

**SUMMARY FOR THE  
ADVISORY COMMITTEE TO THE  
CALIFORNIA INTERAGENCY COUNCIL ON HOMELESSNESS**

**February 5, 2025**

**Via videoconference and telephone**

**I. Call to Order, Tribal Land Acknowledgment, and Roll Call**

Cody Zeger, Cal ICH Director of Statewide Policy, called the meeting to order at 1:07pm.

*Advisory Committee Members Present:*

- **Ludmilla Bade**, Homelessness Advocate
- **Al Ballesteros**, Chief Executive Officer, JWCH Institute
- **Samantha Batko**, Principal Research Associate, Urban Institute
- **Doug Bond**, President & Chief Executive Officer, Amity Foundation
- **Joe Colletti**, Chief Executive Officer, Hub for Urban Initiatives
- **Charlene Dimas-Peinado**, President & Chief Executive Officer, Wellnest Emotional
- **Jennifer Hark Dietz**, Chief Executive Officer, PATH
- **Janet Kelly**, Founder & Executive Director, Sanctuary of Hope
- **Jody Ketcheside**, Deputy Chief Operating Officer, Turning Point of Central CA
- **Philip Mangano**, President & Chief Executive Officer, American Round Table to Abolish Homelessness
- **Alisa Orduña**, Founder & Executive Director, Florence Aliese Advancement Network
- **Sharon Rapport**, Director of California State Policy, Corporation for Supportive Housing
- **Janey Rountree**, Executive Director, California Policy Lab at UCLA
- **Reba Stevens**, Homelessness Advocate
- **Megan Van Sant**, Senior Program Manager, County of Mendocino
- **Alex Visotzky**, Senior California Policy Fellow, National Alliance to End Homelessness
- **Jevon Wilkes**, Executive Director, California Coalition for Youth
- **Roxanne Wilson**, Homeless Services Director, County of Monterey

*Advisory Committee Members Not Present:*

- **Carolyn Coleman**, Executive Director, League of California Cities
- **Vitka Eisen**, President & Chief Executive Officer, HealthRIGHT 360
- **Chris Martin**, Policy Director, Housing California
- **Moriah McGill**, Housing Development Construction Manager, Northern Circle Indian Housing Authority
- **Luana Murphy**, President & Chief Executive Officer, Exodus Recovery
- **Emilio Salas**, Executive Director, Los Angeles County Development Authority
- **Miguel Santana**, Chief Executive Officer, Weingart Foundation

## II. Consent Calendar

There was one item on the Consent Calendar: *Adoption of the [Meeting Summary from the August 22, 2024, Advisory Committee Meeting](#) and [November 12, 2024, Advisory Committee Meetings](#)*

Alex Visotzky made a motion to vote on the item and Jody Ketcheside seconded the motion. Motion passed to approve consent calendar.

*Public Comment:* No public comments made.

**Vote:** The Committee voted to approve the Consent Calendar with 17 members voting yes, 0-members abstaining, and 8 members absent during the vote.

## III. Executive Officer Updates

**Cal ICH Executive Officer Meghan Marshall:** Acknowledged Advisory Committee members impacted by the LA fires and shared an update on the state's response. She is leading a working group focused on those unhoused before the disaster, aiming to prevent entry into the homelessness system. She noted this will be a long-term effort, with updates shared via social media and Council meetings. Marshall also highlighted the Governor's proposal to split the current housing agency into two, with more details expected in Spring 2025. She reaffirmed California's ongoing commitment to addressing homelessness despite federal uncertainties.

**Reba Stevens:** Asked how the state was preparing for possible federal funding cuts and requested info on backup plans to ensure continued support for the Committee and community.

**Meghan Marshall:** Responded by acknowledging the concern and said the state was preparing for the worst-case scenario of losing federal funding. She noted contingency planning was underway across departments and highlighted a survey by the National Alliance to End Homelessness to assess the potential impact on Continuums of Care, including affected units and individuals.

**Jevon Wilkes:** Asked how the proposed restructuring of BCSH would affect existing Council and Advisory Committee structures.

**Meghan Marshall:** Responded that there were no planned changes to the structure of the Council or Advisory Committee, as both are established in statute and not affected by the proposed restructuring.

**Philip Mangano:** Emphasized the importance of preparing for the worst while remaining optimistic about federal support. He cited past cooperation between state and federal leaders during COVID and noted ongoing federal discussions on homelessness and Housing First.

**Meghan Marshall:** Shared that Cal ICH's General Counsel is monitoring federal executive orders daily for housing impacts. She also acknowledged recent disasters in Northern California and affirmed that support continued statewide despite the focus on Los Angeles.

## IV. Housing First

**Cal ICH Policy Specialist Giselle Sanchez:** Provided an overview of the state's Housing First implementation efforts. She explained that under SB 1380, all state-funded homelessness programs had to follow 11 core Housing First components. Cal ICH monitors compliance, provides guidance, and supports state agencies in aligning policies with the law. In 2023, Cal ICH surveyed 35 programs across 8 state departments, offered recommendations, and planned a follow-up in 2025. They also developed and shared guidance documents, including one focused on recovery housing. The draft guidance clarified that participation in recovery housing had to be voluntary and aligned with Housing First principles. Giselle asked the group for input on how Housing First had worked in their communities, feedback on the draft guidance, and what additional support or resources were needed.

**Alex Visotzky:** Highlighted the lack of successful models in Los Angeles, referencing Central City Concern as an example. He suggested adding language in the guidance about incorporating feedback from individuals with lived experience and clarifying how recovery housing connected to coordinated entry, ensuring smooth transitions without prioritizing recovery housing participants over others. Lastly, he recommended sharing the guidance with legislators to better inform their discussions on recovery housing and Housing First.

**Statewide Policy Director Cody Zeger:** Mentioned that the upcoming Lived Experience Advisory Board (LEAB) meeting would discuss Housing First, with more to come on the subject.

**Megan Van Sant:** Expressed concern that Housing First and recovery housing were fundamentally different models and not realistically compatible in most communities, especially smaller ones. She appreciated the guidance's intent but felt it presented an unrealistic expectation. She emphasized the need for sober options for individuals in recovery, including families and those involved in child welfare, and suggested the state consider allowing a portion of funding like 10% of HHAP to go toward recovery housing that might not fully align with Housing First. She urged more honest recognition of the practical limitations providers faced.

**Cody Zeger:** Clarified that the guidance was framed at a system level rather than at the individual program level. He emphasized that the intent was to support participant choice where someone might choose a sober living program, but if it no longer fit their needs, there were pathways to other housing types. He acknowledged that this system-based approach might not be practical in smaller communities with fewer resources.

**Megan Van Sant:** Responded that the issue wasn't just about having limited program options in smaller communities it was also about how funding requirements tied to Housing First effectively excluded recovery-based models. She pointed out that programs focused on sobriety were being shut out of key funding streams like HHAP and behavioral health transition funding.

**Sharon Rapport:** Agreed that most recovery homes didn't meet HUD's standards or support true participant choice. She emphasized relapse was part of recovery and people shouldn't be evicted for it. She shared an example from Portland, where Central City Concern offered both recovery and harm-reduction housing options nearby, giving people real choices. Sharon noted that this model didn't exist in most of California.

**Roxanne Wilson:** Shared that the guidance was initially confusing and required multiple readings. She suggested the document be clarified, especially for local-level implementers. She gave an example of Behavioral Health Bridge Housing, where a mix of low-barrier and abstinence-based units existed on the same street, making it difficult for residents to stay sober.

**Reba Stevens:** Emphasized the importance of including people with lived experience of substance use in shaping recovery housing policy. She called for intentional focus groups. She stressed aligning efforts with real needs, pointing to over 2,000 deaths in LA County in 2023, 40% from overdose. Stevens warned that rigid funding rules could cut off critical recovery options and urged flexibility based on community needs. She spoke candidly about addiction, choice, and triggers, saying that seeing drug use nearby, even after years of sobriety, could still be dangerous. She urged the group to prioritize saving lives over systems, including voices of those who had lived it, and to focus on building solid, supportive foundations—not just policies that looked good on paper.

**Philip Mangano:** Cautioned that Housing First might face political backlash, with conservative groups arguing it had failed under the Biden administration. He expected a shift toward a Services First model and warned that the term Housing First itself could become a liability, even if the approach remained effective. He advised considering alternate language and preparing for a scenario where Housing First would no longer be the primary federal strategy. With HUD's new Secretary in place and aware of these critiques, California programs reliant on federal funding were advised to be ready for possible changes.

**Alex Visotzky:** Added that the main issue with the federal government moving away from Housing First wasn't complete defunding but rather changes to the CoC program that could disadvantage California and lead to reduced funding. While CoC funding of around \$670–680 million was significant, it was still smaller compared to recent state investments. The shift away from Housing First could have impacted future funding, though the state's investment and Housing First's effectiveness in securing and retaining housing were key factors to consider.

**Ludmilla Bade:** Suggested that the funding streams should also support people who were not immediately eligible for housing, such as those far down the list or in temporary situations like RVs. She highlighted the gap in support for those not next in line for housing, sharing her own struggle to find consistent social worker support. Ludmilla emphasized the need for parallel recovery services to assist those not yet in housing, ensuring that they weren't left out or disconnected from the community.

**Cody Zeger:** Stressed the need for services during the housing search, not just after securing housing. He said the goal was to clarify how recovery housing fit within the state's Housing First approach. They would review feedback and continue refining guidance while working with local communities to address implementation barriers.

**Megan Van Sant:** Expressed concerns about the compatibility of recovery housing with the Housing First model, particularly regarding the absence of a sobriety requirement. She questioned whether recovery housing without sobriety requirements existed. Megan suggested being honest about the incompatibility between Housing First and recovery housing and advocated for setting aside state funding specifically for sober homeless individuals who wanted to live in sober shelters, as they felt discriminated against in the current system.

## **V. Advisory Committee Membership and Role**

**Meghan Marshall:** Outlined that term limits were approaching for current Advisory Committee members, and an application process will be held to fill vacancies. The advisory committee's statutory requirements included ensuring racial and gender diversity, and representation from specific groups such as survivors of gender-based violence, individuals with lived homelessness experience, and those with developmental disabilities. Currently, the committee is not meeting

the statutory obligations for five of the nine required member categories. In addition to statutory expertise, the committee planned to include new members with expertise in areas such as lived experience advisory boards, tribal communities in northern and southern California, native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander communities, and homelessness solutions for rural communities. Other recommendations include representatives from statewide associations, code enforcement officers, academic research institutes, and managed care plans. The discussion section focused on gathering feedback about the additional expertise needed, how recruitment for future members should be handled, and how to improve engagement with the Advisory Committee.

**Jody Ketcheside:** Noted that while rural homelessness services are included, CoC experience is missing, which she finds valuable given the frequent state inquiries about CoC operations.

**Meghan Marshall:** Clarified that statute requires representatives from local agencies, including those involved in Continuums of Care.

**Ludmilla Bade:** Emphasized the importance of incorporating environmental expertise, particularly in alignment with the United Nations' sustainability goals. She suggested including someone familiar with sustainable housing and environmental issues, pointing out that homelessness can be linked to a lack of sustainability. She stressed the need for multi-use, environmentally conscious affordable housing to address both housing and climate crises.

**Jevon Wilkes:** Noted that there is no statutory provision for them to have a representative with Lived Experience on the Council.

**Meghan Marshall:** Clarified that while there is no requirement, statute mandates that a member from the Advisory Committee be designated to report on the Committee's activities to the Council.

**Jevon Wilkes:** Suggested that while the Advisory Committee provides valuable input, having a seat at the table with voting power would significantly improve engagement. He emphasized that although discussions and report-outs are important, having the ability to influence decisions through a vote would allow for more impactful advocacy.

**Alisa Orduña:** Expressed concerns about the Advisory Committee becoming too institutionally focused with the addition of new members. She worried this might marginalize individual advocates, particularly those with lived experience, and hinder the space's inclusivity. She emphasized the importance of racial equity and making sure that new voices are welcomed without feeling tokenized. She highlighted the need to ensure that these voices contribute to tangible changes, especially in addressing disparities.

**Alex Visotzky:** For stronger engagement, Advisory Committee members should have a more active role in setting meeting agendas. He noted that some past agendas haven't always aligned with members' priorities or the urgency of current events. To address this, he proposed forming an executive subcommittee of advisory members to work with staff on shaping agendas, allowing members to bring forward timely, relevant topics for discussion. This, he said, would help ensure the Committee reflects real-time needs across the state.

**Reba Stevens:** Emphasized using current California data to guide Advisory Committee selection and highlighted the need for family representation, noting the rise in homelessness among families, especially in Los Angeles. She urged thoughtful, regionally aware selection to ensure balanced and compassionate representation.

**Meghan Marshall:** Explained that the Advisory Committee recommendations are informed by data for overrepresentation of certain groups in unsheltered homelessness. While statute requires representation for African Americans, data also supports including Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander and Tribal communities. She agreed with Reba Stevens' call for family representation and acknowledged the growing need, especially in Los Angeles. Meghan also noted the challenge of managing a large committee and emphasized balancing broad representation with a manageable size for effective engagement. She expressed deep appreciation for the longstanding commitment of members, particularly those who have served since the Advisory Committee was established in statute and acknowledged the frustration that can come with the work. She closed by thanking members for their continued engagement and patience as Cal ICH continues to evolve as a young and growing organization.

## **VI. General Public Comment**

**MaryAnne:** A consultant for Lived Experience Advisors in San Diego, raised concerns about implementing Housing First for individuals in recovery. Speaking from both professional and personal experience, she questioned how behavioral challenges such as petty theft, substance use, or antagonistic behavior are managed when individuals are housed alongside others not experiencing the same issues. She emphasized that for those seeking recovery, being around substance use can be triggering and counterproductive. MaryAnne also shared that as someone who experienced homelessness due to economic hardship, the stress of constantly looking over one's shoulder didn't necessarily go away with housing, particularly if safety remained a concern. Finally, she reiterated her interest in being considered for the Cal ICH Lived Experience Advisory Board.

**Brandon:** Referenced earlier comments about a possible shift in HUD's direction regarding Housing First. He expressed interest in learning more about this potential change and asked for the names of reports or sources mentioned, such as those from the Heritage Foundation, so he could read and better understand where federal policy might be heading.

**Ayako Utsumi:** Representing the California Department of Aging, thanked Megan Van Sant, Sharon Rapport, and other speakers for their insights on Housing First. Noted that the model may impact older adults differently and encouraged Cal ICH to continue studying the issue.

## **VII. Final Remarks and Adjournment**

Director Cody Zeger closed the meeting and informed the group that the next **Council Meeting will be held on March 12, 2025**, while the next **Advisory Committee meeting will be held on May 7, 2025**.

The Cal ICH Advisory Committee Meeting was adjourned at 2:51 pm.