Prevalence of Black People Experiencing Homelessness

Homeless Population vs. General Population, by Race & Ethnicity, Los Angeles Continuum of Care, 2017

Sources: Homeless population data represent estimates from the 2017 Greater Los Angeles Homeless Count for the Los Angeles Continuum of Care (LA CoC) and excludes the Glendale and Pasadena Continuums of Care. General population data taken from the U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey 2017 5-Year Estimates for Los Angeles County.
Prevalence of Black People Experiencing Homelessness

In the Los Angeles Continuum of Care, approximately 1 in 40 Black people experience homelessness.

For White people, approximately 1 in 250 experience homelessness.
The LAHSA Commission approved Committee membership in December 2017; Committee launched in April 2018. The Committee was formed in response to:

1) The persistent overrepresentation of Black people experiencing homelessness, and
2) The impact of the Ad Hoc Committee on Women & Homelessness

The Committee comprised a broad range of stakeholders:

- 2 LAHSA Commissioners served as chair and vice-chair
- 24 Committee members
Committee Members

LAHSA Commission Committee Members

Jacqueline Waggoner, Chair  
Kelli Bernard, Vice-Chair

Committee Members

Dr. Va Lecia Adams Kellum  
St. Joseph’s Center

Chancela Al-Mansour  
Housing Rights Center

Reverend Eddie Anderson  
McCarty Memorial Christian Church

Dr. Jack Barbour  
Southern California Health & Rehabilitation Program

Wendell Blassingame  
Skid Row Resident/Veteran

Rachel Brashier  
LA City Councilmember, Marqueece Harris-Dawson, Council District 8

Reverend Oliver Buie  
Holman United Methodist Church

Chela Demuir-Cartier  
Unique Woman’s Coalition

Robin Hughes  
Abode Communities

Janet Kelly  
Sanctuary of Hope

Monique King-Viehland  
Community Development Commission of the County of Los Angeles

Veronica Lewis  
SSG HOPICS

Juataun Mark  
Los Angeles County Department of Health Services

Nova Mirari  
Homeless Youth Forum of Los Angeles

Anita Nelson  
SRO Housing Corporation

Alisa Orduna  
City of Santa Monica

Molly Rysman  
Supervisor Sheila Kuehl, Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors, Third District

Suzette Shaw  
Skid Row Resident/Human Services Advocate with Homeless Lived Experience

Brenda Shockley  
Office of Mayor Eric Garcetti

Lola Smallwood Cuevas  
Los Angeles Black Worker Center

Sean Spear  
City of Los Angeles Housing + Community Investment Department

Reba Stevens  
Advocate with Homeless Lived Experience

Pete White  
Los Angeles Community Action Network

Dhakshike Wickrema  
Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas, Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors, Second District
Committee Purpose

1) Examine the factors contributing to the overrepresentation of Black people among the population experiencing homelessness,

2) Identify opportunities to increase racial equity within the homeless service delivery system, and

3) Develop recommendations to more effectively meet the needs of Black people experiencing or at risk of homelessness.
To guide its work, the Committee adopted the use of a Racial Equity Toolkit, a process and set of questions designed to guide, inform, and assess how policies, programs, and budgetary decisions burden and/or benefit Black people experiencing homelessness.

**STEP 1. Set Outcomes**

**STEP 2. Involve Stakeholders and Analyze Data**

**STEP 3. Determine Benefit and/or Burden**

**STEP 4. Advance Opportunity or Minimize Harm**

**STEP 5. Evaluate, Raise Awareness, and Be Accountable**

**STEP 6. Report Back**
Overview of the Process

In May 2018, the Committee began a series of listening sessions and focus groups to learn firsthand from those who have experienced homelessness, those who serve people experiencing homelessness as well as other interested parties. Following these sessions, the Committee engaged in monthly, thoughtful discussions exploring the impacts of structural and institutional racism and the various systems of care which contribute to the overrepresentation of Black people in the homeless population. Public meeting topics included:

- Criminal justice system involvement and re-entry
- Cost of living and lack of employment opportunities
- Foster care and child welfare system involvement
- Coordinated Entry System (CES) access and assessment
- Permanent housing and retention
The Committee developed 67 recommendations, informed by quantitative data analysis and feedback from experts in the field, including community leaders and advocates, service providers, policymakers, and people with lived experience of homelessness.

Recommendations aim to address the burdens the Committee identified, in areas of:

- Cross-System Coordination
- Data & Research
- Funding
- Hiring & Training
- Programs & Services
- Policy & Advocacy
Key Insights & Recommendations:
Institutional Biases in Upstream & Mainstream Systems
Key Insights: Structural and Institutional Racism

Institutional barriers across agencies and systems must be dismantled to eliminate the racial disparities and systemic racism impacting Black people experiencing homelessness.

“African Americans are disproportionally represented in homelessness because they are overrepresented in every area of disparity in our country. And that goes back to our roots of racism, oppression, and institutional racism. It doesn’t change with the category. It is almost expected.”

-Black Woman, South Los Angeles Listening Session Participant

“Structural racism is the issue here. Los Angeles doesn’t acknowledge this. How can we have the conversation if we don’t acknowledge we live in a racist Los Angeles?”

-Participant, San Pedro Listening Session
## Recommendations: Structural and Institutional Racism

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Recommendation</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Data &amp; Research</strong></td>
<td>Advocate for funding and engage researchers to use a racial equity lens in conducting qualitative and quantitative research driven by the community.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Cross-System Coordination</strong></td>
<td>Establish a countywide racial equity initiative to provide enhanced coordination and oversight across systems of care.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Hiring &amp; Training</strong></td>
<td>Enhance and require ongoing trainings in areas such as implicit bias, cultural competency, and the impacts of discrimination against Black people.</td>
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Key Insights: Cost of Living and Lack of Employment Opportunities

Low and stagnant wages exacerbates homelessness and particularly impacts Black people.

Employment discrimination based on race contributes to high unemployment for Black people.

Stronger connections are needed between the homeless service delivery system and the workforce development system.

“I am a paycheck away from being homeless myself.”

-Black Woman, Listening Session Participant
Recommendations: Cost of Living and Lack of Employment Opportunities

**Cross-System Coordination**
Advocate for and fund the establishment of a cross-system partnership to provide a holistic approach in addressing employment barriers.

**Programs & Services**
Ensure that living-wage employment training programs align with major growth sectors in the LA region, are adequately funded, and accessible to Black people experiencing homelessness.

**Data & Research**
Establish a process to collect employment data related to people experiencing homelessness.
The interconnectedness of incarceration and homelessness creates a revolving door that only serves to make the plight of homelessness more challenging and complex.

Black people are disproportionately impacted by the criminal justice system.

Transitioning formerly-incarcerated individuals to community may require housing with wraparound services; housing alone is not sufficient.

“It is nearly impossible to house Black people with criminal histories.”

-Black Woman, San Pedro Listening Session Participant
### Recommendations: Criminal Justice System Involvement and Re-entry

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cross-System Coordination</th>
<th>Conduct a global landscape analysis to identify existing and potential relationships, as well as current efforts, related to criminal justice reform.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Funding</strong></td>
<td>Fund and build capacity for programs that support people who are formerly incarcerated and who are or are at risk of experiencing homelessness.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Programs &amp; Services</strong></td>
<td>Support the development and growth of community-rooted programs, providers, and networks owned and/or led by formerly incarcerated individuals to guide successful re-entry.</td>
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Rates of child welfare system involvement are disproportionately high among Black people experiencing homelessness.

Homelessness often creates a barrier for families seeking reunification.

Transition-aged youth (TAY) participants are too often placed in programs that are not tailored to their individual needs or interests.

“There is no conversation as to what the youth needs; the programs are prescriptive. If I am competent and succeeding, don’t take away resources because of it. Ask what we need rather than assume what we need.”

-Black Youth, Homeless Youth Forum of Los Angeles Focus Group Participant
## Cross-System Coordination

Enhance education and coordination between the child welfare system and homeless service system, to improve access to services for families and youth.

## Programs & Services

Identify strategies to increase the capacity of community-based supports—particularly mental health and behavioral health services—to strengthen families and enhance family stability.

## Data & Research

Conduct research to identify interrupters of intergenerational cycles of homelessness and develop appropriate coaching strategies to model desired healthy behaviors and essential life skills.
Key Insights & Recommendations:
Within the Homeless Service System and Permanent Housing
Including Black people with lived experience in program and policy design, implementation, evaluation, and service delivery, is critical to ensuring services meet the needs of Black people experiencing homelessness.

The quality of interim housing varies across facilities, and for some, living in a shelter can be a traumatizing or re-traumatizing experience.

Sufficient research has not been done to understand whether CES Triage Tools adequately measure vulnerability and acuity of Black people experiencing homelessness.

“They wanted to put 400 people that all had histories of trauma into one place.... Until homeless services really integrates trauma-informed care and deals with it from the perspective that looks at the whole piece—that looks at the racism—we are going to continue to repeat and spend money in ways that is not going to change the system.”

-Black Woman, Service Provider, South Los Angeles Listening Session Participant
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Recommendations: Coordinated Entry System Access and Assessment</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Data &amp; Research</strong></td>
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<td>Conduct data analysis to evaluate the efficacy of the CES Triage Tools for capturing the vulnerabilities of Black participants experiencing homelessness and connecting them to appropriate housing and services.</td>
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<td><strong>Funding</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide resources and training for nontraditional sites that frequently interact with people experiencing homelessness to provide direct, targeted services in coordination with CES and mainstream systems of care.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Programs &amp; Services</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Fund outreach teams to provide one-time financial assistance in preventing homelessness further upstream, by serving those with less acute needs.</td>
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Key Insights: Permanent Housing and Retention

Rates of return to homelessness are higher for Black people than other race groups, despite being housed in CES permanent housing at comparable rates.

There is a large gap between the number of affordable housing units available in LA County and the number of low-income households in need.

Racial discrimination prevents Black people from securing rentals of their choice. More sufficient protection from evictions is needed across LA County.

“The Shelter-Plus Care program is good, but where is the care? The permanent care facilities only have staff working from 9am-4pm. A lot of the staff have credentials, but they have no idea how to help individuals experiencing homelessness.”

-Black Woman, South Los Angeles Listening Session Participant
### Recommendations: Permanent Housing and Retention

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<tr>
<th><strong>Policy &amp; Advocacy</strong></th>
<th>Continue to advocate for policies and funding to support further affordable housing development, to address the deficit in supply of affordable housing.</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Funding</strong></td>
<td>Fund and prioritize efforts to establish a centralized system for accessing affordable housing and engage key community partners to enhance the cultural sensitivity and effectiveness of information dissemination.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Data &amp; Research</strong></td>
<td>Increase the quality of housing retention services in permanent supportive housing (PSH) and rapid re-housing (RRH) through training, data collection, and evaluation.</td>
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Action Plan & Progress to Date
Action Plan

1. Disseminate Key Insights & Recommendations
2. Partner with Critical Stakeholders
3. Establish Methods for Evaluation
4. Implement Recommendations
5. Ongoing Feedback & Continuous Oversight
6. Establish Methods for Evaluation
7. Building the Movement for Racial Equity
A Racial Equity Plan
✓ Joined the Government Alliance on Race and Equity (GARE) cohort to develop a Racial Equity Plan for infusing a racial equity and trauma-informed lens into all aspects of the agency’s work.

LA City and County Partnerships
✓ Engaged with LA City and County leadership to advance the Committee’s recommendations through enhanced cross-system collaboration.

Equitable Hiring Practices and Job Requirements
✓ Focused on refining the agency’s hiring practices and job requirements to expand the diversity of applicants.

Training and Capacity Building
✓ Increased resources to train staff in implicit bias, cultural competency, institutional racism, and trauma-informed care.

Advocacy for Tenant Protections and Affordable Housing Development
✓ Advocated at the state and local level for expanding tenant protections and the production and preservation of affordable housing.
Ongoing Strategic Development
• LAHSA will be engaging a consultant to provide a strategic framework for implementing the recommendations and support in creating metrics for evaluation on progress.
• LAHSA will hire an Equity Officer for continuous and thoughtful improvement to LAHSA’s practices and policies to advance racial equity.

Oversight and Accountability
• LAHSA’s Communications and IT teams are working to develop public-facing report card and tracking mechanism.
• LAHSA staff will report-back to the LAHSA Commission on a biannual basis to share progress.

Community-Based Research
• LAHSA is collaborating with academics through the Homelessness Policy Research Institute (HPRI), Committee members, and other key partners to begin scoping and securing funding for the CES Triage Tool and PSH Retention research priorities.