

## Talking Points Concerning the 2015 Homeless Persons Count in Ventura County

Prepared for the Interagency Council on Homelessness

### The full Homeless Count Report can be found at:

<http://www.ventura.org/community-development/homeless-grants>

The total number of men, women and children was 1417 – a small, 2% overall decrease from 2014. This Point in Time Count is a snapshot of the overall issue of homelessness in Ventura County. The Point in Time Count uses HUD's definition of homelessness that includes only those who are literally living on the streets or seeking shelter in specific programs.

Completion of the survey is completely voluntary and all data is self-reported by participants.

The continued overall downward trend of homelessness can be traced to the adoption of a housing first model among homeless service providers, to a focus on homeless prevention efforts, to rapidly re-housing specific clients, and to focused street outreach and engagement of chronically homeless persons. Collaboration among agencies, pooling of resources and sharing of information has had success in getting people off the streets and into housing.

460 of the 1417 (32%) of the people counted were in temporary housing. The majority, 957 people or 67%, were on the streets. The 957 included 92 children, 65 youth ages 18-24 and 87 veterans of military service.

The homeless population was disbursed throughout Ventura County in a pattern that we have come to know: Oxnard ranked #1, Ventura ranked #2 and Simi Valley continued to rank #3. These three cities, consistent with historic trends, accounted for 80% of the homeless population. One factor that resulted in Oxnard's comparatively high number was that the Winter Warming Shelter rotation was in Oxnard this year (the shelter alternates annually between Oxnard and Ventura). The Winter Warming Shelter was highly utilized this year, sheltering 862 persons for over 14,000 shelter stays in the 4 month winter season. Families with children were diverted from the shelter through funds provided by the Board of Supervisors. This is the last season that Society of St. Vincent de Paul will be operating the winter warming shelter generating significant publicity around the shelter program and alternatives for the future.

Other observations about the 2015 Ventura County Homeless Persons Count:

- The City of Oxnard count was expected to increase and did. The count of 603 in Oxnard, as cited earlier reflects the 'normal count' for Oxnard in a year the city hosts the Winter Warming Shelter. The number increased as expected due to the artificially low 2014 numbers.
- The most significant decreases were in cities that have implemented a collaborative rapid rehousing program. Ventura and Thousand Oaks both host the Homeless 2 Home (H2H)

Program and work with various agencies and use rapid rehousing funds to assist individuals and families with services and housing.

- The overall number of sheltered individuals and families decreased this year due to a decrease in transitional housing units as many were converted to permanent housing for persons who were formerly homeless.
- Nearly 50% of unsheltered individuals meet the definition of chronically homeless (homeless for greater than 1 year or 4 episodes of homelessness in a 3 year period). Ventura and Simi Valley both have over 50% chronically homeless; 56% and 58% respectively. The percentage of chronically homeless across the county is higher than the national average but similar to other coastal California communities.
- Ventura County is a high cost/low vacancy area and units at market rate or more affordable rates are scarce within the community. The overall vacancy rate ranges from 1.5-3% and rents have reportedly increased rapidly over the past few months. The lack of accessible affordable housing diminishes the progress in ending homelessness. Individuals that have received housing vouchers including HUD VASH Vouchers for veterans have been unable to find available units that will accept the voucher.
- The Continuum of Care is phasing in a Coordinated Entry System. Coordination of homeless services countywide will help individuals and families get connected with the most appropriate services at point of entry into the system. With very limited resources, coordination of services is essential. The Continuum of Care is looking to partner with all willing housing and services partners to build upon this system.
- The recalibrated 10 Year Strategy to End Homelessness in Ventura County calls for the development of hundreds of additional housing units. It will require the willingness and collaboration of city and county governments to approve projects for very affordable housing units. Groups across the county are looking at a variety of creative housing development options including repurposed shipping container homes, tiny house models, conversion of motels into Single Room Occupancy units and HomeShare models.

Note: This report reflects only those individuals who were willing to participate in the survey and whom a surveyor could find on the day of the count. Some individuals refused to complete the survey or chose not to be "found" on survey day.

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