



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

Meeting Summary
June 11, 2020
1:00PM – 4:00PM
Teleconference

I. Call to Order and Roll Call

Lourdes M. Castro Ramirez, Council Chair and Secretary of Business, Consumer Services, and Housing Agency call the meeting to order at 1:11PM.

Council Members Present:

- Lourdes M. Castro Ramirez, Council Chair and Secretary of the Business, Consumer Services and Housing Agency;
- Emilio Ramirez, Council Vice Chair and Director of Housing, City of Oxnard
- Amy Anderson, Chief Housing Officer, Office of Los Angeles Mayor Eric Garcetti;
- Russell Atterberry, Undersecretary of the Department of Veterans Affairs;
- Alexis Barries, Family Partner with Placement Service and Crisis Stabilization Response Team, Santa Clara;
- Gina Buccieri-Harrington, Assistant Director of Grants Management, Victim Services Program in the Governor's Office of Emergency Services;
- Corrin Buchanan, Chief of the Housing, Homelessness and Civil Rights Branch in the Department of Social Services
- Donald Cavier, Chief Deputy Director of the California Housing Finance Agency;
- Jacey Cooper, Chief Deputy Director of Health Care Programs in the Department of Health Care Services;
- Gail Gilman, Chief Strategy Officer, All Home California
- Jody Ketcheside, Deputy Regional Director of Turning Point of Central California
- Jennifer Loving, Chief Executive Officer of Destination: Home;
- Toks Omishakin, Director of California Department of Transportation;
- Joseph Uchishiba, Police Officer for the City of Fairfield;
- Gustavo Velasquez, Director of California Department of Housing and Community Development; and
- Stephanie Welch, Executive Officer for the Council on Criminal Justice and Behavioral Health in the Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation

Absent:

- Gary McCoy, Congressional Aide for Office of House Speaker Nancy Pelosi

Opening Remarks

Secretary Lourdes M. Castro Ramirez explained that the Council was created in 2017 in recognition of the homelessness crisis facing California. Secretary Castro Ramirez thanked Council for their commitment to the Council's mission, and welcomed new Council Members Gustavo Velasquez, Director of California Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD), and Toks Omishakin, Director of California Department of Transportation (CalTrans).

II. Adoption of the March 25, 2020 Council meeting minutes

The Council approved the [meeting minutes](#) from the March 25, 2020 Council meeting with a correction to Council Member Amy Anderson's title and affiliation.

III. State's response and coordination efforts to protect people experiencing homelessness during the COVID-19 pandemic

Secretary Castro Ramirez thanked the Council and everyone joining the meeting for their efforts to protect and provide support services for individuals experiencing homelessness.

HCFC has provided [guidance documents](#) and regular communication, kept an updated website, and hosted stakeholder engagement calls with the goal of coordinating and problem-solving together. Supporting homeless populations and services providers is a key priority for the state and continues to demonstrate our commitment to working across sectors to solve homelessness and poverty in our state. Thank you to the Governor and his administration for their response to this pandemic.

As part of the state's response to the pandemic, the Unified Coordination Group (UCG) has been working across state agencies to ensure appropriate response and safe recovery. The priorities of UCG are:

- Support hospital systems and maintain surge, testing, and contact tracing capacity
- Protect vulnerable populations, including seniors and those with access and functional needs
- Support homeless population and shelters through emergency protective measures
- Ensure continuity of first responders, healthcare workforce, and government operations
- Provide state and federal assistance, including unemployment and food supply assistance
- Execute task force objectives and continue mid and long-term advance planning
- Support reopening the state through progress toward six indicators, guidance, and personal protective equipment (PPE)

Deputy Secretary for Homelessness Ali Sutton provided updates about HCFC's response to COVID-19 and its key areas of focus:

- Allocation of additional funding

HCFC has been responsible for administering [\\$100 million in funding](#) announced by the Governor on March 18. Award letters were sent out to cities, counties, and continuums of care within 5 days of the announcement. All funds have now been distributed. 75% of funds are expected to be spent on Project Roomkey, the state's non-congregate sheltering effort. There are additional eligible uses, and HCFC is providing technical assistance to grantees for this funding.

- [100-day challenge](#)

The Governor announced the 100-day challenge a few months ago. Initial kick-off was planned for the end of March but was postponed. The first cohort consists of Los Angeles County, Riverside County, Alameda County, and Stanislaus County and was launched on May 26. There is intensive technical assistance, and Rapid Results Institute has been brought on to assist. There are 85 days left of the challenge.

- Intensive full-system technical assistance

HCFC team has been working with state and federal partners including the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to ensure coordination in technical assistance efforts. HCFC has had individual calls with all 58 counties, 44 Continuums of Care (CoC) and 13 largest cities in California, has hosted regular office hours, and followed up with one-off conversations. Goals are to ensure safety in encampments, quick referral into non-congregate shelter for those who need it, and social distancing in shelters.

- Guidance development and resource sharing

HCFC developed [guidance](#) that continues to be updated with information from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and California Department of Public Health (CDPH). Resources are being shared from HUD, the National Alliance to End Homelessness (NAEH), the US Interagency Council on Homelessness (USICH), California Department of Social Services (CDSS), Housing California, and others.

- Coordination amongst state agencies

HCFC is assisting CDSS with Project Roomkey implementation, working with HCD to think through maximizing permanent housing options, and has worked with CalTrans for guidance on encampment cleanup and with the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR) on strategies for individuals being released from correctional facilities.

Council Member Corrin Buchanan provided updates from CDSS. 15,617 hotel and motel rooms are available across the state for Project Roomkey, and these are at a 65% occupancy rate with 10,229 rooms currently occupied. Rooms are being prioritized

for 3 groups: individuals who test positive for COVID-19, individuals who have been exposed to COVID-19, and individuals who are at high risk due to underlying health conditions or age. Two-thirds of rooms across the state are set aside for the high-risk group, and those rooms are at an 81% occupancy rate.

\$50 million in funding has come through CDSS for this effort which was primarily used for the purchase of trailers to serve as non-congregate shelter settings. The next largest use of this funding was to directly fund counties and tribes. These dollars have been fully allocated. FEMA reimbursement is available at 75% for eligible Project Roomkey expenses.

CDSS has been providing technical assistance and hosting office hours, including collaboration with partners from HUD, the Business, Consumer Services and Housing Agency (BCSH) and others. Focus has been on increasing occupancy rate, making units available to high-need individuals, and long-term solutions around positive exits and housing stability.

Council Member Gustavo Velasquez provided updates from HCD. There is a collaborative effort across state agencies to reduce unsheltered homelessness, with two main goals: public health and protecting the most vulnerable. Critical goals within this include permanent housing and permanent supportive housing. HCD and the California Department of General Services (DGS) are collecting and reviewing data to work toward acquisition of Project Roomkey motels and hotels to convert to permanent housing. In addition, recent data shows people of color are at a greater risk for homelessness, and HCD is committed to working to reduce these disparities. The Governor has committed \$600 million toward these efforts and expenditures must be made by the end of the calendar year.

Under the CARES Act, HCD issued a Notice of Funding Availability (NOFA) on June 1 for an Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG) of approximately \$42 million. Applications are due July 20 and funds will be awarded through streamlined allocation methodology to address needs related to COVID-19. HUD will make nearly \$272 million available through another round of ESG.

The CARES act provides additional flexibility to use Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funding for COVID-19 response for fiscal year 2019/2020. HCD released a NOFA on June 4 for CDBG-CARES funding for \$19 million. Applications began to be accepted on June 8 and will be accepted through August 31.

Council Member Gina Buccieri-Harrington provided updates from the California Governor's Office of Emergency Services (CalOES). CalOES received additional federal funding for the Emergency Management Grant to support regional emergency operations. \$4 million in additional funding for COVID-19 response was also received for Family Violence Prevention Funds, which support domestic violence shelters.

Council Member Buccieri-Harrington and Victim Services Chiefs from CalOES worked with coalitions for safety net programs to determine needs for COVID-19 response. \$5.3 million in funding was allocated, the majority of which is emergency and shelter funding. CalOES also put a Victim Services team within the State Operations Center to handle additional needs for community-based organizations.

CalOES was able to get match waivers for federal funding including Victims of Crime Act funding, Violence Against Women funding, and the Governor lifted the state match for domestic violence shelters. They were able to increase processing for funding for community-based organizations, allowing these organizations to receive checks in less time. They were also able to be more flexible in modifying grants to allow for broader usage.

Council Member Russell Atterberry provided updates from the California Department of Veterans Affairs (CalVet). The Health Care for Homeless Veterans program received \$10 million in CARES act funding to improve isolation practices for safety. Additionally, the HUD Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing (HUD-VASH) program is working to add flexibility to potentially allow veterans in Project Roomkey rooms to be eligible for this funding.

IV. Local response to and coordination around COVID-19 for people experiencing homelessness, including implementation of Project Roomkey

Council Member Jennifer Loving [presented](#) from Destination: Home in Santa Clara County. The County operates on a collective impact model where local jurisdictions collaborate and work together. One emergency operations center (EOC) was created for the region for housing and homelessness including the County of Santa Clara, the City of San Jose, Destination: Home, and CoC partners.

The region had over 2,000 shelter beds and housing units available when the COVID-19 pandemic hit and had to immediately cut hundreds to implement social distancing. Over 1,000 beds have been added back at 12 sites in 7 cities, the majority of which are in hotels/motels. The region received some state-provided trailers and opened 4 new temporary shelter locations. 500 new temporary housing units are pending.

In early April, a central referral hotline was set up to connect vulnerable individuals to these units. With assistance from the county's Office of Supportive Housing, enough units were set up that no individual who has requested shelter has had to be turned away. As a result, 12,000 households and over 13,000 individuals have been connected to shelter, the majority in non-congregate settings. Close to 400 individuals have been permanently housed during the pandemic.

Early in the pandemic, Santa Clara County started raising money to provide families with financial assistance. The region's homelessness prevention system is budgeted to

serve about 1,500 families yearly. They received 4,500 applications for financial assistance in the first three days. Over 27,000 additional households have requested assistance. \$10.9 million was given out to approximately 4,000 households in phase 1 of this program. Close to \$37 million in additional funding has been raised for this program. Phase 2 of this program is a partnership with 70 different organizations and will use this funding to focus on extremely low-income families. Phase 3 of this program will focus on COVID-19 recovery and assistance to keep families housed.

Secretary Castro Ramirez asked to clarify that there have been 20,000 applications and that 4,000 households have been served.

- Santa Clara County has given assistance to 4,000 households. About 9,000 additional applications are with partners, and about 15,000 are currently to be processed.

Secretary Castro Ramirez asked if they are tracking the federal stimulus package that may provide additional relief.

- The hope is that the federal government comes through, but regardless there will be a level of scarcity that hasn't been seen. We have to figure out how to keep as many families as possible from entering into homelessness.

Council Member Gail Gilman commented that there is a concern among jurisdictions about extremely low-income households entering into homelessness. She would like to re-think the way we look at prevention and consider offering temporary housing benefits to help families stabilize as they return to work.

- Flexible funding sources such as [Homeless Emergency Aid Program \(HEAP\)](#) have been important, and have helped to grow local homeless systems and increase capacity.

Heidi Marston [presented](#) from the Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority (LAHSA). Los Angeles has embraced Project Roomkey efforts and estimates at least 15,000 people are eligible for the program. Since the beginning of COVID-19 over 6,000 people have been moved into shelter, including over 34 Project Roomkey sites, Rec and Parks Shelters, and trailers from the state. They are building out a long-term COVID-19 recovery plan for people experiencing homelessness.

Los Angeles is looking at immediate, short-term, medium-term, and long-term response. The focus is on five "pillars" of response:

- Unsheltered

Ongoing street testing, making sure encampments aren't being moved, providing a health and safety response, providing housing resources to those outside.

- Shelter

Ensuring shelter system is maintained and looking at shelter inventory with respect to social distancing and capacity.

- Housing

Housing stock and acquisition strategies, subsidies, rapid rehousing and permanent supporting housing.

- Prevention and Diversion

Targeted prevention to keep people from falling into homelessness. For example, 599,000 individuals have become unemployed in Los Angeles County since May 9, and there is concern around what happens when things like eviction moratoriums are lifted.

- Strengthening Systems

Centralizing administration, building out longer-term response plan to be prepared for future emergency response.

Los Angeles is focusing in these areas while maintaining a lens of racial equity and racial justice, recognizing that Black residents make up 8% of the population in Los Angeles County but 33% of the homeless population.

Council Member Anderson noted LAHSA's work and collaboration in response to COVID-19 and in managing Project Roomkey sites, as well as recognizing assistance that was provided by DGS in securing these sites.

Council Member Jody Ketcheside presented from Turning Point of Central California in Tulare, CA. Tulare County currently has 97 people housed through Project Roomkey, utilizing 4 different hotels. Kings/Tulare Homeless Alliance (KTHA) is the CoC for the county. They are doing referrals and conducting screenings for these sites, as well as making sure individuals are entered into the Coordinated Entry System (CES), Homeless Management Information System (HMIS), and that exit strategies are being immediately worked on.

KTHA has also developed a street medicine partnership with hospitals in Visalia and Tulare in which COVID-19 testing, general health screenings and first aid are conducted on the street and medication is distributed. CoC staff are conducting housing assessments, updating addresses for stimulus checks, and providing supplies for hygiene. The CoC is also able to purchase supplies for community partners whose budgets have been impacted by COVID-19.

Tulare County has been invited to be part of a 100-day challenge to address youth homelessness. 21 other communities in the country have participated. This is timely because the California Youth Crisis Line has seen a 227% increase in crisis calls across the state.

Fresno County/Madera County CoC has opened 300 additional shelter beds in 4 different locations. The area did not have any shelters until last July, when 3 were opened using HEAP dollars. The CoC is also used state-provided trailers for individual

isolation. The focus in Fresno County and Tulare County is on preventing folks from returning to homelessness.

Public Comment:

- Helene Schneider, Regional Coordinator of US Interagency Council on Homelessness (USICH): Want to express appreciation for California's response and Project Roomkey. USICH connects with 19 different agencies and departments. Want to be a resource, please feel free to reach out.
- Mindi Parsons, California Department of Education (CDE): Want to highlight COVID-19 resources the department has put together. Topics include mental health, distance learning, early learning, meals, special education, and youth homelessness. Department has allocated \$1.4 billion to local education under the CARES act. For questions about the homeless education program email homelessed@cde.ca.gov.

V. Other Department and HCFC Updates

Deputy Secretary Sutton provided HCFC Updates. The [Homeless Data Integration System \(HDIS\)](#) procurement solicitation was released in early April. This includes a proof of concept model where up to 3 vendors will build a basic model of an HDIS system. We expect a vendor to be selected by late summer or early fall and have a system fully operational by the end of the calendar year.

All [Homeless Housing, Assistance and Prevention Program \(HHAP\)](#) standard agreement contracts have been returned and almost 85% (\$550 million) of funding has been distributed to grantees.

HCFC has staff working to provide COVID-19 specific guidance around youth, and how to use the youth set-aside from HEAP and HHAP.

HCFC is currently recruiting for our Council Executive Officer position. In addition, the Governor's revised budget recommends 10 new positions for the Council and we will be recruiting soon.

There is a plan to start work again soon on an HCFC action plan.

The following Departments provided a written [update](#) of their relevant homeless programs:

- Department of Housing and Community Development
- Department of Social Services
- Governor's Office of Emergency Services

No written updates provided:

- Council on Criminal Justice and Behavioral Health

- Submitted interim compliance report on Housing First in March outlining compliance with 8 of 11 components of Housing First. Continuing to work with HCFC and legislature toward compliance on substance abuse treatment and recovery programs.
- Struggles with how to count and define homelessness. Looking for guidance on how to align with CoC definitions.
- Department of Transportation
 - Undertook efforts to identify over 300 properties to be used for temporary leasing and emergency shelter. Created ready-to-use lease agreements to streamline process. Interactive map of properties is available on BCSH website.
 - Receives 500 monthly average customer service requests to clear homeless encampments. In the past month received 613 calls. Last year spent nearly \$15 million clearing encampments, this year has spent \$10 million. Clears 50 encampments per week including hazardous materials.
 - Has had pushback from the federal government on temporary shelter lease agreements and will keep working to move the process forward.

Council Member Gilman expressed that the Council should consider meeting more frequently, especially to allow greater input from partners outside state government with strategic planning efforts ramping back up.

Council Member Anderson asked what role the Council can play in helping to find a sustainable funding source for homelessness. She commented that such a funding source is critical to sustain and grow programs addressing homelessness.

Secretary Castro Ramirez stated that there had been a goal to work on strategic planning earlier, before the pandemic became the focus. She also recognized Council Member Gilman's suggestion, and stated she would look into opportunities to communicate more frequently to strengthen planning efforts.

Public Comment:

- Sharon Rapport, Corporation for Supportive Housing: In reference to language which would allow state-funding sober living facilities to be exempt from Housing First, we oppose action to exempt any program from California's Housing First laws. Residential treatment is already not subject to Housing First, and our position is that this exemption would only cause more homelessness. We instead recommend adopting HUD guidance to allow for recovery residences in a way consistent with Housing First and allowing CDCR additional time to comply with Housing First laws.
- James Bolas, Operation Safe House, Riverside County: Suggest that any program engaging youth or young adults should receive training around standards of care. Suggest creating a point of service in each county to

coordinate needs for youth and young adults experiencing homelessness. There is a “blind spot” around 18-24-year-olds in emergency housing.

- Mindi Parsons: CDE serves over 270,000 students in K-12, and of those 20% of homeless students do not qualify under the HUD definition. If there are any organizations that can help and don't need HUD, please email homelessed@cde.ca.gov.

VI. Other matters not on the agenda for consideration at future meetings

Council Member Stephanie Welch suggested walking through relevant budget proposals and legislation that have been passed at next meeting, especially around Project Roomkey.

Secretary Castro Ramirez stated that HCFC will plan to follow up with a public written update regarding Council Member Welch's request.

Deputy Secretary Sutton added that HCFC will work with legal team to determine how to appropriately share information with the Council and will plan on bringing these matters for discussion at a future meeting.

Public Comment:

- James Bolas, Operation Safe House, Riverside County: Comment that was made on agenda item V was intended for agenda item VI. Would like to see conversation around having all homeless service agencies trained in youth development strategies. Is particularly concerned with 18-24-year-olds being placed into adult shelters.

VII. Public comments on items not on the agenda

No public comments were made on this item.

Secretary Castro Ramirez thanked everyone for joining and made final remarks. Today, BCSH issued a [press release](#) through HCFC regarding \$100 million in COVID-19 Emergency Homelessness Funding indicating that 100% of these dollars have been distributed. The Secretary read quotes from Libby Schaaf, Mayor of Oakland, and Manuel Perez, Chair of the Riverside County Board of Supervisors.

VIII. Meeting is adjourned at 3:42PM.