

WRCOG Regional Homelessness Statement of Principles

Introduction:

According to the 2016 homeless Point in time count, the County of Riverside has 1,351 unsheltered homeless individuals living on the streets and 814 living in shelters. The total homeless population of 2,165 reflects a 12% decrease from the 2015 point in time count of 2,470. The reduction is attributed to several factors, including an improving economy, lower unemployment rates and a renewed effort to permanently house homeless veterans and the chronically homeless.

The County of Riverside is not unlike many counties and cities across the nation struggling to address the issue of homelessness. While the number of homeless in the County has continued a gradual but steady decrease, the perception is that the issue has worsened. This perception is a result of the “visible” one-third of the homeless population that continue to decline services. Homelessness is not a crime, it knows no political affiliation and is not concerned with jurisdictional delineations. To better address this challenge, a regional approach is needed. Working collaboratively with the County of Riverside a plan can be developed that ensures each city is doing its part to actively address homelessness.

Regional Commitment:

Each city in the county is committed to the following:

1. Standardize ordinances for panhandling, shopping carts, camping and trespassing
 - Makes it easier to enforce these laws consistently (throughout the region)
2. Engage the local homeless population and provide connections to local resources
 - Utilize multi-disciplinary teams that include service providers, faith-based/non-profit organizations, law enforcement, code enforcement, etc. to address local homelessness issues as locally as possible
3. Provide services that meet the needs of the local homeless population to help balance the provision of services across the County
4. Advertise local resources for the local homeless population
 - Identify local available resources and submit information to the 211 Volunteer Center
 - Provide local resource guide handouts
5. Participate in a broad community-focused educational marketing campaign to highlight effective ways to help the local homeless population
 - Use consistent messaging and themes throughout the County
 - Advertise on digital boards and local media

6. Participate in the Riverside County Homeless Point in Time Count
 - Having an accurate count enables our community (and region) to be eligible for federal and state funding for homeless services. The count helps us to better understand the demographics and needs of those experiencing homelessness in our community, and helps to ensure a more equitable distribution of resources to meet the needs of the different populations.
7. Utilize the Coordinated Entry System (CES)
 - Coordinated entry ensures that all people experiencing a housing crisis have fair and equal access, are quickly identified, assessed for, referred, and connected to housing and assistance based on their strengths and needs
 - CES Assessments can be conducted by the following partners in your community: Outreach workers, law enforcement personnel, code enforcement personnel, library and park and recreation center staff, faith based organizations and non-profit organizations
 - CES Assessment Trainings will be provided by the County of Riverside University Health Systems Behavioral Health
8. Identify housing opportunities that are affordable in the local community
 - Identify housing opportunities
 - Identify funding resources
 - Incentivize the development of housing opportunities that are affordable (i.e., amend a development standard or a modification of the Zoning Code)
 - Partner with developers and property owners/landlords
9. Work towards the development and benefit of a permanent and diverse funding stream for homeless services and affordable housing uses throughout the region
10. Encourage faith-based and non-profit organizations to be responsible and compassionate when helping homeless individuals and families without harming them
 - Assist faith-based and non-profit organizations navigate homelessness in your community
 - Encourage faith-based and non-profit organizations to be part of a broad and coordinated regional effort to leverage resources and maximize impact, rather than engage in singular short-term solutions