



COUNTY ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE
MANAGEMENT & BUDGET TEAM
COUNTY OF HUMBOLDT

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INTEROFFICE MEMORANDUM

TO: BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
FROM: PHILLIP SMITH-HANES, COUNTY ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER
SUBJECT: RESPONSE TO 2013-14 GRAND JURY REPORT *HUMBOLDT COUNTY HOMELESS VETERANS*
DATE: SEPTEMBER 9, 2014

The 2013-14 Grand Jury has issued report *Humboldt County Homeless Veterans* and the Board of Supervisors (BOS) is required to respond to the recommendations. I recommend that the Board respond as follows:

Recommendation R1: *The Humboldt County Board of Supervisors should designate in the Housing Element of the General Plan Update that certain areas be identified where sanctuaries and or campgrounds can be established.*

This recommendation will not be implemented because it is not warranted.

1. The Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) provides funding to the Humboldt Homeless and Housing Coalition (HHHC), of which the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) is a member. The HHHC has a policy to provide funds for rapid rehousing and supportive housing approaches as opposed to establishing areas for homeless sanctuaries and/or campgrounds.
2. HHHC's current *10 Year Plan to End Homelessness* or its updates do not contain recommendations relating to establishing homeless sanctuaries or campgrounds.
3. The City of Eureka has engaged consultants (Focus Strategies) who have developed a Homeless Policy paper. This document contains recommended short, medium, and long term strategic approaches to end homelessness. The document does not recommend the establishment of homeless campgrounds, sanctuaries or other temporary approaches to manage homelessness but rather recommends the development of rapid rehousing and supportive housing approaches to end homelessness.

Recommendation R2: *The Board of Supervisors should encourage Department of Health and Human Services to obtain funding, jointly with other community agencies, through HUD and other sources to build "micro housing villages" and sanctuaries for homeless veterans.*

This recommendation will not be implemented because it is not warranted.

1. DHHS is not a primary provider of housing and related services for homeless veterans. DHHS's Veterans Services Division and its other Branches do coordinate with various state and federal veteran's

services agencies responsible for and funded by the federal government. These coordination efforts assure local veterans are connected to services. DHHS does not receive specified funding for veteran housing related services and is it not mandated to provide them.

2. DHHS, as a member of the HHHC, the County's federally funded Continuum of Care, has participated in a multi-year effort to reduce homelessness including but not limited to homeless veterans. The HHHC, which includes veterans services organizations, has developed its most recent update of its *10 Year Plan To End Homelessness* which is available on-line at humboldthousing.org. This collaborative effort focuses on what the federal government's Homeless Emergency Assistance and Rapid Transition to Housing (HEARTH) Act recommends and competitively funds. The HHHC current *10 Year Plan To End Homelessness* does not include recommendations to fund or develop "micro housing villages" and "sanctuaries" for homeless veterans or other homeless populations. Rather, a primary focus of the HHHC is on the development of rapid re-housing and supportive housing approaches.
3. DHHS has recently participated in the City of Eureka's strategic effort to reduce homelessness. The City's consultants, Focus Strategies, have provided the Eureka City Council with a Homeless Policy Paper for their review and approval. DHHS and other County leadership have participated in this strategic City/County process. The County is supportive of the Focus Strategies final report recommendations and conclusions which do not support the implementation of "micro housing villages" or "sanctuaries" as an approach to "manage" homeless veterans or other persons. Rather the report recommends, among other approaches, a focus on the development of rapid re-housing and supportive housing approaches as the evidence based approaches most likely to end homelessness.

Recommendation R3: *The Board of Supervisors should encourage the Humboldt County Health and Human Services Department to expand alcohol and substance abuse treatment to include more local detoxification services.*

This recommendation will be implemented when resources are available.

While the County does not currently receive adequate state or federal funding to expand local medical detoxification services, DHHS, as a member of the California Behavioral Health Association (CBHDA), is participating in various multi-county efforts towards increasing regional options to develop these types of services which are cost prohibitive for smaller and rural counties like Humboldt to implement alone. The Board is hopeful that through approaches such as regional Joint Powers Authorities and/or the development of federal waivers that these types of services can be built and staffed in a sustainable manner for use by the northern rural counties.

Recommendation R4: *The Board of Supervisors should explore ways to reduce barriers to accessing services.*

This recommendation has already been implemented.

DHHS is actively engaged in several effective and collaborative approaches at the local, regional and state levels toward reducing barriers and increasing access to services. Some examples are: the development of a Regional Call Center serving several northern counties to increase access to Medi-Cal; CalFRESH and other federal entitlements related to access to behavioral health services associated with the implementation of the Affordable Care Act (ACA); active participation and leadership in the Humboldt Homeless and Housing Coalition; involvement with the City of Eureka and other local providers in increasing access to coordinated services for severely mentally ill homeless populations; and ongoing involvement at the regional and state levels towards increasing funding for behavioral health services through the development of federal waivers related to

the expansion of Drug Medi-Cal and other ACA related behavioral health services. While the examples cited are not fully inclusive of all the activities or collaborations DHHS is involved in, the Department is and will continue to be very active in any local, regional or state level activities targeted at improving access and funding for needed behavioral health, public health and social services in Humboldt County.