



**DATE:** October 24, 2017

**TO:** Homeless Strategy Committee

**FROM:** Paul Duncan, Associate Director of Systems Integration  
Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority

**SUBJECT:** Strategy 70: Expanding Emergency Shelter and Improving Access

**Peter Lynn**  
Executive Director

**Board of Commissioners**

**Wendy Greuel**  
Chair

**Noah Farkas**  
Vice Chair

**Kelli Bernard**

**Sarah Dusseault**

**Mitchell Kamin**

**Lawson Martin**

**Booker Pearson**

**Kelvin Sauls**

**Jacqueline Waggoner**

**Administrative Office**

811 Wilshire Blvd.  
6<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Los Angeles, CA 90017

213 683.3333 - PH

213 892.0093 - FX

213 553.8488 - TY

[www.lahsa.org](http://www.lahsa.org)

---

**Recommendation:** No action required.

The City of Los Angeles' Comprehensive Homeless Strategy (CHS) 70: Expanding Emergency Shelter and Improving Access instructs LAHSA to report on measures to improve access to emergency shelter. Since the implementation of the City's Comprehensive Homeless Strategies in February 2016, and with additional funding from the City and County, LAHSA expanded shelter and improved access by adding beds, implementing program changes, and providing technical assistance to providers.

LAHSA continues to work with service experts and community stakeholders to improve Los Angeles' shelter system. Moreover, funds made available through Measure H will bring even more shelter capacity and resources to the City.

This report outlines the progress made over the past year as well as the plans for continued improvement.

**SHELTER EXPANSIONS AND IMPROVEMENTS SINCE CHS IMPLEMENTATION**

**Added Shelter Beds**

- During the 2016/2017 year, LAHSA funded more than 400 additional beds in the City
- Some of these beds shelter beds are dedicated for vulnerable populations: women, veterans, and people exiting institutions such as jails, hospitals, and foster care.
- Approximately a third (475) of LAHSA's existing single and youth crisis housing beds in the city are now bridge housing programs, thus providing more intensive service provision and longer term stays for participants to focus on housing goals. Bridge housing programs will not only address immediate needs but lead to permanent solutions for participants.
- LAHSA will award up to 300 additional beds to the single adult and transitional age youth systems through our competitive procurement processes this year.

#### Converted 14-hour programs to 24-hour programs

- Before 2016, LAHSA-funded emergency shelters were operated on first-come first-served basis. The large majority of programs were open 14-hours in the evening, requiring people experiencing homelessness to leave each morning and wait in line again that evening, not knowing if they would have a bed to sleep in that night. This model decreased stability and limited the amount of time spent with case management staff to work toward permanent housing goals. With support from the city, LAHSA increased these shelters to 24-hour operations, and they are now Crisis Housing programs.

#### Improved CES Linkages

- Crisis and Bridge housing is funded through the CES system to create, strengthen, and streamline linkages to and from outreach, housing navigation and permanent housing resources. By integrating shelters into CES, the services can be used more intentionally. People experiencing homelessness can be bridged from the street to permanent housing. This will result in improved flow through homeless programs and systems of care.

#### Increased Services

- Services being offered at the shelters have been augmented by funding Housing Navigators who provide additional case management and housing location services to many people staying at the shelters.
- Shelters that operate 24-hours must also serve three meals a day.
- LAHSA converted a third of the crisis housing beds into bridge housing beds. Bridge housing programs offer a higher rate for service, provide more intensive case management services, and have higher expectations for permanent housing placements.

#### Increased Capacity

- This year, LAHSA hired several staff to support quality improvements for services and facilities at the shelters.
  - Crisis Housing Coordinator (2)
  - Quality Standards Coordinator
  - ADA Coordinator
- LAHSA is adding additional staff which will further increase capacity in supporting shelters.

#### **IMPROVING ACCESS FOR "HARD-TO-SERVE" POPULATIONS**

Strategy 7O requests a report on how shelter capacity might be expanded for "hard-to-serve" populations. Mothers with teenage sons, people who do not want to be separated from their intimate partner, and people who have animal companions have been cited as "hard-to-serve" populations. LAHSA includes guidance for accommodating hard-to-serve populations in our current shelter policies and they will continue to be developed.

#### Mothers with Teenage Sons

- LAHSA requires all family shelter programs to accept children into the shelter regardless of their age or gender. LAHSA reviewed its grievance log for the past year and has not received reports of a mother being turned away because of having a teenage son. We will continue to enforce this policy among providers.

#### People with Intimate Partners

- Some people have refused shelter services because shelter facilities have traditionally separated the sleeping quarters by gender.
- LAHSA does not currently have a policy on allowing intimate partners to stay together, however we are exploring how we might prioritize funding for shelters that are able to offer this accommodation.

#### People with Animal Companions

- Service animals play an important role in supporting people with disabilities, and it is therefore, LAHSA's policy to welcome any animal trained to assist a person with a disability. All agencies must be committed to having policies, procedures, and practices to permit the use of service animals by clients with disabilities. However, some facilities are not able to make this accommodation, based on space and other logistical considerations of their facilities. In these rare situations, the accommodation provided may be relocation to a different shelter.
- LAHSA and its providers also recognize the importance of animal companionship to many people who are experiencing homelessness, and are working with our partners to inform our shelter residents with pets of the resources that are available to them. This includes making pet crates, grooming, and spay/neuter services accessible to our shelter providers.
- LAHSA awarded five crisis housing programs one-time County Homeless Strategy E8 funds to enhance their facility to better accommodate the animal companions of people experiencing homelessness to reduce barriers to entry for pet owners. Programs requested funding for items such as benches and trash cans to build a dog run, supplies like leashes and pet crates, and pet trainers. Awardees are part of a learning community hosted by LAHSA and the County Department of Animal Care and Control. LAHSA will use the lessons learned during this upcoming year to inform recommendations for animal accommodation policies at other shelters.

#### **CAPACITY BUILDING AND TRAINING**

- LAHSA in collaboration with the LA LGBT Center hosted four forums for shelter providers on gender identity and equal access. The forums provided guidance and support to providers as they implement the HUD's Final Rule on Equal Access which states that gender identity is the gender a person knows themselves to be, not their sex assigned at birth or how another person perceives them. More than 150

employees from 60 agencies participated in these forums, citing knowledge, compassion, equality, and eagerness as their reasons for attending. The forums explained what that concept of "gender identity" means, as well as helping attendees develop a thorough understanding of the HUD Rule and their role in implementing it through small group work and interactive discussion.

- LAHSA facilitates onboarding meetings to train all of our providers on the latest administrative and programming requirements at the start of all new contracts.
- Throughout the year, LAHSA provides ongoing technical assistance through site visits, webinars, and SPA-level meetings. This year, a high level of assistance was offered to providers of shelters funded by County Strategy B7, bridge housing for persons exiting institutions and with criminal justice backgrounds. These providers received extensive guidance regarding program eligibility and documentation requirements, HMIS and program data, as well as training on program budgeting, billing, and reimbursement processes.

#### **PLANS FOR CONTINUED IMPROVEMENT**

LAHSA has immediate and future plans to continue enhancing the shelter system and improving access. Listed below are a few of the areas that LAHSA is planning improvements.

##### External Consultation

- LAHSA regularly convenes stakeholder and consumer groups for program input. Some of these are the Lived Experience Advisory Group, Homeless Youth Forum, and the Ad Hoc Committee on Women and Homelessness.
- LAHSA is working with the consulting firms Abt Associates and Housing Innovations to evaluate and enhance all aspects of Crisis and Bridge Housing, including but not limited to, case management approaches, case management services, program rules, security best practices, quality of/standards for food and meals.
- Housing Innovations provided two days direct service staff training in October 2017 and will be returning in December 2017 to provide additional training for shelter leadership and direct line staff on best practices.
- On May 11, 2017, LAHSA, together with DHS and DMH, hosted more than 90 stakeholders to gather input about shelter program design. LAHSA is incorporating their feedback into our current programs.

##### Accessibility for People with Disabilities

- There are certainly ways that LAHSA funded shelter facilities can be enhanced to better accommodate persons with disabilities. LAHSA recently hired an ADA Coordinator with over 25 years of experience in ADA and California Title 24 Building Code design, evaluation, inspection and modification of facilities in both the public and private sectors. His experience spans a wide cross-section of industries and entities, including experience with both the County and City of

Los Angeles, nonprofits, entertainment industry, transit/ADA paratransit and homeless services agencies.

- Over the next year, he will be evaluating and refining ADA policies and procedures as well as developing and delivering trainings for LAHSA and shelter staff. Concurrently, he will be evaluating Winter Shelter Program facilities to assess accessibility and developing Transition and Self Evaluation Plans to identify opportunities to improve accessibility.

#### Accessibility for Individuals with Limited English Proficiency

- LAHSA's ADA Coordinator and Quality Standards Coordinator are working together to assess shelter providers' ability to adequately communicate with individuals who have limited English proficiency. After an analysis of service gaps, LAHSA will assist providers in developing Language Access Procedures and Plans which will include items such as general agency policies, intake forms, interpretation and translation services.