



# Going Home: Moving from Homelessness to Housing

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The Emergency Housing and Assistance Program (EHAP) is the state's primary funding source for emergency and transitional housing to the 360,000 homeless in California. The proposed state budget responds with \$35 million for EHAP—a significant response to a dire need. EHAP funds have not increased beyond \$2 million for the last decade, even though the demand for homeless services has increased relentlessly. Shelters have been overwhelmed with families and individuals who could not afford prohibitive rent increases and lost their homes, seniors who have lost their federally subsidized rental housing to “opt-outs”, single mothers unable to find a landlord willing to accept Section 8, emancipated foster children, working families who cannot afford the rents that now average more than \$1,000 per month in many areas of the state, homeless veterans, the mentally ill, substance abusers . . . and the list goes on.

**The Program:** EHAP provides funds for emergency shelter, transitional housing and related services for the homeless and those at risk of losing their housing. The funds are distributed to all 58 counties based on a “need” formula derived from factors including population, unemployment and poverty. In many areas, the program funding recommendations are made locally by Designated Local Boards (DLBs). Funds can be used for

operating costs (staffing, vouchers and support services), and capital costs for new construction and rehabilitation, but because of the very low funding levels, DLBs generally recommend the use of their EHAP for operating their existing shelters or to provide hotel vouchers, and often limit the allocation to a maximum grant award of about \$20,000. There is simply no funding to expand or build new shelters, or to create transitional housing . . . in short, to respond to the burgeoning need.

**The Need:** The State Department of Housing and Community Development estimates that the homeless population has topped 360,000. Housing resources for the homeless reach only 68,000 homeless people, leaving an unmet need of 293,000. More than 80% of the homeless have no resources available to them. The \$2 million for EHAP in this year's budget will assist few of the homeless.

**Grim Stories:** 169 homeless died on San Francisco's streets during the past year—amongst them a 4 month-old girl and a 39 day-old boy. The Bus Authority in Santa Clara/San Mateo Counties operates “Motel 22” a bus that runs all night. Homeless ride it back and forth to nowhere . . . to keep warm. A woman who works a minimum wage job in Paso Robles is part of the “hidden homeless” – unseen because the nearest shelter is 30 miles away. After a fire left a 64-year-old man homeless, he began living under

a bridge, the only “shelter” available in Healdsburg. Three weeks later he drowned in an apparent suicide.

**Track Record:** The Emergency Assistance Housing and Program was developed during the administration of Governor George Deukmejian. It has produced more than 18 million nights of shelter for homeless Californians and has become a key part of local government's strategy for housing homeless families and individuals. In addition to shelter, it provides services such as job counseling, job skills development, mental health counseling, self-sufficiency training and drug rehabilitation. EHAP also provides homeless prevention and move-in costs for permanent housing. This program must be greatly enhanced so that this effective, well-honed program can create the reality of housing for more than a small percentage of Californians without a home.

**New Program for the Homeless Mentally III:** AB 34 (Steinberg) allocated \$10 million last year to fund comprehensive “wrap around” services for one year to severely mentally ill homeless adults in three test counties, Sacramento, Los Angeles and Stanislaus. The services include outreach to homeless individuals, psychiatric evaluations, placement in housing, medical treatment and job placement. An estimated 1,100 people will be served by this new program.