

Homelessness is THE humanitarian crisis of our time. Despite significant investments and leadership by the Governor, Legislature, and local governments, California lacks a comprehensive framework to address it effectively and equitably. The current approach to helping those who are unhoused remains fragmented and lacks clear lines of responsibility, accountability and sustainability. This must change.

To make meaningful progress in helping those who are unhoused, the California State Association of Counties (CSAC) offers the 'AT HOME' Framework. Counties are determined to work with our federal, state and local partners, and in partnership with the Governor and the Legislature, to implement this comprehensive framework to help those who are unhoused or at risk of becoming unhoused in our communities.

A CCOUNTABILITY



Clear responsibilities aligned to authority, resources, and flexibility for all levels of government

No one level of government is solely responsible for the homelessness crisis. We need to develop a comprehensive and coordinated system that includes all levels of government. The undertow of massive economic and systemic inequities, as well as a tangled web of decisions made by well-intentioned policies and programs built over decades, continues to stymie efforts to support those who are unhoused or at risk of becoming unhoused.

- Clearly define city and county roles for siting and supporting shelters, siting permanent supportive housing, encampment outreach, and encampment clean-up.
- Commit ongoing funding – one-time funding is neither sustainable nor conducive to maintaining programs or sustaining progress.
- Require the submission of countywide or regional plans developed in partnership with all key stakeholders and with established, clear goals and responsibilities.
- Allocate funding commensurate with the responsibilities each entity has within the plan and provide for maximum local flexibility to be used in accordance with established goals and outcomes.

T RANSPARENCY



Integrate and expand data to improve program effectiveness

Current data systems and data sharing do not support an integrated case management approach to helping those who are unhoused or at risk of becoming unhoused.

- Integrate and expand data systems to enhance transparency and allow for data-driven decision making.
- Enhance existing health, social services and state and local criminal justice data systems to provide more robust data on the immediate and long-term needs of individuals and improve institutional discharges.
- Establish statewide, publicly facing dashboards to track program investments and outcomes.

H OUSING



Increase and maintain affordable housing units across the spectrum

There is a significant shortage of supportive and emergency housing in California, including temporary shelters, transitional housing, permanent supportive housing, low-income housing, and affordable housing to support aged, disabled and very-low income residents.

- Increase resources needed to acquire, build and operate housing solutions across the full housing continuum, especially emergency shelters, transitional housing, and permanent supportive housing for individuals with complex needs.
- Increase flexibility and streamlining to generate more affordable housing projects.
- Create flexible housing subsidies and modify federal Housing Choice Vouchers to help more individuals utilize rental assistance to maintain housing.

O UTREACH



Develop sustainable outreach systems and increase workforce to support these systems

There is a significant shortage of Health and Human Services (HHS) workers to manage and deliver the programs and services that assist with addressing homelessness in California. In addition to identifying ways to support and build this workforce, new classifications that leverage lived experience and support housing navigation are also needed. To further strengthen and stabilize this system, federal funding should be obtained for many of these critical activities.

- Recruit, train and retain a robust HHS workforce and consider new certifications for workers in housing and other fields.
- Leverage additional federal funding for outreach and rapid response, particularly for those with complex needs living unsheltered, without reducing overall funding for behavioral health and social services programs.
- Expand training and quality improvement incentives for law enforcement and probation responding to unhoused individuals.

M ITIGATION



Strengthen safety net programs

Counties deliver most health and human services programs on behalf of the state. These programs serve as the safety net in California, and we must strengthen these programs to prevent individuals from becoming homeless.

- Provide adequate funding for county workforce for safety net programs to ensure eligible individuals can be enrolled and receive the services they need timely (known as county administration).
- Increase the availability of and access to programs and services that provide screening, treatment, and recovery services for substance use disorder, including for individuals with co-occurring mental health conditions.
- Increase flexibility for county behavioral health funding to maximize federal Medi-Cal funds and expand the reach of county behavioral health investments for the unsheltered population

E CONOMIC OPPORTUNITY



Create employment and education pathways, as well as supports for basic needs

Specialized education and career programs and services are needed to support the economic mobility and long-term self-sufficiency of those who are formerly homeless or at risk of experiencing homelessness, including justice-involved individuals, veterans, older Californians, and former foster youth.

- Update local workforce development and investment boards to address employment for unhoused populations and work with California Community Colleges to develop programs that support the formerly unhoused.
- Increase accessible programs for justice-involved individuals to receive training and overcome employment barriers.
- Continue and expand efforts to assist more qualifying aged, blind, and disabled persons to obtain SSI/SSP benefits and expand subsidized housing placements for these populations.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT:

Danielle Bradley
CSAC Legislative Analyst for Health, Human Services and Homelessness
dbradley@counties.org