

14Forward Connects Homeless to Services

Overview

Yuba County's 14Forward project combines temporary sheltering with vital services, to help our homeless residents achieve permanent housing by overcoming personal and financial obstacles.

The Challenge

Like most other California counties, Yuba County has always had some level of homelessness in its communities, which were competently addressed by private and faith-based organizations, in coordination with programs offered through our Health and Human Services Department.

Around late 2015, the number of homeless residents skyrocketed. Trash and sewage issues along the rivers – which had been mostly manageable over the previous decades – saw a sudden rapid increase in volume along the shorelines. This prompted the declaration of a health emergency by Yuba County's Health Officer, even as environment concerns were voiced over the damage being done to the fragile ecosystem of the waterways.

Developing a Solution

In early 2016, Yuba County officials engaged the services of a consultant specializing in homeless issues to guide a series of meetings held to discuss best practices in addressing the needs of both the homeless community and the rest of the county's residents.

Yuba County also reached out to the local service organizations, non-profits, faith community and homeless advocates that had worked independently and together for many years to address the needs of those struggling in the community. These groups, along with community leaders, homeless advocates and homeless residents were invited by the Yuba County Administrator's Office to be part of a new collaboration tasked with creating the framework necessary to address homelessness in the region. This complex and inclusive structure was

necessary to make sure Yuba County could build an approach to addressing homelessness that was not duplicating existing programs.

The county also conducted a very thorough analysis of public and private resources and shelters available to the homeless population, to see how they could fill in the gaps in services to homeless residents – a step that made the project very unique among other efforts throughout the state. The effort resulted in the creation of 14Forward, with onsite services to address such needs as job training, substance abuse intervention, veterans' services, financial counseling, and more.

Community businesses and organizations were given the opportunity to sponsor the converted Tuff Shed structures, accounting for 15 of the units. Other community donations received equal nearly \$20,000.

Results

By establishing 14Forward, Yuba County met a court requirement that affects all counties – to have adequate available shelter services to homeless residents – thus allowing for the closure of three major encampments along the Yuba and Feather rivers, and for the removal of 1.4 million pounds of debris and sewage. Major threats to health and our rivers' ecosystems have been averted, as a direct result of standing up 14Forward. More importantly, since opening, 213 persons have participated in the 14Forward program, 53 have moved on to permanent housing, and more 53 obtained employment.

Contact

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