

Date of Hearing: June 15, 2022

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON HOUSING AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Buffy Wicks, Chair

SB 914 (Rubio) – As Amended May 19, 2022

SENATE VOTE: 37-0

SUBJECT: HELP Act

SUMMARY: Requires cities, counties, and continuums of care (CoCs) that receive state funding on or after January 1, 2023 to take specific actions to address the needs of unaccompanied homeless women, and in particular domestic violence survivors, as specified. **Specifically, this bill:**

- 1) Defines “unaccompanied woman” as an individual who identifies as a woman who is 18 years of age or older, who is experiencing homelessness, as defined in the federal McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, and who is not accompanied by children or other dependents.
- 2) Requires cities, counties, and CoCs that receive state funding on or after January 1, 2023 to:
 - a) Take steps to ensure that the needs of victim service providers and survivors of violence, and a gendered analysis of the causes and consequences of homelessness are incorporated into homelessness planning and responses;
 - b) Include families, people fleeing or attempting to flee domestic violence, and unaccompanied women within the vulnerable populations for whom specific systems support are developed;
 - c) Ensure that analyses and goals are completed with the following guidelines:
 - i. Developed with victim service providers to address the specific needs of the population identified in (b);
 - ii. Incorporate aggregate data from victim service providers;
 - iii. Ensure that addressing the safety and wellness of people in encampments include addressing risk of sexual and domestic violence;
 - iv. Ensure that the response to family homelessness includes victim service providers;
 - v. Address disparate racial and gender outcomes in accessing and maintaining services and housing;
 - vi. Address the nexus of homelessness and justice-involvement, particularly for women and survivors of domestic violence; and

- vii. Disaggregate the number of beds provided by victim service providers and the number of beds available for women, transgender, and gender-nonconforming persons.
- 3) Prohibits victim service providers from entering client-level data into the statewide Homeless Data Integration System (HDIS) or local Homeless Management Information System (HMIS).
- 4) Allows for funding that supports data systems to be used to develop and maintain comparable databases.
- 5) Requires Cal-ICH to set and measure progress toward goals to prevent and end homelessness among domestic violence survivors, their children, and unaccompanied women by doing the following:
 - a) Setting goals that include:
 - i. Decreasing the number of domestic violence survivors, their children, and unaccompanied women experiencing homelessness;
 - ii. Decreasing their duration and frequency of homelessness; and
 - iii. Decreasing their barriers to services.
 - b) Defining outcome measures and gathering data related to the goals;
 - c) Providing technical assistance when funding is available; and
 - d) Establishing initial goals by January 1, 2025 and updating them every two years.

EXISTING LAW:

- 1) Establishes the California Interagency Council on Homelessness (Cal-ICH) to coordinate the State's response to homelessness using housing first practices with a number of goals including, but not limited to:
 - a) Creating partnerships among state agencies and departments;
 - b) Promoting systems integration to increase efficiency and effectiveness; and
 - c) Coordinating existing funding and application for competitive funding.
- 2) Defines "housing first" as the evidence-based model that uses housing as a tool, rather than a reward, for recovery and that centers on providing or connecting homeless people to permanent housing as quickly as possible. Housing first providers offer services as needed and requested on a voluntary basis and that do not make housing contingent on participation in services.

- 3) Establishes the Secretary of the Business, Consumer Services and Housing Agency and the Secretary of the California Health and Human Services Agency as co-chairs of the council which consists of 20 other members:
 - a) The Director of Transportation;
 - b) The Director of Housing and Community Development;
 - c) The Director of Social Services;
 - d) The Director of the California Housing Finance Agency;
 - e) The Director or the State Medicaid Director of Health Care Services;
 - f) The Secretary of Veterans Affairs;
 - g) The Secretary of the Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation;
 - h) The Executive Director of the California Tax Credit Allocation Committee in the State Treasurer's Office;
 - i) The State Public Health Officer;
 - j) The Director of the California Department of Aging;
 - k) The Director of Rehabilitation;
 - l) The Director of State Hospitals;
 - m) The Executive Director of the California Workforce Development Board;
 - n) The Director of the Office of Emergency Services;
 - o) A representative from the State Department of Education; and
 - p) A representative of the state public higher education system from one of the following:
 - i. The California Community Colleges,
The University of California, and
 - ii. The California State University;
- q) The Senate Committee of Rules and the Speaker of the Assembly shall each appoint one member to the council from two different stakeholder organizations.
- 4) Requires domestic violence shelter programs to report the following:
 - a) The total number of persons requesting services of the domestic violence shelter-based program;
 - b) The number of persons served in the domestic violence shelter-based program, by each type of service provided; and
 - c) A description of the social and economic characteristics of persons receiving services, by type of service provided.
- 5) Prohibits, unless a release of information is obtained, grantees and subgrantees, such as victim service providers, from disclosing or collecting any personally identifying information regarding personal services requested, utilized, or denied, regardless of whether the information has been encoded, encrypted or hashed, in order to protect the confidentiality and privacy of persons receiving services, as specified.

FISCAL EFFECT: Unknown.

COMMENTS:

Author's statement: According to the author, “Domestic violence is one of the leading drivers of homelessness for women, and unaccompanied women experiencing homelessness wait on average more than 10 years to access stable housing, a rate twice that of men. Despite making up a significant portion of the homeless population, our state’s homelessness response does not appropriately consider the needs of these two intersecting groups. As noted in a 2021 report from the Little Hoover Commission, there is ‘difficulty in getting leaders at all levels of government to understand the intersection of domestic violence and homelessness and how widespread of a problem it is.’

SB 914 addresses this issue and will keep California at the forefront of innovative responses to homelessness and domestic violence by ensuring that data about these populations and the work of relevant service providers is incorporated into local homelessness planning. With this, cities, counties, and Continuums of Care will have a more complete picture of the homeless population in their community and be better able to achieve results in preventing homelessness and supporting individuals in moving to stable housing.”

Homelessness in California: Based on the 2020 point in time count, California has the largest homeless population in the nation with 161,548 people experiencing homelessness on any given night. Many of those people, 113,660, are unsheltered meaning they are living outdoors and not in temporary shelters. Nearly half of all unsheltered people in the country were in California. Research indicates that upward of 57 percent of all homeless women report that domestic violence was the immediate cause of their homelessness. Additionally, 38 percent of all survivors of domestic violence become homeless at some point in their lives.

An October 2019 report by the California Policy Lab found that homeless, unsheltered women reported abuse and/or trauma as the cause of their homelessness at much higher rates (80%) than either unsheltered men (38%) or sheltered women (34%). While unsheltered individuals overall reported average wait times more than six times longer than sheltered people (2,632 days versus 410 days), unsheltered women reported an average of 5,855 days since they were last stably housed.¹ Los Angeles County recently passed a resolution to recognize unaccompanied women experiencing homelessness as a unique sub-population with their own specific needs.

CA-ICH: The California Interagency Council on Homelessness (CA-ICH), formerly known as Homelessness Coordinating and Financing Council, is responsible for coordinating the state's response to homelessness. The CA-ICH is required to address a set of goals to respond to homelessness. CA-ICH is also responsible for ensuring that all state housing and homeless programs are Housing First. Housing First is an evidence-based housing model that centers on providing people experiencing homelessness with housing as quickly as possible and then providing services as needed.

As the state’s homelessness crisis has worsened, the role of the CA-ICH has significantly increased. The council is now responsible for administering two significant programs dedicated to addressing homelessness, HEAP and HHAP. In 2021-22 budget included multi-year funding for HHAP. To access this funding, eligible applicants (CoCs, counties, and eligible cities) are

¹ Janey Rountree, Nathan Hess, Austin Lyke, *Health Conditions Among Unsheltered Adults in the US* (California Policy Lab, October 2019) <https://www.capolicylab.org/health-conditions-among-unsheltered-adults-in-the-u-s/>.

required to submit a Local Homelessness Action Plan that demonstrates how HHAP funds and all local dollars for homelessness can reduce the number of people experiencing homelessness. The Local Homelessness Action Plans are based on data collected through local homelessness management information systems (HMIS) and must include:

- 1) An analysis that assesses the current number of people experiencing homelessness and existing programs and funding which address homelessness within the jurisdiction;
- 2) Identification of the number of individuals and families served, including demographic information and intervention types provided, and subpopulations that are underserved relative to their proportion amongst those experiencing homelessness in the jurisdiction; and
- 3) Identification of all funds, including state, federal and local funds, currently being used, and budgeted to be used, to provide housing and homelessness-related services to persons experiencing homelessness or at imminent risk of homelessness, how this funding serves subpopulations, and what intervention types are funded through these resources.

Homelessness, Domestic Violence, and Unaccompanied Women: Unaccompanied, homeless women are not required to be tracked under current federal law, however counties like Los Angeles and San Bernardino have recently done so. In 2020, there were over 13,500 unaccompanied women in Los Angeles, amounting to 65 percent of all unhoused women. Around half of this population reported domestic violence or intimate partner violence.² According to the state HDIS, 18 percent of homeless people reported experiencing domestic violence.³ This is voluntary information given to providers that use HMIS, which often does not include domestic violence service providers, so it is probably an undercount. In 2019-20, California Office of Emergency Services' Domestic Violence (DV) Assistance Program served almost 19,000 individuals in their shelters, which accounted for over 600,000 nights, but there were still almost 28,000 unmet requests.⁴ For domestic violence and intimate partner violence survivors who recently left abusers, the need for housing is one of the most significant concerns.

Confidentiality is of utmost importance to survivors and programs supporting them because survivors often have to worry about their abusers trying to find them. Because of this, the data collected is aggregated. However, this means that client-level data for domestic violence survivors is not incorporated into the federal HMIS. This is the primary system that the state uses to collect information for its HDIS, and HDIS helps Cal-ICH plan for future homelessness interventions. Because domestic violence survivor data is not incorporated into the state HMIS, survivors may not be fully considered in the State's homelessness response.

² Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority, "2020 Greater Los Angeles Homeless Count - Unaccompanied Women," (November 2020). https://clkrep.lacity.org/online/docs/2020/20-1425_rpt_cla_7-21-21.pdf Appendix to 7/21/21 CLA Report . Accessed April 2022

³ California Interagency Council on Homelessness. "Homeless Data Integration System (HDIS)". (2021). <https://bcsd.ca.gov/calich/hdis.html>

⁴ California Governor's Office of Emergency Services. "Joint Legislative Budget Committee Report". (April 2021). <https://www.caloes.ca.gov/GrantsManagementSite/Documents/2021%20JLBC%20Report.pdf>.

Confidentiality may be an issue to obtain all the information on domestic violence survivors. It would be easier for Cal-ICH to access data from federally funded shelters, but accessing information from private sources may be difficult. However, even if the data is not fully complete, the data that can be obtained would still provide valuable information. As of now, victim service provider data is not collected by Cal-ICH so this population is missing. Victim service providers offer confidentiality and many resources including counseling, legal services, and others that are tailored help the specific needs of this population, and they are integral for many people who are homeless. Their inclusion in homelessness planning is reasonable.

This bill would require any CoC, city, or county that receives state funding to address homelessness to develop a strategy to address homelessness among unaccompanied women. CA-ICH would be required to set goals to reduce homelessness among unaccompanied women. CA-ICH is the processes of working with CoCs, cities, and counties to develop measurable outcome goals as a requirement of HHAP. The goals will be based on data from local HMIS systems and are expected to be completed by the end of the summer.

Double-referred: This bill was also referred to the Assembly Committee on Human Services where it will be heard should it pass out of this committee.

REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:

Support

California Partnership to End Domestic Violence (Co-Sponsor)
Downtown Women's Center (Co-Sponsor)
Rainbow (Co-Sponsor)
ACLU California Action
California Department of Justice
Central City Association of Los Angeles
City of Kingsburg
City of Los Angeles
Clovis Police Department
Domestic Violence Solutions for Santa Barbara County
Family Violence Appellate Project
Fresno Police Department
Housing California
Jewish Family Service of Los Angeles
Jewish Public Affairs Committee
LA Family Housing
Little Hoover Commission
Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors
Los Angeles County District Attorney's Office
Marjaree Mason Center
Mendota Police Department
National Association of Social Workers, California Chapter
Neighborhood Legal Services of Los Angeles County
People's Health Solutions
Reedley Police Department
St. Joseph Center

The Pacific Palisades Democratic Club
The People Concern
Women's Foundation California

Opposition

None on file.

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