

# **Successful and Proven Real World Solutions to Reduce Homelessness**

**Mendocino County Community Forum**

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## The Same Challenges

**Communities Across the USA Many of the Same Challenges and Problems.**

## But Different Solutions

**Communities Have Different Service Delivery Systems, Service Levels, Infrastructures, Assets and Resources.**

## The Condition of Homelessness is Very Costly

- a- Human tragedy affecting many individuals and their families.
  - b- Creates major drain on local government resources.
  - c- Overwhelms the criminal justice system (eg police, courts and jails).
  - d- Overloads emergency rooms/departments.
  - e- Diverts limited non-profit resources.
  - f- Hurts and suppresses economic development.
  - g- Frightens local residents.
- > Overall Very Expensive on Many Levels.

## **If You Want, You Can Make Big Improvements !!**

**You can get real reductions in homelessness !!**

- 1- Significantly Decrease Street-Level Homelessness.**
- 2- Reduce Jail Overcrowding.**
- 3- Reduce ER/ED Mis-use and Over-use.**
- 4- Significantly Increase Street Graduation Rates.**
- 5- Reduce the Rate of New Homelessness.**

## Have a Bias for Action -> Just Start

**Do not do a long and dragged out “Theoretical” study . . .**

**Instead do a fast “Action Plan” . . .**

**Then Implement Your Action Plan as Fast as You Can!**

## Complicated vs. Complex

This is NOT Complicated . . .

It IS Complex . . .

**There is a Big Difference!**

## Your Challenge is Definable

**Homelessness has . .**

- **Scope (who),**
- **Structure (dimension),**
- **Scale (numbers).**

## The Far Right vs. The Far Left

- ▶ Unfortunately the issues of homelessness are too often framed in the Far Right vs. Far Left context.
- ▶ Different views of the Real Root Causes (Triggers).
- ▶ Different views of Solutions (Jail Cells vs. Park Benches).
- ▶ Both Extremes Are Wrong > Real Solutions Are in the Middle.



## Recovery vs. Jail Cell Floors and/or Park Benches

**Recovery Does not Occur on a Jail Cell Floor . . .  
nor on a Park Bench.**

**>> Instead Recovery Occurs in 24/7 Programs  
that Address Root Causes (eg mental health,  
substance abuse and domestic violence).**

## Smart Love

**#1 Goal - Help Folks Graduate from Homelessness Forever by**

**Using “Smart Love” . . . Dignity . . . Respect,**

**Which in Turn Decreases Homelessness.**

## *“7 Guiding Principles of Transformation”*

- ▶ No gimmicks.
  - ▶ No moving the cheese.
  - ▶ No addressing symptoms.
- ▶ **A systems approach of addressing the REAL root causes of homelessness is a very successful and proven way to reduce homelessness.**

## **The “7 Guiding Principles of Transformation” Moving from Enablement to Engagement**

- 1. Move to a Culture of Transformation (vs. the Old Culture of Warehousing).**
- 2. Co-location and Virtual E-integration of as Many Services as Possible.**
- 3. Must Have a Master Case Management System that is Customize.**
- 4. Reward Positive Behavior.**
- 5. Consequences for Negative Behavior.**
- 6. External Activities Must be Redirected or Stopped.**
- 7. Panhandling Enables the Homeless and Must Be Stopped.**

*Developed by Dr. Robert G. Marbut Jr. Spring 2007*

## Many Communities Have Made Great Improvements

**Many communities have realized dramatic and real decreases in street-level homelessness (eg in parks, under bridges, in wooded areas, on beaches, in CBDs, etc.).**

## **While Other Communities Have Struggled - What Has Been Your Response?**

- 1- Do nothing because of NIMBY'ism**
- 2- Wait/hope for the Federal and/or State Government to solve YOUR problems**
- 3- Do not make political waves, instead make a bunch of small tactical decisions that do not yield to real improvements**
- 4- Study and meet, then meet and study . . . paralysis of analysis**
- 5- Pursue idealistic programs that sound great on paper, but are not financially affordable nor sustainable over the long term**

## While Other Communities Have Struggled - What Has Been Your Response?

- 1- Do nothing because of NIMBY'ism  
→ Never pull the trigger.
- 2- Wait/hope for the Federal and/or State Government to solve YOUR problems  
→ In *never-ever-land* wishing upon a star while waiting for Santa.
- 3- Do not make political waves, instead make a bunch of small tactical decisions that do not yield to real improvements  
→ Political correctness leads to wimpy inaction - never make the needed “Big” changes.
- 4- Study and meet, then meet and study . . . paralysis of analysis  
→ Waiting for a “silver bullet” to appear.
- 5- Pursue idealistic programs that sound great on paper, but are not financially affordable nor sustainable over the long term  
→ Wastes time.

## **There Are Five Strategic Keys to Success – Think “Systems Approach” by Peter Drucker**

- 1- In detail, understand your exact problems (eg scope, structure and scale).**
- 2- Address the real root causes/triggers of homelessness, not symptoms.**
- 3- To get big changes, you must make big changes.**
- 4- Improve/change your service delivery system.**
- 5- Change your community CULTURE from “enabling” to “engaging.”**



## Key 1-

### In Detail, Understand Your Exact Problems

- a- Determining your problems should only take 3-5 months.
- b- Need to know scope (who), structure (dimension) and scale (numbers).
- c- Start by being homeless in order to understand your “flow” and “what is thought about agencies/services.”
- d- Use the HUD PITC (Point-in-Time-Count), but know this often undercounts.
- e- Meet with your agencies and look very closely at their data and census rosters.
- f- Do field studies/observations of street feedings and encampments.
- g- Do grid searches.
- h- If you have data gaps, do street-level surveys.
  - > **Metrics beyond PITC . . . HMIS is more accurate than PITC.**
  - > **Synthesize your data . . . analyze your data.**
  - > **Compare your findings to national results and best practices.**

## Key 2 - Address the Real Root Causes and Triggers of Homelessness, NOT Symptoms

- Focus on practical solutions.
- Do not spend time reinventing the wheel.
- Understanding the different triggers/causes **MUST** inform your recovery approach and decision-making.
- For men, the root cause triggers are **Substance Abuse, Mental Health and Job Retention.**
- For women, the same issues plus **domestic violence and financial hardship connected to divorce or loss of partner.**

## Key 3 -

### To Get Big Changes, You Must Make Big Changes

- ▶ This is so important . . . if you keep doing (more or less) the same things, you will get (more or less) the same results.
- ▶ If you want **BIG improvement** then you must make **BIG changes** in how you are interacting with the homeless community.

## **Key 4 -**

### **Improve/Change Your Service Delivery System**

**Think Peter Drucker . . . Need a Systems Approach:**

- a- Move from being “Agency-Centric” to being “System-Centric.”**
- b- Move from measuring “Out-Puts” to measuring “Out-Comes.”**
- c- Move from “Enabling” to “Engaging.”**

## **Key 5 - Change your Community Culture from “Enabling” to “Engaging”**

- **Need a formal awareness campaign.**
- **Changing culture is more productive than changing ordinances.**
- **Changing community culture will change how agencies are funded.**
- **Changing community culture will change what volunteers and agencies do.**

## Other Issues That Are Controversial

- ▶ **“Dramatically Reducing” vs. “Ending” Homelessness**
- ▶ **“Smart Love” vs. “Tough Love”**
- ▶ **Street-Feeding Programs**
- ▶ **Housing First**

## “Dramatically Reducing” vs. “Ending” Homelessness

- ▶ **President Bush 43 had the “10 Year Plan to End Homelessness”**
- ▶ **President Obama had his “5 Year Plan to End Homelessness”**
- ▶ **President Trump is not even talking about ending homelessness**
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- ▶ **We should **focus instead on realistic ways** to dramatically increase street graduation rates and reduce homelessness.**

## “Smart Love” vs. “Tough Love”

- ▶ **“Smart Love” is not “tough love” . . . merge the heart with the brain.**
- ▶ **You can do a lot with DIGNITY and RESPECT to reduce homelessness.**  
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- ▶ **The best thing you can do for the individual experiencing homelessness is to address the root causes of that individuals’ homelessness . . . do not give things out that placate the symptoms.**  
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- ▶ **If you work smartly with dignity and respect, you can increase “street graduations” . . . and thus reduce homelessness dramatically.**



## Street-Feeding Programs

- Food, clothing, cash and sun tan lotion do not address the root causes of homelessness.

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- More often than not, street-feeding programs enable homelessness.
- More often than not, street-feeding programs do not engage individuals into 24/7 programming.

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- The solution is to align and co-locate street-feeding programs with high quality 24/7 programs.
- Every quality program I know of in the USA serves 19-21 meals a week.

## Housing First

- Housing First is one of many tools in your tool-box.  
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- Scattered site Housing First programs are great for families with single moms.
- Concentrated site Housing First programs are great for combat veterans.  
‣ -----
- Housing First “jumps the line” over working-poor.
- Housing First does not address the root causes of homelessness.
- Housing First is VERY expensive, especially for communities with high rental and occupancy rates.
- Housing First does not work well in cities that have high “in-bound” rates of homeless individuals.

# Mendocino County

## **Observations, Findings and Recommendation of Strategic Action Steps**

In Order to Address the Issues of Homelessness,  
We Must **First** Have a  
**Common Understanding** of Our Challenge

## Need a Common Understanding of Our Challenge

**Currently, there is no agreement on the:**

- **Scope . . . who,**
- **Structure . . . dimension,**
- **Scale . . . the numbers.**

# Major Observations and Findings

## **The Positives and the Opportunities:**

- ▶ **Most stakeholders sincerely get along with each other.**
- ▶ **Many of the recommendations already have started to be implemented.**
- ▶ **There is a high potential of developing a consensus around most of the key issues.**
- ▶ **The number of year-round individuals experiencing “unsheltered” homelessness as defined by HUD is actually much lower than most stakeholders have been thinking.**
- ▶ **Because of travel logistics and far distances among many of the cities within Mendocino County, very few individuals experiencing HUD-defined homelessness move from one city to another.**

## **The Negatives and the Challenges:**

- ▶ **A Common Understanding of the Critical Challenges Does Not Exist.**
- ▶ **Decision Making Has Been Mostly “Tactical” in Nature, and Not “Strategic.”**
- ▶ **Decision Making and Operations Have Been “Agency-centric,” and Not “System-centric.”**
- ▶ **The Lack of Good Data Has Led to Decision Making Based on Myths and Anecdotes.**
- ▶ **Need to Focus More on the Root Triggers of Homelessness, Rather than the Symptoms.**



## The Negatives and the Challenges (continued):

- ▶ **There Is a Need for More Substance Abuse and Mental Health Treatment Slots/Beds.**
- ▶ **The Amount of Housing Placements is Low.**
- ▶ **Panhandling Has Become a Big Issue Around the Walmart and Safeway in Ukiah.**
- ▶ **Encampments Are Dangerous.**
- ▶ **Children Are Mixed With Adults.**

# Population Counts

## HUD-defined Homelessness

- ▶ **Ukiah . . .**
  - Inside City Limits . . . 172-188**
  - Perimeter . . . 26-37**
  
- ▶ **Fort Bragg . . .**
  - Inside City Limits . . . 81**
  - Perimeter . . . 15-17**
  
- ▶ **Willits . . .**
  - Inside City Limits . . . 3-6**
  - Perimeter . . . 0**

# Survey Data Analysis

## Survey Data Analysis Takeaways

**Basic Demographic Traits Are Similar to Peer Communities, Except:**

- 1- There Are Three HUD-defined Cohorts, and One Not,**
- 2- Large “Bubble” - Chronic Homelessness for 1-3 Years,**
- 3- Little Movement Between Cities and Among Activities,**
- 4- High Levels of Unemployment and Underemployment.**

## The Most Important Take-a-way From This Study

**There Are 3+1 Cohorts  
&  
Each Cohort Must Be Treated Uniquely**

## There Are 3+1 Distinct Cohorts:

### **3 HUD-defined Cohorts Experiencing Homelessness:**

- + 39% Very Homegrown Individuals**
  - + 23% Somewhat Homegrown Individuals**
  - + 38% Out-of-Town Individuals**
- = 100%**
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### **1 Cohort Does NOT Meet HUD-definition**

- + *“North-South Travelers”***

## These 4 Distinct Cohorts Must Be Treated Differently

- 1- Both the service agencies and the general public need to realize that it is critical to **treat** these 4 distinct cohorts **differently** based on behavior and clinical needs.
- 2- It is very important to realize that **treating** all four **cohorts the same creates many very negative outcomes** for both the individuals and for the community-at-large.



## Very Homegrown & Somewhat Homegrown Cohorts Experiencing Homelessness

- Need to **proactively focus** on helping the 2 **homegrown cohorts** who are experiencing homelessness.
- It is critically important to **focus** on the individuals who have been experiencing homelessness for **1-3 year range**.

## Out-of-Town Cohort Experiencing Homelessness

- A little over 1/3 of the individuals moved into Mendocino County after the on-set of homelessness.
- More often than not came here because of “services” being provided.
- Lower service priority.
- **Encouraged to receive services in their hometowns (better chance of recovery).**

## Most “North-South Travelers” Are NOT Experiencing HUD-definition of Homelessness

- **Illogical to give limited resources to individuals who are not actually experiencing HUD-defined homelessness.**
- **Enabling handouts exacerbate the negative environmental and economic impacts.**
- **Enabling handouts raise the risks of serious fire incidents.**
- **The criminal elements within this cohort should not be supported and enabled.**

## The 2<sup>nd</sup> Most Important Take-a-way From This Study

**There Is a Very Large “Bubble” of Individuals That  
Have Been Experiencing Chronic Homelessness  
for 1-3 Years**

## There Is a Strikingly High Number of Individuals Experiencing Homelessness Within the 1-3 Year Range

**This high number of individuals in the 1-3 year range is a challenge because the rate of successful recovery starts dropping after 1 year, and then precipitously drops after 2 to 3 years.**

### The two most plausible explanations:

- 1- Three different public adult mental health providers in four years,**
- 2- The closure of the year-round Buddy Eller Center 4 years ago in 2014.**

## Report Recommendations

**28 Recommendations within 5 Areas**

## **Governance and County-wide Strategy Recommendations**

**1- Need to Develop a Common Understanding of the Scope, Scale and Structure of the Problem, and Need to Use Common Nomenclature in Order to Improve Decision Making.**

**2 - Gain “Buy-in and Agreement” for One Overarching Strategic Action Plan with Specific Action Steps by Most of the Community and Key Stakeholders.**

**3 - Move from Tactical One-off Decision Making to Strategic Decision Making Based on Data.**

**4 - Move from Agency-Centric to System-Centric Decision Making (Need More Collaboration and Less Silos).**

## **Governance and County-wide Strategy Recommendations (Continued)**

**5 - Reduce Duplication of Services While Increasing Agency Specialization.**

**6 - Need to Operate at Maximum Capacity by Increasing Utilization of the Overall System.**

**7 - Need to Fully Build-out and Then Robustly Utilize HMIS.**

**8 - Encourage All Organizations and the General Public to Engage, Rather Than Enable Individuals Experiencing Homelessness.**

**9 - Improve Strategic Coordination Between the County and Cities (Need More Collaboration and Less Silos).**



## Clinical Recommendations

**10 - The Different Cohorts Need To Be Treated Differently Based on Behavior.**

**11 - Establish System-wide Service Eligibility and Triage Criterion (with Emergency Protocols).**

**12 - Whenever Possible, Separate Children from Chronic Adults.**

**13 - Create a County-wide Virtual Case Management System.**

**14 - Create Street-Level Outreach Team Capacities, Especially in Ukiah.**

**15 - Create/Source Meaningful Mental Health and Substance Abuse Rehabilitation Slots.**

**16 - Need Only One Day-Center in Ukiah.**

## Sheltering and Transitional Housing Recommendations

**17 - Must Have a Winter Shelter in Ukiah, However it Is Inconclusive If an Extreme Weather Shelter Is Needed in Fort Bragg.**

**18 - Need to Strategically Optimize Placement at Willow Terrace When it Opens.**

**19 - Source New Housing Opportunities of All Types Whenever Possible.**

## Public Space Issues

**20 - Have a Zero Tolerance Approach to Encampments.**

**21 - Address the Issue of Stolen Shopping Carts.**

**22 - Engage Van-campers, and Impound Vehicles When Necessary.**

**23 - Engage Car-campers.**

## Longer Term Recommendations

**24 - After the Willow Terrace Opens, After Duplication is Reduced, and After Utilization is Increased, then Re-look at the Overall System Volume Needs.**

**25 - Need to Conduct Deeper Data Dives Into the Issues of Employment, Out-of-towners and High Levels of Chronicness.**

**26 - Replicate the Data Analyses Within This Study in the Remainder of the County.**

**27 - Create and Implement a Public Relations Campaign in Order to Engage the General Public as a Proactive Partner with this Effort.**

**28 - Set Up a Feed Back Loop to Guide Ongoing Improvements . . .  
Set Up a Checkup Plan.**

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# Q&A