



# CONTRA COSTA CONTINUUM OF CARE QUARTERLY MEETING MINUTES

*The Contra Costa Continuum of Care provides a forum for communication and coordination about the implementation of the County's Strategic Plan to prevent and end homelessness, and for orchestrating a vision on ending homelessness in the County, educating the community on homeless issues, and advocating on federal, state, and local policy issues affecting people who are homeless or at-risk of homelessness.*

**Date, Time:** Friday, April 15, 2016 10:00am – 12:00pm

**Location:** ZA Room, 30 Muir Road, Martinez, CA 94553

## **1. Welcome and Introductions**

- Call to order by Teri House, Chair

## **2. Criminalization of Homelessness: Best Practice Alternatives**

- HomeBase Staff (Amanda Stempson, Emily Salvaterra, and Rehana Parsons) gave a presentation on the state of legislation that criminalizes homelessness in the county and in the nation and best practices that address criminalization and present constructive alternatives.
- The United States has seen an increase in, and attention paid to, laws that prohibit sleeping, eating, sitting, or panhandling in public.
- In the 2015 CoC Program competition, HUD addressed the criminalization of homelessness in the community application, and asked communities to describe their efforts to address these policies by engaging with and educating local policymakers and law enforcement and/or implementing communitywide plans to reduce enforcement of existing laws or to remove them altogether.
  - In Contra Costa's CoC application, the following strategies were indicated as currently being implemented by the CoC to ensure that homelessness is not criminalized: engaging/educating local policymakers and law enforcement, implementing communitywide plans, implementing Homeless Court and Behavioral Health Court, implementing Homeless Encampment protocol in partnership with City Flood Control, and developing the Assisted Outpatient Treatment program, a civil court ordered treatment for persons with serious mental illness.
- At the local level, CoCs can assist in reducing criminalization of homelessness with implementation of smaller scale strategies:
  - Comprehensive and seamless systems of care
    1. Create a workgroup focused on the issue
    2. Train outreach teams
    3. Expand affordable housing
    4. Solution-oriented use of resources
    5. Create alternative programs for homeless persons to carry out acts of daily living in private



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6. Build community-wide awareness
  - Collaboration among law enforcement, behavioral health, and social service providers
    1. Multidisciplinary outreach teams
    2. Cross-trained police officers and service providers
    3. Crisis intervention teams
  - Alternative justice systems
    1. Problem solving courts
    2. Citation dismissal programs
    3. Holistic public defender offices
    4. Volunteer legal services projects
    5. Reentry transition planning
- Of the large jurisdictions in Contra Costa County, all have laws against public camping, five have laws against sleeping in public, five have laws against trespassing, and four have laws against urinating/defecating in public.
- Contra Costa County also has a variety of alternative programs that reduce or address the impact of criminalizing homelessness: the Assisted Outpatient Treatment Program, the Mental Health Evaluation Team, and the Homeless Court and Behavioral Health Courts.

### **3. Panel Discussion: Alternatives to Criminalization of Homelessness in Contra Costa**

- Captain Diane Aguinaga, of the Antioch Police Department and a member of the Council on Homelessness, moderated a discussion on current partnerships and strategies in place in Contra Costa County related to homelessness and the criminal justice system.
- The following individuals sat on the panel:
  - Donte Blue, County Re-Entry Coordinator
  - Crystal Luna, Contra Costa Mental Health Services ACTiOn Team
  - Officer Nicole Riddick, Pittsburg Police Department
  - Officer Mark Lambert, Pittsburg Police Department
- Captain Aguinaga asked the following questions of the panel:
  - How do you see policies that criminalize homelessness impacting our community?
  - Any examples from your work that show the impact of criminalization?
  - Can you share some strategies for successful/sustainable partnerships between law enforcement and other agencies, specifically communication strategies (e.g., cross-agency communication, information/data sharing, external communication)?
  - What are the primary service needs of the reentry population, and how has this changed, if at all, since implementation began? (Donte Blue)
  - What has the initial community response been to the implementation of the ACTiOn team? Can you share any first lessons learned? (Crystal Luna)



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- Can you talk about the training that police officers receive related to working with people experiencing homelessness and/or psychiatric crises? (Officers Nicole Riddick & Mark Lambert, Pittsburg PD)
- What formalized collaborations/partnerships do you have set up with homeless service providers? (Officers Nicole Riddick & Mark Lambert, Pittsburg PD)
- How can service providers, homeless advocates, and community members effectively and respectfully voice their concerns about policies that criminalize homelessness? (All Panelists)
- Can you share some strategies for successful/sustainable partnerships between law enforcement and other agencies, specifically communication strategies (e.g., cross-agency communication, information/data sharing, external communication)? (All Panelists)
- How can homeless outreach teams play a role in providing alternatives to criminalization? (All Panelists)
- What are the gaps in availability of housing and services for this population? (Donte Blue)
- Can you share what you see as the successes of county realignment/reentry efforts? (Donte Blue)
- What do you see as the potential impact of the ACTiOn team, and what are your goals or anticipated outcomes? (Crystal Luna)

#### **4. Community Discussion: Promoting Best Practice Alternatives**

- The discussion was opened up to questions and input from audience members. Topics included strategies to fund and implement affordable housing and street outreach initiatives; current innovative partnerships to address homeless individuals' legal and basic needs (including programs from STAND!, the Public Defender's Office, and the El Sobrante Library); and recent 'Ban the Box' initiatives to prohibit discrimination in housing and employment access based on criminal history.

#### **5. Nuts & Bolts**

- Antioch Shelter Project: The Antioch City Council recently expressed 100% support for providing land and rezoning to provide a 50-bed emergency shelter for women and children.
- Some of the CDBG Consortium jurisdictions are considering issuing a Request for Proposals for Street Outreach services for FY 2016/17.

#### **6. Pin It**

- Next Council on Homelessness meeting: May 5, 2016, 2:00 – 3:30 pm
- Next CoC meeting: July 15, 2016, 10:00am – 12:00pm