



Homeless Emergency and Active Readiness Toolkit (HEART): Get Connected

# Sutter-Yuba Case Study:

Stronger Collaborations Leads to Better Outcomes

## SUTTER-YUBA COUNTY AT A GLANCE

- Population: 171,926 (includes both Sutter and Yuba Counties)
- Location: Rural/Semi-Rural
- Median Income: \$63,626 (2022)
- Sheltered and unsheltered people experiencing homelessness on a single night in January (2024): 928

## SUMMARY

The Sutter Yuba Homeless Consortium, which serves as the Continuum of Care (CoC) for Sutter and Yuba counties, demonstrates the importance of “getting connected.” The CoC has fostered a robust network of partnerships through its role in the Access and Functional Needs (AFN) committee, which focuses on emergency and disaster events affecting unsheltered communities. This committee meets quarterly and strengthens collaboration between law enforcement, mental health services, social services, and unsheltered communities, ensuring that people experiencing homelessness are actively included in emergency response planning. Additionally, the CoC holds monthly stakeholder meetings with law enforcement, county health and human services, and public health to ensure coordinated support for the unhoused population in the county ensuring there are clear channels in place for sharing resources, strategies, and updates.

The CoC plays a crucial role on the AFN committee in connecting law enforcement, mental health services, social services, and people experiencing homelessness. The CoC brings the knowledge gathered at the monthly stakeholder meetings to the quarterly AFN committee. The successful evacuation during the Lake Oroville dam spillway incident was attributed to close communication and coordination through the AFN Committee between the public transit and shelter systems.





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## FOCUS ON QUARTERLY MEETINGS

In 2020, the Office of Emergency Services (OES) invited the CoC to join the Sutter-Yuba AFN committee. As a leading expert on homelessness, the CoC plays a vital role. They share critical information, including contacts across shelter providers and emergency services.

The AFN committee convenes quarterly, bringing together representatives from various sectors: childcare, law enforcement, local nonprofits, public information officers, aging/disability services, the Area Developmentally Disabled Administrative Board (ADRC), regional transit, shelters, federally qualified health centers (FQHC), and the county health officer. The purpose of these meetings is to:

- Identify and discuss potential regional disasters.
- Facilitate introductions to OES and key partners, helping participants gain a clear understanding of roles and responsibilities through contact rosters.
- Share resources and collaborate, using the meetings as a platform to exchange best practices and support.
- Provide updates and a forum to discuss various topics, including critical issues such as animal welfare and senior citizen support during emergencies.

## BENEFITS OF COLLABORATION

The AFN meetings foster strong relationships within the community. Participants build connections, develop a deeper understanding of local service providers and nonprofits, and improve coordination between organizations and county services. These collaborative efforts proved invaluable during recent floods. Effective communication facilitated by the AFN committee kept the community well-informed about the situation and the actions planned by the Emergency Operations Center (EOC).

The CoC connects law enforcement, mental health services, social services, and people experiencing unsheltered homelessness including those living near the river. This collaboration ensures coordinated support for people experiencing homelessness in the county.

Strong relationships have been built with county health and human services, and public health through joint committee participation. Outside of the AFN meetings, the CoC also hosts monthly stakeholder meetings with law enforcement. These meetings foster trust and establish clear communication channels across stakeholders. This collaboration extends beyond emergencies, building a foundation for ongoing partnership. These ongoing interactions ensure coordinated support for those experiencing homelessness in the two county region.

The local OES also developed an action plan for rising water levels that includes people living in encampments near the river. This plan utilizes law enforcement to guide evacuations, with regional transit transporting people to shelters or churches. The plan demonstrates the commitment to including people experiencing homelessness in emergency planning.

## CONCLUSION

The Sutter Yuba Homeless Consortium's case study exemplifies "getting connected" through its commitment to building a collaborative network that includes people experiencing homelessness in emergency preparedness and response. By participating in the AFN committee, the CoC plays an essential role in bringing together law enforcement, mental health services, social services, and people experiencing homelessness. This collaboration ensures a coordinated approach that addresses the specific needs of people experiencing homelessness during disasters, emphasizing a whole-community approach to emergency planning.

The AFN committee's quarterly meetings foster inter-agency connections, sharing critical resources, best practices, and responsibilities. By uniting representatives from childcare, public health, law enforcement, transit, shelters, and nonprofits, these meetings ensure all partners understand their roles in emergency situations. This focus on resource-sharing and communication builds a network of trust and readiness among agencies that can be activated swiftly during a crisis.

### Special thanks to:

• **Johnny Burke**, Executive Director, Sutter Yuba Homeless Consortium