

City of Huntington Beach

2000 MAIN STREET

CALIFORNIA 92648

Barbara Delgleize
Mayor

September 20, 2022

The Honorable Erick L. Larsh
Presiding Judge of the Superior Court
700 Civic Center Drive West
Santa Ana, California 92701

RE: HUNTINGTON BEACH RESPONSE TO GRAND JURY REPORT

Dear Honorable Judge Larsh:

Thank you for the 2021-2022 Orange County Grand Jury report, *How Is Orange County Addressing Homelessness*, shared on June 17, 2022. This report shares information about the important progress made as well as areas for continued growth in addressing the homelessness crisis. Our Council and City leadership has reviewed the report and thank you for the opportunity to provide a response.

The City of Huntington Beach strives to be a leader in homeless-related services and supporting the most vulnerable individuals seeking safety and support in shelter, housing and supportive services.

Below please find the City's responses to the findings/recommendations presented by the Grand Jury.

Findings Responses

(F3) The County of Orange and cities within Orange County have been inconsistent in collaboration for support of shelters and services, which has resulted in missed opportunities to end homelessness.

Response: The City of Huntington Beach agrees with this finding.

(F4) There are insufficient number of rental units available to those exiting Emergency Shelters, resulting in the majority returning to homelessness when leaving the shelters.

Response: The City of Huntington Beach agrees with this finding.

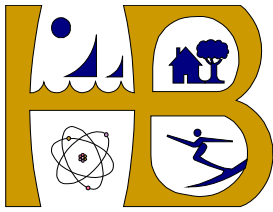
Recommendation Responses

(R4) By July 1, 2024, the County of Orange and cities should collaborate to open facilities that can house people with severe and persistent mental illness and addiction issues in a secure setting.

The recommendation has been implemented, with a summary regarding the implemented action.

As of December 2020, the City of Huntington Beach opened and operates the **Huntington Beach Navigation Center (HBNC)**, a 174 bed shelter and multi-service center for those experiencing homelessness. The HBNC contracts with Mercy House as its operator, and provides participants with a safe place for sleeping and property storage; as well as laundry, showers, housing navigation and

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connection to supportive services. These services include linkage to mental health and substance use treatment, physical health providers and development of a housing plan for more permanent housing opportunities. On-site partners include a Federally Qualified Health Center for physical and behavioral health services, the County of Orange Behavioral Health Services for outreach and linkage to County behavioral health programs and many other providers. Since its opening, the HBNC has successfully transitioned ninety-five (95) participants to permanent housing.

The Grand Jury toured the HBNC on October 26, 2021 and shared their positive response to the program. The City welcomes any additional Grand Jury members for a tour of the HBNC in the future.

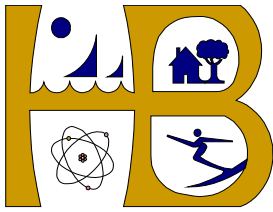
The City is engaged in the development of the **Huntington Beach Healing Center** – an integrated and innovative approach to supporting those experiencing homelessness. The City has partnered with Jamboree Housing to develop a combined shelter and behavioral health supportive services and affordable housing hub that will provide all services in one location. The City released a Request for Qualifications to Housing Developers and is now working with Jamboree Housing to develop this secure setting for those experiencing homelessness to obtain shelter, services and permanent housing opportunities. The City and Jamboree Housing are in the process of engaging funding partners including Cal Optima, the County of Orange and available State/Federal governments.

The City also established the **Homeless Task Force**, a dedicated team of full-time police officers, case managers, and outreach staff to accomplish a multi-pronged approach to conduct regular outreach and engage the homeless or those at risk of homelessness. The team determines their needs, reunites individuals with family members, and works within the County's Coordinated Entry System to match individuals and families with housing opportunities, assist in eviction prevention, and work cooperatively with local schools and nonprofit organizations for children who are homeless or housing insecure. The Homeless Task Force team conducted over 4,400 outreach contacts in 2021 alone.

The City has funded and implemented the **Be Well Mobile Crisis Response Team** providing crisis counselors seven days per week to respond to individuals experiencing homelessness and mental health issues. The City's Be Well mobile crisis response team, the first-of-its-kind in Orange County, responds to calls from police dispatch and to home, school, business and street locations-based on calls for service. It has been integrated into the police dispatch system.

The Be Well OC in Huntington Beach Team engages individuals exhibiting severe mental illness or substance use issues and de-escalates situations. Their goal is to connect individuals to mental health and substance use services to address their behavioral health issues. This allows more successful linkage to shelter, housing, and behavioral health programs throughout the City and the County. They also conduct proactive street outreach to support the homeless that are also struggling with behavioral health issues. This program helps improve outcomes for those in need, while also supporting law enforcement and EMS so they can focus on emergency calls where they are needed most urgently. The net result is improved mental health care for Huntington Beach residents, at a lower overall cost to the community.

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The Be Well OC in Huntington Beach began its operations in August 2021 and is in its second year of operation based on the first year's successful implementation. As of July 31, 2022, the Be Well OC in Huntington Beach has responded to over 2,000 calls for those individuals experiencing a mental health crisis. About 53% of them are those homeless/unhoused.

The City welcomes any Grand Jury members interested in seeing the Be Well OC in Huntington Beach Mobile Crisis van team and learning more about this program.

(R5) By July 1, 2023, the County of Orange, cities and CoC should collaborate to encourage the development of housing affordable to individuals exiting the emergency shelters in Orange County.

The recommendation has been implemented, with a summary regarding the implemented action.

The City of Huntington Beach has developed a System of Care focused on the outreach, engagement and linkage of those experiencing homelessness to shelter, housing and supportive services. Since opening its Navigation Center, the City has focused on transitioning participants to permanent housing opportunities. The City has also partnered with the County of Orange in its Project Homekey application, successfully being awarded 17 million in funding to purchase and convert the Quality Inn and Suites into permanent supportive housing. The motel was successfully purchased in July 2022 and is now moving towards opening as an interim housing program with 62 rooms, with the ultimate goal of conversion to permanent housing in the next four to five years. This program will begin accepting referrals through the County's Coordinated Entry System in September/October 2022.

As mentioned previously, the City's Healing Center Project will include permanent affordable housing units as part of an integrated site that will potentially include shelter, supportive services and housing. The City has also partnered with Jamboree Housing to build an affordable senior housing development with 42 units that broke ground in June 1, 2022. The developer works with the County's Housing Finance Trust as part of the funding platform to create this affordable housing opportunity in the City.

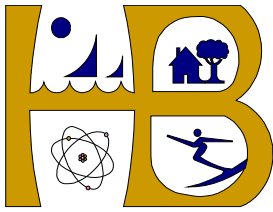
The City welcomes any future discussions with the County of Orange to discuss affordable housing opportunities.

(R6) By December 1, 2022, the County of Orange, cities and CoC should collaborate to increase the number of housing opportunities for Transitional Aged Youth.

The recommendation has been implemented, with a summary regarding the implemented action.

The City of Huntington Beach serves adults age 18 and over at the HBNC. Individuals are engaged by the City's Homeless Task Force to transition to the HBNC and/or develop a housing plan. The HBNC provider, Mercy House, will screen all incoming participants and develop an age-appropriate housing plan using the County's Coordinated Entry System. Transitional Aged Youth (TAY) individuals are matched to housing vouchers and opportunities as part of the regular housing match meetings.

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This City/County coordination occurs regularly to ensure TAY are connected to all potential housing options. As discussed in previous responses, the City is moving forward with several housing opportunities including the Project Homekey Motel Conversion Site and the Healing Center. These programs include TAY in their operations. The City also works closely with Robyne's Nest, a local homeless provider that works exclusively with TAY experiencing homelessness.

The City welcomes any further discussions with the County of Orange to discuss TAY housing.

If there are additional questions, please contact Jason Austin, Deputy Director of Homeless and Behavioral Health Services at JAustin@hbpd.org or our office at 714-536-5553. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Barbara Delgleize
Mayor

CC: City Council
City Manager Al Zelinka
Assistant City Manager Travis Hopkins

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