



Sacramento County Mental Health Board

March 5, 2021

Sacramento County Board of Supervisors
700 H Street, Suite 2450
Sacramento, CA 95814

To: Sacramento County Board of Supervisors
**Re: Recommendation Related to Mobilization of Resources/Emergency Response
Dealing with Homelessness**

Authority and Recommendation:

Per Welfare and Institutions Code Section 5604.2, the duties of the Sacramento Mental Health Board include, but are not limited to:

- (1) Review and evaluate the community's public mental health needs, services, facilities, and special problems in any facility within the county or jurisdiction where mental health evaluations or services are being provided, including, but not limited to, schools, emergency departments, and psychiatric facilities.
- (2) Advise the governing the Board of Supervisors and the local mental health director as to any aspect of the local mental health program.

In fulfillment of our roles as advocates, the Sacramento Local Mental Health Board (SLMHB) respectfully submits this letter and recommendations in light of the loss of life in the homeless community during the well forecasted historical storms that took place on January 26, 2021. Specifically, the SLMHB is asking the Board of Supervisors:

1. to, as a matter of policy, direct staff to amend the current criteria/guidelines related to warm/cooling shelters to allow year-round sheltering.
2. to solidify agreements between the County of Sacramento and incorporated cities that allow a quick mobilization of resources to respond to emergencies/crisis in a swift matter and move away from the current practice to activate the guidelines using arbitrary, unjustified criteria, and/or through a bureaucratic process.

Background and Justification for the Recommendation:

During the evening of Tuesday, January 26, 2021, at least 6 of our un housed neighbors died during the terrible windstorm. This storm had been forecasted for days. As of February 4, 2021 only names of 3 were known- Karen Hunter, F, age 57, Christopher Bolivar, M age 54 and Bryant Booker, M, age 29.

According to Bob Erlenbusch, Executive Director of the Sacramento Regional Coalition to End Homelessness, the coroner had not yet listed their cause of death; and yet, since 2002, out of almost 1,200 people experiencing homelessness who have died in the county, the coroner has only identified 10 that died of hypothermia. However, it is well known that they died because they were outside.

Joe Smith, Advocacy Director at Sacramento Loaves & Fishes, tells us the County guidelines to only open warming centers where there are 3 consecutive days of below 32 degree temperatures are just that, guidelines. The City of Sacramento believed it must follow the county guidelines. However, the day after the historical storm that took the lives of at least 6 un housed neighbors and caused untold mental health issues and terror, the City Council issued an emergency declaration and opened warming centers in the library and Southside Park.

The City Manager, Howard Chan, stated he did not ask the county officials to approve opening a warming center on 1/26/2021 because he “knew” the county guidelines would not be modified to open warming centers despite the fact it was freezing. Mr. Chan also said there was no public support from the public health officials in the county due to fear of a Covid-19 outbreak.

We recommend the County of Sacramento and the incorporated and unincorporated areas of Sacramento coordinate their services for their underserved and vulnerable population of our unhoused and homeless community who are our neighbors.

It is further recommended that the County of Sacramento change the weather criteria to allow year-round sheltering and open warming and cooling centers from December 1 to March 31 and June 1 to September 1, and provide additional days of opening during unusual inclement weather. These centers should also serve as clean air centers to provide additional safety for our neighbors in the event of natural disasters such as wildfires.

Sincerely,



Loran Sheley, Chairperson
Sacramento County Mental Health Board

cc: Ryan Quist, Deputy Director
Behavioral Health Services