



City of San Antonio

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On agenda: 11/19/2019

Title: Briefing on the Department of Human Services (DHS) Homeless programs to include coordinated encampment outreach and alternative giving initiatives. [Colleen M. Bridger, MPH, PhD, Assistant City Manager; Melody Woosley, Director, Human Services]

Sponsors:

Indexes:

Code sections:

Attachments:

Date	Ver.	Action By	Action	Result
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DEPARTMENT: Human Services

DEPARTMENT HEAD: Melody Woosley, Human Services Director

COUNCIL DISTRICTS IMPACTED: Citywide

SUBJECT: Homeless Programs Overview

SUMMARY:

This item provides a briefing on homeless programs to include coordinated encampment outreach and alternative giving initiatives.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

The City of San Antonio Department of Human Services is responsible for the community’s efforts to end homelessness by supporting homeless initiatives; participating in policy development; and providing investments and oversight of City owned assets and contracts with Haven for Hope, campus partners, and other homeless service providers. The City of San Antonio supports initiatives designed to impact those most vulnerable in our community, including individuals experiencing homelessness by ensuring that homelessness is rare, brief and non-recurring. The Homeless Services Division collaborates with the local Continuum of Care, service providers, and multiple City Departments to end Vet homelessness, provide homeless encampment outreach events, support the Haven for Hope Campus which offers housing, transformational and life-saving services for men, women and children experiencing homelessness in Bexar County, and address behavioral health issues for homeless individuals in the City. During the mid-year budget review, staff received approval from City Council to allocate \$200,000 from the General Fund operating contingency reserve to fund a comprehensive assessment of homeless services, identify gaps in those services and develop, in consultation

with our stakeholders, a community strategic plan for addressing those gaps. On October 17th City Council approved a contract with The Center for Common Concerns/ HomeBase for the purpose of conducting a comprehensive Homeless Strategic Plan for the City of San Antonio Department of Human Service. The assessment and community plan is anticipated to be finalized by March 2020 and will serve as a guide to enhance strategies and data-driven decisions to achieve the community's long-term goal of making homelessness rare, brief and nonrecurring.

Encampments

In January 2017, the Department of Human Services (DHS) began the Coordinated Homeless Encampment Outreach Initiative with the support of six City Departments and Haven for Hope. The goal of this initiative is to reach out to homeless individuals living in encampments and places not meant for human habitation across the City and connect them to services at Haven for Hope including emergency shelter, housing resources, meals, employment, mental health and substance use services. The city departments participating in this initiative include San Antonio Police Department (SAPD), Transportation and Capital Improvements (TCI), Development Services Department (DSD), Solid Waste Management, Parks and Recreation, and Animal Care Services.

The Encampment Outreach strategy consists of four steps: identification of an encampment, outreach to the homeless individuals, restoring/cleaning the area, and maintenance of services to homeless and the area where the encampment was identified. DHS, SAPD, and Haven for Hope begin the outreach and notification to homeless living in the identified encampment several days in advance of a restoration/cleaning event. The restoration/clean up event is performed by TCI and/or appropriate department depending on the location of the encampment. DHS, Haven for Hope, SAMMinistries and Thrive Youth Centers provide support services to homeless individuals who accepted services and continue outreach to those who declined services. Monitoring of sites is performed by DHS on a quarterly basis or as requested by SAPD SAFE officers when encampments reappear in known locations.

Since the inception of the program, a total of 485 events have been completed with 1,076 homeless identified. A total of 215 or 20% of the homeless identified accepted services at Haven for Hope. Homeless encampments occur across the community in every council district. Homeless encampments occur across the community in every council district. The majority (74%) of outreach events occurred at encampments on City property with 70% in City right of way including drainage culverts and 4% in city parks. The team works with DSD when private property (4%) is involved to ensure property owners are notified and with the Texas Department of Transportation (22%) when encampments are located on their properties. The table below reflects the number of Outreach Events across the community by Council District since FY17.

Council District	FY17 Number of Outreach Events	FY18 Number of Outreach Events	FY19 Number of Outreach Events	Total # of Events FY17- FY19
CD1	10	47	51	108
CD2	3	27	27	57
CD3	20	17	28	65
CD4	2	10	33	45
CD5	2	22	18	42
CD6	7	23	35	65
CD7	8	12	10	30
CD8	2	2	13	17
CD9	1	6	6	13
CD10	5	9	29	43
Total	60	175	250	485

Alternative Giving

The FY 2019 Budget allocated \$30,000 for public messaging, including signage, as part of an initiative to encourage residents to donate to non-profit organizations that support homeless programs and services and to reduce panhandling that violates City code.

The Human Services Department launched “Change the Way We Give” Alternative Giving Campaign on May 10, 2019 as a meaningful way for residents to compassionately give to organizations serving people experiencing homelessness in lieu of donating to people directly on the streets. Giving monetary donations directly to the homeless can enable destructive behaviors and prevent permanent long term solutions. Additionally direct donations can impact public safety for both parties. The initiative is a partnership with the COSA Dept. of Human Services and the homeless continuum of care, the South Alamo Regional Alliance for the Homeless (SARAH). The campaign was piloted in Council District 8 in areas with high rates of panhandling. Billboards were strategically placed in areas close to several key intersections.

The campaign uses a secured online mobile giving application which is available where donors can be assured they are giving directly to Homeless Service Providers. The mobile app is available in English and Spanish. Twelve agencies currently partner with the city to receive donations from this campaign. Every amount donated continues to make a positive impact on the lives of individuals and families experiencing homelessness. The total funds raised through the alternative giving campaign is \$730, in addition according to the latest data from SAPD dated August 2019, we have seen a 27% decrease in panhandling calls for targeted intersections and a 75% decline in panhandling calls at the Bandera and 1604 W intersection.

FISCAL IMPACT:

There is no anticipated impact to the General Fund as a result of this briefing.

RECOMMENDATION:

Staff will present a briefing on this item. Action is at the discretion of the Chair.