

County of Santa Clara Develops Pilot Program for Chronically Homeless Persons

100 Housing Vouchers and Services Will Be Provided

SANTA CLARA COUNTY, CALIF. – Today, the County of Santa Clara Board of Supervisors approved the development of a pilot program to provide Housing Vouchers for the Chronically Homeless. The program will create 100 housing vouchers for chronically homeless individuals and families identified through the Housing 1000 campaign.

To qualify for the voucher program, individuals or a member of a family must have: 1) A disabling condition and have been residing on the streets, or in a place not meant for human habitation, an emergency shelter, or a safe haven; and 2) have been continually homeless for one year or longer or have had four or more episodes of homelessness within the past three years. For these purposes, a disabling condition is defined as a physical disability, mental illness, severe depression, alcohol or drug abuse, chronic health problems, HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis, Hepatitis C, trauma, or a developmental disability.

“I know from personal experience how important it is to have stable housing,” said President George Shirakawa, County of Santa Clara Board of Supervisors. “My mom’s family came to California from the mid-west dustbowl and worked in the fields to survive. More times than not, home was a labor camp on the side of a highway. This Voucher program is a part of the County’s effort to move beyond the band-aid approach, such as temporary shelters, to more permanent housing solutions. ”

Under the program, the County will spend \$1.2 million annually to provide 100 housing vouchers for chronically homeless persons. An additional 25 vouchers will be provided with AB109 funding, which will provide a subsidy of approximately \$1,000 per month for each household.

“This is a great example of doing the right thing in a fiscally responsible way,” said Supervisor Mike Wasserman, Chair of the County of Santa Clara’s Housing, Land Use, Environment and Transportation Committee and member of *Destination: Home’s* Honorary Council. “I am pleased to be a part of this new effort to provide housing support for the chronically homeless, while still saving taxpayer dollars.”

Barriers related to privacy and confidentiality make it difficult to determine how much chronically homeless individuals cost the County system wide. Tracking the effects of the Housing Vouchers through this pilot program is expected to enable the County to develop much needed baseline data. The program will work in tandem with a similar effort, although on a smaller scale (25 vouchers), under development for individuals being released from state prison or County jail.

“The key factor to successful reintegration into society for both the chronically homeless and those returning to the community after detention in the criminal justice system is stable long-term housing with supportive services,” said Gary Graves, Chief Operating Officer. “This is exactly what the Housing Vouchers program aims to accomplish.”

The County will seek an organization to manage the voucher allocation process and will work with *Destination: Home*, a community based organization working to end homelessness, to provide case management and other needed services.

Jennifer Loving, executive director of *Destination: Home*, applauded the county’s

commitment to promoting housing as a primary treatment intervention for its homeless clients.

"This is not simply a humanitarian effort; it makes sense from a cost standpoint," Loving said. "Studies across the country have shown that when people have permanent homes, they are less likely to cycle through expensive public systems like jails or hospital emergency rooms. I love that our county leaders understand this and want to do more."

"People think that the guy living under the bridge doesn't cost us anything, so we should just leave him there," added Loving. "But if he has the flu and falls down in the street, then the police will call an ambulance to take him to the emergency room. And because he has no place to live, the hospital can't discharge him."

Over the past several months, access to housing options has been declining because the Housing Authority has been unable to provide Section 8 housing vouchers for chronically homeless men, women and families. At the same time, the need for stable housing options has become more apparent as the County has taken on additional responsibility for individuals released from State prison as well as those being released from County jail.

The Housing Vouchers program is designed to operate for 12 months on a pilot basis and be evaluated in a year. The County's goal is to implement the program by April 2012.

About Destination: Home

Destination: Home, a program of The Health Trust, is part of the Housing 1000 campaign, a partnership of local organizations committed to finding permanent homes for the county's most vulnerable homeless residents. Since its creation in 2008, *Destination: Home* has made progress toward ending homelessness in the county by partnering to fund and promote permanent housing solutions for homeless men, women and families in our community, and by galvanizing county-wide support in shifting from managing to ending homelessness. For more information, visit www.destinationhomesc.org.

About Housing 1000

Housing 1000 is Santa Clara County's campaign to house 1,000 of the most vulnerable, chronically homeless men and women in our community. Part of the national 100K Homes Campaign, it is a partnership between Santa Clara County, the city of San Jose, *Destination: Home*, the Santa Clara County Collaborative on Affordable Housing and Homeless Issues, and Community Technology Alliance. For more information, visit: www.housing1000sv.org.

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