

UTREACH



Develop sustainable outreach systems and increase workforce to support these systems

Addressing homeless encampments shifted considerably after the *Martin v. City of Boise* decision and during the COVID-19 pandemic with public health guidance issued by both the federal and state governments. Working to connect individuals living in homeless encampments with services and housing requires considerable efforts by counties, cities, and other partners. However, outreach and casework around encampments are not covered activities under any of the state and federal entitlement programs, including Medi-Cal. Many successful local efforts have been implemented using one-time state and federal funding to coordinate the outreach and casework needed to transition persons living in encampments into housing, and continuing those efforts is critical.

County governments and other levels of government are currently facing the most difficult labor market in decades. There are significant and well documented challenges to recruiting, training, and retaining qualified staff especially in behavioral health and social worker classifications. These types of workers, as well as leveraging lived experience and creating new trained classifications, are necessary to expand the service and provider network sufficiently to support comprehensive homelessness services, especially to support housing navigation.

THE FOLLOWING ARE RECOMMENDED ACTIONS TO IMPROVE OUTREACH AND RESOLUTION TO HOMELESS ENCAMPMENTS:

- Develop statewide street outreach through a new pre-approved Medi-Cal Administrative Activities Plan and structure to maximize federal reimbursement for these activities, as well as pursue other avenues for federal funding for outreach, rapid response, follow up, and individual retention activities.
- Expand training incentives for law enforcement and probation related to responding to individuals experiencing homelessness.
- Identify the specific skills that are needed for a homeless response system workforce and develop training, coaching, and support programs. This includes leveraging lived experience and developing skills that are needed to help individuals navigate the housing landscape.
- Consider creation of certification for workers in the housing field and homelessness navigator field. Professionalizing work on housing and homelessness would help highlight the specialized knowledge required to be effective practitioners helping individuals with housing issues. This could be achieved through a state, community college, local government, and health plan partnership.
- Support the integration of the new community health worker benefit through the managed care plans with the homelessness outreach system and county behavioral health.
- Provide support for regional hubs for training and workforce resources statewide.

3/10/23

FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT:

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