

# **Homeless Emergency Assistance Program**

## **Monterey County Community Priorities: A Summary & Analysis of Community Meetings**

December 11, 2018

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# 1. About the Meeting

## 1.1 Meeting Format & Focus Questions

Item 1: Meeting Dates, Location and Attendance

Location	Date	# of Sign-Ins	# of Small Groups
Salinas: Public Activity League (PAL)	Monday, 6-8pm 11/5/18	57	6
Peninsula in Seaside: Oldemeyer Center	Thursday, 6-8pm 11/8/18	27	4
South County in Greenfield: Council Chambers	Friday, 6-8pm 11/9/18	15	0
North County in Castroville: Tea House	Friday, 6-8pm 11/30/18	11	0

*Note: Attendance numbers does not include those staffing the event. It may be that not everyone signed in.*

The meeting format was designed around four engagement principles:

1. Dispersed geographically to reach communities across the county.
2. Neutral space, context and a common understanding of the homeless population.
3. Structured and facilitated input methodology to allow for comparability across meetings.
4. Multiple engagement methodologies for varying preferences in providing feedback:
  - a. Individually in written format throughout the meeting.
  - b. Individual voting mechanism.
  - c. Verbally in general Q&A and in facilitated group discussion.
  - d. Verbally share ideas one-on-one immediately after the meeting.
  - e. By email after the meetings, to Katherine Thoeni of CHSP.
  - f. Bilingually in Spanish and English.

Four discussion points were provided by the Coalition of Homeless Service Providers:

1. Describe the impact of homelessness to you and your community.
2. What gaps do you see in homeless services?
3. What kinds of projects/services/programs do you feel would help homeless people as quickly as possible? (Choose top 3 that you believe should be prioritized)
  - a. Programs for youth or youth at risk of homelessness. (unaccompanied youth ages 18-24)
  - b. Expand current homeless bed inventory through new emergency shelter beds
  - c. Expand current homeless bed inventory through transitional or other sorts of housing
  - d. Operating support for expanded homeless beds
  - e. Targeted street outreach, health and safety education programs, criminal justice diversion programs
  - f. Enhanced client services through housing navigation, landlord mitigation programs, targeted case management

- g. Rental assistance and rapid rehousing programs
  - h. Other activities not otherwise described
4. What commitment are you willing to make to solve homelessness?

## 1.2 Factors Influencing Outcomes

Within each group discussion, a facilitator took notes and attendees had the opportunity to write comments on notecards. The intent of using notecards was to document ideas when there was not an opportunity all ideas to be voiced. This methodology may allow some duplication between the notecards and the discussion notes. Only notes from the discussions and notecards were included in the below analysis; notes from the report-out by small groups are not, since this would clearly be a duplication of discussion notes.

A few additional things to consider that may have an influence on outcomes:

- The presentation and inquiry format changed slightly across meetings. The changes were intended to enhance clarity and flow, and should not impact overall discussion outcomes with any significance. Outcomes are still highly comparable across meeting.
  - Based on feedback from table facilitators, between the first and second meeting:
    - The order of questions asked was changed to improve flow of concepts and conversation.
    - The request for each small group to prioritize programs was removed (individual vote only).
  - Based on first run of the presentation, the order of a few data points and questions was changed to make information and conversation flow better.
  - The decision was made that if there were 15 or less attendees, the discussion would be held as one group. Consequently, no report out points were selected when there was only one discussion group.
- Based on a quick “raise-your-hands” survey, we noted that participants at each meeting came from all over the county. Therefore, one cannot directly correlate outcomes from each meeting to the geographic area of the meeting site. However, some input provided is geographically specific.
- Some attendees came to multiple meetings, which may have the following influence:
  - The same views repeated at each meeting, but only represent one voice – not multiple voices at multiple meetings.
  - The views repeated multiple times will influence the overall tenor of the conversation, masking some of the uniqueness of each.

## 2. Discussion Themes

Discussion outcomes are reported below by pulling out various themes that arose during the discussion, categorizing input by program areas, and by the results of the vote on program areas. While certain observations and solutions are directly related to a particular geography, each meeting was attended by people from all over the county. Therefore, the qualitative results are analyzed collectively from all meetings only, instead of also by meeting, so that observations and solutions are not erroneously correlated to a specific region based on where they were heard. Feedback that was provided for a specific place or region is noted as such in the catalog of responses (for example, “I see people with packs coming out from under the highway bypass here in Greenfield,” or “Chinatown should be designated as Salinas City Center.”).

### 2.1 Impact of Homelessness to You and Your Community

Across all discussions, attendees shared multiple dimensions of the impact of homelessness: the impact on themselves at witnesses of homelessness, the impact on the individual experiencing homelessness, and the impact of homelessness of community members on the community as a whole. The themes, listed by each of these dimensions, are summarized and listed here, in no particular order.

#### 2.1.a Impact as Witness of Homelessness

As witnesses, attendees reported the following general themes:

- Visibility of homeless population is increasing.
- A concern and empathy for those experiencing homelessness and their well-being, especially those that are physically or mentally unhealthy.
- An understanding that the situation and the solutions are complex.
- Evokes a feeling of hopelessness or inability to help; can be demoralizing.
- A concern for public safety and decreasing property values were raised, especially near potential shelters, encampments or public places people without homes spend their time.
- While knowing people that are homeless need shelter, not wanting shelters in their own neighborhoods.

#### 2.1.b Impact Experiencing Homelessness

Attendees reported the following overarching themes on impact on individuals experiencing homelessness:

- For families that are homeless, ability to parent well is greatly affected.
- In-school youth facing homelessness – whether in a family or alone – have a harder time succeeding at school.
- Hard to access services (transportation, availability, eligibility requirements), so may not even try or get on waitlists.
- Different subgroups have different needs. For example:
  - Those over 55 may experience additional hardships, such as physical disabilities and accumulation of personal items.
  - Students that are homeless need services beyond the school year.
  - Families need to be able to stay together, regardless of gender of parent(s).

- Moved around to new communities when there are sweeps, creating instability.
- Don't feel safe – bullied by law enforcement, by community members, by other homeless people.

### 2.1.c Impact of Homelessness on the Community

Attendees reported the following themes on the community as a whole:

- Every one reported seeing more people that appear to be homeless across the county. A few areas are the exception, such as
- Public sanitation is a concern, in particular trash and human waste that is left behind.
- Public safety is a concern, with reports of increased crime and fire hazards – extra burden on emergency services.
- Visible homelessness is demoralizing for a community:
  - Affects perception of city (e.g., safety and property values)
  - Contributes to a sense that “the system” is failing.
  - Loss of potential within community when people that are a part of it are dealing with being homeless.
- Difference in cultural attitudes about homelessness affect how cities/areas deal with their community members facing homelessness.
- Policing is not always the solution, since it may just move populations around.
- Need shelters and services across the county, especially where the population experiencing homelessness is higher.
- Different views on solutions is causing a division in community.

When considering ways to mitigate the negative impacts and enhance the positive ones, it is valuable to consider interventions that address each of these three dimensions.

## 2.2 Gaps in Homeless Services

Attendees were asked to reflect on the gaps they perceived in services for homelessness. During both the responses to the impact of homelessness and the gaps in services, solutions also emerged. These have been culled and reported in this section, both as general themes and in an analysis of frequency by program area.

Some overall themes on gaps and solutions are summarized here (in no particular order):

### *Prevention*

- Address the almost-homeless population – prevent overcrowding, eviction, etc.

### *Service Enhancements*

- Include wraparound services with shelters:
  - Support clients so they can stay in services they need.
  - Have a navigator/community mentor for support and connection.
- Focus on target populations (youth, veterans, families, elderly, etc.).

- Shelters need more flexibility in rules – e.g., allow pets, have safe storage for stuff during day, do not separate families.
- Gap in culturally/linguistic/specific/congruent services.
- Mobile assessments, health and other support services – go to them
- Need better way to share information about services and options with people that are homeless.

*Services & Programs*

- Employment as a “service” – like WPA.
- Provide facilities for homeless – showers, laundry, trash pick-up. Could be mobile.
- Landlord incentives.
- Safe spaces to store stuff if on the street, staying in a shelter, or accessing other services, so people do not have to give everything up (including pets) to receive services.

*Planning*

- Focus on getting people off the streets and safe, period.
- Improve census and survey methodology results for more useful information (more specific, reach populations better, better training for census-takers, engage more community members that have trusted relationship with homeless).
- Change city zoning.
- Need better information sharing between service providers.
- 

*Housing & Shelters*

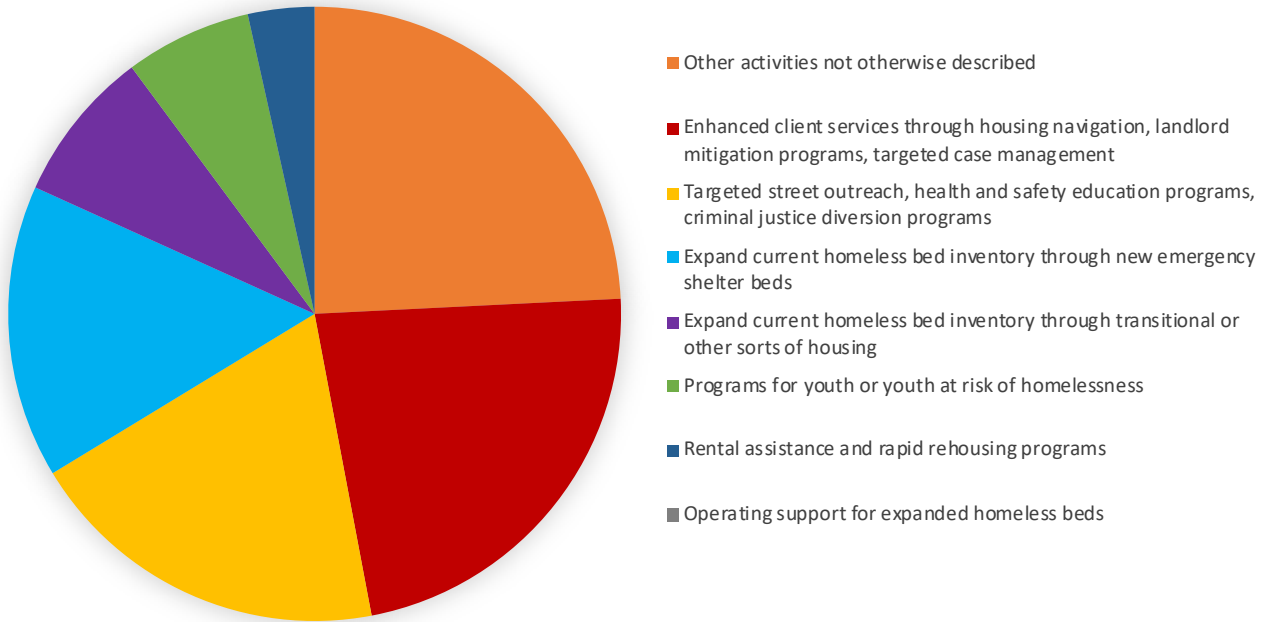
- Provide various types of housing with various eligibilities – safe parking, tiny homes, tents, beds in shelters, warming shelters, etc. Making encampments safer can be a better solution than sweeping an encampment.
- Address housing crisis so housing is affordable and available at all income levels.
- Housing/shelter solutions are not same for everyone. Some need a tent, others a bed, others a temp home.
- Where to put shelters? Conflicting opinions – not in Creek Bridge, south Salinas, outside of town, near veteran’s clinic, etc.
- Housing inventory count, including renting rooms in homes temporarily, or using driveways or properties for safe parking options.

*Community Building*

- Build trust between those that are sharing public spaces – whether homeless or not.
- Need community education on what they can do to help and what the situation is.

Item 2 is an attempt to analyze qualitative responses quantitatively. Each comment about programs, whether spoken or written, has been accounted for and assigned to its related program area. Some comments may relate to multiple program areas, and have been assigned as such.

Item 2: Relative Frequency of Comments (Gaps and Solutions) by Program Areas



After “other” (a diverse category described below), the gaps cited most fall under “enhanced client services through housing navigation, landlord mitigation programs, targeted case management.” Included in this category are comments related to wraparound services, coordination and collaboration among service providers, and one-stops, land lord supports, and support in navigating the system of housing and services.

The second most cited gaps fall under “targeted street outreach, health and safety educational programs, criminal justice diversion programs.” Included in this category are comments related to targeting specific groups, such as veterans, the elderly, etc. where they are (excluding youth, they are specifically called out as a program area). Providing hygiene services, such as toilets, waste disposal, showers and laundry were frequently mentioned. Also included are services that provide safety to the homeless themselves and to the community.

“Expand current homeless bed inventory through new emergency shelter beds” was in third place. This includes discussion on location of the emergency shelters; concerns about community well-being around the shelter; expanded hours to people have a place to go during the day; and use of nontraditional emergency shelters, such as tents, managed encampments, short term shared housing in regular rental market or underutilized private homes, tiny homes, or safe parking for vehicles.

In fourth place was “expand current homeless bed inventory through transitional or other sorts of housing.” Many of the issues are similar to those cited above for transitional housing, such as using nontraditional housing, broadening eligibility, increasing number of beds, and location. Concern about affordable housing came up, as well.

The category “Programs for youth or youth at risk of homelessness” came in a close fifth place. While intended to encompass only transition youth, it includes comments for all youth, children, and families, since most participants did not necessarily differentiate or understand the definition of transition youth, and families include children.

“Rental assistance and rapid rehousing programs” came in last place for mentions during discussion. This topic was also not a strong point in discussion. Some items that were related to the imminently homeless could be related (although were not included in this category here for analysis).

“Operating support for expanded homeless beds” was not specifically cited. Sustainability of programs was; one could infer this to be operating support, but it was not specifically mentioned, and so was not included here. Comments that generally stated “more services” and “provide transportation” were equally divided between program areas. For all services, flexible eligibility was discussed, in particular to prevent families from being broken up, or single fathers to be separated from their children, to allow pets, and to offer services to those that are in overcrowded homes (and not counted in the census).

“Other”, which was not a part of the vote and had the highest number of citations during the discussion, includes diverse topics such as:

- Work force development, including life and job skills development, WPA city-improvement jobs, and other types of employment or community service.
- Planning efforts, such as policies, zoning, city plans, etc.
- Community awareness and engagement.
- Early childhood care and learning services.
- Increase in funding for homelessness services and housing.
- Safe storage during the day and over time, including pets.
- Safe parking places as a form of transitional shelter, for cars and RVs.
- Managed encampments as a form of transitional shelter.

It is important to note that the number of times something was mentioned and recorded does not directly correlate with the prevailing priorities of a particular community. Quantity of references to a gap, impact or solution may reflect the following:

- Multiple ways to share voice (during general Q&A, on notecards, and in discussion).
- An individual with a dominant voice in the room.
- Tendency for individuals to agree over voicing additional/new/innovative perspectives.
- Quantity of comments does not necessarily respond to the quality of the idea or its relevance to a shared set of programmatic values.
- A group that represents one view represented by multiple people in the room.
- An individual or group that attended multiple meetings.

While there are attempts to correct for these factors, through facilitative and analytic techniques, this type of analysis must not be taken as statistical proof. It does provide the tenor of the discussion(s) in the room.

### 2.3. Community Priorities Vote

After a discussion on the types of services that fall under each category, each attendee received 3 votes of equal weight, and were asked to select the three top program areas they believe HEAP funds should be focused on to best address the issue of homelessness within 2 years. The results are provided by meeting and as a total in Item 3.

This vote does not include any additional suggestions that do not fall in these categories. These ideas were captured either in the discussion notes and/or attendees wrote them on notecards, and are included in section 3.2. These ideas were not included in the vote because they would vary across small groups and across meetings.

While this vote provides a top-level insight to where attendees feel like emergency funds should be focused, this was not a highly controlled vote. Factors to consider are:

- Not until the third meeting was it realized that additional and very specific directions on voting guidelines needed to be made:
  - Vote only one time across entire community engagement process (not one time per meeting attended).
  - Cannot cast all votes for one item (must choose top three choices).
- Not all attendees voted.
- Not all attendees cast three votes.
- One small group allowed attendees to add a category to vote on, therefore they only cast two votes for the above programs instead of three.

#### Item 3: Program Priorities Vote by Location and Total

	Salinas	Peninsula	South County	North County	Total
Targeted street outreach, health and safety education programs, criminal justice diversion programs	35	12	3	2	52
Expand current homeless bed inventory through new emergency shelter beds	25	16	0	3	44
Enhanced client services through housing navigation, landlord mitigation programs, targeted case management	12	22	6	4	44
Programs for youth or youth at risk of homelessness. (unaccompanied youth ages 18-24)	11	18	3	7	39
Rental assistance and rapid rehousing programs	9	15	4	4	32
Expand current homeless bed inventory through transitional or other sorts of housing	10	4	2	2	18
Operating support for expanded homeless beds	0	2	0	0	2
<b>Total votes</b>	<b>102</b>	<b>89</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>231</b>

**Assuming 3 votes per person, # of people voting 34.0 29.7 6.0 7.3 77.0**

Item 4 compares the frequency of program areas by citations in discussion and by vote. Note that while individually, the frequencies are different by discussion and by vote, the same program areas are in the top three.

Item 4: Comparison of Discussion and Vote on Program Areas

1	Targeted street outreach, health and safety education programs, criminal justice diversion programs	Enhanced client services through housing navigation, landlord mitigation programs, targeted case management
2	Expand current homeless bed inventory through new emergency shelter beds	Targeted street outreach, health and safety education programs, criminal justice diversion programs
3	Enhanced client services through housing navigation, landlord mitigation programs, targeted case management	Expand current homeless bed inventory through new emergency shelter beds
4	Programs for youth or youth at risk of homelessness.	Expand current homeless bed inventory through transitional or other sorts of housing
5	Rental assistance and rapid rehousing programs	Programs for youth or youth at risk of homelessness
6	Expand current homeless bed inventory through transitional or other sorts of housing	Rental assistance and rapid rehousing programs
7	Operating support for expanded homeless beds	Operating support for expanded homeless beds

**2.4 Commitments**

At the end of the meetings, everyone was asked to write down a commitment they are willing to make to help solve homelessness. Commitments range from the personal to the professional. They include simply being more aware and compassionate to getting directly involved or connected with homeless people, to raising awareness and advocating for solutions. Some are specific, some are general. The list below is a consolidation of all commitments made, since many were similar in nature. Frequency of each commitment types is not considered, since only a fraction of attendees actually completed a commitment card:

- Get civically engaged: go to community meetings, vote, talk with council members.
- Outreach: share information with homeless people in my community (newspaper column, talking with others, etc.).
- Volunteer for services: food pantry, meals, etc.
- Raise money for services.
- Collaborate with other service providers.
- Volunteer to be a census and survey taker in 2019.
- Encourage church/temple to do more direct services, such as meals, overnights, use of address and phone, etc.
- Accept Section 8 vouchers on my properties.

- Help people around me directly (e.g., offer driveway), and/or just connect/talk.