

Successful and Proven Real World Solutions to Reduce Homelessness

Mendocino County Board of Supervisors

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Mendocino County Health & Human Services

Increase in homelessness

Board/HHSA - Developed HOMe Team

More coordination among service providers

Partners engaging with County

First step is a common understanding

Mendocino County
Observations, Findings and
Recommendation of Strategic Action Steps

In Order to Address the Issues of Homelessness,
We Must **First** Have a
Common Understanding of Our Challenge

Need a Common Understanding of Our Challenge

Currently, there is no agreement on the:

- **Scope . . . who,**
- **Structure . . . dimension,**
- **Scale . . . the numbers.**

Major Observations and Findings

The Positives and the Opportunities:

- Most stakeholders sincerely get along with each other.
- **Many of the recommendations already have started to be implemented.**
- **There is a high potential of developing a consensus around most of the key issues.**
- The number of year-round individuals experiencing “unsheltered” homelessness as defined by HUD is actually much lower than most stakeholders have been thinking.
- Because of travel logistics and far distances among many of the cities within Mendocino County, very few individuals experiencing HUD-defined homelessness move from one city to another.

The Negatives and the Challenges:

- A Common Understanding of the Critical Challenges Does Not Exist.
- **Decision Making Has Been Mostly “Tactical” in Nature, and Not “Strategic.”**
- **Decision Making and Operations Have Been “Agency-centric,” and Not “System-centric.”**
- **The Lack of Good Data Has Led to Decision Making Based on Myths and Anecdotes.**
- Need to Focus More on the Root Triggers of Homelessness, Rather than the Symptoms.

The Negatives and the Challenges (continued):

- There Is a Need for More Substance Abuse and Mental Health Treatment Slots/Beds.
- The Amount of Housing Placements is Low.
- Panhandling Has Become a Big Issue Around the Walmart and Safeway in Ukiah.
- **Encampments Are Dangerous.**
- Children Are Mixed With Adults.

Population Counts

HUD-defined Homelessness

- ▶ **Ukiah . . .**
 - Inside City Limits . . . 172-188**
 - Perimeter . . . 26-37**

- ▶ **Fort Bragg . . .**
 - Inside City Limits . . . 81**
 - Perimeter . . . 15-17**

- ▶ **Willits . . .**
 - Inside City Limits . . . 3-6**
 - Perimeter . . . 0**

Survey Data Analysis

Survey Data Analysis Takeaways

Basic Demographic Traits Are Similar to Peer Communities, Except:

- 1- There Are Three HUD-defined Cohorts, and One Not,**
- 2- Large “Bubble” - Chronic Homelessness for 1-3 Years,**
- 3- Little Movement Between Cities and Among Activities,**
- 4- High Levels of Unemployment and Underemployment.**

The Most Important Take-a-way From This Study

**There Are 3+1 Cohorts
&
Each Cohort Must Be Treated Uniquely**

There Are 3+1 Distinct Cohorts:

3 HUD-defined Cohorts Experiencing Homelessness:

- + 39% Very Homegrown Individuals**
 - + 23% Somewhat Homegrown Individuals**
 - + 38% Out-of-Town Individuals**
 - = 100%**
-

1 Cohort Does NOT Meet HUD-definition

- + *“North-South Travelers”***

These 4 Distinct Cohorts Must Be Treated Differently

- 1- Both the service agencies and the general public need to realize that it is critical to **treat** these 4 distinct cohorts **differently** based on behavior.
- 2- It is very important to realize that **treating** all four **cohorts the same creates many very negative outcomes** for both the individuals and for the community-at-large.

Very Homegrown & Somewhat Homegrown Cohorts Experiencing Homelessness

- Need to **proactively focus** on helping the 2 **homegrown cohorts** who are experiencing homelessness.
- It is critically important to **focus** on the individuals who have been experiencing homelessness for **1-3 year range**.

Out-of-Town Cohort Experiencing Homelessness

- A little over 1/3 of the individuals moved into Mendocino County after the on-set of homelessness.
- More often than not came here because of “services” being provided.
- Lower service priority.
- Encouraged to receive services in their hometowns.

Most “North-South Travelers” Are NOT Experiencing HUD-definition of Homelessness

- Illogical to give limited resources to individuals who are not actually experiencing HUD-defined homelessness.
- Enabling handouts exacerbate the negative environmental and economic impacts.
- Enabling handouts raise the risks of serious fire incidents.
- The criminal elements within this cohort should not be supported and enabled.

The 2nd Most Important Take-a-way From This Study

**There Is a Very Large “Bubble” of Individuals That
Have Been Experiencing Chronic Homelessness
for 1-3 Years**

There Is a Strikingly High Number of Individuals Experiencing Homelessness Within the 1-3 Year Range

This high number of individuals in the 1-3 year range is a challenge because the rate of successful recovery starts dropping after 1 year, and then precipitously drops after 2 to 3 years.

The two most plausible explanations:

- 1- Three different public adult mental health providers in four years,**
- 2- The closure of the year-round Buddy Eller Center 4 years ago in 2014.**

Report Recommendations

28 Recommendations within 5 Areas

Governance and County-wide Strategy Recommendations

1- Need to Develop a Common Understanding of the Scope, Scale and Structure of the Problem, and Need to Use Common Nomenclature in Order to Improve Decision Making.

2 - Gain “Buy-in and Agreement” for One Overarching Strategic Action Plan with Specific Action Steps by Most of the Community and Key Stakeholders.

3 - Move from Tactical One-off Decision Making to Strategic Decision Making Based on Data.

4 - Move from Agency-Centric to System-Centric Decision Making (Need More Collaboration and Less Silos).

Governance and County-wide Strategy Recommendations (Continued)

5 - Reduce Duplication of Services While Increasing Agency Specialization.

6 - Need to Operate at Maximum Capacity by Increasing Utilization of the Overall System.

7 - Need to Fully Build-out and Then Robustly Utilize HMIS.

8 - Encourage All Organizations and the General Public to Engage, Rather Than Enable Individuals Experiencing Homelessness.

9 - Improve Strategic Coordination Between the County and Cities (Need More Collaboration and Less Silos).

Clinical Recommendations

10 - The Different Cohorts Need To Be Treated Differently Based on Behavior.

11 - Establish System-wide Service Eligibility and Triage Criterion (with Emergency Protocols).

12 - Whenever Possible, Separate Children from Chronic Adults.

13 - Create a County-wide Virtual Case Management System.

14 - Create Street-Level Outreach Team Capacities, Especially in Ukiah.

15 - Create/Source Meaningful Mental Health and Substance Abuse Rehabilitation Slots.

16 - Need Only One Day-Center in Ukiah.

Sheltering and Transitional Housing Recommendations

17 - Must Have a Winter Shelter in Ukiah, However it Is Inconclusive If an Extreme Weather Shelter Is Needed in Fort Bragg.

18 - Need to Strategically Optimize Placement at Willow Terrace When it Opens.

19 - Source New Housing Opportunities of All Types Whenever Possible.

Public Space Issues

20 - Have a Zero Tolerance Approach to Encampments.

21 - Address the Issue of Stolen Shopping Carts.

22 - Engage Van-campers, and Impound Vehicles When Necessary.

23 - Engage Car-campers.

Longer Term Recommendations

24 - After the Willow Terrace Opens, After Duplication is Reduced, and After Utilization is Increased, then Re-look at the Overall System Volume Needs.

25 - Need to Conduct Deeper Data Dives Into the Issues of Employment, Out-of-towners and High Levels of Chronicness.

26 - Replicate the Data Analyses Within This Study in the Remainder of the County.

27 - Create and Implement a Public Relations Campaign in Order to Engage the General Public as a Proactive Partner with this Effort.

**28 - Set Up a Feed Back Loop to Guide Ongoing Improvements
... Set Up a Checkup Plan.**

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Mendocino County Health & Human Services

First step is a common understanding

Share the full data report and recommendations

Partners engage in joint problem-solving

county, CoC, cities, law enforcement, service providers
design and commit to countywide strategies

Q&A