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SACRAMENTO AREA

HOMELESSNESS PROGRESS REPORT

Motels play major role in sheltering people experiencing homelessness

By Janna Haynes and Tim Swanson

They have been one of the most effective tools for helping unsheltered residents while preventing the spread of COVID-19.

Motel rooms over the past two years have played a major role in the ongoing efforts by the County of Sacramento, City of Sacramento and Sacramento Steps Forward to immediately shelter people and keep communities as safe and healthy as possible.

"Motels have always been a part of our collective strategy to address homelessness in our region," said Emily Halcon, director of homeless initiatives for the County of Sacramento. "However, the pandemic has really enhanced how we think about their use."

Funding to place people in motel rooms has come from a variety of federal and state sources, including the state's [Project Roomkey](#) program.

The purpose of the state's Project Roomkey program is "to provide non-congregate shelter options for people experiencing homelessness that protect human life and minimize strain on health care system capacity," state officials said.

Project Roomkey launched in Sacramento in April 2020 in response to growing concerns about unchecked transmission of COVID-19 among unsheltered residents.

A coordinated effort between the City, County and SSF, Sacramento's Roomkey program to date has sheltered 2,051 people, with 440 individuals moving on to stable housing and 457 moving to temporary or emergency housing. Approximately 225 people currently remain in Project Roomkey motels.

In addition to Roomkey, the City of Sacramento launched its own motel program, using federal, state and local funding to secure rooms in five motels. More than 1,300 people have been sheltered through this program so far.

About this Report

The City of Sacramento, Sacramento Housing and Revelopment Agency, Sacramento Steps Forward and the County of Sacramento are publishing this monthly report to keep the community informed about our collaborative work to address homelessness in Sacramento.

For Margie Habner and her family, who had been living in a derelict RV, one of the City's motel rooms provided the stability they needed to get their lives back on track.

"This (motel room) was the best thing for my family," Habner said. "The main thing is my kids are in public school, something they really needed, but being in that trailer, it wasn't going to happen."

After spending less than a month in the motel room, [Habner and her family](#) were able to move into a small house.

The Roomkey program was never designed to be a long-term solution to homelessness. With infection rates dropping, Roomkey funding also has been winding down.

The State's successor program, [Project Homekey](#), supports local governments and organizations in their efforts to purchase hotels, motels and other buildings and convert them into permanent housing.

The State has committed \$2.7 billion to Project Homekey, with \$23.9 million in funding awarded to Sacramento Housing Development Agency this past January.

Sacramento currently has three Homekey sites underway, including the conversion of a Best Western hotel in downtown, which will be renamed Central Sacramento Studios. (The other Homekey sites are in Natomas and South Sacramento.)

Meanwhile, the County, City and SFF continue to evaluate plans on how to best move forward with the use of motel rooms to help people experiencing homelessness.

This could include extending elements of the current Roomkey program and/or transitioning clients staying in motels into other programs, such as the County's newly created "Stay Safe Communities."

Regardless of what form the plans take, everyone currently in Roomkey will be supported and have "opportunities either for future sheltering, or, ideally, future housing," said Julie Field, the County's homeless services project manager.

For additional information and data from Sacramento's Project Roomkey efforts, [please read this report](#), which also can be found on [SSF's website](#).





The former Science Center Museum on Auburn Boulevard is ready to open as the City's newest homeless services center. The Outreach and Engagement Center provides space for Hope Cooperative and other service providers to work with clients, and it can also serve as a respite center.

After almost two months of operations, the new safe ground location at [Miller Park](#) is working well. The 60-tent site is typically at or near capacity and no unsanctioned encampments have sprung up nearby. Several people have already transitioned from safe ground into more sustainable housing.

Escaping the cycle of homelessness isn't easy, but it can be done. Please read [Margie's Story](#) to find out how one Sacramento family went from an RV in a field to a real house.

Sacramento Housing and Redevelopment Agency

Sacramento Housing and Redevelopment Agency ([SHRA](#)) has been awarded a \$6.7 million grant from the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) 2021 Continuum of Care (CoC) program which supports homeless housing and service programs across the United States. Sacramento Steps Forward manages the CoC for Sacramento County. The CoC award of three Shelter Plus Care grants to SHRA will enable the Agency to continue to administer rental assistance to house over 550 disabled individuals and families experiencing homelessness. SHRA has been awarded renewal funding through the CoC competitive process each year for the past 11 years.

The awards, announced March 14 by Secretary Marcia L. Fudge, will provide \$2.6 billion in FY 2021 funding for approximately 7,000 local programs enabling communities to achieve the overarching goal of long-term stability for homeless individual and families by moving them into permanent housing with access to supportive services.



Sacramento Steps Forward



The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) recently announced that the Sacramento region has been awarded \$29.7 million to fund 31 projects for individuals and families experiencing homelessness.

As required by HUD, the CoC receives proposals from community service providers, scores them based on HUD and local requirements, and submits the applications to HUD in fall of each year.

Of the 31 awards, the majority renew and sustain various homelessness services programs. New awarded projects include new beds to rapidly rehouse survivors of domestic violence, supportive housing projects for those experiencing chronic homelessness, and funds to continue regional planning and the coordinated entry system. Combined, these critical funds will continue to finance 2367 beds and add 210 new beds to the homelessness response system. [Click here to learn more.](#)

County of Sacramento

The County of Sacramento often is asked what services it offers to shelter, house and care for our community members experiencing homelessness. Here is a partial list of services, which are a collaboration among several County departments, including Human Assistance, Health Services and Child, Family and Adult Services.

Sheltering (capacity per night)

- Emergency Family Shelters: 40 families
- Mather Interim Shelter: 140 individuals
- North A Street Shelter: 80 adults
- Scattered Site Shelters: 115 people
- Domestic Violence Shelter: 162 women/children

Transitional Housing (capacity per night)

- Adolfo Transitional Housing for Foster Youth: 68 youth households
- Mather Family Transitional Housing: 25 families
- Youth Transitional Housing: 12 Youth

Permanent Housing (Yearly Capacity)

- Flexible Housing Program: 300 households
- Flexible Supportive Rehousing: 250 households
- MHSA Built Permanent Supportive Housing Units: 221 households

For a full picture of county-funded homeless outreach, shelter and housing services, as well as mental health and addiction services, please review our [Homeless Program Matrix](#).