



YOLO COUNTY

Health & Human Services Agency

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July 30, 2024

Honorable Timothy Fall, Judge
Superior Court of California
1000 Main Street
Woodland, CA 95695

Grand Jury Foreperson
Yolo County Grand Jury
PO Box 2142
Woodland, CA 95776

Judge Fall and Grand Jury Foreperson,

On June 12, 2024, the Yolo County Grand Jury submitted its report, *Addressing Homelessness in Yolo County; We Won't Be Left Behind*, which contained seven (7) findings and seven (7) recommendations, of which the Yolo County Health and Human Services Agency (HHS) was invited to respond to five (5). HHS has reviewed the Report of the Grand Jury and has prepared an official response (pursuant to Penal Code §933.05):

FINDINGS

F-2: The VI-SPDAT form is used to evaluate an individual's situation and from what services they might benefit. They are given a "Vulnerability Index" score and the information is added to the Continuum of Care's database. When housing opportunities arise, those with a higher index score and who meet the housing criteria, are given preference for placement. Inconsistencies in the administration of the form results in flawed scoring, may not be reliable, and may perpetuate racial inequities.

Response: HHS agrees with this finding.

F-3: County websites, including the Health and Human Services and Homeless Services webpages, have outdated links, missing phone numbers, and incorrect employee and contact links. Effective availability of services information is negatively impacted when the websites are incomplete or incorrect.



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Response: HHSA agrees with this finding.

F-4: Yolo County has not consistently posted meeting information for the Executive Commission to Address Homelessness. This is a violation of the Brown Act. Consequently, the public is frequently unable to obtain information for scheduled public meetings or participate in deliberations.

Response: HHSA agrees with this finding.

F-5: Residents of shelters and respite centers may often require support with housing options, application submittals, and other services. Without this support many individuals' needs go unmet.

Response: HHSA agrees with this finding.

F-7: Yolo County would benefit from a dynamic GIS mapping application to provide help to anyone needing to access information regarding available services, locations, and hours. Although the development of this type of application is in progress, the county has had difficulty obtaining relevant information from service providers. This results in an incomplete and inaccurate application.

Response: HHSA agrees with this finding.

RECOMMENDATIONS

R-2: Yolo County Health and Human Services, in conjunction with the Homeless and Poverty Action Coalition, need to evaluate alternate screening tools to assess individuals experiencing homelessness. The Grand Jury is requesting an evaluation and determination if another form of assessment would be an improved screening tool to replace the VI-SPDAT form. This evaluation should be completed by October 31, 2024.

Response: HHSA agrees with this recommendation but recommends extending the October 31, 2024 deadline to June 30, 2025 to allow HHSA and the Yolo County Homeless and Poverty Action Coalition (HPAC) adequate time to implement the strategies described below.



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As the homeless Continuum of Care (CoC) for Yolo County, HPAC holds the responsibility of managing coordinated entry. To assess clients based on priority of need, an assessment tool must be utilized. Historically, the VI-SPADT tool has been used. Across the nation, many CoC's recognize that the VI-SPADT was not intended to be utilized for coordinated entry and have developed alternative assessment tools. HHSA and HPAC reviewed the literature regarding the VI-SPADT tool and recognized that the tool was not producing consistent results and did not measure the concept of vulnerability.

HPAC acknowledged the pitfalls of using the VI-SPADT and appointed a Coordinated Entry Assessment Subcommittee to identify potential alternatives. At present, this subcommittee has vetted multiple assessment tools from Chicago, Illinois; Santa Clara County, California; San Antonio, Texas; Austin, Texas; Houston, Texas; Marin County, California; Maricopa County, Arizona; Richmond, Virginia; Lake County, California; and Davidson County, Tennessee and has also received technical assistance from Homebase. The subcommittee is charged with bringing the top assessment tools to the Executive Committee for review and to identify the assessment tool(s) to pilot, and ultimately implement, locally.

R-3: The information on all County webpages pertaining to homeless services, need to be updated by September 30, 2024. Web pages need to be updated annually, or more frequently if appropriate.

Response: HHSA agrees with this recommendation.

HHSA's newly formed Contracts, Grants, and Outcomes team will be responsible for the creation of content for relevant county webpages. This finding will be remedied moving forward by holding a master site map of all content uploaded by this team.

R-4: Yolo County should ensure public meetings are always posted as mandated by the Brown Act.

Response: HHSA agrees with this recommendation.

HHSA's newly formed Contracts, Grants, and Outcomes team will be responsible for the distribution of all formal meeting notifications, postings, and public correspondence.



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The deficiencies related to this recommendation have been addressed as HHSA has begun to properly post meeting materials to the Yolo County website in accordance with Brown Act. Meeting minutes and agendas have since been posted and can be located here: [Executive Commission to Address Homelessness | Yolo County](#).

R-5: Yolo County Health and Human Services Agency should develop a routine schedule for employees to visit various shelters and respite centers around the County, be available to assist individuals who might need help filling out applications, and to answer questions they might have about accessing services. This schedule should be posted on the Health and Human Services webpage listing locations with days and hours staff will be available to provide assistance. The schedule and its online posting should be implemented by October 31, 2024.

Response: HHSA disagrees with this recommendation.

One of the most challenging aspects of addressing homelessness is that no single agency, entity, or non-profit holds sole responsibility. At the local level, homelessness is often addressed by a complex network of county, city, non-profit, and faith-based organizations, and partners. Each county and/or CoC is unique, and Yolo County does not have adequate resources or staffing levels to assist all county homeless residents. Currently, HHSA has three (3) staff dedicated to homeless services who serve individuals who are medically fragile. This unit is funded through a grant that expires December 31, 2027. There are no other case managers or housing navigators within the County or HHSA to support our clients who are experiencing homelessness.

There are a variety of homeless case managers employed by cities, non-profits, and faith-based organizations throughout the county. While we are collectively doing our best to meet these growing needs in Yolo County through careful coordination and collaboration, this area is significantly under resourced and underfunded. HPAC's efforts to coordinate these entities is commendable, but this remains a core barrier to effectively addressing homelessness across the State of California.

Lastly, the applications clients are likely to need assistance with are nested within the Yolo County Housing Authority, federal benefit programs, Veterans Services, and elsewhere. In many cases, even when these applications are completed- like in the case



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of housing vouchers- there is incredibly limited inventory of available and/or eligible units.

R-7: The Health and Human Services Agency should include in the service providers' grant applications, a requirement that they provide timely information for the GIS mapping project and commit to updating the information as needed. This statement should be included in the applications prior to the next grant submission cycle.

Response: HHSA agrees with this recommendation.

HHSA is committed to ensuring that real time information regarding available housing inventory is available to the community. HHSA has a working GIS map that will inventory all housing resources and available shelter, interim, shared, and permanent housing within Yolo County. It is Yolo County's intention to require contracted providers to update their available beds, shelter, housing in HMIS on a regular basis by including this language into relevant county contracts. This collaborative effort will enhance real time access to housing inventory for organizations utilizing coordinated entry, HPAC as the CoC for Yolo County, and the public. HHSA will also continue to refine real-time information regarding shelters, beds, and resources with Yolo211.

In closing, HHSA extends our gratitude to the Grand Jury for their work on this report. Should the Grand Jury decide to continue studying this important topic, HHSA respectfully recommends aligning those studies with the bi-annual administration of the Point in Time (PIT) Count. The PIT Count and accompanying report would provide the Grand Jury with up-to-date data and information regarding the needs of individuals experiencing homelessness throughout Yolo County. HHSA remains committed to working in partnership with all city jurisdictions, the Grand Jury, and the community to solve this complex issue.

Best Regards,

Nolan Sullivan

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Nolan Sullivan
Agency Director