

# Bring L.A. Home

## Department of Public Social Services Focus Group

### March 23, 2004

#### **DPSS Staff Attending:**

Phil Ansell, AD, Bureau of Program and Policy (BPP); Margaret Quinn, Chief, BPP; Michael Bono, Chief Research Analyst, BPP, Research and Quality Assurance Division (REQAD); Elvie Matisa HAS I, REQAD; Judith Lillard HAS II, Cash and Nutrition Programs; Robin Hell, HAS III, Bureau of Workforce Services (BWS), Line – Division I; Stephanie Dillard, HAS III, BWS – Division III.

**Bring L.A. Home Consultant & Staff:** Dan Flaming, Economic Roundtable; Natalie Profant Komuro and Jose Quinonez, Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority

#### **Background**

DPSS previously submitted written recommendations to Bring L.A. Home. At this meeting DPSS staff made suggestions, but also raised questions that, once answered, might clarify other roles DPSS could play to end and prevent homelessness. It was acknowledged that by providing cash and other benefits to extremely low income households, DPSS already prevents and addresses homelessness for many households in Los Angeles County. However, the DPSS system is so large that even a small percentage of clients experiencing homelessness represents an overwhelming number of people for the homeless delivery system.<sup>1</sup>

At the beginning of the meeting, Phil Ansell, who had to leave early, wanted to make two points. The first was to acknowledge how much DPSS does already and to ask what room on the margin DPSS may have to tweak to help end and minimize the duration of homelessness. The other question was if a vast majority of homeless people has contact with DPSS, or that DPSS is the County department most likely to have contact with homeless people, what opportunities exist for pre-homeless and currently homeless families to take advantage of that degree of contact beyond direct DPSS programs?

Of the ideas raised, staff recommends pursuing the following ideas:

#### **1. Pool funding for Emergency Shelter.**

DPSS administers an emergency housing voucher for G.R. recipients. One of the contracting agencies recently told DPSS that it would not renew its contract because LAHSA's contract for emergency housing paid more. DPSS staff suggested that pooling of LAHSA and DPSS funding might be a more effective way to provide emergency shelter for GR recipients.

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<sup>1</sup> The DPSS response to the Bring L.A. Home Questionnaire, dated February 5, 2004, stated "as of November 2003, 43,964 cases use a district address as the residence address, indicating the probability of homelessness. This represents 4.6% of the Departmental caseload."

## **2. Work with DHS to reduce delays for SSI applications.**

Facilitate linkages between DHS and DPSS in order to document disability in a more timely manner.

## **3. Expand the San Gabriel Valley Homeless Outreach Project.**

This project is a collaboration between DPSS, LAHSA and the Department of Mental Health to provide homeless families with mental health and other services to help them out of homelessness.

**MEETING NOTES** – these notes integrate the discussion of March 23, 2004 with the previously submitted written recommendations. The items with ❖ are comments from the focus group.

### **Existing Programs**

- CalWORKs Homeless Assistance - *Temporary and permanent housing payments – 16 days HAP, hotel paid \$40 per night, permanent housing, utility turn-on, up to \$1500 per month.*
  - ❖ CAL-Works homeless Assistance is a once in a lifetime benefit per State regulation.
  - ❖ What predictors identify people at risk of homeless? Could those be used to identify DPSS clients for additional assistance?
  
- Diversion - *One-time emergency housing assistance*
  
- Housing vouchers for GR Applicants – *14 day housing vouchers pending application approval; approximately \$4 million/year for GR voucher program.*
  - ❖ \$24.00 a night averages/ \$1,500.00 per month (single individuals)
  - ❖ We find competition with LAHSA for beds.
  - ❖ As agencies we should pool resources for providing emergency beds.
  - ❖ [while General Relief is very low], making changes to current levels raises the possibility of a 2 tier General Relief structure. The state has a provision permitting counties to deduct \$40.00 for indigent care.
  - ❖ Even raising general relief level you'd still be hard pressed to prevent homelessness. Analyze populations receiving general relief. Would better or improved targeting to those it would benefit most be a better use of limited funds? Preventing homelessness would be more cost-effective.
  
- Expedited Food Stamps
  
- Twin Towers GR Program
  
- Prevention Services
  
- Emergency Assistance to Prevent Eviction (EAPE) and Moving Assistance Program

- ❖ County reliance on welfare to work to fund prevention is not stable and able to provide housing assistance over the long term
- ❖ DPSS already prevents homelessness -- what can be done on the margins of our programs for better prevention?
- ☐ Skid Row and San Gabriel Valley Homeless CalWORKs Families Projects  
*Emergency housing vouchers, transportation, crisis intervention and assessment*
- ❖ Pending \$1 Million in funding, expand the targeted family program in each Supervisorial District. Project will have evaluative component to track recidivism and effectiveness.

### **Proposed Changes within DPSS**

- ☐ Multi-disciplinary case management
  - ❖ Expand the San Gabriel Valley Homeless CalWORKs Families Project (see above)
- ☐ Create transparency in DPSS homeless programs
  - ❖ Transparency-Different access points. Specialized workers in each DPSS office knowledgeable Cal Works homeless programs to provide only one access point and one eligibility worker for the client.
- ☐ Financial literacy classes. *Partnership with outside organizations, including banks, to address needs of clients who receive lump sum payments.*
  - ❖ Proposed for 2004-05.
- ☐ Linkages to Housing Authorities for Section 8
  - ❖ Propose eligibility workers have linkages with Housing Authorities, Section 8 and other subsidized housing.
- ☐ Shared housing bulletin board. *Tenant resources, shared housing opportunities.*
  - ❖ Proposed for next year.

### **Proposed Changes Outside DPSS**

- ☐ Educate public and private organizations about homelessness and how to identify persons who are homeless.
  - ❖ [For DPSS staff] is there an opportunity to take advantage of the contacts that homeless people have with DPSS to provide resources outside the scope of DPSS?
- ☐ Design a referral system for agencies to link clients with services; develop a comprehensive resource directory.
  - ❖ [LAHSA staff provided an update on the Homeless Management Information System and the Information & Referral module]
- ☐ Create transitional housing for subgroups (mental ill, substance abuse).
- ☐ Use refurbished abandoned properties for transitional or permanent housing.

- ❖ [LAHSA staff provided an update on the Homeless Management Information System and the Information & Referral module]
- ☐ Secure professional assessment services.
  - ❖ Transportation is a huge barrier, especially for persons with nontraditional working hours.

❖ **Additional Comments**

<i>Transportation</i>	❖ Transportation is a huge barrier, especially for persons with nontraditional working hours.
<i>Inflexible rules</i>	❖ We have to wait until persons are homeless /on street before assistance can be provided.
<i>Documentation challenges</i>	❖ Difficulty in presumptive eligibility for SSI is documentation of disability. Particularly documentation of mental illness.
<i>Fragmentation of services</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>❖ Linking of departments and providers and client's records does not exist. (DPSS and DHS do not have access to the same information case record)</li><li>❖ What can services can augment SSI so receipts can access housing and services? Clients need a transition plan.</li></ul>