSING AGENCY

Gavin Newsom, Governor
Lourdes M. Castro Ramírez, Secretary

April 10, 2020

To California's Local Leaders Fighting to End Homelessness:

In his 2020 State of the State Address, Governor Gavin Newsom declared, "In order to track the progress, we're committed to developing and establishing a unified homelessness data system to capture accurate, local information. Because at the end of the day...you can't manage what you don't measure."

Today, we are pleased to announce that the California Business, Consumer Services and Housing Agency (BCSH) has officially released a Request for Proposals to build the Homeless Data Integration System (HDIS). HDIS will be the unified, statewide data system designed to collect and analyze information from local homeless programs, enabling us all to make data-driven decisions and significantly strengthening our efforts to combat homelessness in California.

Amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, we see now more than ever the importance of communication, access to data, and strong coordination across systems. Even during such difficult times, all this work must be done with transparency and accountability.

HDIS will be built on partnerships between the State, Continuums of Care (CoC), and local jurisdictions. Specifically, we look forward to working closely with CoCs and integrating the data already being collected through the Homeless Management Information Systems (HMIS). To ensure the success of this effort, we are encouraging CoCs to become early adopters during the procurement process. We are also requesting the Data Use Agreement provided by the Homeless Coordinating and Financing Council (HCFC) be signed and returned. Partnering now will ensure that the HDIS system is shaped collectively---and grounded in your knowledge and experience.

To learn more about HDIS, sign up as an early adopter and return the signed Use Agreement. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact us or Jill Leufgen at jill.leufgen@bcsh.ca.gov or view the FAQ posted on the BCSH -HCFC website at www.bcsch.ca.gov/hcfc.

Thank you for your incredible work--- serving, supporting, and uplifting the most vulnerable members of our community. Stay safe and healthy!

With gratitude,


Lourdes Castro Ramírez
Secretary

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