



DATE: December 19, 2016

TO: Homeless Strategy Committee

FROM: Paul Duncan, Associate Director of Systems Integration
Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority

SUBJECT: Strategy 7A Status Update

RECOMMENDATIONS

None at this time.

CITY STRATEGY 7A

Strategy 7A instructs LAHSA to report back on the number of shelter personnel needed to transform the existing shelter system into bridge housing.

BACKGROUND: THE LAHSA SHELTER SYSTEM

Before 2016, LAHSA-funded emergency shelters were operated on first-come first-served basis. They were open 14-hours per day, requiring people experiencing homelessness to leave each morning and wait in line again that evening, not knowing if they would have a bed to sleep in that night. This model decreased stability and limited the amount of time spent with case management staff to work toward permanent housing goals. With support from the city, LAHSA increased these shelters to 24-hour operations, and they are now Crisis Housing programs.

LAHSA also operates the winter shelter program for single adults, a 14-hour program that is only open evenings during the winter months. The winter shelter program is unique in that several of the facilities are not year-round shelter sites, but armories, churches, and warehouse spaces. These shelters provide a safe and warm place to sleep, two meals a day, and some case management services.

For families, LAHSA operates the family crisis housing program within the Coordinated Entry System for Families (formerly known as the Homeless Family Solutions System). The family shelter system has similarities to the single and youth systems "bridge" model. Each family placed in a shelter or motel is linked with a Family Solutions Center and works closely with a case manager to enter permanent housing. The 24-hour family program has 332 shelter units. The family crisis housing program operates different throughout the county. One Service Planning Area (SPA) (2) operates its only family shelter. Five SPAs (3,4,5,6, & 8) subcontract their shelter beds to other agencies due to organizational shelter capacity. The balance (SPAs 1 & 7) do not have shelters, so the SPA leads provide motel vouchers in lieu of shelter beds. All eight SPA leads utilize motel vouchers when their shelter capacity is full. The average cost throughout the county for family shelter is \$56.38/day.

CRISIS AND BRIDGE HOUSING

The Crisis and Bridge Housing model funded through LAHSA's 2016 Coordinated Entry System (CES) Request for Proposals (RFP), allows shelter providers to have more flexibility in

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serving participants. Shelter providers were awarded funding to support both shelter types. A shelter participant could begin at the bridge level of services, or begin in a crisis bed and convert to the bridge program after 30 days.

Crisis Housing and Bridge Housing provide a safe, low-barrier, supportive, twenty-four (24) hour residence to individuals experiencing homelessness, while they are assisted as quickly as possible into permanent housing. Both program types work in collaboration with LAHSA and the Coordinated Entry System (CES) for homeless individuals in the Los Angeles Continuum of Care (LA-CoC). The Crisis Housing component of the shelter program has broad eligibility requirements and a 30-day time limit for residence. These beds may be utilized by anyone, including people who are newly homeless or face low barriers to reentering permanent housing. Shelter staff offers them some “light touch” case management and linkages to other resources. If a person remains in the shelter consistently for 30 days, the bed they are using will convert to bridge housing, and will function according to the Bridge Housing program.

The Bridge Housing component was initially created to reserve beds for people who were already matched to a housing resource (i.e. a Section 8 voucher), but who are still waiting for additional paperwork or approvals, or who have not yet found a unit in which to move. Bridge Housing components funded through the 2016 RFP can also reserve beds for people who are deemed high-acuity by the CES survey but have not yet been matched to a housing resource, who are exiting an institution, or who have been in the crisis housing component for 30 days. Bridge Housing participants receive more intensive housing navigation and case management services and can stay in the shelter up to 90 days (with possible extensions). Additionally, if a Bridge Housing participant misses a night, they are not automatically exited from the program, but instead have the bed reserved for them. LAHSA awards both Crisis and Bridge Housing contracts the same bed rate per night: \$30. Agencies are required to leverage other funding sources in order to cover all shelter costs.

Bridge Housing acts as a *bridge* between the street and permanent housing. Bridge Housing can serve as a bridge on the front end – with reserved beds for certain populations who are exiting institutions into homelessness - or on the back end – with services in place to support the connection to permanent housing.

Both program components are essential to the shelter system in order to have access points for people experiencing homelessness who are at different stages.

LAHSA Funded Shelters for Single Adults and Transition Age Youth - City of Los Angeles				
	2015-2016	2016-2017		
SINGLE ADULTS AND YOUTH	Emergency Shelter 14 hours	Crisis (ER) Shelter 24 hours	CES Crisis & Bridge Housing	Winter Shelter (Dec. – Mar.)
Beds	1,045	1,045	268	932

TRANSFORMING THE EXISTING SYSTEM

Through the 2016 CES RFP, LAHSA increased the number of Bridge Housing beds (a portion of the 268 beds in the chart above), while also enhancing the shelter system by adding additional staff resources. LAHSA awarded funds for Housing Navigators who are not employees of the shelters, but specifically serve people residing in the shelters. These housing navigators can provide a higher level of service than the shelter staff, resulting in improved outcomes in bridging people to permanent housing. This strategy was a result of discussions with other shelter funders (DMH, DHS) and lead service providers through County Strategy E8.

There are two ways to transform the existing system to Bridge: 1) fund additional bridge beds at a higher rate than the current \$30 per bed and 2) provide funding for Housing Navigators to serve the people in the shelter system. There are 1,313 year-round single adult shelter beds in the city of Los Angeles, which does not include winter shelter. Using County Strategy E8 dollars, LAHSA funded \$330,000 of housing navigation services that will be used to serve only people who are residing in the city of Los Angeles shelter system. Using a 1:25 ratio of housing navigator to client, it is estimated that these funds could serve 150-200 people in a year. This enhancement to the shelter system is just the beginning.

There remains a large gap in specialized housing navigation services for people residing in shelters. To serve the existing shelter system at a 1:25 ratio, the system would need 45 additional housing navigators. At an estimated cost of \$50,000 for salary and benefits, this requires an additional investment of \$2,250,000.

Currently, the ratio of Housing Navigators to shelter participants does not meet the estimated need, which partially shifts the expectations of housing placement to the shelter employees. Bridge Housing allows providers to assist clients with higher levels of service, however LAHSA's current bed rate is the same for both components. Providers must utilize other sources of funding to cover the cost of enhanced services. For a more thorough transformation of the existing shelter system, there must be a higher bed rate for higher expectations of service.

BARRIERS TO ACCESSING SHELTER

It is LAHSA's policy that all shelters are low barrier to the greatest extent possible, based on the limitations of the facility, and to make reasonable accommodations as they are able. However, there remain obstacles to some people experiencing homelessness in accessing shelter. Two barriers that are often cited are pets and storage of personal items.

Service animals play an important role in supporting people with disabilities, and it is therefore, LAHSA's policy to welcome any animal trained to assist a person with a disability. All agencies must be committed to having policies, procedures, and practices to permit the use of service animals by clients with disabilities. However, some facilities are not able to make this accommodation, based on space and other logistical considerations of their facilities. In these rare situations, the accommodation provided may be relocation to a different shelter.

LAHSA and its providers also recognize the importance of animal companionship to many people who are experiencing homelessness, and are working with our partners to inform

our shelter residents with pets of the resources that are available to them. This includes making pet crates, grooming, and spay/neuter services accessible to our shelter providers.

LAHSA has been working with the city's Animal Services Department and the private foundation, Found Animals, to create linkages between shelters and local pet service organizations and resources. For example, LAHSA facilitated the connection of the Weingart shelter in Skid Row and the organization, Downtown Dog Rescue, who has provided Weingart residents with leashes, food, and crates. Weingart residents can also go to the Downtown Dog Rescue during the day to enjoy a safe place to spend time with their pets.

Sufficient storage for personal items has been cited as another barrier to accessing shelter. There are anecdotal accounts of people not wanting to leave their personal items on the street for fear of losing them. This was even more significant of a barrier when the shelter system was only 14-hours, as shelter residents had to take their items with them every morning and come back in the evening to line up. LAHSA aimed to reduce hesitation to access shelter by transforming the majority of the shelter system to a 24-hour program and also requiring shelters to have lockers for residents to secure their personal items.

LAHSA recognizes that there is more that can be done to reduce barriers to entering shelter. As we explore and refine best practices, we will create policies and procedures, assist with program modifications, and provide ongoing trainings to support any shifts.

Side By Side: 2015 and 2016 Crisis + Bridge Housing Program Components

	2015 Emergency Shelter Program 7/1/15-6/30/16	CRISIS HOUSING	BRIDGE HOUSING <i>aka Reserved Crisis Housing</i>
Core Elements	14-hour operations Low-Barrier Entrance Criteria	24-hour operations Extended intake hours Low-Barrier Entrance Criteria	
Eligibility	First Come, First Served		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High Acuity, Matched to Housing • Mid-acuity, matched to housing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High-acuity, Unmatched • Exiting an Institution • Resided in Crisis Housing >30 consecutive days
Length of Stay	90 days	30 days	90 days
Extension Requirements	Contractor must document the reason(s) for the extension and the identified stable housing or other temporary housing the participant is waiting to access	Not Applicable	Housing plan identified
Grace period of missed days before client loses bed	None	None	Termination not permitted for one-night; providers' discretion for two-nights
Case Management Requirements	Light touch case management toward self resolving homelessness with <i>in-house case management staff</i>	Light touch case management toward self resolving homelessness with efforts to link to, and maintain linkage with, <i>assigned Housing Navigator</i>	
Performance Targets			
Permanent Housing Placements	30%	70%	
Increase in Income	20%	20%	
Bed Utilization	95%	95%	
HMIS Data Quality	95%	95%	