



La Cienega Safe Parking Program

Program Context

The La Cienega Lot is the largest safe parking program operated by Safe Parking LA and is larger than the average safe parking program size.

While our nightly utilization rates are low, we use the “3-night rule” (which is a safe parking programmatic standard across the Continuum of Care) for clients stating that if a client doesn’t stay on the lot more than 3 nights in a row, they are disenrolled. This ensures that enrolled clients are using the location and program, otherwise, the spaces are opened for new clients. Clients can re-enroll if they decide to return after more than 3 days.

What are some reasons that clients may not stay at the lot every night?

- Lot is too far away from where they must go during the day (i.e. doctor appt, work, etc.) and there is special consideration of adding to vehicle wear-and-tear and gas prices.
- Location is not near community resources (i.e. grocery, bank, library, park) and does not have a high walk score, so clients plan accordingly on a day-to-day basis.
- Clients that are parents often want to prioritize a hotel and/or other options when they have time with their children, so may stay in a different location for certain nights.
 - As a current example: There is a family of 3 enrolled in the program. They feel most comfortable in Long Beach because they are familiar with the location and comfortable with supports there, but there isn’t a safe parking program available. They spend most nights at the lot but can get stuck in Long Beach sometimes due to lack of gas, traffic, or other obstacles.
- Clients that work within the gig economy will often prioritize late night food delivery and driving back to the program location may be too late for entry (midnight or later).

Having a large lot is useful and offers some benefits to clients that are not true for our other/smaller lots. At the La Cienega Lot, clients are not crowded together. They can open their car doors and still have some separation from other clients; a sense of personal space can feel like a luxury. An important feature for many clients is that there are two restrooms and two handwashing stations, allowing for more personal space and time when utilizing these amenities.

Having a lot at this specific location can also be somewhat alienating. It is quite loud, and not always a welcoming environment. For those that use it, it is still a benefit and is a safer alternative to sleeping every night in their vehicle on the street without external support.



A Safe Parking LA client at the La Cienega Lot shared her story in [“A Car is not a Home,” a multi-media opinion piece from the New York Times.](#)

Outcomes and Measures of Success

Safe Parking LA does not see nightly utilization metrics as the appropriate measure of success for our programs. Our goal is not to have a full lot every night, but rather to move people into stable housing and away from chronic homelessness. In our experience over the last six years of operation, a program location becomes more stable and known over time. While achieving 100% occupancy is not a goal, we do see higher utilization usually during the summer (as people can safely sleep with their windows and doors open all night) and usually in the second year of operation.

The average placement rate for interim housing agencies across LA County in 2020 was 25% and other service provider organizations generally report between 22-24%.

Safe Parking LA is statistically higher across the board for interim housing placement rates. In our fiscal year 22-23, we placed clients into more **stable housing at a rate of 34%**. In the first half of fiscal year 23-24 (July 1, 2023 – December 31, 2023), we placed clients at **nearly 48%**.

La Cienega Lot highlights include:

- Enrollment numbers have been on par with/slightly above our other lots
- **Housing placement rate is 41%**
- Average stay is approximately 50 days

Total numbers for the La Cienega Lot since opening on June 1, 2023 (through March 18, 2024):

- Total enrollments (*includes initial and subsequent enrollments by clients*): 74
- Total unique clients (*includes primary and passenger clients*): 70
- Total unique households/vehicles: 59
- Total clients exited (*includes all exits – to housing, other programs, without services, and self-resolved*): 51
- Total placements into permanent and transitional housing: 21

Considering that most interim housing is congregate with a limit on personal belongings allowed and no free overnight parking, many people weigh the options of what they might lose in other interim housing options and choose safe parking. Safe Parking LA attends to the specific needs of the client as the only service provider focused solely on vehicular homelessness. We are able to resolve homelessness at almost double the rate of interim housing programs and in half the time.

Safe parking is a more community-based approach. It is a landing spot for people to stabilize and catches people before they fall into chronic homelessness. Safe Parking LA assists them with



sorting out what is next and is more in line with homelessness prevention than traditional homeless services.

Outreach & Intake Efforts

Over the past year, Safe Parking LA has undergone a variety of transitions that have limited staff bandwidth and programmatic growth opportunities. We are pleased to be in a stable position now with new program staff in place to strengthen the organization efforts for outreach & intake for all programs, but especially the La Cienega Lot.

Intake: We recently increased support for our intake, adding a Services Coordinator & Intake Specialist to the team plus increasing Intake hours completed by our Program Coordinator. This increases capacity to answer phone calls from potential clients, respond to inquiries via website/ email/phone, field referrals from partner organizations, and permit new clients more quickly.

Partner Outreach:

- The CD 11 field office is a primary partner for coordinated outreach efforts in the area. They were newly staffed in the last couple of months. Safe Parking LA holds monthly meetings with this team to give updates on our programs and find outreach opportunities.
- In February, Safe Parking LA onboarded a Program Manager, Mirna Camarena, who is expanding our outreach efforts to partner organizations. This ensures all homeless service providers near our lots know about our program, lot locations, and increases client referrals for our programming through the Coordinated Entry System and across the Continuum of Care countywide.
- Safe Parking LA is embedded in SPA 5, having a veteran-focused program on the West LA VA campus and other CD11 and CD5 locations. We collaborate with service connections (i.e. Westside Coalition) and engage a wide range of neighborhood-serving organizations from mutual aid to libraries.

Communications: Our Development Department is increasing our digital reach through social media and email communications. This is the main access point for our target service population and leads individuals straight to our online application to streamline program enrollment.

As mentioned above, we can meet clients virtually, generally meaning we respond via phone/text/email in the way the client makes first contact. Increasingly, Safe Parking LA's social media impressions show that the most widely shared posts are with users that are demographically and economically like those of our clients. We have adjusted to posting more in line with client needs and channeling direct messages through our Intake team for immediate engagement for resources and enrollment.