

## HOMELESSNESS IN SAN FRANCISCO

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### GLOSSARY

ADA - Americans with Disabilities Act  
CAAP - County Adult Assistance Program  
CGJ - Civil Grand Jury  
DCYF - Department of Children, Youth, and their Families  
DHS - Department of Human Services  
DPH - Department of Public Health  
DOSW - Department on the Status of Women  
HMIS - Homeless management information system  
HUD - U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development  
Local Board - Local Homeless Coordinating Board  
MAP - Mobile Assistance Patrol  
MOCD - Mayor's Office of Community Development  
MOH - Mayor's Office of Housing  
MOOH - Mayor's Office on Homelessness  
SFRA - San Francisco Redevelopment Agency  
SRO - Single Room Occupancy

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### Table Of Contents

[Glossary](#)  
[General Overview](#)  
[Background](#)  
[Investigative Process](#)  
[Findings And Recommendations](#)  
[Attachments](#)

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## HOMELESSNESS IN SAN FRANCISCO

The numbers in parentheses ( ) indicate the item number of the sources listed in Attachment A.

### GENERAL OVERVIEW

The issue of homelessness is one that intersects the lives of all the people of San Francisco. Over the past 20 years, the situation has worsened, affecting not only the homeless - individuals, families and children - but also residents, neighborhoods, businesses, and the tourism industry. It is the view of the Civil Grand Jury (CGJ) that homelessness is the pre-eminent social issue facing San Francisco.

In San Francisco homelessness is a major, ongoing, highly politicized problem. On average, over 100 people die each year on the streets (1) while over 9,000 are without permanent homes. (See Attachment C) The quality of life for both San Franciscans and visitors is significantly diminished, and expenditures for preventing homelessness and caring for the homeless exceed \$100 million per year (2).

According to the 2001-2006 Continuum of Care (3), a five-year strategic plan for homeless services adopted by the Board of Supervisors, the causes of homelessness include poverty; lack of housing, living-wage jobs, vocational skills, and health care; and the disruptions resulting from substance abuse, severe mental illness, and domestic violence. In addition, CGJ has found that other contributions to the cycle of homelessness in San Francisco include historical policy decisions on the state and federal level, such as the closure of state mental health hospitals and the drastic reduction of federal funding for public and subsidized housing.

While state and federal policies have a major impact and state and federal funding and participation is essential, the structure and programs for dealing with homelessness are essentially local. CGJ has focused on these local efforts, with specific attention to coordination and management. After a seven-month investigation, CGJ has found that the City's efforts to deal with homelessness have been lacking in leadership, effective management, and coordination.

The Civil Grand Jury herein presents recommendations for improving these areas under four categories:

- ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE AND LEADERSHIP - Establish a Commission on Homelessness to incorporate the functions of the Mayor's Office of Homelessness (MOOH), oversee the Local Homeless Coordinating Board (Local Board), ensure the implementation of the City's strategic plans for dealing with homelessness (Continuum of Care), and monitor the efficiency and effectiveness of homeless programs.
- INFORMATION SYSTEMS - Develop an integrated information system for tracking the delivery of homeless-related social services.
- SHELTERS - Improve the shelter system by creating an integrated central data base of available beds, establishing a "bill of rights" for shelter participants, and setting standards of care within the system.
- PUBLIC EDUCATION - Initiate a major public campaign to educate the public about homelessness, its root causes, how the public can participate, and the status of the City's efforts.

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## GENERAL BACKGROUND

Definition of Homelessness: The Local Board has adopted this definition: "The term `homeless' includes those individuals or families who lack a fixed, regular and adequate nighttime residence and those who have a primary nighttime residence in one or more of the following categories: a shelter, the street, a vehicle, a make-shift structure, doubled-up, or transitional housing" (3).

Number of Homeless: In October 2001, MOOH conducted its annual homeless count (4). As of April 2002, the Local Board had revised this number, adopting an unofficial figure of 9,544, distributed as follows:

- Street Count = 3,156
- Shelters/Transitional = 2,451
- Residential Treatment = 739
- Jail = 959

- DPH beds = 1,160
- SRO's = 1,079
- TOTAL = 9,544 (See Attachment C)

As of May 2002, the Local Board is working on a further modification of these figures that indicates a total over 10,000. Final figures are due in June 2002.

Current Plan: In 2001, the Board of Supervisors adopted the 2001-2006 Continuum of Care, a five-year strategic plan for homeless services that maps San Francisco's strategies for ending homelessness (3).

Cost: In December 2001, the Office of the Budget Analyst prepared a report estimating that the City spent, for the fiscal year 2001, a total of \$104,288,056 on homeless services, including capital improvement projects, administrative costs, and the County Adult Assistance Program (CAAP). Of this amount \$72,982,026 was for direct services. These costs are spread across seven City departments: Department of Public Health; Department of Human Services; Mayor's Office Community Development; Department on the Status of Women; Department of Children, Youth and their Families; Mayor's Office on Housing; and the San Francisco Redevelopment Agency (2).

City Shelters: The City operates 10 shelters that provide 2081 emergency beds for individuals and 175 for families (3).

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## INVESTIGATIVE PROCESS

CGJ interviewed individuals and staff from -

Board of Supervisors  
 Board of Supervisors Budget Analyst  
 City Attorney's Office  
 Coalition on Homelessness  
 Department of Children, Youth and their Families  
 Department of Human Services  
 Department of Public Health  
 District Attorney  
 Homeless and formerly homeless individuals  
 Local Homeless Coordinating Board  
 Mayor's Office of Community Development  
 Mayor's Office on Disability  
 Mayor's Office on Homelessness  
 Multi-Service Center South Shelter  
 Next Door Shelter  
 Nonprofit service providers  
 Office of the Controller  
 Police Department  
 San Francisco Chamber of Commerce  
 San Francisco General Hospital  
 San Francisco Hotel Council  
 Union Square Association  
 Union Square Business Improvement District

In addition to its extensive interviews and research, members of CGJ attended Local Board meetings, visited shelters, reviewed the 2001-2006 Continuum of Care, and attended the March 7, 2002, Homeless Summit.

## ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE AND LEADERSHIP

The Current Administration

The Mayor's Office on Homelessness

The Local Board

The Current Administration - Background

Homeless policy in San Francisco has varied greatly from one mayoral administration to the next. The need for such a policy was first recognized during the Feinstein administration in the 1980s. Approaches have ranged from the creation of the Multi-Service Centers under the Agnos administration to the Matrix program under that of Frank Jordan. These policies have formed the overall framework for how the City responds to the challenging and often overwhelming issue of homelessness.

Under the current administration, several different City departments, with the Department of Public Health (DPH) and Department of Human Services (DHS) as the two primary agencies, administer homeless programs in San Francisco. The majority of homeless services are delivered by non-profit organizations, which receive contracts from these two departments. The development, planning, and coordination for homeless services and policy are left to the departments themselves, in conjunction with the Mayor's Office on Homelessness (MOOH) and the Local Board.

The Mayor's Office on Homelessness - Background

Every Mayor since Dianne Feinstein has maintained an office with the responsibility for advising the Mayor on homeless issues and for coordinating departmental activities to reduce homelessness. Currently, this office's activities are aimed at the City establishing an integrated system of health care, housing, employment, and support services for those who are homeless and who are at risk of becoming homeless. This office reports to the Mayor.

The Local Board - Background

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's (HUD) initiative of April 1994 consolidated grants of federal homeless funds and required that cities and counties establish Local Homeless Coordinating Boards (Local Boards) to oversee homeless planning. The HUD initiative did not define the role of Local Boards nor provide guidance on how to fulfill this mandate.

The Board of Supervisors' resolution of August 1997 stated that the Local Board is to function as a citywide advisory body to City departments, commissions, and the Board of Supervisors. The authorizing resolution required that the Local Board ensure compliance with the Continuum of Care. The Board is mandated to include representatives from the homeless, formerly homeless, community, advocacy organizations, service-provider agencies, business and corporate sectors, the foundation community, the Mayor's Homeless Coordinator, and representatives of City departments. The members of the Local Board were sworn in during January 1998. There are 34 members on the Local Board.

The purpose of the Local Board is to ensure a unified homeless strategy that is supported by the Mayor, the Board of Supervisors, City departments, nonprofit agencies, homeless and formerly homeless people, and the community at large. The Local Board is also to advise the Mayor and Board of Supervisors on annual homeless funding priorities and on allocations for the use of federal and state homeless block-grant funds.

The Continuum of Care calls for the Local Board to play a central role in coordinating communication and information - among agencies, existing housing and service provider organizations, and advocacy coalitions - to reduce duplication of effort and to strengthen the effectiveness of citywide planning. To date, the priority of the Local Board has been to coordinate the preparation of an application for funding, known as McKinney funding, from HUD. The Local Board proposed the following priorities for funding under that grant:

- permanent housing for homeless persons with disabilities
- appropriate treatment for homeless persons with substance-abuse and/or mental-health problems
- employment services for homeless persons (including job training and job-retention services).

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## FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### The Current Administration - Findings

CGJ, throughout this investigation, has found that the current administration has failed to provide significant public leadership in regard to the problem of homelessness. This failure has left the residents of San Francisco frustrated, disengaged from the process, and apprehensive about the issue. Specifically, the current administration has not indicated a clear policy on how the City will address homelessness; instead it has taken a noticeably laissez-faire approach. As a result, the development of policy has been left to the individual departments, leading to problems of coordination, management, and political support. In addition, CGJ has found that, under the current administration, departments and the Local Board have been insufficiently supported in the development and implementation of the Continuum of Care.

### Mayor's Office on Homelessness - Findings

The Mayor's Office on Homelessness has four employees: one full-time director and three full-time employees. Annual salaries and mandatory fringe benefits amount to \$403,584, and are funded through DHS and MOCD. The Director of MOOH serves at the pleasure of the Mayor and has no independent authority over departments or budgetary allocations (2).

The mission of MOOH involves a range of tasks and responsibilities, including coordinating emergency services, managing the Mayor's Homeless Fund, and providing a liaison to the Local Board. MOOH does not provide any direct homeless services.

MOOH performs an annual homeless count, the first of which occurred on April 27, 2000. CGJ has found this count lacking in consistent, scientific methodology.

MOOH has no direct accountability to the Board of Supervisors, the Local Board or City departments for its actions, directives, or decisions. CGJ has found this office to be ineffectual and inconsistent in its relations with other City departments and the Local Board. As a result, CGJ has strong concerns regarding the use of City resources for this office.

#### The Local Board - Findings

The Local Board is comprised of a broad range of committed, sincere, and experienced people, including members of City departments, advocates, service providers, homeless, and formerly homeless individuals.

Though the Local Board develops an annual work plan and fiscal budget to coincide with the City budget-planning process, it has not produced an overall fiscal projection for the entire five-year plan.

The Local Board lacks staffing, training, and funding to fulfill its entire mandate. As a result, it does not have the capability or the necessary skills to provide fiscal and legislative analyses. In addition, there is no accountability within the current organizational structure for the recommendations of the Local Board, or for its relation to the development of policy and legislation by the Board of Supervisors.

The Local Board lacks representation from state or federal officials. Without representation from these key sectors, the Local Board is not able to effectively establish and analyze homeless policy, or successfully advocate at a state and federal level.

The Local Board has difficulty in maintaining consistent attendance for its meetings, often resulting in an inability to take action due to a lack of a quorum of its members. CGJ found that the Local Board has failed to encourage consistent participation and membership from the business community. In addition, CGJ believes that the Local Board has not done enough to encourage the participation of homeless, formerly homeless, and extremely low-income people on the Local Board. CGJ believes that involvement from both of these sectors is crucial for a full, representative public process.

The Civil Grand Jury concurs with the Department of Public Health, the Department of Human Services, and the Mayor's Office on Homelessness that a new Department of Homelessness would not improve homeless services. (Attachment B) However, the Civil Grand Jury has consistently found a lack of accountability in decision-making, leadership, and management. These findings have led the Civil Grand Jury to recommend changing the organizational structure to create a visible, public, and accountable process that is comparable to the scale of homelessness.

The Civil Grand Jury believes that the current structure must change.

#### Recommendation 1a

The Board of Supervisors should initiate a Charter Amendment to create a department-level, seven-member Commission on Homelessness. The Commission would be charged, but not limited, to do the following:

- Direct and oversee the implementation and monitoring of the Continuum of Care.

- Provide oversight and accountability for the Local Board and the Mayor's Office on Homelessness.
- Assume the responsibilities and duties of the current Mayor's Office on Homelessness. In addition, the Commission would be responsible for the hiring of a director of this new Office on Homelessness and of monitoring the activities of that Office. The Office on Homelessness would continue the current responsibilities of MOOH, but with a greater focus on implementing the Continuum of Care, and would provide staffing to the Local Board and the Commission.
- Establish a clear, accountable, and public decision-making process for residents, the members of the Local Board, City departments, service providers, and the City and County of San Francisco.
- Provide fiscal accountability by reviewing any General Fund expenditures earmarked for homeless programs. This would be mandated and the DPH, DHS, and all applicable departments that fund homeless programs or services would be required to submit information to the Commission for its review.

The Commission on Homelessness would include other aspects:

- The Local Board would act as the representative body of this Commission and would continue with its current mandate, including the management of the federal McKinney funding. Through its debate and valuable public process, the Local Board would make recommendations to the Commission for final action.
- Appointments to this Commission would be split between the Board of Supervisors and the Mayor, with at least one member being homeless or formerly homeless.
- The Commission would not take over the administration of any homeless programs, which would remain with the current departments.
- The Commission would have sufficient staff to provide it with the capability to conduct fiscal and policy analyses of programs and legislation.

#### Recommendation 1b

Because of the long-term nature of solving homelessness, the Mayor and the Board of Supervisors should consider the establishment of a dedicated source of funding for homeless services and for low-income, affordable housing. This funding stream could be modeled on 1998's Proposition E which established baseline funding for MUNI, or on the hotel tax which provides funding for the arts.

Required Responses --

- Board of Supervisors - 90 days
- Local Homeless Coordinating Board - 60 days
- Mayor's Office on Homelessness - 60 days
- Office of the Mayor - 60 days

#### Recommendation 2a

The Mayor and the Board of Supervisors should fund the Local Board to a level that would allow it to effectively fulfill its mandate. This would include mandatory training for members, the hiring of full-time dedicated staff, and the increasing of its capacity to conduct fiscal and policy analysis.

#### Recommendation 2b

The Local Board should prepare an annual report on the state of homelessness in the City, including, but not be limited to:

- identifying gaps in services provided by the City
- providing information on the current needs of the homeless population
- providing documentation on the services that are provided.

#### Recommendation 2c

The Local Board, in coordination with other City departments, should take responsibility for the performance and execution of a broad-based census, using consistent, scientific methodology, of the homeless population in San Francisco.

#### Recommendation 2d

The Local Board should develop a common methodology of budgetary reporting, with regard to homeless services, from all applicable City departments. The Local Board should develop a five-year fiscal projection for the Continuum of Care.

#### Recommendation 2e

Consistent with the Continuum of Care, the City should pay all members of the Local Board who earn less than \$25,000 per year a living-wage stipend for their time on the Board. CGJ believes that this is necessary to facilitate and to encourage the participation of people who are homeless, formerly homeless, and low-income (3).

#### Recommendation 2f

The Local Board should identify all information, data, and resources needed to fulfill its entire mandate. Responsibility should be specifically assigned to City departments for the timely gathering and submission of this information.

#### Recommendation 2g

The Local Board should have seats for involved state and federal officials. Additional seats could include a representative from HUD.

#### Recommendation 2h

Appointments to the Local Board should be distributed between the Mayor and the Board of Supervisors.

#### Required Responses

- Board of Supervisors - 90 days
- Local Homeless Coordinating Board - 60 days
- Mayor's Office on Homelessness - 60 days
- Office of the Mayor - 60 days

## INFORMATION SYSTEMS

### Background

At present, the City has no method of tracking the delivery of homeless-related social services. Instituting a tracking system has been highly debated in San Francisco, with serious concerns over privacy issues, civil rights, and cost of implementation. Several cities have instituted some version of a comprehensive information system in an effort to provide more integrated services, collect data, and to account for publicly allocated

resources. By 2004, the City needs to comply with a HUD requirement that all cities implement a homeless management information system (HMIS).

#### Findings - Information Systems

At present, there is no method of assessing how many individuals access homeless services in the City. As a result, the City cannot measure the number of people accessing various programs or determine other relevant and needed data. This leads to extensive duplicate counting of homeless individuals, and makes it difficult to provide effective and integrated services or to develop long-range planning and assessment.

#### Recommendation 3

The City should develop an integrated informational system that can track participants and provide the homeless population with improved and focused services from the City and from service providers. CGJ recognizes that information sharing of this type is controversial. It is the view of the CGJ that serious consideration should be given to a system similar to DPH's "Reggie" system. That extensive system has the capability of safeguarding extremely sensitive, private information; participation in the program is voluntary. Such a system would have several goals:

- Provide a higher level of integrated service for homeless individuals, children, and families.
- Provide a way of assessing what needs are being addressed and where more resources are needed.
- Reduce duplication of services.
- Provide consistent, accurate, and accessible information on homeless services.
- Ensure compliance with HUD's required implementation of an HMIS.

#### Required Responses

- Department of Public Health - 60 days
- Local Homeless Coordinating Board - 60 days
- Mayor's Office on Homelessness - 60 days

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## SHELTER SYSTEM

### Background

The shelter system was set up to address needs of the homeless who were street bound or using emergency-care facilities as shelters. The City's ten shelters provide 2081 beds for individuals and 175 for families. The cost to operate these shelters for the fiscal year 2001-02 is \$6,455,957 (2).

The three largest shelters offer available beds through a lottery system. A shelter stay can range from 1 day to 18 months. Depending on the shelter, individuals either have access to a bed (with a small storage area for personal belongings), cot, or a mat on the floor. Most shelters have a check-in and check-out time. The time of arrival can determine if an individual receives a bed for the night. Once a shelter is closed for the evening, there are no in-and-out privileges.

### Shelter System - Findings

There is no integrated referral database system to ascertain available shelter beds on an immediate, up-to-date basis. Availability is checked by phone with transportation between shelters provided by the Mobile Assistance Patrol (MAP) vans.

City shelters do not have established minimum client-staff ratios, and CGJ found differences in client-staff ratios from shelter to shelter. In addition, there are varying levels of training amongst entry-level staff.

Living conditions at City shelters vary greatly from location to location; CGJ found vastly differing standards of care within the shelter system.

CGJ found that there is no system wide "Bill of Rights" for shelter participants. In addition, the rules of participation for shelter clients vary greatly from location to location.

CGJ found that the provision of reasonable ADA programmatic access is inconsistent throughout the shelter system. CGJ also found that ADA architectural access compliance is inconsistent and requires review.

CGJ has found that, because of current operating policies and other factors, on any given night there may be a number of empty, unused beds within the shelter system.

#### Recommendation 4a

The City and the Local Board should convene involved departments, homeless advocates, and service providers in order to develop an integrated, central database of available beds. A city-wide referral system would improve access to the location of available beds on any given night.

#### Recommendation 4b

The Local Board and City departments should develop minimum standards of operation for all homeless shelters.

#### Recommendation 4c

The Local Board and City departments should develop a standard "Bill of Rights" for all shelter participants, inform participants of these rights, and create standard system-wide operating policies.

#### Recommendation 4d

The Local Board and City departments should develop minimum standards of training for all shelter staff and establish minimum client-staff ratios throughout the entire shelter system.

#### Recommendation 4e

The Local Board and City departments should work with the Mayor's Office on Disability to ensure that all shelters, including the expanded winter shelters, are architecturally ADA compliant in addition to ensuring reasonable programmatic access at each site (5). In addition, CGJ recommends that the Office of Contract Administration work with the MOD to ensure that all homeless service contracts include these provisions.

#### Recommendation 4f

CGJ concurs with the Continuum of Care and strongly recommends that the Local Board and City departments convene a system-wide shelter monitoring committee to provide oversight for shelter conditions and standards of care (3).

Required Responses --

- Department of Human Services - 60 days
- Department of Public Health - 60 days
- Local Homeless Coordinating Board - 60 days
- Mayor's Office on Disability - 60 days
- Mayor's Office on Homelessness - 60 days
- Office of Contract Administration - 60 days

## PUBLIC EDUCATION

### Background

In regard to highly charged issues, such as homelessness, public education often can be a keystone for engaging the greater population and encouraging public participation. Public education campaigns on HIV/AIDS prevention, drunken driving/alcohol abuse, and anti-smoking are examples of the positive effects that public education campaigns can have in combating misperceptions and stereotypes, while increasing knowledge and understanding.

### Findings - Public Education

The current Administration, the Board of Supervisors, and City departments have provided minimal public education regarding the complexities of homelessness, its root causes and the status of the City's efforts. In addition, the City has not responded consistently to the numerous negative articles and interviews in the media.

There is no coordination among departments as to how to handle this vital aspect of the homeless problem. CGJ has found that, despite the City's broad and expansive efforts to address homelessness, the general public has little or no knowledge about the causes of homelessness or the services the City now provides.

### Recommendation 5

The Mayor, Local Board, Board of Supervisors, advocates, service providers, and major City departments need to initiate a major public education effort about homelessness and the reality of poverty in San Francisco. This campaign should cover but not be limited to the following areas:

- the historical and root causes of poverty and homelessness
- the history and status of the City's past and current efforts in combating homelessness
- the involvement of the public in developing solutions.

Required Responses --

- Board of Supervisors - 90 days
- Department of Human Services - 60 days
- Department of Public Health - 60 days
- Local Homeless Coordinating Board - 60 days
- Mayor's Office on Homelessness - 60 days

- Office of the Mayor - 60 days

#### Summary of Required Responses

- Board of Supervisors - Recommendations 1a, 1b, 2a, 2h, and 5
- Department of Public Health - Recommendations 1a, 3, 4b, 4c, 4d, 4e, 4f, and 5
- Department of Human Services - Recommendations 1a, 4b, 4c, 4d, 4e, 4f, and 5
- Office of the Mayor - Recommendations 1a, 1b, 2a, 2h, and 5
- Local Homeless Coordinating Board - Recommendations 1a, 2a, 2b, 2c, 2d, 2e, 2f, 2g, 2h, 3, 4a, 4b, 4c, 4d, 4e, 4f, and 5
- Mayor's Office on Disability - 4e
- Mayor's Office on Homelessness - 1a, 2a, 3, 4a, 4b, 4c, 4d, and 4f
- Office of Contract Administration - 4e

#### ATTACHMENT A - SOURCES

1 Homeless Deaths Identified from Medical Examiner Records  
December 1997-November 1998  
<http://www.dph.sf.ca.us/Reports/Homeless/RptHomeless98.pdf>

December 1996-November 1997  
<http://www.dph.sf.ca.us/Reports/Homeless/RptHomeless97.pdf>

2 Homeless Survey 2001-2002, Budget Analyst  
[http://sfgov.org/budanalyst/homeless/homeless\\_survey2001-02.htm](http://sfgov.org/budanalyst/homeless/homeless_survey2001-02.htm)

3 Continuum of Care: A Five-Year Strategic Plan for Homeless Services 2001-2006  
<http://sfgov.org/lhcb/reports/coc032301.htm>

4 Mayor's Office on Homelessness - Homeless Count Report  
<http://sfgov.org/homeless/count.htm>

5 Mayor's Office on Disability pamphlet  
Americans with Disabilities Act - An Overview of Programmatic Access  
Requirements for City Contractors

#### OTHER INFORMATIONAL INTERNET LINKS

Controller's Office: Performance Audit of Homeless Services (May 2002)  
<http://sfgov.org/controller/Audits/hs.pdf>

Letter from Budget Analyst to Local Board  
<http://sfgov.org/budanalyst/letterlhcb/index.htm>

Local Homeless Coordinating Board  
<http://sfgov.org/lhcb/>

Mayor's Office on Homelessness  
<http://sfgov.org/homeless/>