



**WORKING GROUP:** PREVENT HOMELESSNESS

**INITIATIVE: OUTREACH & ENGAGEMENT**

Establish a system and method of reaching and engaging homeless people to accept appropriate permanent housing and services to end their homelessness and stabilize their lives.

**The Situation**

Many homeless individuals are unable or unwilling to participate in services that can help them. Often people are reluctant to accept services because of previous negative experiences, mental illness, or fear of law enforcement. Outreach and engagement is a critical element of getting unhoused people to accept and benefit from existing services.

**Progress to Date**

Currently there are several efforts that seek to outreach and connect with the homeless population. The City of San Jose has sponsored three “Project Homeless Connect” events, in partnership with the County of Santa Clara and the Collaborative on Affordable Housing and Homeless Issues. Provided on one day at one location, Homeless Connect has provided medical and mental health services, housing information, financial assistance, personal hygiene, and veterans services. More than 900 homeless people have been assisted at these events.

Santa Clara County in collaboration with the City of San Jose and the other cities has conducted two biennial homeless counts and surveys since 2004. These comprehensive counts and surveys help to understand the extent and conditions of homelessness in order to better serve the population.

A countywide information and referral system is in place consisting of a toll free shelter bed hotline that provides information about shelters in the nine Bay Area counties. The Community Voicemail system provides voicemail capability directly to the homeless enabling them to attain housing and job related information. Two Santa Clara County websites have been created and are widely used – [www.helpscc.org](http://www.helpscc.org) for access to health and human services and [www.housingscc.org](http://www.housingscc.org) for access to affordable housing.



**WORKING GROUP:** PREVENT HOMELESSNESS

**INITIATIVE: OUTREACH & ENGAGEMENT**

**Proposed Strategies**

1. Train multidisciplinary outreach teams according to the principles of Assertive Community Treatment (ACT) to conduct outreach efforts to the homeless community and develop trusting relationships with homeless individuals and service providers.
2. Provide the outreach teams with wireless communications capability to facilitate in-field intakes, assessments, referrals, and benefit eligibility.
3. Continue to support Project Homeless Connect and seek to improve and expand the effort to reach additional homeless people. Ensure that services are provided, not just information, so that there is a direct impact on the homeless and that the efforts result in a reduction in homelessness.
4. Enhance collaboration between outreach workers and facility staffs to make referrals to housing and supportive services more effective.
5. Establish one-stop centers in key locations where the homeless and those at risk of becoming homeless can access existing resources and information.
6. Expand collaborative efforts, for example San Jose's Work2Future and Housing Services Partnership, to maximize resources from multiple organizations.