About Focus Strategies

We believe optimized systems, the power of analytics, and expanded housing lead the way to ending homelessness.
Systems Approach
Goal

Moving from a loosely coordinated collection of programs and activities that address some homelessness, to a strongly coordinated system that jointly addresses all homelessness.
Why Do You Need a System?

• Programs alone cannot solve the problem
• Limited resources requires joint decision-making shaped by shared goals
• Need to know how you are investing your funds, who is being served, and what the results are
• Creates accountability for all stakeholders
When You Have a System...

• There are shared objectives all stakeholders agree upon; and:
  • Resources are aligned to achieving shared objectives
  • Programs are designed to achieve shared objectives
  • Data is analyzed to understand whether objectives are being met and make adjustments to improve results

• There is a clear structure and process for making decisions about the community’s response to homelessness that is understood by everyone

• Each person who experiences homelessness receives a timely and consistent response that sets them on a pathway towards a housing solution
Homeless Crisis Response System

- Housing Crisis
  - Unsheltered
  - At Risk of Homelessness

- Coordinated Entry
- Diversion
- Housing Barrier Assessment
  - Prioritization

- Housing
  - Successful Diverted to Housing
  - Rapid Re-Housing – Rental Housing
  - Permanent Supportive Housing
  - Affordable Housing
  - Rental Housing

- Shelter/Interim Housing
Programmatic Features

A strong homeless crisis response system includes three key features:

1. **Strong Strategies to Reduce System Inflow** – targeted prevention, diversion, reducing institutional discharge to homelessness

2. **High-Performing Homeless System Interventions** – outreach, drop in programs, emergency shelter, transitional housing

3. **Range of Housing Exits** – new affordable units, use of existing inventory (short-term and longer-term rent subsidies and services)
Infrastructure

In addition, a crisis response system should include three structural elements:

1. **Leadership and Governance** that guides system-level planning and decision making towards a single shared set of strategies and policies

2. **Planning, Policy, Data and Evaluation Capacity** to support ongoing assessment of performance at project and system levels, including robust HMIS data

3. **Staffing Capacity** to adequately support system changes and implementation of shared strategies and policies
Scope of Work Timeline

START

- Stakeholder Engagement & Baseline Assessment Research Conducted 
- Baseline Assessment Report & Short-Term Action Plan Issued 
- System and Project Performance Analysis (SWAP) Completed 
- Target Implementation of Interim Recommendations 
- Governance Structure & Draft System Design Completed 

March 2019
August 2019
November 2019
January 2020
February 2020
April 2020

END

- Action Plan Issued
- New Homeless Response System Implemented/Ongoing Evaluation and Adjustment

FocusStrategies.net
Observations and Findings
Purpose of Baseline Report

• Summarize Focus Strategies initial observations about current response to homelessness in Santa Cruz County
• Identify strengths and challenges of current efforts
• Inform next steps, including the analysis of data, system planning, and governance structure development
• Provide Short-Term Action Plan for impactful work that can be launched while the rest of the scope is underway
Overview of Areas Assessed

Areas assessed on a community-wide level:

• Leadership and Governance
• Strategies to Reduce Inflow
• Emergency Response
• Homeless-Targeted Housing
• Affordable Housing
• Coordinated Entry and Data
Leadership and Governance

• HAP is a positive forum for community to share information, coordinate work, meet HUD requirements, and update on changes in the field

• Governance re-design work not completed; needs further fleshing out, particularly in relation to roles and decision-making processes, setting and implementing funding priorities

• Agreement regarding jurisdictional roles and responsibilities need to be developed (cities, County)
Strategies to Reduce Inflow

- **Diversion** started but not fully built-out in system and inconsistently practiced
- **Prevention** offered by a number of agencies, but targeting and efficacy has to be evaluated
- **Reducing Institutional Discharge to Homelessness** approach in early development
Emergency Response

• **Outreach** efforts connect individuals to basic needs, health and behavioral health, and CES

• **Drop in** and **day services** are available in limited quantities

• **Emergency shelter** is predominantly in North County

• **Navigation Centers** will open in both North and South County – low barriers to entry and services focused on securing housing upon exit, open year-round, 24/7

• **Safe parking** is newly implemented; connecting people to services and system

• **Encampment** response is major focus; efforts to address health and safety impacts consumes significant resources
Emergency Response

• Encampments are just one portion of the homeless population, but drive community’s media and political narratives due to visibility

• Response to encampments focused on immediate public health/public safety issues; not connected to strategy for reducing unsheltered homelessness

• To reduce unsheltered homelessness, people have to move from outdoors and into housing, this can include an intermediate stay in temporary shelter
Homeless-Targeted Housing

• Community shifting from transitional to permanent housing interventions
• Increased housing navigation services and targeting of landlords to build relationships
• Rapid Rehousing and PSH are not yet to scale; more resources and scaling up of housing-focused case management, housing navigation, and landlord engagement is needed
Affordable Housing

- Developers interested in building units and funders willing to put dollars into projects
- County has low or no growth policies – particularly in unincorporated areas
- Loss of Redevelopment Agency has impacted amount of units available
- Significant gap in inventory exists for households at lowest incomes
- Variations in community acceptance, political will, and belief that additional housing will help
Coordinated Entry and Data

• Coordinated Entry:
  – Highest need individuals being prioritized; change in who has access to housing
  – System utilizes static list; lacks dynamic prioritization, people get stuck waiting

• Data and Evaluation Capacity:
  – County is aligning homelessness data with CORE measures to improve system processes
  – Data not being used to understand system performance, inform planning, or develop strategic direction
  – No individual or entity is responsible for data analysis and evaluation, and there is little staffing capacity to perform those tasks
Interim Recommendations and Short-Term Action Plan
Summary of Findings

• Key elements in place that can be built on: Coordinated Entry, outreach, shelters, targeted housing for high needs
• Some immediate gaps: diversion, housing-focused shelter, limited Rapid Rehousing and PSH exits
• Individual components need to be tied into a system approach
• Important to continue progress towards adopting a governance structure that can better oversee a systems approach; address community concerns about decision-making, transparency and goals
• Data underutilized; HMIS coverage and data quality concerns
• Current staffing capacity for homeless system functions is inadequate
Diversion/CES, Shelter, and Outreach

1. Implement systemwide Diversion practice to reduce inflow; includes retooling Smart Path Coordinated Entry
2. Build capacity of emergency shelters to deliver housing-focused services through training and seeding new pool of flexible resources
3. Coordinate and standardize outreach efforts through agreement on aligned approach by outreach teams and funders
Governance

• Relaunch and complete work on a new Governance structure

• Reconvene the Governance study group with support from Focus Strategies to answer:
  • How will the revised structure operate?
  • What purview it will have?
  • What resources and efforts it will jointly oversee?
  • What administrative staffing is needed to implement the system?

• End result will be agreement on the new structure, including protocols and procedures.
What Happens Next?

• Finalize and release Short-Term Action Plan following incorporation of today’s feedback
• Start any work on interim recommendations, including relaunch of governance work
• Other system development work is already underway (SWAP)
DISCUSSION

In Summary:
Systems Approach
Observations and Findings
Interim Recommendations
Purpose of Today’s Study Session

- Share first major deliverable from 12 month technical assistance engagement with Focus Strategies:
  1. Systems approach to homelessness
  2. Baseline System Assessment Findings
  3. interim recommendations and initial community feedback
  4. Review next phases

- Garner input and feedback from the Board on Phase 1 deliverables and next steps overall