



Sonoma County Community Development Commission
Sonoma County Housing Authority
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MEMORANDUM

Date: July 7, 2020
To: Sonoma County Board of Supervisors
From: Barbie Robinson, Executive Director of Department of Health Services and
Interim Executive Director of the Sonoma County Community Development
Commission
Subject: Preliminary Results of 2020 Homeless Count

2020 Homeless Count

The 2020 Point-In-Time (PIT) Homeless Count was conducted on February 28, 2020. The Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) approved a delay of the PIT Count from the end of January to the end of February due to the emergency declaration on homelessness related to the encampment along the Joe Rodota Trail (JRT).

The Homeless Count and Telephone Survey is funded with approximately \$80,000 in local Continuum of Care dollars and Transient Occupancy Tax (ToT) funds committed by the County, in addition to \$16,000 between the nine cities and \$34,000 from the Commission. 2020 marks the first year that the homeless count was conducted using a mobile app that relayed data in real-time and pinpointed exact geolocations for individuals being counted.

Preliminary results from the PIT Count indicate a decrease of 7% in homelessness from 2,951 individuals to 2,745. This is due in large part to increased funding from the State of California in 2018-2019 as well as intensive outreach and care coordination of critical services by the County's Accessing Coordinated Care & Empowering Self-Sufficiency (ACCESS) initiative and its Interdepartmental Multidisciplinary Team (IMDT) and Homeless Encampment Access & Resource Team (HEART).

In addition, significant investments in rapid rehousing and permanent housing solutions have been key to the decrease in homelessness from 2019 to 2020. It should be noted that the Point-In-Time count took place after the declaration of the emergency on the Joe Rodota Trail, which resulted in 104 placements: 60 placements into Los Guilicos Village, 35 shelter placements, 4 residential substance use treatment placements, and 5 other housing placements. This activity is reflected in the sheltered count. It also took place prior to the significant system changes following the County's shelter-in-place order in March 2020. The COVID-19 pandemic with the required shelter-in-place order will have significant impacts on the new baseline for the number of unsheltered in the County.



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Subpopulation Trends

Some of the most dramatic decreases appeared in homeless subpopulations which HUD has identified as key to ending homelessness overall. These significant decreases reflect the increasing emphasis on funding and strategies for these subpopulations:

- Chronically Homeless individuals (persons with a disability and lengthy homelessness);
- Families with at least one adult over 18 and one minor child or youth;
- Transition Age Youth ages 18-24 and unaccompanied children under 18 years old;
- Veterans; and
- Other high priority subpopulations including individuals living with HIV/AIDS, serious mental illness, substance abuse challenges, and individuals who are victims of or experiencing domestic violence.

Individuals experiencing Chronic Homelessness – 562 individuals experiencing chronic homelessness were identified during the PIT, a 16% reduction from 675 in 2019. This reduction is directly tied to increased emphasis on Housing First and serving chronically homeless (those with the longest homeless history) through the Coordinated Entry System. The most notable decrease was in single adults experiencing chronic homelessness. There was an increase from 22 chronically homeless individuals in families, to 44 in 2020—likely due to better documentation of chronically homeless families.

Homeless Families with Children – 79 families with a total of 233 individuals were found, almost all of them in sheltered settings. This is a decrease of 9%, from 87 families in 2019, and a continued overall decrease in families from a high mark of nearly 200 families in 2013.

Transition Age Youth (TAY) – The most dramatic decrease is among transition age youth ages 18-24 years old and unaccompanied children under 18. In 2019, 657 TAY and unaccompanied children (540 TAY and 117 unaccompanied children) were counted. This was a 29% increase from 2018. In 2020, 52 unaccompanied children and 297 TAY were counted, for a total of 349 and a decrease of 47%. More analysis is needed to discern the reason for such a large drop. A few factors could have led to this large decrease: A) increased resources for youth homeless interventions (e.g., almost \$2 million in Homeless Emergency Aid Program (HEAP) funding); B) movement of youth out of the area and/or aging out of the population; and/or C) the challenges of the observational youth count and children experiencing homelessness in Sonoma County at any given time.

Veterans – The number of homeless veterans has been steadily declining in Sonoma County from a high of 400 in 2013 to 210 in 2019. In 2020, 139 veterans were counted, a reduction of 34% in veteran homelessness. Factors that contributed to the decrease include: increased resources to end veteran homelessness (e.g., over 400 active HUD-

Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing (HUD-VASH) vouchers in the County of Sonoma in 2020 and Veterans Administration funding with several agencies) as well as increased housing placement of veterans into supportive housing with VASH and other Veterans Affairs resources.

Exactly the same methods were used to analyze the dataset as in 2019, so we will be looking for responses to the larger survey data while developing the full report to better understand these dramatic but fortuitous decreases.