



CITY OF LAGUNA HILLS

City Council

MAYOR
Dave Wheeler
MAYOR PRO TEMPORE
Janine Heft

September 13, 2022

COUNCIL MEMBERS
Don W. Caskey, FAIA
Erica Pezold
Don Sedgwick

Erick L. Larsh
Presiding Judge of the Superior Court
700 Civic Center Drive West
Santa Ana, CA 92701

Re: California Penal Code Section 933 Response to the Orange County Grand Jury Report, "How is Orange County Addressing Homelessness?"

Dear Judge Larsh:

As requested by the Orange County Grand Jury letter dated June 28, 2022, the City of Laguna Hills is responding to Findings F1, F3, and F4, and Recommendations R1, R2, R4, R5, and R6 of the Grand Jury Report entitled, "How is Orange County Addressing Homelessness?"

Findings and Responses

F1. South Orange County SPA cities lack low-threshold emergency shelters resulting in more homeless encampments and individuals living on the streets.

Response: Disagrees partially with the finding. While the South Service Planning Area (SPA) does have a few emergency shelters such as the One Step Ministry Host Home Program and the Friendship Shelter that operates the City of Laguna Beach's Alternative Sleeping Location (ASL) Emergency Shelter, the 2022 Point In Time Count did identify a total of 422 individuals experiencing unsheltered homelessness within the South SPA. This is an overall decrease of 116 individuals or a 21.56 percent decrease from the 538 individuals experiencing unsheltered homelessness identified during the 2019 Point In Time Count. Furthermore, the City of Laguna Hills contracts with non-profit Mercy House to provide homeless outreach services. Since the 2019 Point In Time Count, the City has reduced the number of individuals experiencing unsheltered

homelessness by 50 percent. The City, through Mercy House, is extremely effective in developing relationships with homeless individuals and families, and navigating them to appropriate resources and care resulting in fewer individuals living on the street. Accordingly, a lack of shelters does not appear to result in more homeless encampments on individuals living on the street.

F3. The County of Orange and cities within Orange County have been inconsistent in collaboration for support of shelters and services, which has resulted in missed opportunities to end homelessness.

Response: Disagrees wholly with the finding. The collaboration between the County of Orange, Orange County Continuum of Care and cities in Orange County has resulted in the creation of several shelters and services that better address unsheltered homelessness. Since the Orange County Board of Supervisor's adoption of the Orange County Housing Funding Strategy in 2018 and through the Orange County Housing Finance Trust, a total of 1,273 permanent supportive housing units have been completed, are in progress of funding, or currently under construction. The development of new permanent supportive housing and affordable housing is an existing and ongoing collaborative effort between the County of Orange, cities in Orange County, and the Orange County Housing Finance Trust.

F4. There are insufficient number of rental units available to those exiting Emergency Shelters, resulting in the majority returning to homelessness when leaving the shelters.

Response: Agrees partially with the finding. According to the Orange County Continuum of Care (CoC) Housing Inventory Count (HIC) 2022 report, there are 2,793 permanent supportive housing units for individuals and families experiencing homelessness in Orange County. In the same year, the County of Orange and the Orange County Continuum of Care conducted the 2022 Point In Time Count, which identified 5,718 homeless individuals throughout Orange County.

According to the Grand Jury report, permanent housing and permanent supportive housing has increased 13 percent from 3,261 in 2017 to 3,689 in 2021. Although the total number of permanent supportive housing units in Orange County has been increasing over recent years, an increase of total rental units available for all populations to those exiting Emergency Shelters may contribute to the reduction of homelessness.

Recommendations and Responses

R1. By July 1, 2023, the CoC and County of Orange should leverage funding to persuade South Orange County cities to open a regional, low-threshold emergency shelter for the homeless, in addition to the Laguna Beach Friendship Shelter. (F1)

Response: The recommendation requires further analysis. On April 27, 2022, the County of Orange with the support of the Orange County Continuum of Care Board issued a Request for Proposals (RFP) to seek proposals from qualified organizations to provide Emergency Shelter Operations and Services across three Service Planning Areas (SPAs) in Orange County and for different segments of the homeless population including individuals, families, transitional aged youth and survivors of domestic violence.

The primary goal of the Emergency Shelters Operations and Services program is to ensure accessible, streamlined entry to emergency shelter and providing robust supportive services that assist participants in obtaining permanent housing. The goal is to award contracts to the Emergency Shelter Operations and Service programs.

R2. By July 1, 2023, South OC SPA cities should collaborate in siting and funding a low-threshold emergency shelter for the homeless, in addition to the Friendship Shelter in Laguna Beach.

Response: The recommendation requires further analysis. As outlined by the Orange County Grand Jury in its report, this recommendation requires further analysis. The funding and siting of a low-threshold emergency shelter in the Orange County South Service Planning Area (SPA) requires collaboration, partnership, and coordination between the County of Orange and the cities located in the South SPA. The City of Laguna Hills remains open to continued dialogue with the County of Orange and South SPA cities should a site and funding for a low-threshold emergency center be identified.

R4. By July 1, 2024, the County of Orange and cities should collaborate to open facilities that can house people with severe and persistent mental illness and addiction issues in a secure setting. (F2)

Response: The recommendation has been implemented. The 2022 Housing Inventory Count identified 2,793 units of permanent supportive housing. Permanent supportive housing is long-term affordable housing paired with supportive services for people experiencing homelessness that have disabling conditions such as severe and persistent mental illness and addiction issues.

Through the Orange County Coordinated Entry System, permanent supportive housing is prioritized for individuals experiencing the long periods of homelessness and that require services for disabling conditions and addiction issues.

Furthermore, since the adoption of the Orange County Housing Funding Strategy in 2018 and through the Orange County Housing Finance Trust, a total of 1,273 permanent supportive housing units have been completed, are in progress of funding, or under construction. The Housing Funding Strategy has established a target for the development of 2,700 new supportive housing by 2025. The development of new permanent supportive housing and affordable housing is an existing and ongoing collaborative effort between the County of Orange, the cities and the Orange County Housing Finance Trust.

R5. By July 1, 2023, the County of Orange, cities and CoC should collaborate to encourage the development of housing affordable to individuals exiting the emergency shelters in Orange County. (F3, F4, F5)

Response: The recommendation has been implemented. The County of Orange (County), cities and the Orange County Continuum of Care (CoC) have been working together to encourage the development of affordable housing and permanent supportive housing that supports the needs of people experiencing homelessness and accessing the system of care. This includes the development of housing opportunities that support participants exiting from emergency shelters into permanent housing.

In 2019, the Orange County Housing Finance Trust (OCHFT) was established and is a collaboration between the County of Orange and the cities for the purpose of funding affordable housing and permanent supportive housing to assisting the homeless population and households of extremely low, very low, and low income within Orange County. Twenty-four (24) cities, including Laguna Hills, are now members of the Trust along with the County. The OCHFT has issued three Notice of Funding Availabilities (NOFAs) and provided funding commitments for seventeen (17) projects to-date.

To-date, over 2,600 units of affordable and supportive housing are complete, under construction, or in progress of funding throughout Orange County with the support and collaboration between the County and cities.

Furthermore, the City of Laguna Hills adopted its Housing Element on June 28, 2022. Pursuant to State Housing Element Law, cities must plan for all housing types, including housing for individuals and families exiting emergency shelters.

Accordingly, cities have or are in the process of identifying sites where such facilities can be built and adopting policies which facilitate such development by the private sector and non-profits.

R6. By December 1, 2022, the County of Orange, cities and CoC should collaborate to increase the number of housing opportunities for Transitional Aged Youth. (F6)

Response: The recommendation has been implemented. Since June 2020, the Orange County CoC has worked to improve the homeless service delivery for transitional aged youth experiencing homelessness or that are at risk of homelessness. The County provides oversight over the Coordinated Entry System and has worked to implement a separate process for transitional aged youth to be prioritized for available housing resources in Orange County. This has resulted in the implementation of a Transitional Aged Youth Registry, composed of youth participants experiencing homelessness in Orange County regardless of their household composition. Transitional aged youth service providers are invited to attend a collaborative case conferencing meeting to discuss individual cases, available housing resources, and dynamic prioritization through the Coordinated Entry System to ensure that the most vulnerable participants are receiving the most appropriate housing referrals.

The Office of Care Coordination began tracking outcomes in the form of transitional aged youth-focused dashboard to understand the housing need and analyze trends. Together, the Office of Care Coordination and CoC have utilized the dashboard information to inform the implementation of housing resources and the solicitation of new housing resources specifically designed to meet the needs of the transitional aged youth experiencing homelessness or at risk of homelessness in Orange County.

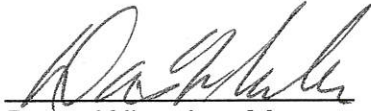
Recently, the Office of Care Coordination applied for the Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program, a funding opportunity from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) designed to reduce the number of transitional aged youths experiencing homelessness through a coordinated community approach.

The State of California's Homeless, Housing Assistance and Prevention Program, which provides funding to the County, CoC, and cities of Anaheim and Santa Ana, require recipient jurisdictions to allocate a minimum percentage of the funding to create housing opportunities and resources for transitional aged youth.

End of Responses

Should you have any questions or need additional information pertaining to the City of Laguna Hill's responses to the Orange County Grand Jury report, please contact Jarad Hildenbrand, City Manager, at (949) 707-2600.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Dave Wheeler", written over a horizontal line.

Dave Wheeler, Mayor
City of Laguna Hills

Cc: Gwen P. Isarowong, Foreperson
2021-2022 Orange County Grand Jury
700 Civic Center Drive West
Santa Ana, CA 92701