

**SUBJECT: HUMAN SERVICES SUMMARY IN RESPONSE TO
SUBCOMMITTEE**

PREPARED BY: HUMAN SERVICES & RENT STABILIZATION DEPARTMENT

(Christof Schroeder, Director)

(Wendy P. Barreno, Human Services Manager)

(Diane Kahn-Epstein, Strategic Initiatives Supervisor)

(Derek Murray, Social Services Supervisor)

(Francisco Gomez, Strategic Initiatives Program Administrator)

STATEMENT ON THE SUBJECT:

The City Council Subcommittee on Homelessness will receive updates from the Human Services Division on topics posed at the Subcommittee meeting held on July 11, 2024.

RECOMMENDATION:

Receive and discuss.

BACKGROUND / ANALYSIS:

At its meeting on July 11, 2024, the City Council Subcommittee on Homelessness discussed items on observing street outreach to people experiencing homelessness, the telephone reporting system for homeless concerns, and additional data expected from the Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority (LAHSA) homeless count for the City of West Hollywood. This report provides initial responses and updates on these inquiries.

Observing Street Outreach

During item 4.A. on the establishment of quarterly homeless outreach initiatives, the Subcommittee discussed witnessing and observing street outreach to people experiencing homelessness with City-contracted agencies and City staff. In response, the Human Services Division proposes coordinating observation of street outreach services

for Subcommittee members with Healthcare in Action (HIA) and the Los Angeles County Sheriff Department (LASD). HIA provides medical, behavioral health, substance use treatment, case management, and housing navigation services to unhoused community members in West Hollywood. HIA uses street medicine to address immediate health concerns, chronic conditions, and continuity of care. The City of West Hollywood works collaboratively with LASD to support safety for all community members. Deputies from the West Hollywood Sheriff's station help link people experiencing homelessness with services and enforce laws. The observation would include HIA and LASD conducting proactive outreach at parks, alleys, intersections, and residential neighborhoods to engage community members experiencing homelessness, including individuals experiencing chronic homelessness and/or individuals who may have previously refused services, and providing services and linkages to additional resources.

To ensure that patient health information remains confidential and avoid interfering with service provision and relationship-building, Subcommittee members and City staff would observe outreach from a distance. During the observation, any questions from City staff or Subcommittee members would need to be general. Questions about individuals would not be allowed. If an issue or concern arises, City staff and/or contracted providers may end the observation. Human Services Division staff have confirmed with the City Clerk that Subcommittee members are able to participate in the observation together.

If Subcommittee members would like to proceed with this proposed observation plan, Human Services staff will work with the Community and Legislative Affairs Division, HIA, and LASD to schedule and coordinate the observation. While the proposed observation involves these entities, the City of West Hollywood partners with a range of homeless service providers and public safety partners in areas related to housing and homelessness to help address evolving needs in the community.

During the course of the discussion on item 4.A. on the establishment of quarterly homeless outreach initiatives, the Subcommittee posed questions about why individuals experiencing homelessness continue to be present in the City of West Hollywood despite the availability of services. Like the causes of homelessness, the reasons that people experiencing homelessness continue to be present are multi-faceted and complex. To

follow-up on one area discussed during the Subcommittee meeting, Los Angeles County does not currently have the housing units necessary to house all people experiencing homelessness, including unsheltered individuals. According to LAHSA, even with an 89% increase in shelter beds from 2016 to 2024, Los Angeles County currently has shelter beds for only 36% of people experiencing homelessness. An estimated 52,367 individuals continue to experience unsheltered homelessness each night. While permanent supportive housing slots have increased by 47% between 2016 and 2024, people in interim housing wait an average of 287 days to transition into permanent housing. As some individuals exit homelessness, others enter homelessness. According to one [report](#), the population of people experiencing homelessness in Los Angeles grows by an estimated 20 people every day, with 207 Angelenos exiting homelessness and 227 Angelenos entering or returning to homelessness. More broadly, according to an [annual affordable housing report](#), Los Angeles County is currently in need of approximately 521,596 affordable housing units for its 844,748 low-income, very low-income, and extremely low-income households. When housing spaces are available, factors such as, but not limited to, health care access and quality, education access and quality, social and community contexts, family circumstances, environmental impacts, the economy, community safety, and/or personal preferences may impact long-term housing stability and the rates of sheltered and unsheltered homelessness.

Another area discussed during the Subcommittee meeting concerned individuals experiencing homelessness who choose to decline services. To better understand how contracted service providers in West Hollywood respond when people experiencing homelessness choose to decline services, the Human Services Division outreached to five contracted agencies serving people experiencing homelessness in July 2024 to ask about (1) follow-up processes when individuals experiencing homelessness choose to decline services and (2) any circumstances that would lead providers to contact other entities when services are declined.

Key findings related to contracted service providers' follow-up processes when individuals experiencing homelessness choose to decline services include:

- Emphasis on the fundamental principles important to ethical decisions and high-

quality care, including respect for personal autonomy, beneficence, non-maleficence, and justice, as well as reducing harm and trauma-informed care

- Respect individual choices to decline services
- Recognize that attempting to force services can cause harm and worsen situations
- Recognize that there is not always an immediate solution to the challenges that people experiencing homelessness, including chronic homelessness, may present
- Meet individuals where they are; take small steps such as providing snacks and meals
- Return to and continue to monitor areas where individuals have refused services
- Continue outreach and attempts to respectfully build rapport, trust, and positive relationships; utilize approaches such as motivational interviewing and open-ended questions, as well as the principles of Dialectical Behavior Therapy, Cognitive Behavioral Therapy, and Acceptance and Commitment Therapy
- Leave informational cards, business cards, and other materials with information on how to reach out if services are desired
- Let individuals know when the agency will return
- Let individuals know that they may also talk to Block-by-Block Ambassadors, go to City Hall, or go to Plummer Park to request services

Key findings around any circumstances that would lead providers to contact other entities when an individual experiencing homelessness chooses to decline services include:

- If an individual is in need of immediate medical attention for an injury or health concern, contact emergency services such as 911 or known community-based medical care providers
- If an individual is potentially in need of behavioral health services, contact known mental health providers
- If an individual appears to be a danger to themselves or others, contact LASD

In service provision, consent is recognized as a critical and ethical component of health

and well-being. In launching the Community Assistance, Recovery, and Empowerment (CARE) Court, for example, a state-funded program designed to help people with untreated schizophrenia and other associated psychotic disorders receive treatment and services for their health and wellbeing, Los Angeles County has outlined that participation is [voluntary](#). While family member, roommate, clinician, or other eligible person may file a CARE Act petition referring someone to the CARE program, “participants cannot be forced to participate in services against their will (including taking medication) and can leave the program at any time.” In another example, [Housing First Guidance](#) provided by the California Department of Housing and Community Development, which is based on state law under [Senate Bill \(SB\) 1380](#), outlines that participation in services is optional and not a condition of permanent housing tenancy.

The City of West Hollywood has invested in Block by Block Security Ambassadors to provide in-person responses to non-emergency and non-violent calls for service, as well as the West Hollywood Care Team to serve the community as a behavioral health response program. When there are public safety concerns, the City of West Hollywood has [advised](#) community members to reach out to the West Hollywood Sheriff’s station 24/7 and call 911 in an emergency.

Telephone Reporting System

An evaluation of opportunities to enhance and improve the Homeless Concern Line system is currently underway. As discussed during the Subcommittee meeting, Human Services Division team members actively manage the Homeless Concern Line in assigned shifts during City business hours. As part of its current pilot, the West Hollywood Care Team has begun monitoring the Homeless Concern Line on evenings, weekends, and holidays as it ramps up to 24/7 service provision. The Human Services Division is currently collaborating with the City’s Information Technology Department to enable callers, including callers familiar with the line, to bypass the outgoing message, if desired.

Additional Data on People Experiencing Homelessness

In August 2024, LAHSA provided the City of West Hollywood with additional data from the 2024 point-in-time count estimates for people experiencing homelessness. The revised data indicates a range of 82 to 85 unhoused individuals, with 67 counted in public

spaces and an additional 15-18 estimated to be in improvised dwellings on the night of the count. In West Hollywood, improvised dwellings included cars, RVs, and makeshift shelters. LAHSA plans to post this additional data in an interactive map on their website within the coming months.

CONFORMANCE WITH VISION 2020 AND THE GOALS OF THE WEST HOLLYWOOD

GENERAL PLAN:

This item is consistent with the Primary Strategic Goal(s) (PSG) and/or Ongoing Strategic Program(s) (OSP) of:

- OSP-5: Support People through Social Services.

In addition, this item is compliant with the following goal(s) of the West Hollywood General Plan:

- HS-1: Maintain and pursue humane social policies and social services that address the needs of the community.

EVALUATION PROCESSES:

Social Services Program Administrators review the quarterly program and fiscal reports and conduct regular file audits. When verifying data reported to the City, staff review client files, supportive documentation, and other relevant materials. Staff also consider the following in its agency assessments: 1) program quality, client access, and collaboration within and between agencies; 2) participant feedback and client evaluation; 3) quality, timeliness, and responsiveness of the agency's communication with the City; 4) agency's participation in City-sponsored Planning and Coordination meetings; and 5) impact of staff turnover. Agencies are required to provide an opportunity for clients to evaluate services and to incorporate the results of client feedback into program planning.

ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY AND HEALTH:

N/A

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT:

N/A

OFFICE OF PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITY:

HUMAN SERVICES & RENT STABILIZATION DEPARTMENT / HUMAN SERVICES
DIVISION

FISCAL IMPACT:

None at this time.

ATTACHMENT:

None at this time.