

Ventura Social Services Tak Force

Minutes 8/2/203 3:15pm

Via Zoom: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81514995979>

Present: Judy Alexandre, Sue Brinkmeyer, Kyler Carlson, Kevin Clerici, Leah Coming Jim Duran, Jennifer Harkey, Shelley Harrison, John Sanders Jones, Lauren Praer Mex Kate Mills, Maria Navarro, Kappy Paulson, Leona Rollins, Chris Russell, Debora Schreiber, Susan White Wood

The meeting was called to order at 3:17 pm

- I. All were welcomed and introduced themselves to the group
- II. The Agenda was approved with no changes M/S Kevin Clerici/Kyler Carlson
- III. The Minutes of 6/7/23 were approved with no changes M/S Kevin
- IV. Judy reported that there were no changes in Ventura Social Services Task Force finances
- V. Jenn Harkey presented the draft of the Strategic Plan on Homelessness and answered questions
 - a. The COC has been working for months with consultants, and invited all cities to do gaps analyses and develop strategies with assistance from consultants. Leona Rollins has been leading the development. Oxnard, Ventura and Thousand Oaks participated. There is currently an internal draft circulating among leadership of 3 cities and counties. Full draft to send to community should be ready for specific feedback and suggestions from people with lived experience as well as service providers and community members. Jenn shared gaps and next steps from beginning draft, which is currently 120+ pages. Once plan is ready for sharing, it will be posted on COC website and on Ventura City website as well. Leona reported that once the draft is out, there will be a community survey and two public meetings.
 - b. The gaps document reviewed by Jennifer Harkey is attached and incorporated in these minutes.
 - c. Jennifer Harkey commented that the group preparing Next Steps are working to make sure that next steps are achievable and realistic. The next steps document review by Jennifer Harkey is attached an incorporate in these minutes.
 - i. There was discuss of the following next step: Identify programming needs for HomeShare expansion (Area Agency on Aging). Maria Navarro asked about possibilities for landlords to offer up housing for sheltering homeless people. Gold Coast Foundation has recently done some leasing with landlord leasing to multiple parties under one roof. Kappy Paulson indicated that there is one landlord who is doing shared leasing that is working well by using an agreement. Leona Rollins commented that she would love to see shared housing come to Ventura County since there have been a lot of successes with similar

programs in Los Angeles County. Susan White Wood added that VCBH would support funding for unlicensed sober living as a shared housing model. Kyler suggested that we should ask landlords who come to HOPES if they'd be interested. Judy suggested having a meeting with landlords to see what could be developed. Jim Duran stated that the emergency family shelter does master leasing of an apartment, cares for the apartment and for the tenant, and then the program finds the next tenant. The landlord is so pleased with the relationship that he offers apartments to the program each time another unit becomes available. Jim said that he could invite a landlord that he has built a good relationship with to be a speaker at a meeting with other landlords.

- ii. Leona answered a question that was asked about a term used in the document: Shallow Subsidy. She said that is a type of rental assistance that can be provided to recently rehoused or unstably housed individuals and families. Its purpose is to provide low income households in high rent communities with a way to maintain their housing while they increase their income and other resources in order to maintain housing on their own in the future. Maria Navarro indicated that that is a great idea, especially if it is targeted to families who are extremely rent burdened.
- iii. There was also discussion of next step: Homeless prevention - make referrals to Housing Rights office for legal issues. Ventura has applied for funding precisely for homeless prevention; Susan White Wood of VCBH asked if a next step could be adding dedicated housing case managers to keep people housed. Judy talked about people who pay rent in cash and do not get receipts, including immigrants, those with dementia. Leona added that there are landlords who do abuse those who are most vulnerable. This all tied in well with the planned next step: Assess feasibility of expanding Landlord Engagement Program
- iv. There was discussion of next step: Target outreach for homeless prevention and shallow subsidy programs. Judy asked if we could do a "City Center for Seniors"? Jim Duran said he has had a conversation with someone with a house in Ventura precisely to do what Judy suggested. Leona suggested this might work well because people are less afraid of seniors. Judy added we could have specialized case management for seniors. Kappy Paulson commented that seniors usually need single story homes. Leona concurred, saying that we need first floor units, especially those that can be modified to meet the needs of seniors,
- v. There was discussion about implementing the next steps once they are finalized: Kyler asked where responsibility lies for implementing the plan once it is in place and how advocates encourage our cities and county to implement. Jenn indicated that the county will take a large role, and the Board of Supervisors will be looking at what available resources are, what limitations are, what grants are available. Joe Dawson gave an update on Riverhaven/Turning Point Foundation.

- VI. Edwin Marinez reported that Riverhaven is coming to an end in October. The units will be cleaned out by December. The program is looking for transitions between now and October. The decision was made to end the program because of recent floodings and the environment and the other people in the area. There was a danger to residents. It was a decision made by police and Turning Point. It was difficult to keep the water supply open. They are now looking toward making the program 90-day sheltering with transition to housing. Riverhaven currently has 13 residents on site. One was recently housed, and one moved to shelter. Many agencies are reaching out and helping. Leona is hoping that a grant comes through to help with placement. Kappy added that the City needs the property to put in waste recycling center. Edwin indicated that the focus is on the people, and that Turning Point is looking at it as the next step toward progress, and that this change is bringing the community together to help. Leona added that the City will partner with Turning Point and is hoping future grants will help place more of the residents at the ARCH or other housing.
- VII. Leona Rollins discussed the Gap Needs prioritization update and how to move it to Council agenda. The City is planning to make the gap needs part of the larger strategic plan for the city. Once the draft is public, and feedback is open for 4-8 weeks, it will be revised as needed and then will go to Planning Commission for recommendation probably between September and October and then on to City Council for adoption. Then implementation work will begin.
- VIII. Jenn Harkey and Leona Rollins discussed grant proposals and updates, and news from the Continuum of Care and the City of Ventura.
 - a. Jenn - COC has new requests for proposals on the website. There are grant possibilities for homelessness-related possibilities as well for services to those fleeing domestic violence. Those will be open for another couple of weeks and then approved by Board and then sent to HUD for funding.
 - b. Leona - City has requested a grant for expansion of the ARCH, motel vouchers, and put people removed from encampments onto the path toward permanent housing. We should know more about that in late August. City has \$1.3 million for affordable housing development and will be putting out a call for proposals in a couple of weeks. An additional \$1.6 (minus admin costs) also will be going to affordable housing development by the end of this year.
- IX. Susan White Wood announced that VC Behavioral Health received a bridge housing grant of \$13.3 million to provide a tapestry of housing for homeless clients living with serious mental illness. The proposal includes 20 shelter beds, motel vouchers for up to three weeks with intensive housing navigation during those stays, rental assistance for up to 90 units in the community, including 80 units at Home Key sites throughout the county. They propose also hiring 4 case managers dedicated to the project. Additional board and care funding available, so will be looking for board and care providers that want to participate. Clients are homeless individuals with serious mental illness and will expand to Care Court recipients. The term of the grant is three years. They will be building 10 beds in Thousand Oaks; 4 at Turning Point Ventura,

and 6 beds Spirit of Santa Paula. Goes to Board to accept funding September 12. All must be developed by June 2024. All referrals will be coordinated through HMIS Coordinated entry.

X. Leona is waiting on final documents from the state, and will report at next month VSSTF and at HOPES on how the homeless prevention program in the city will operate

XI. Updates were provided on the following items:

a) Housing Element (Leona Rollins)

- i. Judy indicated that Ventura Social Services Task Force members need to go to Council Monday night to encourage City Council to support Housing Element. If we do not have an approved Housing Element, projects in the pipeline will not get funded.
- ii. Leona reported that Planning Commission recommended approval and that all positive comments from task force will be appreciated.
- iii. Kyler indicated that all 12 of Homes for ALL and Ventura Social Services Task Force recommendations are in the final plan up for adoption. He said that it now should be fairly straight forward. However, people who might object will be at the meeting because of other items on the agenda. Previous council adopted this in substance already. It is a great and robust plan. Many projects hinge on approval and the Housing Trust Fund cannot get affordable housing funding from the state.. Kyler indicated it will go very late.
- iv. Leona added that a lack of approval will also make many other funding sources like funding for mobile home parks or first time homebuyers unavailable.
- v. Judy/Kyler will send talking points, and all are encouraged to be there in person or by written comment.
- vi. The other project on the agenda has 92 units of which 13 are affordable, but it is very tall and that is upsetting a lot of people who will be there to speak against it.

b) General Plan update (Kyler Carlson)

- i. Kyler asked that all complete the 2 surveys on the land use alternatives that will close at the end of the day. He begs all to at least fill out the high level overview on how we want to see the city change over the next 30 years, especially with regard to general plan and land use. The detail survey is also easy to comprehend and to provide feedback, so Kyler is begging folks to complete both surveys if they can. Kyler said he is happy to have a conversation if folks have questions.
- ii. Judy said that another group has told people how to fill them out.

c) Valentine Road update (Kyler Carlson)

b. Tenderlife - has 5 open beds

XI. The meeting was adjourned at 4:46 p.m. M/S Kappy Paulson, John Jones

XII. Next meeting is 9/6/23 at 3:15pm via Zoom

Attached documents:

Gaps document reviewed by Jennifer Harkey:

Gaps

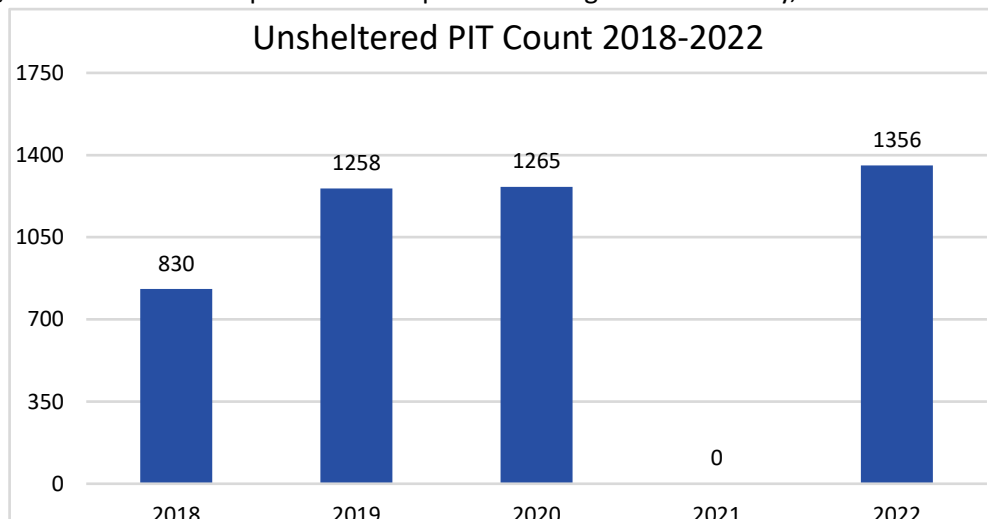
The following gaps were identified through a mixed methodology as described above, informed by service providers, community leaders and elected officials, PWLE/expertise, and members of the general public. These gaps guided the Action Areas, Strategies, Goals, and Next Steps found throughout the Homelessness Plan.

1. Increases in Unsheltered Homelessness

Stakeholders were quick to call out the increases in unsheltered homelessness over the last five years. While the percentage of people experiencing unsheltered homelessness compared to the overall homeless population has remained fairly constant, the rise in homelessness is apparent in the unsheltered population as well. In 2018, the unsheltered count made up 63% of the total count (830 out of 1,308); in 2022, the unsheltered count made up 60% of the total count (1,356 out of 2,248). From 2018 to 2022, however, unsheltered homelessness increased throughout Ventura County by 63% from 830 to 1,356.

*Due to the COVID-9 pandemic, there was no unsheltered count conducted in 2021. Because of this, it is important to look at trends over time, rather than just compared to the previous year.

Additionally, there has been an uptick in encampments throughout the County, as demonstrated



by GIS mapping through encampment outreach over the past two years. The Ventura County CoC partnered with local jurisdictions to apply for the 2023 State Encampment Resolution Funding grant with applications from Oxnard, San Buenaventura, Santa Paula and Thousand Oaks. Oxnard indicated two main encampments, San Buenaventura indicated 15 main encampments, Santa Paula indicated two main encampments and Thousand Oaks indicated

three main encampments. Most encampments had reports of active substance use, mental health concerns, and physical disabilities. Local street outreach services, such as Backpack Medicine, conduct outreach to all encampment sites on a monthly basis, but due to limited resources, relocation from the encampments to shelter/housing options has been sparse.

This increase in the number of people experiencing unsheltered homelessness indicates a need for more housing options, both temporary and permanent, to create throughputs from homelessness to stable housing.

2. Shortfall of Available, Accessible, Affordable Housing and Barriers to Entry

All stakeholder groups highlighted the shortfall of available and accessible affordable housing as a major system challenge. Stakeholders highlighted the lengthy years-long waitlists clients endure to secure a subsidized, affordable housing unit or Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) in Ventura County. As described above, according to California Housing Partnership (CHPC) data, 23,425 low-income renter households do not have access to an affordable home.¹ This places a severe strain on both the homelessness rehousing programs that rely on unsubsidized rental units in the private rental market to move people out of shelters and into housing. Additionally, homelessness prevention, street outreach, and interim housing programs become strained due to the influx of new people falling into homelessness. The units available on the rental market are unaffordable based on local wages, as renters in Ventura County would need to earn \$47.23 per hour – 3 times the state minimum wage —to afford the average monthly asking rent of \$2,456. This often leads to overcrowding and/or cost-burdened households. 86% of Extremely Low-Income households are cost burdened or severely cost burdened, with 34% of Low-Income households living in overcrowded units. Stakeholders highlighted significant barriers once clients are connected to homelessness rehousing programs, vouchers, or subsidies. Units in the unsubsidized rental market are incredibly competitive, and many landlords have stringent screening barriers like credit history, rental history, income, etc. that make it incredibly difficult to secure units. Most homeless service providers noted that many neighborhoods and cities are inaccessible to people experiencing homelessness to obtain housing. All these factors put a significant strain on key populations like older adults and families, who struggle to secure units affordable to their fixed income or family size needs.

3. System Flow Imbalance – Entries Into Homelessness Outpace Exits

The System Flow Gap can be calculated with the following equation:

$$(First\ Time\ Homeless + Returns\ to\ Homelessness) - Exits\ to\ Permanent\ Housing = \\ \textbf{System\ Flow\ Gap}$$

In an ideal system, inflows into homelessness (indicated by first time homeless and returns to homelessness) should not outpace outflows from homelessness (indicated by exits to permanent housing). A system in which outflows outpace inflows, paired with sufficient housing resources, is known as one that has achieved “functional zero”. This means that the system has

¹ California Housing Partnerships. (2023). Ventura County 2022 Affordable Housing Needs Report. chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcglclefindmkaj/https://chpc.wpenginepowered.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/Ventura-County_Housing-Report_2023.pdf

sufficient resources to ensure that a person’s experience of homelessness is rare, brief, and nonrecurring.

Ventura County 2022: System Flow Gap			
First Time Homeless	Returns to Homelessness	Exits to Permanent Housing	System Flow Gap
1208	137	408	937

As shown above, Ventura County’s inflows outpace its outflows, indicating an unbalanced system. To address this, Ventura County will need to dramatically increase access to services and housing options on both ends of the system— 1. prevention and diversion, affordable housing, tenant protections, preservation of current housing stock, income increases, etc. to reduce the number of first time homeless, and 2. interim housing increases, PSH increases, wrap-around supportive services, substance use and mental health treatment expansion, etc. to reduce the number of returns to homelessness and increase the number of exits to permanent housing.

To have a better understanding of the system flow, it is also important to look at the percentage of successful exits to permanent housing destinations.

Ventura County 2022: Exits from ES, SH, TH, and PH-RRH	
Exits to Permanent Destination	408
Total Exits	859
Percentage of Successful Exits	47%

While there were 859 exits from homelessness services, only 47% of them were successful. In this case, a successful exit is labeled as such when an individual has moved from unsheltered homelessness (e.g., on the street) or sheltered homelessness (e.g., emergency shelter) and out of homelessness altogether (permanent housing). With less than 50% of those exiting the homelessness system having successful exits, there is a significant need for more permanent housing options that are easily accessible, such as the number of vouchers , PSH units, new affordable housing creation, etc., and expanded wrap-around supportive services to assist individuals as they move through the system and after they are housed. Particularly, wrap-around services were identified by the majority of PWLE as severely lacking. Many reported not

having the support they needed from their case managers (often due to large caseloads) throughout the housing process, including after being housed, a critical point in the process. Ensuring quicker connections to permanent housing through increases in housing options decreases the time spent in the homelessness system, significantly improving their chance of success.

4. Insufficient Supply of Interim Housing and Permanent Supportive Housing

While Ventura County has increased the number of Interim Housing (IH) and Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH) units over the past five years, stakeholders still highlighted significant shortages. Currently, there are 973 Interim Housing beds and 791 Permanent Supportive Housing Units in Ventura County. According to predictive models, (see Appendix), Ventura County has a shortfall of 1,054 Interim Housing beds and 3,998 Permanent Supportive Housing units to meet the current and future needs. This gap in units creates significant system flow challenges. The gap in Permanent Supportive Housing units does not allow for the throughput from Interim Housing into a permanent housing destination. This often impairs the system as more people enter into chronic homelessness (due to the length of time spent unsheltered coupled with unaddressed disabling conditions), and thus require more intensive solutions. Furthermore, Interim Housing beds cannot be turned over fast enough, so an increasing number of households experience unsheltered homelessness. Unsheltered homelessness often exacerbates medical conditions, prolongs the length of time homeless, and ultimately increases system-wide costs .

5. Service Provider Capacity and Workforce Challenges

As mentioned above, PWLE indicated a need for more consistent access and communication with their service providers/case managers. This need was also raised by service providers, with concerns for the “high need but severe lack of local resources”. While service providers are doing their best, they are having to work in a tight system with limited resources, long waitlists, lack of affordable housing, and immediately available beds.

To ensure the homelessness response system continues to be effective, service providers’ capacity needs to be increased. Many services providers indicated being understaffed, so a focus should be placed on hiring enough staff to minimize caseloads to an appropriate level that gives each case manager the time they need to focus on their current clients. To attract and retain quality staff, providing competitive compensation, paid time off, and education/stipend reimbursements is essential. Doing this will require dedicated funding resources and opportunities for service providers to enhance their compensation packages, as well as providing service providers with additional capacity-building resources related to administrative tasks, technical assistance support, and training on best practices, new programs and funding opportunities, HMIS/CES, etc.

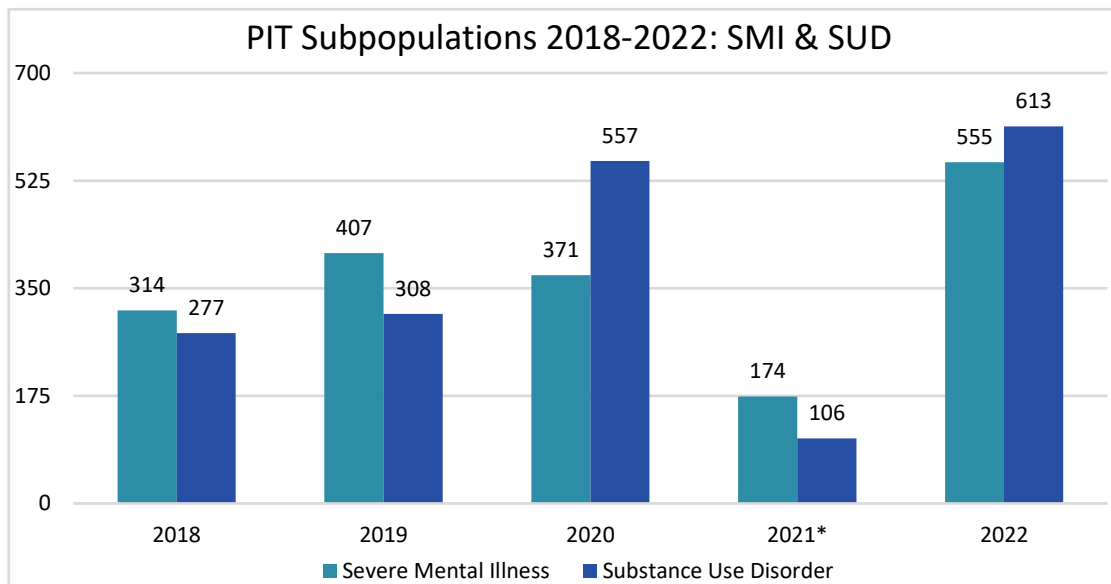
6. Insufficient Substance Use and Mental Health Resources to Provide Appropriate Care

Every stakeholder group—PWLE, service providers, elected officials, general public—listed a severe lack of mental health services and substance use treatment/services throughout the County. 83% of those who responded to the Homelessness Service Provider Survey selected

“Individuals with Health Concerns (People with Disabilities, High Utilizers of Emergency Health Services, People with Mental Illness, People with Substance Use Disorders, etc.)” as one of the top three subpopulations of people experiencing homelessness that has the most immediate needs. In one focus group, PWLE reported that there is no way to access mental health services immediately without going through other channels (such as calling 9-1-1).

As indicated in the chart above, there has been a steady uptick in the number of individuals experiencing homelessness with Severe Mental Illness (SMI) or Substance Use Disorder (SUD). In 2018, there were 314 individuals with SMI and 277 individuals with SUD; in 2022, there were 555 individuals with SMI and 613 individuals with SUD, an increase by 76% and 121% respectively.

To address these issues, the resources for both SMI and SUD need to be expanded, including the increasing crisis and scheduled mental health services, detox beds, in-county substance use treatment beds, in-patient facilities and services, etc.



7. Buy-In from All Stakeholders to Address Homelessness Through Best Practice Models

To address homelessness holistically, buy-in and commitment is required from every stakeholder group. While there were many individuals of all groups that advocated for best practices, there are still misconceptions around some of the evidence-based models, and these misconceptions suppress movement toward ending homelessness in Ventura County.

Housing First is an evidence-based model that prioritizes housing combined additional service needs with the argument that it is difficult to address other personal needs when a basic need, such as shelter, is not being met. Despite the overwhelming evidence proving this model to be successful, there are still individuals that believe that providing housing to people experiencing homelessness enables “undesirable behaviors” such as using substances, crime, etc. These beliefs spill over into narratives that then dictate how the homelessness crisis is addressed.

Addressing the homelessness crisis requires political will, coordination among all stakeholders, evidenced-based approaches, and commitments to increasing the supply of, and access to,

housing. To have all of these, a shared understanding of the root causes of homelessness and best practices in addressing it, and a full commitment to ending it are needed. It is critical that myths are dispelled, silos are broken down, and true collaboration and coordination throughout the County take place to achieve the goals laid forth in this Homelessness Plan.

8. Geographic Deficiencies in Services Available to People Experiencing Homelessness

With Ventura County's vast and diverse landscape, consistent and immediate access to the homelessness system services does not always exist. As evident by a story from one of the interviewed PWLE, individuals must often travel to other parts of the County to access the services they need. One individual described an injury they received while experiencing homelessness. They were able to get medical assistance, but they also required physical therapy, which was not offered in their city of origin. They had to get consistent transportation back and forth from their city of origin to physical therapy weekly, and neither location had easy access to public transportation.

The lack of accessible public transportation was also consistently mentioned by other individuals with lived expertise. Not only are the bus lines limited in their geographical reach, but individuals often didn't have knowledge of the various financial assistance resources available to them to facilitate their transportation needs. This lack of widespread knowledge in things like Ventura County's Area Agency on Aging ElderHelp Transportation Program significantly inhibits people's abilities to travel to necessary locations to meet their needs.

Aside from improving the transportation system, resources need to be spread out geographically. Highly desired and needed services like One Stop are currently only available in Ventura, Oxnard, Camarillo, and Santa Paula. Necessary services must be intentionally placed throughout the County to address homelessness on a large scale.

Next steps document reviewed by Jennifer Harkey:

Action Areas and their related strategies were developed under the guidance of- and in alignment with- national, state-level, and county-level frameworks (See: Appendix).

Key Action Area: Strengthen the Regional Homelessness System

**Action Area 1:
Create
Additional
Permanent
Housing Options**

**Action Area 2:
Maintain and
Maximize
Current Housing
Options**

**Action Area 3:
Prevent
Homelessness
from Occurring**

**Action Area 4:
Expand Interim
Housing &
Sheltering
Options**

**Action Area 5:
Address
Unsheltered
Homelessness**

Next Step(s)

- Identify the costs associated and funding resources necessary for PSH development goal.
- Leverage an array of private, healthcare, faith-based, local, state, and federal funding streams to support the expansion of PSH and affordable housing.
- Match funds and establish tools/liason to support cities with applications for funding.
- Focus on increasing PSH capacity by optimizing utilization, refining system-wide guidelines, lowering barriers to entry, and implementing a “moving on” strategy.
- Pursue lower-cost housing typologies like tiny homes, accessory dwelling units, hotel/motel conversions, prefabricated modular homes, shipping containers, etc. to meet affordable housing needs.
- Identify underutilized public owned land (state, county, city) for affordable housing development.
- Advocate for inclusionary housing policies, upzoning, and infill development.
- Focus on increasing RRH capacity by optimizing utilization, refining system-wide guidelines, lowering barriers to entry, facilitating progressive engagement, and advocating for local conditions so that expanded RRH is effective in the private rental market.
- Identify the current tenant protections in place, their efficacy, and the remaining gaps. Identify the process to adopt and enact necessary additional protections to increase access to housing.
- Identify strategies County could provide to incentivize landlords to rent to low-income, housing insecure, or homeless individuals.
- Allocate funding and resources to invest in masterleasing and shared housing.

- Identify additional programming needs for HomeShare expansion.
- Research innovative strategies to create a sustainable stream of funds to flexible funding pool, such as a dedicated tax or revenue stream.
- Facilitate buy-in from local jurisdictions to ensure a robust funding pool accessible countywide.
- Determine feasibility of expanding Ventura County Housing Trust Fund scope to include a flexible funding pool arm.
- Identify and allocate funding to establish shallow subsidy pilot program.
- Research successful shallow subsidy programs nationally to develop a successful program model in Ventura County.
- Develop RFP and strengthen service provider capacity to ensure successful implementation of pilot program.
- Identify resources and develop a countywide public education/marketing strategy to increase scale and utilization of homelessness prevention resources.
- Assess feasibility of expanding Landlord Engagement Program to include incentives for landlords that refer tenants to homelessness prevention programs as opposed to pursuing eviction process. Work with landlords, apartment associations, etc. to ensure information on homelessness prevention programs is included when a tenant is issued a notice to pay or quit.
- Assess the feasibility of automatic referrals to homelessness prevention programs for overdue electricity, gas, or water bills.
- Target outreach for homelessness prevention and shallow subsidy pilot programs in ZIP Codes, neighborhoods, Cities with highest entries into homelessness.
- Ensure that Coordinated Entry Access Points can effectively connect people to homelessness prevention and shallow subsidy resources.
- Provide training and specialized support materials to strengthen outreach and entry points. Refine triage and intake protocols for Coordinated Access referral partners to ensure community partners understand available resources for people experiencing a housing crisis and how to make referrals.
- Develop opportunities for advocacy, leadership, and peer support for PWLE navigating various systems.
- Identify necessary system resources to create real-time lists of shelter bed and/or resource availability.
- Identify funding to expand Backpack Medicine program, prioritizing the establishment of multi-disciplinary teams and geographical coverage.

- Research and select trainings for client-facing staff for trauma-informed crisis responses.
- Hire peer support specialists to serve on current outreach teams and future outreach teams, including community-led multidisciplinary teams and Backpack Medicine teams.