

HOMELESSNESS IN RIVERSIDE WORKSHOP

OCTOBER 11, 2016

Shelter Resistant Task Force

The Shelter Resistant Task Force, formed in 2011, includes staff from the City of Riverside Public Works, Code Enforcement, Police Department, Homeless Outreach Team and the County of Riverside Department of Mental Health, and the Probation Department. The Team engages and addresses areas throughout the City which have become “hot spots” or areas that generate frequent requests for service. With a City of 81 square miles, the Task Force divides the City into two sections, East and West and engages individuals every Wednesday, alternating between the East and West sections.

The Shelter Resistant Task Force faces the challenge typical in multi-jurisdictional efforts, schedule coordination. Consistent coordinated efforts result in the homeless individual's anticipation of engagement, causing them to relocate prior to the engagement. Rescheduling of the coordinated effort is impractical, as scheduling conflicts between jurisdictions is common. This rigidity, coupled with the fact that homeless individuals with one or more significant barriers (e.g. a homeless individual with untreated mental health concerns who is self-medicating with a legal or illegal substance) often requires multiple engagements, typically 60, with qualified professionals to accept services has made it apparent that these coordinated engagement sessions need to occur on a daily basis, not a bi-weekly basis.

In 2015, the City increased the occurrence of weekly field engagements to twice per week in addition to participating in coordinated engagements with County staff. The increased frequency and consistency of these engagements resulted in the perception of an increase in the population of homeless individuals, when in reality, the individuals engaged came out of the shadows.