

Contact: Jean Walcher/ Sandy Young, JWalcher Communications
jean@jwalcher.com/ sandy@jwalcher.com, 619-295-7140

Housing for the Chronically Homeless: Temporary vs. Permanent

Most homeless assistance programs set out to meet the *immediate* food, shelter and service needs of homeless people and do not address the long-term support services required by many chronically homeless people. By developing long-term, *permanent* housing and supportive service solutions, the cycle of chronic homelessness can be interrupted and significantly reduced.

Home Again is the homeless outreach and prevention public awareness campaign for San Diego County's Plan to End Chronic Homelessness (PTECH). Although the chronically homeless are a minority of the overall homeless population, they drain significant resources – including legal, medical and emergency services – at a high cost to our community.

Home Again advocates providing affordable *permanent* housing integrated with supportive services to help move – and keep – the chronically homeless off the streets and into stable living and working situations.

The Limitations of Temporary Housing

Temporary housing includes both shelters and transitional housing designed to provide short term relief for the homeless. Typically, stays are less than three months long, and often, the occupants must return to the streets during the day. Most temporary housing facilities are either large tents lined with beds or older buildings in neglected neighborhoods where the homeless are often need to line-up each afternoon in order to secure a bed for the night.

These facilities usually do not provide supportive services, such as case management, drug/alcohol rehabilitation, job training and legal aid that are essential for rehabilitation. Even if services are provided, temporary housing does not offer the continual support or stability needed to help break the cycle of homelessness. Temporary housing is simply that – *temporary*. It often leads to a revolving door of shelters, detoxification centers, jail and emergency rooms.

Permanent Housing: A Proven and Winning Solution for Taxpayers, the Community, the Homeless

Permanent housing provides a long-term solution for an individual's housing needs. There is no stay limit, enabling homeless residents to live as independently as possible in a permanent setting. It gives them the opportunity to focus on using the available support services, rather than worry about finding their next living situation. Permanent housing facilities vary from apartments to hotel rooms, but all include the basic amenities of a home.

In permanent housing facilities, support services are either provided by the housing organization or coordinated by the applicant with the help of a case manager through other public or private service agencies. Case management is an essential component of rehabilitation to identify services and solutions. For example, case managers help clients find resources for substance abuse and/or physical or mental disabilities. They also work to secure a source of income for them to live and pay for rent, which may be through employment and/or government assistance.

Providing permanent housing with vital support services is proven to significantly reduce homelessness.

Benefits of Permanent Housing

- It is less expensive to house the homeless than keep them on the streets. The United Way of Greater Los Angeles found that permanent housing solutions led to a nearly 43 percent savings for taxpayers.
- Permanent supportive housing has been proven to help people increase their incomes, work more, make greater progress toward recovery, get in less trouble with the law and become more productive citizens.
- Especially for the homeless with disabilities, permanent supportive housing helps provide a secure and stable environment.
- Permanent housing cleans up neighborhoods, increasing property values.
- Participants report greater quality of life satisfaction and have better success at overcoming psychiatric and substance abuse problems compared to those in more traditional homeless programs.
- Permanent housing lends a sense of autonomy for occupants.
- It's a *permanent* solution.

About Home Again

Home Again is the homeless outreach and prevention public awareness campaign for San Diego County's Plan to End Chronic Homelessness (PTECH), facilitated by United Way of San Diego County. For more information, visit <http://www.homeagainsd.org>.

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