# Placer County Homelessness Response Project

August 2021–August 2023 Summary Report

Executive Summary

The Homelessness Response Project is a unique collaboration of County agencies, cities, law enforcement, health services, and local non-profits to address homelessness in Mid- and South Placer. While Placer County has one of the lowest rates of homelessness in California, project participants felt the region could still do more to address the issue.

2022 Rates of Homelessness (per 10K)

Placer County   **6th Lowest in the State**

18.2

Statewide

43.9
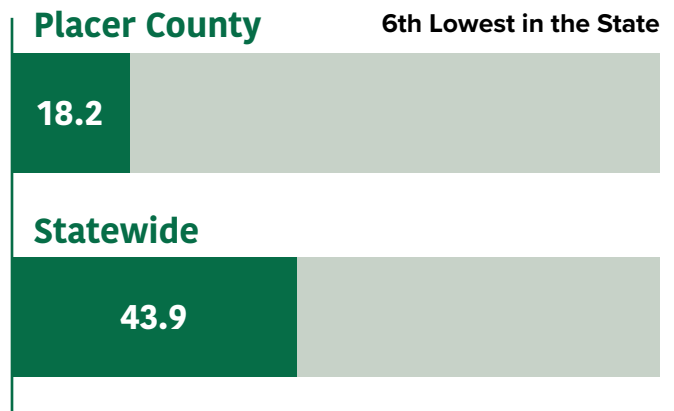
Source: 2022 Point-in-Time counts derived from Continuum of Care homeless population reports, validated by U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development

Guiding Principles

Project members developed the following core principles to guide the approach:

Housing and services should be decentralized and regionally distributed to meet the specific needs of local communities and leverage existing support networks.	Decision making authority should combine input from neighboring jurisdictions, funding agencies, and the Continuum of Care.	All solutions addressing homelessness must balance compassion with accountability.

Key Actions

During the project, the following Key Actions were established in four focus areas—Public Safety and Social Service Partnerships, Emergency Housing, Interim and Permanent Supportive Housing, and Communications and Public Outreach. In addition, the project identified three key overarching (or "cross-cutting") actions to guide discussions in the coming years.

Cross-Cutting Actions
Continue local collaboration and integrate efforts within the Continuum of Care.
Conduct an ongoing review of emerging programs and best-practices to ensure Placer remains a statewide leader.
Develop and implement innovative approaches to homelessness that balance compassion with accountability.

Executive Summary

Public Safety and Social Service Partnerships

Explore shared funding models to support and expand coordinated partnerships between public safety and social service staff.

Implement a pilot program that utilizes peer (or "lived experience") staff, with master's-level clinicians outreaching together.

Ensure that all partnering approaches conform with local law enforcement regulations, are well-supported regionally, and achieve desired outcomes.

Emergency Housing

Ensure that emergency housing is decentralized and appropriately scaled.

Continue to monitor and analyze data from recent emergency housing projects.

Consider a mid-sized Navigation Center or other potential emergency housing models in the population center of South Placer, based on results from current projects.

Interim and Permanent Supportive Housing

Use established Siting Criteria to inform the location, style, and type of future housing.

Encourage cross-jurisdictional/cross-sector representation in the procurement processes, ongoing operations, and management of supportive housing facilities.

Convene a Learning and Accountability work group to analyze and assess the performance of new supportive housing facilities.

Communications and Public Outreach

Ensure that the public is informed of the breadth of services and individual organizations across the County available to address homelessness.

Develop a regional website to provide up-to-date information and links to resources.

Expand partnerships between County and city communications staff to develop and distribute information (social media, newsletters, etc.).

Purpose of this Report

This report summarizes work completed in support of the Placer County Homelessness Response Project during the period of August 2021 to August 2023, focusing on Phase 2 of the project, completed in September 2023.

All other documents that have been produced through this process (including agendas, meeting notes, informational handouts, rosters, and a detailed summary of Phase 1) are available for review. Interested parties should contact LeeAnn Halleib (lhalleib@placer.ca.us) to access these files.

Project Overview

Background

The Placer County Homelessness Response Project was initiated by the County in 2021 to, for the first time, create opportunities for County agencies, local jurisdictions, and key stakeholders to collaborate on shared approaches to homelessness in Mid- and South Placer.

Placer County has one of the lowest rates of homelessness among all California counties. The most current Point-in-Time Count (winter 2023) surveyed 709 individuals experiencing homelessness in Placer County, a decrease from the 2022 count of 750.

Despite these positive gains, the region can still do more to address homelessness and provide adequate housing and services, responsive to both community and funder expectations. The Homelessness Response Project provides an ongoing forum for elected officials and staff from different jurisdictions to share information, discuss policies, and explore innovative approaches to the issue from a range of perspectives. As a truly collaborative regional model, the Project is unique among California communities, and establishes Placer as a statewide leader.

The Homelessness Response Project process followed nationally recognized, evidence-based cross-sector collaboration models, including but not limited to Collective Impact and System Leadership models.

Project Goal

Maintain the lowest rate of homelessness in Northern California while striving to drive rates even lower—a local, state, and federal expectation.

Guiding Principles

Project members developed the following core principles to guide its approach:

- Housing and services should be decentralized and regionally distributed to meet the specific needs of local communities and leverage existing support networks.

- Decision making authority should combine input from neighboring jurisdictions, funding agencies, and the Continuum of Care.

- All solutions addressing homelessness must balance compassion with accountability.

Members and Organization

Consultative groups established to assist in Phase Two of the process included the following:

- The **Planning Team** comprised elected officials and other representatives from each jurisdiction, the local Continuum of Care, regional funders, and health providers. Its purpose was to learn about issues and opportunities to address homelessness in the region, providing a forum and offering input for the collaborative development of responsive action plans as informed by community engagement and relevant research.

- The **Steering Group** provided overall guidance, planning, scheduling, and oversight for the process.

- Four **Technical Working Groups (TWGs)** were formed to research, discuss, develop, and present draft actions to address four regional priority areas based on the key strategies identified during Phase One and further refined by the Steering Group in the initial stages of Phase Two. These TWGs comprised members from the Planning Team, as well as subject matter experts in each priority area. Each group worked in an iterative fashion with the Planning Team, conducting research and developing initial recommendations for feedback and direction from the Planning Team, then revising those recommendations accordingly. The TWGs, composition, and charges were as follows:

  - **Social Service and Public Safety Partnerships** included representatives of law enforcement, probation, and counsel from the various jurisdictions, along with the county's Continuum of Care.

    Charge: Expand public safety and social services partnerships and explore opportunities for regionally compatible ordinances, outreach, and law enforcement practices.

  - **Emergency Housing** comprised County staff, local jurisdiction staff along with Continuum of Care representatives, elected officials, and members from health care and housing organizations.

    Charge: Explore need for South Placer shelter, sobering center, and approaches to managing encampments.

  - **Interim and Permanent Supportive Housing** comprised staff from city housing authorities and other departments; County Facilities Management, Health and Human Services and staff; and health care representatives.

    Charge: Explore strategically growing interim and permanent supportive housing.

  - **Communications and Public Outreach** comprised County communications staff, local jurisdiction PIOs and other staff, and elected officials.

    Charge: Create regionally coordinated public information.

(Membership lists of each of these groups are provided in Appendix A.)

Summary of Meetings

1. Phase 1

In Phase 1 of the project (June 2021 – April 2022), jurisdictions and partner agencies in Mid- and South Placer came together for the first time to consider the issues and opportunities related to homelessness on a regional basis.

Bringing together representatives from elected bodies, administration, law enforcement, the Continuum of Care consortium, health care and social services, the project developed an inventory of current programs and services and identified gaps for consideration in creating a more comprehensive, coordinated response to homelessness.

Phase 1 articulated an overarching desired outcome, a solutions framework and a set of potential strategies for further exploration and implementation. A detailed Phase 1 report is available in the compendium of project documentation.

2. Phase 2 Planning Team Meetings

Planning Team Meetings during Phase Two were held approximately monthly to the extent that scheduling allowed. Each meeting included presentations and updates from the Technical Working Groups. Dates and key agenda items are summarized below.

- **Planning Team Meeting 1, June 29, 2022,** focused on reviewing Phase One and clarifying the Phase Two process, including the role of the Planning Team and objectives for Technical Working Groups.

- **Planning Team Meeting 2, August 3, 2022,** focused on past and current approaches to addressing homelessness, a review of information regarding homelessness in South Placer County and a discussion of perspectives and aspirations for the Phase Two process.

- **Planning Team Meeting 3, September 7, 2022,** focused on a presentation and discussion about expanding partnerships between law enforcement and social services for outreach and response.

- **Planning Team Meeting 4, October 2, 2022,** focused on a presentation and discussion regarding actionable recommendations for expanding supportive housing in the region.

- **Planning Team Meeting 5, October 31, 2022,** focused on exploring the need and opportunities for emergency shelter, sobering centers, and management of encampments.

- **Planning Team Meeting 6, December 5, 2022,** continued the discussion of options for emergency housing and crisis services and a consideration of emerging points of consensus.

- **Planning Team Meeting 7, January 25, 2023,** again focused on the discussion regarding emergency housing and crisis services.

- **Planning Team Meeting 8, February 27, 2023,** focused on options for mobile temporary shelter and mobile crisis teams, as well as assessing progress and accomplishments in addressing homelessness in the county since the beginning of the Plan effort.

- **Planning Team Meeting 9, March 30, 2023,** focused on discussion of three possible models for homeless outreach teams based on existing examples in the county and across the state.

- **Planning Team Meeting 10, June 19, 2023,** focused on reviewing staffing options proposed for homeless outreach teams, the impact of homelessness on the Emergency Department, an overview of Communication TWG progress, and a proposal for transition of the Planning Team into an ongoing intergovernmental policymaker committee of the Continuum of Care.

- **Planning Team Meeting 11, September 13, 2023,** included a presentation of the Statewide Study on Homelessness by UCSF staff, a review of the draft Summary Report, and a proposal for the formation of a Local Government Advisory Committee to the Continuum of Care.

Regional Priorities

Phase 2 of the project focused primarily on four key priorities: Public Safety and Social Service Partnerships, Emergency Housing, Permanent Supportive Housing, and Communications and Public Engagement.

I. Public Safety and Social Services Partnerships

The Public Safety and Social Services Partnerships (Partnerships) Working Group was established to review current collaborative approaches in Placer County, explore partnering models in other regions, and identify opportunities to bolster and enhance the ways that law enforcement and social service agencies can continue to work successfully together toward shared goals.

a. Summary of Activities

- At Planning Team Meeting #3 (held on September 7) the Partnerships Working Group provided an overview of existing partnerships, successful homeless outreach initiatives in place across the region and country, ongoing challenges, and points of agreement thus far.

- In November 2022, the Partnerships Working Group conducted a survey of law enforcement agencies in Mid- and South Placer to gauge the type, frequency, and results of contacts with unhoused individuals. The resulting data was presented at Planning Team Meeting #6 (December 5, 2022) and provided useful information that informed future recommendations.

- At Planning Team Meeting #9 the group presented a variety of possible models for Homeless Outreach Teams, based on existing examples across the County and state, including a peer staffing model observed during a San Diego County fact-finding trip.

b. Key Actions

Based on the review of existing data, feedback from the Technical Working Group, and numerous discussions at Planning Team meetings, members agreed on the following:

- *Explore shared funding models to support and expand coordinated partnerships between public safety and social service staff.*
- *Implement a pilot program that incorporates peer (or "lived experience") staff, with master's-level clinicians providing program management and oversight.*
  - *Clarify who they work for*
  - *Background checks?*
  - *Partnering with non-profits?*
- *Ensure that all partnering approaches are well-supported regionally and achieve desired outcomes.*

II. Emergency Housing

The Emergency Housing TWG was established to review current conditions and available sheltering options in Mid- and South Placer to estimate need, and to explore potential models for future emergency housing.

a. Summary of Activities

The group made a series of presentations to the Planning Team. At Meeting #5, they summarized existing conditions for emergency shelter in the County; explored questions regarding type, eligibility criteria, capacity, and need; and presented case studies focused on successful 75-100-bed "navigation centers." In this model, shelters provide low-barrier entry to temporary room and board while working to connect individuals to permanent housing, income, benefits, and services. The discussion continued during Meetings #6 and #7, assessing emerging points of consensus regarding emergency housing, crisis services, and management of encampments. These discussions included a presentation of initial findings from the recently implemented Mobile Temporary Shelter at the Government Center in North Auburn.

b. Key Actions

Based on the review of existing data, feedback from the Technical Working Group, and numerous discussions at Planning Team meetings, members agreed on the following:

- *Ensure that emergency housing is decentralized and appropriately scaled.*
- *Continue to monitor and analyze data from recent emergency housing projects.*
- *Consider a mid-sized Navigation Center or other potential emergency housing models in the population center of South Placer, based on results from current projects.*

III. Interim and Permanent Supportive Housing

a. Summary of Activities

At Planning Team Meeting #4, the group presented background information on the current status of permanent supportive housing capacity in the region, as well as opportunities for funding and siting of interim and permanent supportive housing, and actionable recommendations including developing an inventory of potential properties, encouraging cross-jurisdictional participation in procurement, and diversifying the pool of developers and operators.

b. Key Actions

Based on the review of existing data, feedback from the Technical Working Group, and numerous discussions at Planning Team meetings, members agreed on the following:

- *Use established Siting Criteria to inform the location, style, and type of future housing.*
- *Encourage cross-jurisdictional/cross-sector representation in the procurement processes, ongoing operations, and management of supportive housing facilities.*
- *Convene a Learning and Accountability work group to analyze and assess the performance of new supportive housing facilities.*

IV. Communications and Public Outreach

The Communications and Public Outreach TWG developed recommendations for effective communications to inform the public and build understanding on efforts to reduce homelessness.

a. Summary of Activities

The Communications TWG developed a matrix of key message themes utilizing statistical data, examples of progress made, opportunities for collaborative approaches, and individuals' personal experience that could be used to communicate the issues and recommended strategies. They considered a variety of options for community engagement, including a website, social media, and supplemental outreach collateral.

Their group's ultimate recommendation, which was presented during Planning Team Meetings #9 and #10, is to develop a website, potentially hosted by the County with support from local partners, with the goal of creating a comprehensive inventory of resources for addressing homelessness in the County.

b. Key Actions

Based on the review of existing data, feedback from the Technical Working Group, and numerous discussions at Planning Team meetings, members agreed on the following:

- *Ensure that the public is informed of the breadth of services and individual organizations across the County available to address homelessness.*
- *Develop a regional website to provide up-to-date information and links to resources.*
- *Expand partnerships between County and city communications staff to develop and distribute information (social media, newsletters, etc.).*

Future Coordination

With Phase 2 of the project ending in September 2023, members of the Planning Team believe there is value in ongoing collaboration and have expressed a desire to continue to meet regularly to review future policies, programs, and projects.

Ongoing Coordination

The group recommends the following approaches for ongoing coordination:

1. **Memorialize regional priorities, strategies, and tactics identified across both phases of work,** demonstrating how Phase 2 built on the foundational work accomplished by the group during Phase 1.

2. **Convene an intergovernmental committee of the Continuum of Care (CoC)** that would allow local jurisdictions to continue to collaborate and share ideas while becoming better informed of and integrated with the regional work of the Continuum of Care.

Topics for Future Discussion

The intergovernmental committee may consider the following topics for discussion in future meetings with the CoC:

- Implementation of, and shared funding for, the Peer Outreach Worker Pilot Program.
- Six-month review of data from the Mobile Temporary Shelter at the Government Center.
- Future siting for Permanent Supportive Housing.
- Further exploration of congregant emergency shelter alternatives such as the Navigation Center model.
- Development and implementation of a project website and coordination among the County and local jurisdictions to ensure consistent messaging to the public.