



MONTEREY AND SAN BENITO COUNTIES

LEAD ME HOME PLAN UPDATE: COMMUNITY INPUT SESSIONS SUMMARY

Prepared April 12, 2021

BACKGROUND

The Coalition of Homeless Service Providers (CHSP) hosted a series of seven community input sessions to inform the update to the *Lead Me Home Plan to End Homelessness*. The sessions, facilitated by consulting firm Focus Strategies, aimed to share background on the planning work to-date and request feedback on a number of key system priorities including homelessness prevention, the community's response to unsheltered homelessness, emergency shelter, permanent housing solutions, and regional governance. Included below is a summary of the input community members shared at these sessions; full session notes may be found at: <https://chsp.org/plan-rewrite/>.

SUMMARY

A. Homelessness Prevention

Prevention strategies should include flexible financial assistance, education on tenant rights and support with legal issues, and connections to public benefits, workforce services, and other community resources. The homelessness response system should expand communication and coordination with other groups engaged in prevention efforts such as faith-based organizations, the criminal justice system, and recovery-related programs. Services should be person-centered with attention to the specific needs of subpopulations such as households with mixed immigration status.

B. Unsheltered Homelessness Response

Given the lack of available emergency and permanent housing solutions available, the region should develop and adopt ways people can stay safe while unsheltered such as approved parking sites, sanctioned encampments, or expanded access to hygiene facilities. To improve planning and coordination, the region should focus on data collection and evaluation, expanded communication between the formal and informal programs providing services to people in encampments, and increased mobile access to health, behavioral health, and other

services people need while unsheltered. Services provided should be person-centered and responsive to the specific situation of each person or encampment area.

C. Emergency Shelter

Shelters should adopt low-barrier and trauma-informed policies and practices. CHSP should increase community and provider education about the availability of emergency shelters in current operation and expand the availability of shelter beds. Program expansion efforts should be developed with attention to increasing geographic access across the region (particularly in San Benito County and South Monterey County), adopting models that allow for participant privacy such as smaller or non-congregate sites, and tailoring to specific sub-populations such as members of the LGBTQ+ community and youth.

D. Housing Solutions

CHSP should re-design the Coordinated Assessment and Referral System (CARS) assessment and prioritization criteria and processes to be more person-centered and equity- and trauma-informed. Given the length of time it can take to connect with permanent housing solutions, CHSP should explore additional interim options such as transitional housing, recreational vehicles, or tiny homes. The region needs to adopt a strategic, coordinated approach to housing development that is equitable, geographically diverse, supported by political will, and focused on increasing community receptiveness to new projects. The approach should include multiple models of housing ranging from large developments to small residential models and tailored service delivery approaches for subpopulations such as people with behavioral health needs, youth, and older adults.

E. Regional Governance

CHSP's Leadership Council should continue to expand its representation to include people with lived experience of homelessness, local jurisdictions not currently active in homelessness response, and system partners such as health care or education that frequently engage with people experiencing homelessness. The Leadership Council should set a region-wide vision and plan for the priority areas above – prevention, unsheltered homelessness response, emergency shelter, and permanent housing solutions. The strategies should account for the unique barriers and opportunities in each region. In addition, the Leadership Council should engage in community education to increase support for homelessness response efforts and in advocacy at the state level for funding and policies that advance affordable housing efforts.

