

RESPONSE TO GRAND JURY REPORT

Report Title: Homelessness in Marin – A Call for Leadership

Report Date: April 20, 2015

Response by: Marin County Board of Supervisors

FINDINGS

- We agree with the finding numbered: 3,7
- We disagree wholly or partially with the findings numbered: 1,2,4,5,6,8

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Recommendation numbered 1 has been implemented.
- Recommendation numbered 3 has not yet been implemented, but will be implemented in the future.
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- Recommendation numbered 2 will not be implemented because it is not warranted.

Date: June 30, 2015

Signed: _____

Number of pages attached 4

Marin County Board of Supervisors
Response to Findings and Recommendations from Grand Jury Report
"Homelessness in Marin- A Call for Leadership" - April 20, 2015

FINDINGS

- F1. There is no coordinated, focused, systematic plan with a comprehensive budget to eliminate homeless in Marin.**

Response: Disagree.

The County has taken a lead role in the development and implementation of the Marin County Continuum of Care, a comprehensive 10 year plan to prevent and end homelessness in Marin. It contains three goals: (1) reduce chronic homelessness; (2) reduce the number of homeless families with children; and (3) reduce the amount of time people spend in programs before becoming self-sufficient. Health and Human Services is actively working with all relevant stakeholders to meet these goals.

The Marin County Continuum of Care is comprised of County and city government leaders, homeless/housing service provider organizations, consumer representatives, local businesses, and other stakeholders. Marin County uses the Continuum of Care model because homelessness is a complex problem that requires a broad, multi-faceted response by dozens of agencies working in tandem. No single agency working in isolation will be able effectively address homelessness on the scale needed to make significant change.

- F2. Marin County has hired a Homeless Policy Analyst who coordinates activities but has no authority as the lead position on homelessness.**

Response: Partially Disagree.

The current Homeless Policy Analyst announced that he will be leaving County employment June 19th, 2015. Health and Human Services is currently conducting a recruitment to fill the Homeless Policy Analyst position. While this position does not directly oversee programs, it is responsible for coordinating services for the homeless among governmental and non-governmental agencies. The position will report to the Chief Assistant Director who will provide a high level of authority on policy and planning around homeless issues.

- F3. The funds Marin County reports spending on homelessness are not in a comprehensive budget, making it impossible for the public to know how and what funds are being spent to address homelessness.**

Response: Agree.

Although the County does not budget funds by activity (e.g., homelessness), Health and Human Services has taken steps to better track direct expenditures related to homelessness. The current financial system has limitations for managing this and often services that are provided are not strictly for those that are

homeless or at risk of being homeless. We will be implementing a new financial management system in 2016 with the hope to track direct expenditures for homeless services in the new system. For some programs however there will be general services and costs that benefit homeless clients that we may not be able to capture.

F4. Decisions about expenditures for the homeless are often reactive to government mandates or political pressure.

Response: Partially Disagree.

Health and Human Services aims to allocate resources based on the strategic objectives of the Continuum of Care, in the context of funding mandates and the need to respond to various stakeholders. For example, the County has invested \$350,000 annually on a homeless prevention program that has proven to be very cost-effective intervention to preventing homelessness over the long-run.

The goal is to be more proactive and to make targeted investments in programs that have a long-term impact on reducing homelessness in our community. To help assist this effort, the County has recently acquired a new data system (i.e., the Homeless Management Information System or HMIS) to improve the ability to make data-informed planning and policy decisions. The HMIS captures information about homeless clients and the services they receive. This data can be used to evaluate the effectiveness of programs and determine the gaps in the service system. The County will use this information to prioritize and guide future resource allocation decisions.

F5. The majority of the homeless in Marin County are centered in San Rafael, which negatively impacts business activity and the overall quality of life in that community.

Response: Partially Disagree.

Although San Rafael has the single largest concentration of unsheltered homeless persons in the County, the majority of this population lives in areas other than San Rafael.

In the most recent Point in Time Count of homeless persons conducted on January 29, 2015, we observed 255 unsheltered homeless persons in San Rafael (approximately 31% of all unsheltered persons counted). The remaining 69% of unsheltered persons were observed in other areas. One hundred eighty three (22%) were observed in the Richardson Bay area. One hundred thirty one unsheltered homeless persons (16%) were observed in unincorporated Marin. One hundred twelve (13%) were observed in Novato. The remainder was located in much smaller concentrations throughout the County.

F6. The majority of the homeless services in Marin County are located in San Rafael, prompting other towns to direct the homeless to those services.

Response: Partially Disagree.

Although there are two high-profile service providers in San Rafael, the majority of supportive housing for homeless persons (57%) is located outside of that jurisdiction. The city with the single largest concentration of supportive housing is Novato with 43.5%. San Rafael follows with 42.7%. The remainder is spread across various other cities and towns. In addition, the County's largest provider of services for homeless persons, Homeward Bound of Marin, is located in the Hamilton Field area of Novato.

- F7. The total economic impact of homelessness in Marin County is not known, including the impact on business activity and the costs of public safety services (e.g. police, fire, public works, district attorney, public defender, jail and hospitals), making it impossible for the public to know that the full economic impact is significantly greater than perceived.**

Response: Agree.

Marin County Health and Human Services has taken steps to improve tracking of expenditures related to those that are homeless. As described in our response to F3, the County will be implementing a new enterprise resource planning (ERP) system in 2015, which we hope will provide better functionality for tracking expenditures across our organization for homeless services. However, there is no current mechanism or planned mechanism that we are aware of for tracking costs or services provided by other agencies such as law enforcement and hospitals.

- F8. Multiple public agencies in Marin County (e.g. police, fire, public works, district attorney, public defender, jail and hospitals) interact with the homeless regularly, but do not participate in the collaboration on homelessness, so their valuable experience is not part of the planning.**

Response: Partially Disagree.

While there is room for improvement, significant collaborations among relevant service providers exist. For example, the Forensic Multidisciplinary Team (FMDT) brings together many public agencies including the Sheriff's department, police departments, the District Attorney, the Public Defender, Probation, county mental health programs, the Marin Housing Authority, the Public Guardian's office, the STAR Court program, and many community-based service providers. The FMDT meets at the County jail and is focused on preventing homelessness and repeated criminal offenses by people with mentally illness and substance use disorders. In addition, several public agencies participate in our homeless policy steering committee which meets quarterly. Department heads frequently share information and coordinate delivery of services.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Marin County Civil Grand Jury recommends that:

- R1. The Marin County Board of Supervisors assumes the leadership role and accountability for development and execution of a systemic plan to end homelessness in the County that includes all relevant stakeholders.**

Response: This recommendation has been implemented.

Members of the Board of Supervisors currently co-chair the Homeless Policy Steering Committee, which monitors the 10 Year Plan implementation efforts. However, the Board could take a more active role in leading the implementation of the plan and ensuring accountability. In order to support a more proactive response to homelessness, the Department of Health and Human Services will provide the Board of Supervisors periodic updates with recommended actions to best meet the goals of the 10 Year Plan.

- R2. The Marin County Board of Supervisors directs the Chief Administrative Officer to recruit a high-ranking official with the authority to implement the systemic plan to end homelessness. This official should report directly to the Chief Administrative Officer and should be held accountable for the results of the plan.**

Response: This recommendation will not be implemented because it is not warranted.

The Board of Supervisors has placed the responsibility for the health and welfare aspects of homeless services with the Director of Health and Human Services. Improving our response to homelessness is a top priority and the Director of Health and Human Services will be working with community partners and the County Administrator to identify both short-term and long-term improvements necessary to better serve homeless individuals in our community.

- R3. The Marin County Board of Supervisors requires a comprehensive County budget for homelessness that is clear to the public and includes revenues and expenditures from all departments and sources.**

Response: This recommendation has not been implemented, but it will be in the future.

Marin County Health and Human Services (HHS) has taken steps to improve tracking of expenditures related to those that are homeless or at risk of being homeless. HHS will be providing the Board with periodic updates related to homeless services, including information on direct expenditures for homeless services provided by HHS. The first update to the BOS is scheduled for June 30, 2015. In addition, the County's new financial system to go live in fiscal year 2016-17 should provide greater functionality for better tracking direct expenditures related homeless services.