

5Cities Homeless Coalition



**P.O. Box 558
Grover Beach, CA 93483
(805) 621-4173**

“A Hand to Rejoin the Community”

September 9, 2010

Presiding Judge Charles S. Crandall
Superior Court of California
1050 Monterey Street
San Luis Obispo, Ca 93408

Subject: 2009 – 2010 San Luis Obispo Grand Jury

Homelessness in San Luis Obispo County: Are We Solving the Problem?

From: The Five Cities Homeless Coalition (5CHC)

The Five Cities Homeless Coalition has carefully reviewed the Findings and Recommendations of the Grand Jury and submits the following response.

Finding 6 – As presently contemplated, the vision for the day center does not include overnight sleeping accommodations.

Response – The 5CHC is undertaking a series of positive actions that address this concern:

1. The day center will provide an emergency overnight shelter during inclement weather and other emergencies.
2. 5CHC is working with South County Faith Communities to develop a workable plan for implementation of overnight shelters at Faith Community facilities similar to the overflow shelter plan at Maxine Lewis. This plan may be able to be implemented prior to start-up of the Day Center

3. The Day Center has commitments from housing service providers to participate in offering services at the Day Center from being on site or through regularly scheduled biweekly or monthly meetings.
4. The 5CHC is participating in the current Homeless Services Oversight Council, HSOC, study to provide overnight parking, a safe parking zone, for those homeless in vehicles and RVs. If approved by the County and local jurisdictions, 5CHC will offer this service at the Day Center.
5. The Day Center will have a computer center for job searching and housing and will have trained staff to assist in searching for housing.
6. 5CHC has a phase 2 plan that provides for an overnight shelter when the Day Center is operational and the required capital and operating funds can be secured.

Finding 10 – Some homeless persons who are afflicted with drug and alcohol problems or mentally ill are not well served.

Response – The 5CHC agrees with this observation as to the current situation.

The 5CHC is undertaking a series of positive actions that address this concern at the Day Center:

1. The Community Health Center will offer Primary Care at the Day Center which will include behavioral mental health services for the homeless.
2. County Drug and Alcohol Services is planning to offer group therapy sessions at the Day Center on a scheduled basis and from those services, Drug and Alcohol can make referrals to Good Samaritan in Santa Maria, CA for more intensive services. They also plan to offer education lectures on services and approaches to treatment.
3. Mental Health will train the client information intake staff, triage approach, at the Day Center, and will be on call to do the assessment of those

needing their services at the Day Center. Mental Health will also work with staff, volunteers and interested people receiving services to do outreach to the homeless and underserved on the services that are available and the welcoming environment at the Day Center. Mental Health plans to offer lectures on mental health to all staff and service providers at the Day Center.

Recommendation 3 – Full Time County Homeless Services Coordinator

Response – Two members of the 5CHC Board are members of HSOC and the Finance and Services Subcommittees. The HSOC member's observations to date are that there is developing a series of activities directed at coordination and efficiency in services in the county. For example the services subcommittee is working to establish uniformity in information intake and assessment of clients among non-profit and county service providers for the Homeless Management Information System. The HSOC Executive Director is actively involved and we recommend that the current organizational approach with the HSOC Executive Director be continued.

Recommendation 4 – The Homeless Services Coordinator should monitor funds and offer guidance to all agencies and groups throughout the county.

Response – The HSOC Executive Director is actively involved with the Finance and Services subcommittees and carrying out the functions recommended for a full time coordinator. We recommend that the current organizational approach with the HSOC Executive Director be continued.

Recommendation 6 – County, south county cities and non- profits should pursue joint efforts to build a facility for both a Day Center and night shelter.

Response – The 5CHC is working diligently with the county, the cities, non profits and the SLO County Community Foundation to make the Day Center happen in a timely manner and to provide an opportunity for an overnight shelter. 5CHC has four members on the Foundation Task Team to select an agency to carry forward the homeless services program envisioned in the 1.5 million dollar

Klaproad initiative. For the reasons set forth above under Findings 6, we believe that the current planned Day Center is viable with a high chance of success. The latter is the most important factor to consider in deciding on the best course of action/project plan to follow.

Recommendation 7 – 5CHC should work with local churches to establish temporary shelter.

Response – 5CHC is pursuing this course of action. See response to Finding 6 – Item 2

Recommendation 9 – Expand Echo Ideas and Methods to the south county.

Response – 5CHC is very familiar with the ECHO system as well as the training of ECHO volunteers and coordination of North County services by CAPSLO. One of the thrusts of the HSOC services sub- committee is to exchange best practices between service providers within the county as well as from model programs outside the county. 5CHC will use best practices from all relevant sources and integrate such into the ongoing operations as well as through changes that would lead to a more efficient delivery of services.

5CHC has had extensive discussions with potential service providers not only on services to be provided at the Day Center but on best practices, training, education and coordination between service providers. As set forth above, Drug and Alcohol and Mental Health plan to be part of a training and education programs at the Day Center. Other examples of training, education and cooperation are The Food Bank Coalition, nutrition programs, Arroyo Grande Community Hospital, health and wellness programs, the Women’s Shelter, training of intake staff and case managers on identifying possible victims of domestic violence and using caring non-threatening ways to suggest services and the Five Cities One Stop for job seekers who will offer workshops and train staff to support Day Center job seeking services. There will be coordination of services between both job seeking services with referrals between agencies depending on what is best for the client.

Respectfully submitted,

Patti Diefenderfer

President

Five Cities Homeless Coalition