

State Efforts to Address Youth Homelessness

LEGISLATIVE ANALYST'S OFFICE

Presented to:

Senate Human Services Committee

Hon. Scott D. Wiener, Chair

Assembly Human Services Committee

Hon. Blanca E. Rubio, Chair



Background and Funding



State Homelessness-Related Programs. California administers a variety of programs that assist youth (generally we are referring to individuals ages 16 to 24) who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless. These state programs—which are discussed in greater depth in subsequent sections—can be classified as follows:

- Programs that provide housing and housing-related services that are directly targeted toward youth.
- State affordable housing and homelessness programs that serve individuals of all ages—including youth—who are low-income, homeless, or at risk of becoming homeless.
- Health and human services (HHS) programs that may indirectly help low-income individuals—including youth—avoid homelessness.



Multiple State Departments Involved. Various state entities participate in the administration of these programs, including the Departments of Housing and Community Development, Veterans Affairs, Social Services, and Health Care Services, as well as the Office of Emergency Services, California Tax Credit Allocation Committee, and California Housing Finance Agency.



Multiple Funding Sources. Funding for these programs comes from a variety of federal, state, and local sources and varies significantly from year to year, often depending on one-time allocations.



Significant Local Control Over Funding Potentially Used to Combat Homelessness. The federal and state governments send significant funding directly to California counties and other local entities that is designed, or potentially could be used, to combat homelessness. Local governments often have significant discretion over whether and how the funds are spent to address homelessness. Prominent examples of these funding sources include:

- Federal funding from the U.S. Administration for Children and Families for the Runaway and Homeless Youth Program, which provides grants to local programs that provide emergency shelter, street outreach, and transitional housing.
- Federal housing-related funding in the form of assistance to renters and grants to local entities from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.
- Federal Community Services Block Grant funding that supports anti-poverty efforts, including those that address homelessness, which are designed and implemented by local community-based organizations.
- State Mental Health Services Act (MHSA) funding for mental health services, which are designed and implemented at the local level and may include housing and housing-related services.



Recent Legislation Established Homelessness Prevention State Workgroup. Chapter 91 of 2016 (SB 1380, Mitchell) created the Homeless Coordinating and Financing Council, whose mission is to prevent and end homelessness in California. Membership includes representatives from the Departments of Housing and Community Development, Social Services, Health Care Services, Veterans Affairs, Corrections and Rehabilitation, as well as other state and local stakeholders in homelessness programs. Its goals include the coordination of the various state entities' efforts to combat homelessness.



State Programs Targeted Directly Toward Youth

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Homeless Youth and Exploitation Program. The Homeless Youth and Exploitation Program is a grant program administered by the Governor’s Office of Emergency Services that is designed to address the housing and other service needs of homeless youth. In each of 2016-17 and 2017-18, the Legislature appropriated \$10 million General Fund to the program—a substantial increase over previous funding levels. Local grantee organizations have discretion over the design of their programs. The figure below lists the services that may be provided under the program in 2017-18.

Allowable Services Under the Homeless Youth and Exploitation Program in 2017-18

✓ Rapid Rehousing	✓ Benefits Advocacy
✓ Rental Assistance	✓ Housing Stabilization Services
✓ Transitional Housing	✓ Care Coordination
✓ Supportive Housing	✓ Employment Training
✓ Housing Navigation	✓ Education Supports
✓ Street Outreach	✓ Family Finding

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Child Welfare Services (CWS) Aimed at Preventing Homelessness. A number of CWS programs provide services that help to prevent homelessness among CWS-involved youth. Such programs include:
 - ***Extended Foster Care to Age 21.*** In 2012, the state began providing extended foster care services to age 21 for foster youth who were in foster care on their 18th birthday. This allows eligible foster youth or their foster care provider to continue to receive monthly foster care payments and extends foster care services until age 21.



State Programs Targeted Directly Toward Youth

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- ***Supervised Independent Living Programs (SILP).*** In addition to extending traditional foster care services past age 18, the state created a new foster care placement option known as SILPs, where foster youth over 18 can live independently and receive monthly foster care payments.
- ***Transitional Housing Programs.*** Counties provide transitional housing services to CWS-involved youth ages 18 to 25. Services include housing as well as supportive services and case management that are designed to help youth achieve independence when they leave the program.
- ***Commercially Sexually Exploited Children (CSEC) Program.*** The CSEC program provides specialized prevention and intervention services to children who are victims, or at risk of being victims, of commercial sexual exploitation. These services are provided alongside the general child welfare services, and may include specialized housing and placement services tailored for this subpopulation.
- ***Bringing Families Home.*** The 2016-17 budget package provided \$10 million in one-time General Fund funding (to be spent over multiple years) for the implementation of Bringing Families Home, a program designed to combat homelessness among child welfare-involved families. Although not targeted at unaccompanied youth, the program may serve certain youth, such as parenting youth with open child welfare cases. The funding is expected to support local services such as housing search assistance, rental assistance payments, and long-term supportive housing.



State Affordable Housing and Homelessness Programs



The state has a variety of housing affordability and anti-homelessness programs that serve the general population, including youth who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless. Examples include:

- ***California Work Opportunity and Responsibility to Kids (CalWORKs) Homelessness Programs.*** CalWORKs has programs operated at the county level that are designed to address homelessness. These programs provide housing-related services such as case management and financial assistance in the form of, for example, short-term rental subsidies, security deposit payments, payments for short-term motel stays, and payment of past due rents to prevent eviction.
- ***State Housing Bond Initiatives.*** In 2016, the Legislature enacted the No Place Like Home Initiative, which provides \$2 billion (mostly in the form of bonds secured by annual MHSAs revenues) to develop permanent supportive housing for individuals with mental illness who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless. As part of the 2017-18 budget's housing package, the Legislature passed the Veterans and Affordable Housing Bond Act, which would provide \$3 billion in bond funding for various housing programs for the general population. This bond measure will be placed on the November 2018 ballot for voter approval.
- ***Low-Income Housing Tax Credit.*** Both the federal government and the state provide tax credits to affordable housing builders to help finance their projects. Roughly \$130 million of these credits are allocated annually to projects serving homeless individuals and families. In recent years, these allocations have yielded 3,000 to 4,000 units.



State HHS Programs That May Assist With Preventing Youth Homelessness

- A variety of state programs exist that, while not directly related to housing and homelessness, help low-income youth achieve and maintain self-sufficiency, and accordingly, indirectly help to address youth homelessness.

- Cash Assistance.** The state provides cash assistance to low-income individuals, including youth, through a variety of state programs. These programs indirectly help low-income youth avoid homelessness by helping to cover the cost of rent and other basic living expenses. State cash and cash-like assistance programs include:
 - **CalWORKs Cash Grants.** CalWORKs provides monthly cash grants to low-income families, including youth who themselves have dependent children. For example, a youth with one child could receive a monthly cash grant of up to about \$575.
 - **CalFresh.** CalFresh is a federally funded, state supervised program that provides cash-like assistance to assist low-income individuals purchase food. Though not housing-related, CalFresh benefits help address a significant ongoing budgetary expense for low-income households, freeing up other resources that may be used on housing.
 - **Supplemental Security Income/State Supplementary Payments (SSI/SSP).** SSI/SSP provides cash grants to low-income aged, blind, and disabled individuals. Although most SSI/SSP recipients are elderly, disabled youth may receive SSI/SSP grants, which help to cover the costs of housing and other basic needs.



State HHS Programs That May Assist With Preventing Youth Homelessness *(Continued)*

- Medi-Cal.** Medi-Cal, California's federal-state Medicaid program, provides health care services to low-income individuals—generally at no cost to beneficiaries—including families with children, pregnant women, childless adults, seniors, and persons with disabilities. Eligible homeless individuals may receive health and mental health services through Medi-Cal.

- Whole Person Care Pilots.** In 2016, 25 counties and other local entities began implementing Whole Person Care Pilots, a Medi-Cal pilot project designed to improve the coordination of health, behavioral health, and social service delivery at the local level. The pilots are aimed at identifying and serving high utilizers of multiple systems of care, and may include services that address homelessness.