

Program 19 – Homeless Strategy

Based on the Humboldt County 2011 and 2013 point-in-time homeless counts and city-specific data, Humboldt County and the City of Eureka have a higher than average rate of homelessness as compared to other regions of the State. In recognition of the importance of this issue to the community, the City established three Homelessness Focus Groups (Community Leaders, Homeless Services Providers, and Consumers) in February 2014 to provide local input and perspectives on homelessness issues, impacts, and solutions. The outcome of the Focus Groups' efforts include a policy paper with a suggested strategy to end homelessness in Eureka, rather than just attempting to better manage the problem. The key components of that strategy include actions to occur in three specific time periods:

HOUSING PLAN

Short-term

- Targeted Outreach and Assessment of People in Encampments: Build upon existing local government efforts to identify those individuals who generate the largest number of emergency calls, are the most frequent users of City and County resources, and are genuinely in need of housing.
- Prioritize High Need/High Barrier Homeless People for Available Housing: Partner with the County and Continuum of Care (CoC) to identify resources that might be immediately available to house the people identified above that are most in need of housing.

Medium-term

- Develop Homelessness Outreach Teams with “Housing First” Focus: Partner with the County to build upon existing efforts to outreach to the unsheltered homeless population, by developing a more specific focus on problem-solving with homeless people to help them secure a place to live.
- Explore Creating a Mental Health Services Act (MHSA) Funded Housing Program: Consider the use of available MHSA funds to develop permanent supportive housing and/or create a pool of flexible rental assistance dollars.

Long-term

- Conduct Data Analysis to Understand What is Needed to Completely End Homelessness in Eureka: Work with the County and CoC to convene a working group to analyze Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) and program budget data, with the goal of understanding how funds are currently being invested, what outcomes are being accomplished, and how outcomes could be improved by changing existing programs and investments.
- Continue Collaboration with the Humboldt County Housing and Homelessness Coalition (HHHC) to Develop and Implement County-wide Solutions: Continue to work with HHHC to support County-wide solutions to end homelessness including expanding housing opportunities; expanding rapid re-housing¹ capacity; expanding substance abuse treatment capacity; helping homeless people increase income; creating a coordinated intake, assessment and referral process; and using data to understand results.

The above builds upon and enhances work already being done by the City, Humboldt County and other providers to work in strong partnership to effectively address and end homelessness. Addressing homelessness in Eureka will be an on-going effort. It is anticipated that the above strategy will continue to evolve and adjust over time to best address local needs, priorities and funding availability.

¹ Rapid rehousing is a strategy used to keep individuals and/or families from returning to homelessness by transitioning them immediately from a shelter situation to permanent housing.

Responsibility: Building and Housing Department, Housing Division and the Housing Authority

Timeframe: Ongoing, 2014-2019

Funding Source: General Fund, CDBG, and HOME funds

Objectives:

- Enhance targeted outreach to and assessment of those homeless people most in need of housing.
- Partner with the County and Continuum of Care to identify resources that might be immediately available to house the people that are most in need of housing.
- Partner with the County to enhance outreach efforts with a “Housing First” focus.
- Explore creating a Mental Health Services Act funded housing program.
- Establish a working group to analyze Homeless Management Information System and program budget data.
- Determine how much additional capacity is needed to completely end homelessness
- Continue to strengthen City partnerships with Humboldt County Housing and Homelessness Coalition and County Health and Human Services to most effectively serve homeless people in Eureka.