Homelessness in California

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Homeless Counts

Counts

HUD requires local communities to conduct homeless counts. Homeless Continuums of Care (CoCs) must complete a count of sheltered homeless people each year, and a count of unsheltered homeless people every two years. An increasing number of CoCs are now completing full annual counts.

The CoC counts approximate how many Californians experience homelessness on any given night and provide the data California’s communities and HUD use to measure the extent of homelessness, and the resources needed to solve it. CoCs in California represent all 58 counties, and reported homeless people residing in almost every county in 2017.

Data on Homelessness

Each of California’s 43 CoCs coordinated a “point-in-time” count of the homeless residents living within their geographic boundaries in January 2017.

• Volunteers count the number of people experiencing homelessness and also conduct a survey of some of the people they count. Through the survey, CoCs report demographics and characteristics of residents experiencing homelessness, such as how long residents have been homeless, their age, any disabling conditions, and where the person or family was living prior to experiencing homelessness.

• In the 2017 count, most homeless people reported that they had been residing in their community before they became homeless, typically for at least 3-5 years.

• The number of people experiencing homelessness over the course of a year is approximately 2-3 times the point-in-time count.
California Data

California leads the nation in—

- The number of homeless people: 133,716 on a single night in 2017. In 2016, California’s population made up about 22% of the nation’s total.
- The number and rate of people experiencing chronic homelessness:* almost 37,000 on a single night in 2017, or about 28% of Californians experiencing homelessness.
- The number of youth under age 24 experiencing homelessness: about 15,000 on a single night in 2017.
- The number of unaccompanied children: about 2,000 on a single night in 2017.²

Approximately 133,000 Californians experienced homelessness on a single night in 2017.

*HUD defines someone as chronically homeless if that person has a disabling condition and has either—
- Been homeless for at least one year or
- Had four episodes of homelessness that cumulatively add up to 12 months over the last three years.
| Continuum of Care | Change Since Last Homeless Count | Total Homeless Persons in Total Chronic Persons in Families w/Children Persons in Chronic Families Homeless Youth (including minors) Unaccompanied Minors Women Veterans Total Permanent Housing Inventory (# of Beds)** Supportive Housing Beds*** Rapid Re-Housing Beds*** Permanent Youth Beds*** |
|------------------|-------------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 2016 California  |                                |                                 |                                 |                                 |                                 |                                 |                                 |                                 |                                 |                                 |                                 |
| San Jose, Santa Clara County^ | 328                          | 7,948                           | 5,472                           | 2,097                           | 1,075                           | *                                | 2,420                           | 509                             | 2,318                           | 660                             | 3,180                           | 2,822                           | 358                             | 86                             |
| San Francisco^ | -40                           | 7,499                           | 4,353                           | 2,138                           | 619                             | 26                              | 2,363                           | 104                             | 2,475                           | 127                             | 3,873                           | 7,599                           | 7,74                             | 122                            |
| Oakland, Berkeley/Alameda County^ | 1,899                         | 5,629                           | 3,863                           | 1,652                           | 711                             | *                                | 919                             | 72                              | 2,308                           | 531                             | 3,029                           | 2,585                           | 387                             | 54                             |
| Sacramento City & County | 843                           | 3,665                           | 2,052                           | 1,136                           | 186                             | *                                | 242                             | 4                               | 1,169                           | 469                             | 3,071                           | 2,970                           | 101                             | 102                            |
| Santa Rosa, Petaluma/Sonoma County | -71                           | 2,825                           | 1,147                           | 599                             | 326                             | *                                | 532                             | 116                             | 851                             | 211                             | 1,081                           | 917                             | 164                             | 12                             |
| Richmond/Contra Costa | -123                         | 1,607                           | 911                             | 331                             | 255                             | 23                              | 238                             | 160                             | 555                             | 99                              | 1,115                           | 847                             | 348                             | 5                              |
| Salinas/Monterey, San Benito County | 405                         | 3,364                           | 2,505                           | 708                             | 645                             | *                                | 627                             | 152                             | 373                             | 124                             | 628                             | 311                             | 317                             | 0                              |
| Marin County | -192                         | 1,117                           | 708                             | 359                             | 200                             | 30                              | 127                             | 18                              | 346                             | 94                              | 574                             | 504                             | 70                              | 0                              |
| Watsonville/Santa Cruz City & County | 285                         | 2,249                           | 1,799                           | 600                             | 403                             | *                                | 508                             | 165                             | 585                             | 236                             | 624                             | 457                             | 167                             | 0                              |
| Mendocino County | 62                           | 1,238                           | 1,078                           | 110                             | 59                              | *                                | 42                              | 0                               | 411                             | 24                              | 370                             | 370                             | 0                               | 0                              |
| Turlock, Modesto/Stanislaus County | 253                         | 1,661                           | 1,192                           | 350                             | 118                             | *                                | 101                             | 7                               | 343                             | 100                             | 466                             | 450                             | 16                              | 0                              |
| Stockton/San Joaquin County^ | 307                           | 1,552                           | 567                             | 254                             | 538                             | *                                | 78                              | 112                             | 610                             | 112                             | 759                             | 751                             | 28                              | 34                             |
| Daly City/San Mateo County | -230                         | 1,253                           | 637                             | 237                             | 431                             | 0                               | 30                              | 5                               | 139                             | 1,044                           | 917                             | 127                             | 1                               |
| Visalia/Kings, Tulare Counties^ | 61                           | 853                             | 499                             | 251                             | 121                             | 3                               | 75                               | 0                               | 331                             | 45                              | 397                             | 217                             | 180                             | 0                              |
| Fresno City & County/Madera County | 133                        | 2,016                           | 1,529                           | 692                             | 82                              | *                                | 318                             | *                               | 655                             | 211                             | 1,271                           | 1,114                           | 157                             | 0                              |
| Roseville/Rocklin/Placer & Nevada County | 123                        | 663                             | 284                             | 93                              | 152                             | 3                               | 41                               | 0                               | 221                             | 32                              | 0                               | 291                             | 42                              | 7                              |
| Redding/Shasta, Siskiyou, Del Norte, Modoc, Sierra County | -333                        | 939                             | 404                             | 367                             | 218                             | 24                               | 60                               | 28                              | 340                             | 103                             | 44                              | 44                              | 0                               | 0                              |
| Bakersfield/Kern County*** | -577                         | 810                             | 369                             | 177                             | 65                              | *                                | 39                              | 0                               | 211                             | 90                              | 1,941                           | 1,067                           | 164                             | 35                             |
| Long Beach** | -482                         | 1,863                           | 1,068                           | 317                             | 94                              | 64                               | 60                               | 23                              | 236                             | 118                             | 110                             | 70                               | 0                               | 7                              |
| Pasadena** | 49                           | 575                             | 47                             | 192                             | 94                              | 6                               | 35                               | 5                               | 188                             | 20                              | 311                             | 207                             | 4                               | 8                              |
| Riverside City & County | 246                          | 2,060                           | 1,638                           | 415                             | 234                             | 7                               | 122                             | 30                              | 812                             | 91                              | 1,850                           | 1,535                           | 292                             | 13                             |
| San Bernardino City & County | -21                          | 1,886                           | 1,179                           | 427                             | 44                              | *                                | 123                             | 14                              | 284                             | 111                             | 2,191                           | 1,091                           | 1,093                            | 13                             |
| Onond, San Buenaventura/Ventura County^ | 119                       | 1,152                           | 664                             | 280                             | 41                              | 4                               | 25                              | 1                               | 151                             | 50                              | 672                             | 493                             | 347                             | 5                              |
| Glendale | -72                           | 168                             | 57                              | 67                              | 35                              | *                                | *                               | *                               | *                               | *                               | *                               | *                               | *                               | *                              |
| Imperial County | 691                          | 1,071                           | 943                             | 445                             | 70                               | 0                               | 91                               | 0                               | 242                             | 104                             | 64                              | 32                              | 32                             | 0                              |
| San Luis Obispo County | -75                          | 2,822                           | 282                             | 24                              | 49                              | *                                | *                               | *                               | *                               | *                               | *                               | *                               | *                               | *                              |
| 2017 California Totals |                                | 15705                          | 133,716                         | 91,024                          | 36,694                          | 19,799                          | 940                             | 15,236                          | 1908                            | 40,105                         | 10976                          |

*Data reported or insufficient data to be reliable.
**Since 2016 count (otherwise since 315 count)
***2017 data unavailable
**Permanent housing resources increased since 2013
Homelessness is Decreasing Nationwide, but Increasing in California

Like other states with high housing prices, California’s homeless population is bucking national trends and continues to grow. While some communities are housing more homeless people than ever before, more people are also entering our homeless system because people in poverty cannot afford housing many communities. A recent report, in fact, showed a direct correlation between increasing rent and increased homelessness in Los Angeles.

The number of people experiencing chronic homelessness is also growing in California, while decreasing nationwide. The almost 37,000 people experiencing chronic homelessness in California have high rates of institutionalization, and incur high public system costs. Moreover, they have high mortality rates, dying, on average, 25-30 years earlier than their housed counterparts.

*The years plotted for California and the U.S. do not match because the Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority changed their methodology of counting people experiencing homelessness after the 2013 count. As a result, comparing California data from 2013 through 2016 would not reflect accurately on numbers of growth.
Trends

Characteristics of Homeless Californians

In 2016, California had the highest rate—over 66%—of homeless people living unsheltered: on the streets, in vehicles, or in places not meant for human habitation. The unsheltered population accounted for almost half of the nation's.

Sheltered homeless Californians live in publicly- or privately-operated shelters, transitional housing, safe havens, or in motels or hotels through vouchers. 2017 counts indicate an increase in the number and proportion of Californians living unsheltered: 68% of all homeless residents.

Los Angeles CoC

Los Angeles County has the highest number of homeless residents in the country, and accounts for about 44% of the State's homeless population. Almost 58,000 County residents experience homelessness on a single night.

- Los Angeles County has growing populations of unaccompanied minors, transition-age youth, and women experiencing homelessness.
- Like other communities, more people are living in RVs and other vehicles than ever before.
- Like other communities, homelessness in Los Angeles reflects significant racial inequity: though 8% of County residents are African-American, 40% experiencing homelessness are African-American.
Homelessness touches multiple public systems and is expensive to our local, state, and federal institutions. Studies over the last 25 years demonstrate homeless people incur high health care, corrections, and child-welfare costs.

Medical costs make up the largest share of costs homeless people incur. In California, studies show homelessness costs our medical system between $23,000 to over $63,000 per year. Chronically homeless people acquire costs of over $100,000. Homeless people are more likely to be admitted to hospitals and nursing homes, and to remain in these facilities longer than housed people with the same conditions.

15% of people with serious mental illness experience homelessness. Conversely, about one-third of homeless people experience a serious mental illness. About two-thirds report substance use disorders. Though people who have experienced homelessness and behavioral health disorders tend to obtain regular behavioral health treatment once housed, people incur higher crisis-related inpatient costs for behavioral health conditions while homeless.

About half of those experiencing homelessness report a history of incarceration. Similarly, according to State statistics, one-third to one-half of all parolees in San Francisco and Los Angeles Counties have experienced recent or current episodes of homelessness. Considering homeless people are seven times more likely to recidivate than housed parolees or probationers, homelessness is expensive to our corrections systems.

According to national estimates, about 18% of homeless families experience some involvement in the child-welfare system. Homelessness is not a basis for child removal in California, but is a barrier to child reunification. 2017 homeless count surveys also reflect high reports of domestic violence, from 25% to 60% of respondents reporting recent incidents.
Dorothy Edwards’ Story

As a teenager, I ran away often and began experimenting with drugs and alcohol. Then came my first hospitalization in a mental facility. I was suicidal and depressed. I would spend much more time in these places as I grew older. I was unable to hold a job. I learned to survive through self-medicating; I had no health insurance at the time.

In 1991, my mother passed away, followed by my sister’s death, also in 1991, and my father’s death, in 1995. All three died from cancer. I could not help them or myself because of my addiction. Suddenly, I found myself with no home to return to and the beginning of my homelessness.

I became a young woman pushing a shopping cart through your neighborhood. I was sunburned, on the streets with my dog, sleeping in business storefronts. I was an addict on the streets, stealing food to eat and longing to once again be a part of the community. During the 2011 homeless census, I was found sleeping on a sofa outside Goodwill, in the donations area.

I had not looked at myself in the mirror for years. My teeth were rotted out and my skin was filled with rashes and bites. I could not bear to see who I had become. I was now considered chronically homeless and most likely to die on the streets within a year.

Because people reached out to me, I was saved from myself. I was taught, through being loved, to love myself. I have a wonderful home today for my dog and myself. I am safe, secure, and happy to be alive.

I am four and a half years clean and sober; huge, considering I spent 40 years in addiction and never believed I could get out from under it.

Today, I work as an outreach worker for Housing WORKS. I reach out to unseen people living on the streets. I offer the gift of understanding. Today, I don’t have to hide. I live my life in full view without being ashamed of myself. We are in the business of bringing the unseen back into view, offering up a second chance to people who are hopeless, and placing value back into the souls of those who, like myself, are homeless.
What is Housing First?

Housing First is an **evidence-based model** for addressing homelessness. The approach begins with the recognition that a homeless person must first be able to access a decent, safe, permanent place to live before that person is able to stabilize, improve his/her health, reduce harmful behaviors, or increase their income.

Under the Housing First approach, **anyone experiencing homelessness should be connected to a permanent apartment as quickly as possible**, and programs should remove barriers to accessing housing. Housing First values tenant choice in where to live and whether to participate in services. Tenants are not required to participate in services or be a client of a mental health system or service provider to access or retain housing.

Housing First does **not** mean “housing only.” Housing First acknowledges social services and care coordination are necessary elements of improved housing stability and quality of life.

Programs using Housing First generally fall into two categories:
- **Supportive housing**, an apartment made affordable through long-term rental assistance, paired with intensive services promoting housing stability, for people experiencing chronic homelessness or significant barriers to housing stability.
- **Rapid re-housing**, which connects a family or individual who does not need supportive housing to an apartment affordable through short- to medium-term rental assistance, along with light services designed to allow that household to increase their income sufficiently to be able to afford the apartment.

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**Solutions**

**Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs**

- **Housing navigation**: Services connecting people to housing in the private or non-profit housing sector, and assistance completing applications necessary to obtain housing.
- **Interim or bridge housing**: A temporary, safe place to stay while waiting for referral to a permanent place to live.
- **Low-barrier**: Tenancy does not require pre-conditions, such as sobriety, agreement to participate in services, being a client of a program, good credit, parenting classes, or passing a criminal background check.
- **Permanent housing**: a place to live that does not limit length of stay, where tenants have all rights and responsibilities of tenancy under a lease.
- **Services promoting housing stability**: Intensive services in supportive housing offer “whatever it takes” approach and typically include case management, housing navigation, working with landlords to avoid eviction, connection to medical and behavioral health treatment, employment services, and benefits advocacy. “Light” services include case management, housing navigation, employment and benefits services.
In 2016, the California Legislature passed Senate Bill 1380 (Mitchell). It required all State housing programs to adopt “core components” of Housing First.

**Low Barrier Access to Housing:**
- Tenant screening and selection practices that promote accepting applicants, regardless of sobriety or use of substances, completion of treatment, or participation in services.
- Applicants are not rejected on the basis of poor credit or financial history, poor or lack of rental history, criminal convictions unrelated to tenancy, or behaviors that indicate a lack of "housing readiness."
- Housing providers accept referrals directly from shelters, street outreach, drop-in centers, and other parts of crisis response systems identifying vulnerable people experiencing homelessness.
- Housing may include special physical features that accommodate disabilities, reduce harm, and promote health and community independence among tenants.

**Voluntary Services Tailored to Tenant Needs, Rather than Tailored to the Program:**
- Supportive services emphasize engagement and problem solving and tenant-driven services plans, without predetermined goals.
- Participation in services or program compliance is not a condition of tenancy.
- Case managers and service coordinators are trained in and actively employ evidence-based practices for outreach and engagement.
- Services are informed by a harm-reduction philosophy, where service providers engage tenants in nonjudgmental communication regarding drug and alcohol use, and offer tenants education in avoiding risky behaviors, as well as connected to evidence-based treatment, if the tenant chooses.

**Tenants Have Lease Protections:**
- Once in permanent housing, tenants have a lease and all the rights and responsibilities of tenancy. They live in housing that is not time-limited (even though the subsidy may be time-limited).
- The use of alcohol or drugs, without other lease violations, is not a reason for eviction.
- Funding promotes tenant selection process for supportive housing that prioritize eligible tenants based on criteria other than "first-come-first-served." Criteria often includes duration or chronicity of homelessness, vulnerability to early mortality, functional ability, or high utilization of crisis services.
Solutions

Evidence Basis for Housing First & Supportive Housing

The federal government recognizes Housing First, and supportive housing specifically, as evidence-based practices.\(^{25}\)

- **Nursing Home Days**
  - Decrease by 42%\(^{26}\)

- **Hospital Admissions**
  - Decrease by 29%, compared to control group

- **Emergency Department Visits**
  - Decrease by 24%, compared to control group\(^{27}\)

- Tenants accessing Housing First programs are able to exit homelessness faster than other interventions.\(^{28}\)
- Tenants using Housing First programs stay housed longer, avoid “doubling up” or living in overcrowded housing, and remain housed more stably than other programs.\(^{29}\)
- Families accessing permanent housing had significant reductions in child separation and children’s behavioral problems.\(^{31}\)
- Tenants using Housing First programs access services more often, have a greater sense of choice and autonomy, significantly reduce health and corrections costs, and are far less costly to public systems than tenants of other programs.\(^{32}\)

Over 90% of tenants accessing supportive housing are able to retain housing stability.\(^{30}\)

*While some studies show promising results from rapid re-housing, this intervention is not yet recognized as “evidence-based.” Because rapid re-housing tenants tend to have shorter episodes of homelessness, they also have less dramatic cost decreases once housed.*
## Supportive Housing Impacts on Health: Study Highlights

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Study</th>
<th>Methodology</th>
<th>Costs Saved/Avoided</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Getting Home: Outcomes from Housing High-Cost Homeless Hospital Patients, Flaming &amp; Lee (2013)</td>
<td>Pre-/Post-one year analysis of costs and outcomes among 163 homeless hospital patients incurring the highest 10% of public &amp; hospital costs, per the “10th-Decile Triage Tool”</td>
<td>72% decline in average total health care costs from $58,962 to $16,474 (among the 36 participants who moved into supportive housing)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Los Angeles, California</td>
<td></td>
<td>Every $1 dollar spent to house and support a 10th decile patient is estimated to reduce public and hospital costs by $2 in the first year and $6 in subsequent years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Pilot Study of the Impact of Housing First-Supported Housing for Intensive Users of Medical Hospitalization &amp; Sobering Services, D. Srebnik (2013), <em>American Journal of Public Health</em>, Feb. 103(2), 316-21</td>
<td>One-year pre-post comparison group of homeless adults with inpatient claims of at least $10,000 or at least 60 sobering center contacts in the last year</td>
<td>Significant reductions in sobering center use, emergency department visits, &amp; hospital admissions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>King County, Washington</td>
<td></td>
<td>Savings of $36,579 per person per year, as compared to control group, well beyond the costs of health care &amp; program services of $18,600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An Intervention to Improve Care &amp; Reduce Costs for High-Risk Patients with Frequent Hospital Admissions: A Pilot Study, M. Raven &amp; K. Doran (2011), <em>BioMed Central Health Services Research</em>. New York, New York</td>
<td>Pre-post one year analysis of costs and outcomes among 19 hospital patients identified as high-risk for hospital readmission by a validated predictive algorithm</td>
<td>37.5% reduction in hospital admissions (from 64-40), with 73.3% of participants decreasing hospital admissions</td>
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<tr>
<td>Multisite</td>
<td></td>
<td>Yearly Medicaid reimbursements to hospitals decreased by $16,383 per patient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Where We Sleep: Costs When Homeless &amp; Housed in Los Angeles, flaming &amp; Burns (2009)</td>
<td>Comparison between data among high-cost chronically homeless adults who received supportive housing and those who did not, one year after tenancy</td>
<td>74% fewer hospital admissions among supportive housing group than comparison group</td>
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<tr>
<td>Los Angeles County</td>
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<td>79% reduction in mental health services costs</td>
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<tr>
<td>Multisite</td>
<td></td>
<td>Yearly Medicaid reimbursements to hospitals decreased by $16,383 per patient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effect of Housing &amp; Case Management on Emergency Room Visits and Hospitalizations Among Chronically Ill Homeless Adults Sandowski &amp; Kee (2009), <em>Journal of American Medical Association</em> Chicago, Illinois</td>
<td>Multisite evaluations of HHS, HUD, VA collaboration to house 734 chronically homeless individuals in supportive housing</td>
<td>66% of costs were health care costs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multisite</td>
<td>Review of Los Angeles County public agency costs among 9,186 homeless General Relief recipients versus 1,007 residents who exited homelessness to PSH</td>
<td>66% of costs were health care costs</td>
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<tr>
<td>Multisite</td>
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<td>29% fewer hospital days and 24% fewer emergency department visits within 12 months among participants than control group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health Care &amp; Public Service Use &amp; Costs Before &amp; After Provision of Housing for Chronically Homeless Persons with Severe Alcohol Problems, Larimer &amp; Malone (2009), <em>Journal of American Medical Association</em> Seattle, Washington</td>
<td>Randomized control-group study of 405 chronically ill, chronically homeless adults receiving supportive housing versus usual care</td>
<td>46% fewer hospital days within 18 months among participants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multisite</td>
<td>Randomized control-group study of chronically homeless alcoholics; 75 participants received intensive case management, using harm reduction, in housing, control group received usual care</td>
<td>$2,449 less in Medicaid costs per person, per month than control group participants after 6 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rhode Island’s Housing First Program Evaluation, E. Hirsh &amp; I. Glasser (2008) Rhode Island</td>
<td>Pre-/ post evaluation of 30 chronically homeless people receiving housing and services</td>
<td>Costs avoided over and above program costs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multisite</td>
<td></td>
<td>Health care savings averaged $7,946 per participant beyond the costs of housing and services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rhode Island</td>
<td></td>
<td>$3,841 reduction in Medi-Cal hospital costs, per beneficiary after one year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frequent User of Health Services Initiative, Final Evaluation, Linkins &amp; Brya (2008)</td>
<td>Pre-2 Year Post-Placement evaluation of participants in program targeting high emergency room users for intensive case management</td>
<td>$7,519 reduction in Medi-Cal hospital costs, per beneficiary per year after two months</td>
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Communities transforming to Housing First-oriented systems are converting transitional housing and shelters to low-barrier interim housing, coupled with housing navigation and rapid re-housing supports.

Data comparing families receiving transitional housing vs. families receiving permanent housing reveal transitional housing often excludes the most vulnerable people, and yet has poor outcomes:

- A three-year HUD study of families receiving transitional housing found families failed to improve housing stability, and had the same outcomes in family preservation, child well-being, substance/alcohol abuse, or health status as families left on their own to exit homelessness.

Similarly, families who access emergency shelters that do not connect these families to permanent housing have poor outcomes:

- About half of those receiving shelter services returned to homelessness or housing instability after leaving the shelter within six months following their shelter stay.
- About one-third of adults in families reported fair to poor health.
- Nearly one-half of the families were food insecure.

One study from Canada indicates promising outcomes for youth programs using a Housing First approach; yet, insufficient data exists comparing outcomes of transitional housing versus permanent housing for transition-age youth. HUD encourages youth providers to use the principles of Housing First, even when housing is time-limited, and will fund transitional housing programs for this population.
Coordinated Entry Systems (CES) identify, assess and prioritize homeless individuals and families for housing and services based on vulnerability and severity of need.

CES is a community-wide approach that moves a homeless response system from a collection of independent housing and service providers who employ their own referral policies and wait lists, to a comprehensive approach intended to coordinate all housing and services resources.

Coordinated Entry Systems (CES) identify, assess and prioritize homeless individuals and families for housing and services based on vulnerability and severity of need.

CES is designed to ensure that—

- People experiencing homelessness receive the right housing and services intervention,
- Communities prioritize people who need supportive housing the most to be able to access it as quickly as possible, and
- Communities target limited housing and services to those with the greatest vulnerabilities.

People experiencing homelessness often face long wait times to receive assistance or are screened out altogether. Some of the most vulnerable people are the least likely to be able to access housing, as they may not have the functional ability to check-in routinely on wait lists, and to apply at multiple housing sites, necessary under a “first come, first served” process of accessing housing and services.

HUD requires CoCs to establish CES by January 2018.35
Coordinated Entry Systems (CES)

CES is intended to be a data-driven process that allows communities to—

- **Provide Access** to housing and services resources through a “no wrong door” approach. People experiencing homelessness are able to call 211, contact a public agency, walk into a shelter, or contact a services provider and gain access to the same housing and services as others accessing the system elsewhere.

- **Assess** for needs and the right housing and services intervention. The cornerstone of CES is a standardized assessment tool that assesses the most appropriate intervention for that individual or family to exit homelessness, and determines whether the individual or family should be prioritized for supportive housing. A common assessment tool is the Vulnerability Index-Service Prioritization Decision Assistance Tool, better known as the VI-SPDAT.

- **Assign** housing and services interventions based on need. In essence, CES creates a centralized referral system to match the individual or family to the right housing program and unit.

- Create a framework of **accountability**. CES helps local communities establish a shared vision, achieve common goals, and collect system-wide data, which allows for on-going planning. CES is intended to engage all stakeholders at least annually to evaluate and update the coordinated entry process.

**Inclusive**

**Outreach**

**Person-Centered**

**Low Barrier**

**Prioritization**

**Housing First Orientation**

**Fair & Equal Access**
End Notes


4. In example, housing providers housed over 14,000 homeless people in Los Angeles County between the 2016 and 2017 homeless counts, but homelessness increased by 23% countywide. Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority. The Greater Los Angeles Homeless Count. Jul. 2017. (Hereinafter 2017 LA Count.)

5. Over one million households living with extremely low-incomes statewide are paying more than 50% of their incomes on rent. California Housing Partnership. How California’s Housing Market is Failing to Meet the Needs of Low-Income Families. Feb. 2014.


8. The U.S. counts for 2013-16 and the California counts for 2015 and 2016 come from HUD. Annual Homeless Assessment Reports to Congress. 2013, 2015, 2016. The 2017 homeless count data is from the collection of homeless counts from California’s CoCs, shown on a previous page. 2016 AHAR.

9. Id.


17. Hospital Costs & Length of Stay.


33. Family Options Study.
