

Responses to Grand Jury Findings and Recommendations

Finding #1 – “With public and private funding, CAPSLO (by far the largest non-profit serving the homeless) operates the Prado Day Center and the Maxine Lewis Shelter. CAPSLO provides case management for homeless clients in the north and south county and the City of San Luis Obispo.”

CAPSLO agrees with this finding, although CAPSLO is not alone in providing services at both the Prado Day Center and the Maxine Lewis Memorial Shelter. Significant volunteer support is provided by the People’s Kitchen, the Interfaith Coalition for the Homeless (ICH), and many other volunteer, community and faith-based organizations. This support enables CAPSLO to provide services to the hundreds of homeless individuals and families served

Finding #2 – “The Maxine Lewis Homeless Shelter is not large enough to provide beds in San Luis Obispo for all who seek them. The facility is in poor condition.”

CAPSLO agrees with this finding. The Shelter was originally designed, twenty years ago, to be a temporary solution while a more permanent facility was located. It is currently zoned for a maximum of 49 beds. On a regular basis clients are turned away for lack of bed space.

Finding #3 - “The ‘overflow’ shelter program that CAPSLO runs with the Interfaith Coalition provides beds for homeless women and families each night of the year at local churches and synagogues. This arrangement has logistical challenges but also provides the important advantage of engaging many volunteers to serve as chaperones, thus giving hundreds of citizens some awareness of what it means to have no home.”

CAPSLO agrees with this finding. The Interfaith Coalition for the Homeless (ICH) provides an additional 30 beds each night for women and families. Churches take turns each month providing these individuals with a safe place to sleep, homework assistance for the children, and caring volunteers to oversee evening activities.

For fiscal year 2009-10, ICH volunteers provided a total of 11,053 hours of support.

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

CAPSLO agrees with this finding. The coalition of county, cities, volunteer and non-profit organizations cannot meet all the needs given the limited resources available.

Finding #12 – “The county, with support from cities and private groups, wants to build a homeless service campus in San Luis Obispo.”

CAPSLO agrees with this finding, however clarification is needed. The County has agreed to provide land for a future homeless services campus. CAPSLO is working with community partners to determine the economic feasibility of building the campus. The County will not be the builder.

Recommendation #3 – “A full-time Homes Services Coordinator (a senior official who is more than the currently contemplated HSOC “Executive Director”) should oversee the implementation of the ten-year plan. This person should be supplied with a staff, including a grant writer.”

CAPSLO, along with a number of other organizations (including non-profit, county and city governments and hospitals) provided financial assistance to support the hiring of the current HSOC Executive Director for two years (part-time). This individual would work in close partnership with HSOC members in implementing the Ten-Year Plan. As this position was only recently hired it is our belief that it is too soon to contemplate adding additional staff and/or time. The HSOC Executive Committee will be evaluating the Director’s contract after one year, and will make any appropriate recommendations to the HSOC Committee at that time.

Recommendation #4 – “The Homeless Services Coordinator should monitor funds directed towards helping the homeless and make recommendations and offer guidance to all involved agencies and groups throughout the county.”

It is the role of the HSOC to monitor use of funds and make recommendations to involved agencies. It is CAPSLO’s understanding that the Homeless Services Executive Director will assist agencies by offering guidance and support. CAPSLO currently provides funders with reports on all activities performed.

Recommendation #5 – “The Homeless Services Campus should be built as soon as possible. The coordinator and appropriate staff from DSS, County Mental Health and Drug and Alcohol should also be stationed there. These professionals need to meet with the homeless where they eat and sleep. Each department should have one or more staff assigned to the Prado Day Center on a regular basis until the campus is occupied. Appropriate arrangements should be made to address issues of client privacy and confidentiality as required by law, but such requirements should not provide a rationale for not delivering services.”

CAPSLO is part of a coalition of community partners looking at building a homeless services center in San Luis Obispo. As previously stated, a feasibility study is currently underway which will assist the partners in identifying the level of support for a capital campaign as well as ongoing sustainability.

CAPSLO would welcome the daily involvement of DSS, County Mental Health and Drug and Alcohol Services. Currently, a homeless outreach worker from County Mental Health is located at Prado Day Center approximately 2 - 4 hours per day, 4 days a week

and sees individuals that are eligible for Medi-Cal. This individual is responsible for all outreach throughout the county.

Recommendation #6 – “The county, south county incorporated cities and appropriate non-profit groups should vigorously pursue joint efforts to build and operate a facility that provide both day services and night time shelter for homeless persons in the five cities region.”

The CAPSLO Homeless Services Director currently participates in the planning process for a proposed south county day center. Other participants include the County, south county incorporated cities and other non-profit groups including the Five Cities Coalition.

The HSOC Supportive Services Sub-Committee is currently exploring regional approaches to service provision.

Recommendation #7 – “Cities in south county, the county itself and The Five Cities Homeless Coalition should begin to work with local churches and service groups to provide temporary shelter until the facility is operative. ECHO in Atascadero provides an excellent model.”

As previously stated, CAPSLO currently participates in the planning process for a proposed south county day center. The Five Cities Coalition is communicating with local churches regarding future support for a day center.

CAPSLO case managers in the South County currently work with homeless clients to link them with services, including assisting them in accessing the Maxine Lewis Memorial Center and finding temporary and permanent housing.

Recommendation #8 – “Non-profit organizations, including churches, and the City of Paso Robles should establish a shelter and meal serving program for people who are homeless.”

CAPSLO agrees with this recommendation, as Paso Robles is the second highest area of need for homeless services. Currently CAPSLO case managers in the North County provide services to individuals and families seeking housing and work to link them with ECHO should they request temporary sheltering services.

Recommendation #9 – “Because ECHO has a system that works, their ideas and methods should be expanded to other areas within the county. CAPSLO, Five Cities Homeless Coalition and other groups now working with the homeless should meet with the staff of ECHO and be mentored in the areas of recruiting, training and effectively utilizing volunteers.”

CAPSLO and ECHO work very closely together – until recently a CAPSLO case manager was stationed at the ECHO shelter Monday through Friday from the start of the

night program until participants went upstairs to sleep. Recently, per ECHO's request the case manager now is stationed there three days a week. The Homeless Services Director, North County Supervisor and North County Case Manager participate in monthly meetings at ECHO to discuss clients and program needs.

CAPSLO acknowledges that ECHO has a volunteer system that works well, however it is important to understand the high level of volunteer support CAPSLO already utilizes. In fiscal year 2009 – 2010, a total of 25,700 volunteer hours were provided in support of homeless services programs (at a monetary value of over \$250,000).

Maxine Lewis Memorial and the ICH Overflow (the two comparable programs to ECHO's night shelter program), received a total of 16,403 volunteer hours during the one-year period – an average of 50 hours per night.