

HOMELESS ENGAGEMENT AND RESPONSE TEAM (HEART) SERVICES FOR THE UNHOUSED **JANUARY – MARCH 2026**

IMPACT

- Outreach and Engagement
- Linkage to services
- Crisis stabilization, promoting recovery, and optimizing community functioning
- Decrease criminalization of mental health and homelessness

BUILT UNITS

BHS continues to strategically invest local Mental Health Services Act (MHSA) funding, administered by the Sacramento Housing and Redevelopment Agency on behalf of BHS, to combat homelessness among MHSA-eligible clients.

- Existing Housing: 498 apartments across 19 developments are dedicated to BHS clients, with an additional 85 units planned as vacancies arise.
- Future Developments: 79 new apartments are planned across 4 properties from 2026 to 2027. These additions will expand the BHS Permanent Supportive Housing Portfolio to a total of 662 dedicated apartments across 23 developments, resulting in a 12% increase in PSH units.

OVERVIEW

The Homeless Engagement and Response Team (HEART) is a special group within Sacramento County Behavioral Health Services (BHS) that focuses on helping people who don't have a place to live. Their main job is to connect these individuals with important services, like accessing mental health services, getting food, getting medical help, and housing and shelter resources. HEART works together with different parts of the county government, city partners, and other community groups to make sure people who are experiencing homelessness get the support they need.

DESCRIPTION

Outreach and Engagement: HEART staff, which includes counselors and peer support specialists many of whom have personally experienced homelessness—actively engage with individuals living in shelters and encampments. They reach out with compassion and empathy, taking time to connect with people where they are. Through consistent visits and conversations, they assess individuals' mental health and substance use needs. By demonstrating kindness and understanding, the HEART team fosters meaningful relationships and builds trust with those who may be hesitant to seek help, creating an open door for ongoing support.

Linkage and Assessments: Once trust is established, HEART works to connect individuals with critical health services. Whether in encampments or shelters, the team helps people enroll in both medical and behavioral health care services. They conduct assessments to understand each person's unique needs and circumstances, ensuring referrals are tailored and relevant. By focusing on both immediate and long-term care, HEART supports individuals in navigating complex systems to access the services that will best support their well-being.

HEART has 4 areas of concentration:

Shelter Team – Clinicians and Peer Support Specialists are present at local shelters to provide services. Approximately 33% of the shelters are within the city limits.

City Partnership Agreement – Clinicians and Peer Support Specialists partner with City Street Outreach teams and provide services to individuals residing in encampments and city shelters.

Greater Sacramento County – Clinicians and Peer Support Specialists provide services to individuals in the unincorporated County, including outreach to individuals in the American River Parkway area and surrounding cities.

Community-Based Referrals – Services provided to individuals who have received a HEART referral from the community over the phone or electronically.

OUTCOMES – JANUARY – MARCH 2026

The HEART team conducted 489 Outreach and Engagement attempts resulting in:

- 141 individuals engaged
- 159 individuals agreed to be screened
- 150 were referred to BHS programs
- 87 individuals linked to BHS services