

Regional Community Action Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness in San Diego

Executive Summary

This Regional Community Action Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness in San Diego (Regional Plan) sets forth a shared vision and foundation for moving to action for ending homelessness throughout the San Diego region over the next five years. The Regional Plan identifies system and resource gaps, promotes evidence-based approaches for the homelessness crisis response system including person-centered orientations like Housing First, Trauma-Informed, and progressive engagement, places a focus on equity, and embraces the truth that HOUSING ends homelessness and EVERYONE can thrive in HOUSING with appropriate SUPPORT as needed.

The Regional Plan adopts the shared vision of an END to HOMELESSNESS across San Diego County through a housing-focused, equity driven, and person-centered system approach.

Ending homelessness does not mean there will never be another person who will face a housing crisis in San Diego again. Rather, it means San Diego will have a robust coordinated system in place to prevent housing loss when possible, and when not prevented, to respond with urgency, compassion, and eagerness to engage people in a meaningful way, to connect them to permanent housing as quickly as possible, and to provide stabilizing community supports. San Diego embraces the vision of making homelessness rare, brief, and one-time.

It is an unprecedented time to address homelessness in San Diego. Though COVID-19 exacerbated the housing and homelessness problem, it also forced rapid planning and response, collaboration across sectors, stimulated more federal and state funding for solutions than ever before, and catalyzed political will, leadership, and momentum to do something significant on the issue. It is also a critical moment in our history, with a national call for social justice and the pursuit of racial equity. San Diego cannot end homelessness without simultaneously addressing systemic institutional racism, dismantling racist policies, and ensuring an equitable response to those experiencing homelessness. San Diego is ready to act.

Up to this point, there has never been a single aligned plan to prevent an end homelessness across all of San Diego County. Currently there are plans in place at federal and state levels that guide the regional work in San Diego as well as a local regional plan to end youth homelessness, various cities in the county have plans in place, and sub-regional collaboratives have created goals and strategies. However, there is no one overarching guiding plan for the region that aligns all stakeholders under one vision moving towards action.

The purpose of this Regional Plan, essentially a “Plan of Plans” that builds on and aligns all existing plans, is to commit to a shared vision, adopt a set of core principles, identify system priorities, goals, and strategies, and ensure strong measures and accountability. There is a critical need to ALIGN all plans, strategies, stakeholders, practices, and

funding under a single vision and act collectively with intention, urgency, and compassion.

The San Diego Continuum of Care (CoC), the county-wide regional body designated by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) is tasked with bringing together stakeholders who have a common goal to end homelessness and develop and implement a regional plan to achieve this goal. The Regional Task Force on Homelessness (RTFH), serves as the lead agency for the San Diego CoC and embodies a Collective Impact Framework that includes a diverse group of stakeholders: elected officials (Federal, state, and local), government agencies – including the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, County of San Diego, and cities – homeless services providers, faith-based organizations, law enforcement, healthcare partners, the education sector, philanthropy, business partners, persons with lived experience, advocates, and others.

The CoC, including the Advisory Board, Committees, and Membership, has a powerful role to play in realizing the adopted vision and embracing and practicing the principles below, building the momentum and implementing the goals and strategies identified, and being accountable to the shared community measures.

Core System Principles Expected of All Stakeholders in San Diego

To achieve the vision outlined in this plan, the region is committing to a set of core principles that directs how we collaboratively do the work of preventing and ending homelessness in San Diego. These core principles define our culture of working together and will guide all actions and decision making as community as we move forward.

- **Act with Urgency, Compassion, and Eagerness:** Homelessness is a crisis for each San Diegan who experiences it. The system and key stakeholders must act with urgency to advance bold solutions; with compassion to see every person as a human being with strengths; and with an eagerness to engage immediately to leverage existing political will and unprecedented levels of resources to house people now. We cannot wait.
- **Unified and Committed Leadership:** Collective and coordinated regional efforts will have greater impact than those of any one entity or organization. Leaders across the region must stand united in their commitment to a common vision, goals, and strategies. This includes elected officials across all levels of local, state, and federal government.
- **Commitment to Housing as the Solution:** Housing is a basic human right and a key social determinant of health. Every person should have access to a safe, secure, and affordable home to ensure personal and community health and wellness. This includes a commitment to a Housing First approach that includes rapid placement into permanent housing and the necessary supportive services to ensure housing stability.
- **Centering Racial Equity and Social Justice:** We cannot end homelessness without addressing racist policies and systems that have historically removed people of color from their homes, excluded them from neighborhoods, and denied them

access to wealth-building opportunities. The homeless system of care will center equity, address racial disparities, dismantle racist policies, and ensure an equitable response to those experiencing homelessness.

- **Include and Value the Voices of those with Lived Experience:** The people closest to the problem are often closest to the solution. To build a system more responsive to current needs, we will authentically engage and empower people with lived experience at all levels of planning, decision-making, and implementation.
- **Shared Accountability, Responsibility, and Transparency:** We will share data about our system, be honest and vulnerable about limitations, failures, and successes. We will prioritize system strategies, programs, and projects that demonstrate reductions in homelessness.
- **Promote a Person-Centered Homelessness Response System:** Each person experiencing homelessness has their own unique story, needs, and strengths. The homelessness crisis response system will be flexible and recognize each person experiencing homelessness is the expert in finding the right solution to end their homelessness. A person-centered system incorporates approaches including Housing First, Trauma-Informed Care, progressive engagement, and harm reduction.
- **Value the Critical Role of Homeless Services Providers:** The work to end homelessness cannot happen without dedicated service providers. We will listen to and value the input, voice, and perspective of homeless services providers from agency leadership to front line staff. We will also ensure our region can maintain a highly skilled workforce.
- **Data Must Drive Decision Making:** We will identify shared measures, implement Continuous Quality Improvement practices, and build capacity where needed. High quality data will help inform decisions, funding, and midcourse adjustments. Local data will shape service delivery, prioritization, and local initiatives.
- **Collaboratively Seek and Align Funding to Achieve Goals:** We will work together to seek and align funding to achieve the goals and strategies in this plan from various sources.

Regional Goals Over the Next Five Years

Building on the regional vision and core principles the following people and system goals will guide strategies, priorities, funding, and action. All of the population-based and system goals are aligned with and embedded in existing federal, state, or local plans.

Regional Goals Over the Next Five Years		
People Goals	System Goals	System Strategies
1. End Veteran Homelessness	1. Create a Strong and Equitable	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthen coordination • Educate the community • Mobilize diverse stakeholders

2. End Youth Homelessness	Regional System to End Homelessness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build equity and inclusion into the system • Align funding • Enhance capacity of homeless services system • Use data to evaluate and improve performance 	
3. Reduce Unsheltered Homelessness by 50%			
4. Prevent and End Homelessness Among Older Adults			2. Aggressively Expand Permanent Housing Options <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop new affordable and supportive housing units • Maximize utilization of existing rental stock • Pair housing with supportive services for stability
5. End Family Homelessness			3. Meet the Needs of People Experiencing Unsheltered Homelessness <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • End the criminalization of homelessness • Continue to build the practice of high-quality street outreach services • Implement a regional clearance with support framework for addressing encampments
			4. Create Safe, Low-Barrier, and Housing-Focused Shelter <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase the number of low-barrier, housing-focused shelter beds • Coordinate temporary housing intake • Implement a Low-Barrier Model and Make Services Available
	5. Reduce the Flow of People Entering Homelessness <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a coordinated system for homelessness prevention • Work across sectors to prevent discharges into homelessness • Prevent returns to homelessness 		

Shared Measures

Measuring performance and impact is critical for success. The region will commit to conducting regular performance review, analyzing data and performance, and make mid-course adjustments depending on data findings and changing community contexts.

System Performance Measures	Project Performance Measures
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decrease length of time homeless • Decrease returns to homelessness • Decrease those becoming homeless for the first time • Increase housing placements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Total persons and households served • Length of time in program • Successful housing placements • Occupancy rates
Housing Inventory Measures	Reaching Functional Zero
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase number of low-barrier emergency shelter beds • Increase number of rapid re-housing slots • Increase number of permanent supportive beds/units • Ensure each sub-region has sufficient housing resources based on population need 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Know every person experiencing homelessness by name • Regularly reviewing inflow, outflow, and actively homelessness • Achieve “Functional zero” as defined by Community Solutions for specific sub-populations as part of the Built For Zero Initiative.

Implementing the Plan

The Regional Plan will guide the creation of a detailed implementation strategy that will outline the distinct steps, timelines, and funding to achieve the plan goals. Specific entities will have the following roles with plan implementation.

Entity/Body	Regional Plan Role
CoC Advisory Board	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Serve as the region's Collective Impact body on ending homelessness. • Help educate the broader community and general public on the plan • Support, influence and advocate for goals and strategies in the plan. Work with elected officials at all levels to support the plan. • Align the plan with cross-sector systems represented by the board – healthcare, law enforcement, business, education, and employment. • Monitor plan implementation and performance.
CoC Committees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The CoC Evaluation Committee will serve as the regional leadership committee for implementing the plan and will oversee plan goals, strategies, actions, and performance. The Evaluation Committee will report back to the CoC Board and other key stakeholders. • Other CoC Committees: Support policy and planning for plan strategies and implementation. Work with the Evaluation Committee to operationalize the goals, strategies, and actions in the plan. • Make recommendations to the CoC Advisory Board to better achieve plan goals over the long term.
Regional Task Force on Homelessness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Serve as the backbone organization for the region's Collective Impact framework and as the lead agency for the San Diego CoC. • Support day to day work implementing and operationalizing the goals, strategies, and actions with all partners. • Use various tools including HMIS to measure the performance of the plan. • Align CoC funding with plan goals and strategies.
Sub-Regional Efforts/Bodies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support plan education and advocacy in sub-regions. • Use plan to inform sub-regional plans and goals. Ensure alignment of sub-regional strategies to the plan.
Government Agencies – Cities and County	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adopt the plan within government structure. • Align city/county plans with regional plan as necessary. • Align funding to plan vision and goals and support implementation of goals, strategies, and actions. • Be responsible for identifying, citing, and development steps to build new affordable/supportive housing and/or low-barrier shelter and other services for those experiencing homelessness.
Homeless Services Providers and CoC Membership including Persons with Lived Experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide robust housing and services in accordance with best practices and approaches identified in the plan. • Provide ongoing feedback on challenges, successes, and implementation needs from the provider perspective. • Provide perspective of those who are/have experienced the system and recommend implementation changes and direction

Lastly, this Regional Plan is a dynamic document intended to be updated and adjusted as the local context changes, new resources are made available, and the data points to new strategies.

However, as the plan changes, the commitments embodied in the plan stay the same:

- HOUSING is a basic human right that should be afforded to ALL San Diegans.
- Housing is a key social determinant of HEALTH and improves the well-being of people and communities.
- Homelessness is both an UNACCEPTABLE and SOLVABLE problem in San Diego.
- San Diego is committed to ENDING HOMELESSNESS. The time to act is now.