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## **Supervisors Consider Additional Ways to Address Homelessness**

During a special study session to consider options for addressing the needs of those in Orange County without permanent housing, the Board of Supervisors evaluated how the system of care operates and recommendations for improvement.

“An Assessment of Homeless Services in Orange County” was presented by Susan Price, the County’s new director of care coordination, a position created to better coordinate the County’s response to homelessness. Tuesday’s study session was held to examine ways to provide services in a more coordinated, permanent and efficient way.

“Today’s session was very valuable and we thank everyone who was able to attend and share their perspectives,” Board [Chairwoman Lisa Bartlett](#), Fifth District, said. “We know that the needs are great in Orange County but we also know there are many partners willing to help, including our cities, charities, faith-based groups and individuals.”

“At the county we are very concerned in addressing this problem as it both hurts those living on the streets and creates public health and safety issues,” said Board [Vice Chair Michelle Steel](#), Second District. “We will continue to work together to reduce the number of people living unsheltered on the street and improve the quality of life for all Orange County residents.”

Earlier this month, the County opened a transitional center with emergency shelter beds and enhanced services at the former Santa Ana Transit Terminal, now called The Courtyard. The former terminal is providing access to showers, food programs, storage and comprehensive service referrals to County programs and housing.

“It’s time that we do more to take action to get people off the streets and onto a productive path,” said [Supervisor Andrew Do](#), First District, who pressed for the transitional center to open swiftly to address the growing numbers of those without permanent housing who are living in the Civic Center.

[Supervisor Todd Spitzer](#) suggested Tuesday’s study session as a way to highlight what programs are working in Orange County and what more can be done to assist those without permanent housing.

“Homelessness continues to increase in Orange County and throughout the state because we need to offer complete wrap around services,” said Supervisor Spitzer, Third District. “Today we do not triage the homeless in order to move them from the street to permanent housing. The County is taking big steps to advance this initiative by opening the Kraemer Shelter in my

district later next year. I know we must do a better job coordinating services if we are going to end homelessness in Orange County.”

[Supervisor Shawn Nelson](#), Fourth District, said finding solutions for people to move to permanent housing is a responsibility shared by the County and Orange County’s 34 cities. Several North County cities contributed funds and support toward a multi-service center approved by the Board in Anaheim that will open next year.

The Placentia Veterans Village, being built to house 49 of Orange County’s estimated 450 homeless veterans, received Board approval in March. “There is a lot we can accomplish when the cities and the County work together,” Supervisor Nelson said.

Among the recommendations discussed at the Board study session Tuesday included creating geographic service planning areas for homeless programs to engage in more regional coordination; increasing the number of emergency shelter beds, transitional and permanent housing solutions for single adults and veterans; embracing the national Stepping Up Initiative coordinated through the Orange County Sheriff’s Department to reduce the number of people with mental illnesses in jail; and restructuring the federal Continuum of Care governance to enhance system coordination and performance.

A copy of “An Assessment of Homeless Services in Orange County” can be found here: [Homeless Assessment DCC Final Report](#)

A recently completed survey by County staff and non-profit organization volunteers found 461 people who said they were living permanently in the Civic Center, a 13% increase over a survey conducted at the same time last year. Among other findings:

- The bulk those surveyed – 57% -- said their last permanent residence was Santa Ana.
- Four in 10 people said they had been living in the Civic Center for less than a year.
- Two-thirds said they are receiving Medi-Cal and CalFresh benefits (food stamps).
- The reasons people cited most for why they were living in the Civic Center: a sense of community, the availability of free food and lack of housing.

A copy of the 2016 Orange County Civic Center Homeless Survey can be found here: <http://ochealthinfo.com/civicax/filebank/blobdload.aspx?BlobID=58117>

The Courtyard is only one component of a larger network of services to assist those without permanent housing. Two weeks ago, the Board of Supervisors selected Mercy House Living Centers Inc. to operate a new 200-bed year-round emergency shelter and multi-service center in Anaheim as well as operate seasonal cold-weather shelters at National Guard armories in Fullerton and Santa Ana.

The County has operated a seasonal armory shelter program in Fullerton and Santa Ana for the past 28 years. However, the armories are only open seasonally and overnight. The Fullerton armory program is slated to be discontinued when the Anaheim service center opens.

More information on the new emergency shelter in Anaheim and the cold-weather armory program can be found here: <https://cms.ocgov.com/civicax/filebank/blobdload.aspx?BlobID=57754>

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