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Date: July 3, 2019

To: Members of the City Council

From: *PD for PL* Peter Lynn, Executive Director, Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority

cc: Meg Barclay, Office of the City Administrative Officer
Aamir Shaikh, Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority
Nathaniel VerGow, Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority

Subject: Budget Motion 12 – Report Back on Shelter Bed Tracker and Ways Technology Can Enhance Efficiency and Transparency

I am pleased to transmit the enclosed report provided by the Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority (LAHSA) in response to City Council Budget Motion 12, authored by Councilmember Joe Buscaino, requesting an update on the status of a real-time, electronic system for tracking shelter bed availability. The report also requests information on ways that expanding technology can enhance the homeless system's efficiency and transparency.

I would be happy to meet with you and your staff to review the report. Please direct any questions or concerns to me at plynn@lahsa.org or 213-683-3333.

PL:av

Enclosed report



Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority

Report Back on Budget Motion 12
Shelter Bed Tracking and Ways Technology Can Enhance Efficiency

July 3, 2019

INTRODUCTION

This report is prepared in response to City Council Budget Motion 12, dated May 23, 2019, requesting an update on the status of live shelter bed tracking system developed by the Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority (LAHSA), along with an assessment of other ways that technology can be used to enhance efficiency and transparency in the homeless system.

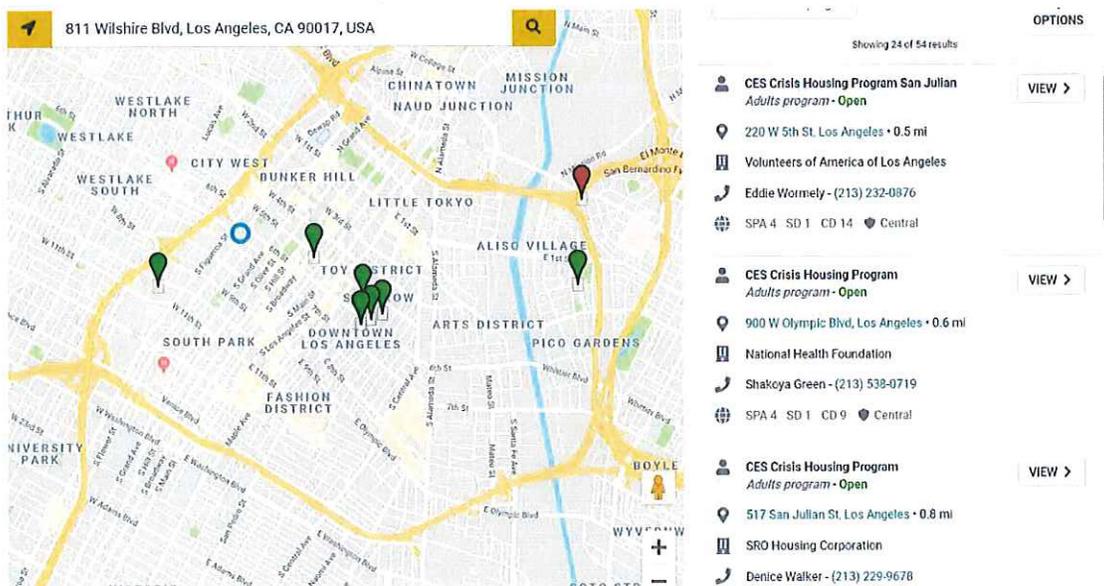
Included in this report is an overview of the application, along with other technology efforts that LAHSA is employing—this includes the Los Angeles Homeless Outreach Portal (LA-HOP), along with uses of technology to enhance our procurement processes.

SHELTER BED AVAILABILITY APPLICATION

The shelter bed availability application was launched initially in early 2018 to help LAHSA staff as well as partner agencies and providers gain a better understanding of where available crisis and winter shelter beds are located. This information can help providers that are interfacing with clients to ensure they are expediently placed in an available bed that night if one is available, without needing to spend additional time making phone calls and inquiries to an array of crisis housing providers.

The shelter bed application is available on the LAHSA website on the [“Find a Shelter” page](#). On the page, winter shelter bed vacancies (which are first-come first-served and operate from October to April) are available to be viewed by all users, including those that have not yet created a profile. However, for users that have created a profile, both winter shelter and crisis housing programs are available to search. Organizations that work in the homeless sector are able to create profiles; to set up a profile on the LAHSA website, organizations need to list their name, Tax ID Number (TIN), and DUNS Number. Once this profile is created, users can view all interim housing programs on the app. As of July 1, 2019, 54 programs display bed availability throughout the continuum for LAHSA and other partners to search, with 38 of these interim housing programs located in the City of Los Angeles.

Figure 1. Overview of Available Shelter Resources on Tracker



Upon finding open beds in a particular site, the tracker provides a contact phone number for the intake office at that site, along with directions to the site. Users can enter their geolocation and see all interim housing programs within a given radius of their choosing (See Figure 1).

Data for the tracker is updated live from the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) multiple times daily, beginning at 12:00 PM each day and refreshing approximately every three hours, with the final data refresh coming between 10:00 and 11:00 PM each night. For Winter Shelter programs, agencies update their bed availability through HMIS each morning, while for other crisis housing programs, provider agency staff data is updated several times every day. Outreach staff using the tracker can both see the number of available beds that are estimated for that night, along with the number of free beds that were available the previous night (See Figure 2).

Figure 2. Address and Bed Availability by Selected Site

The screenshot displays a web application interface for 'THE PEOPLE CONCERN'. At the top, it shows the Google logo and the text 'Map data ©2019 Google'. Below this, the site name 'THE PEOPLE CONCERN' is prominently displayed, followed by the address: 'CES CRISIS HOUSING PROGRAM LAMP VILLAGE, 527 CROCKER ST, LOS ANGELES, CA 90013, USA'. The interface is divided into two main sections: 'Site Information' and 'Operation Details'. The 'Site Information' section includes a 'SAVE' button, an 'ESTIMATED BED AVAILABILITY' section with a site staff estimate of 0 free beds for tonight and HMIS data showing 3 free beds for the night of June 30, 2019, a 'Notes' field, and 'Site Contacts' for Steven Mitchell, including his phone number (310) 595-7922 and email smitchell@thepeopleconcern.org. There is also a 'Flagged for review' toggle switch. The 'Operation Details' section includes 'Check in Hours' with 'Starting' at 07:00 AM and 'Ending' at 11:00 PM, and 'Days of Operation' with checkboxes for Sunday through Saturday.

Additional enhancements are being added to the shelter bed tracker. Providers will soon be able to provide an estimate of available beds for the upcoming night, rather than wait to provide real time data, which is dependent on a time intensive Coordinated Entry System (CES) intake. This enhancement will ensure bed availability is more up-to-date, as staff will be able to update data faster and provide a more accurate estimate to the system. In addition, LAHSA is streamlining the access to the application, and moving towards a system where users do not need to be logged on to the LAHSA portal in order to see availability of low-barrier resources.

LA-HOP

The Los Angeles Homeless Outreach Portal (LA-HOP) launched in July 2018. Developed with funding from Los Angeles County Measure H Strategy E6 (Countywide Outreach System), LA-HOP allows users to report information on people experiencing homelessness and ensure that LAHSA outreach teams are alerted. Users can access LA-HOP at www.la-hop.org.

Once a report is made through LA-HOP, LAHSA outreach staff that cover the requisite geography integrate the report into their canvassing plan to visit the site within between 48 and 72 hours to make contact. If they are able to locate the person, they begin the process of connecting that person to services and housing resources. To date, LAHSA has received over 9,000 requests for service through LA-HOP from throughout Los Angeles County. About one-third of these requests have come from concerned residents, while another 23% have originated from public employees. In about 6% of cases, LA-HOP reports were self-referrals—as such, LA-HOP can also be a valuable tool for people experiencing homelessness to outreach to the system when they are ready to begin the process of connecting to services and housing but unsure how to do so.

LA-HOP has proved particularly valuable in conducting outreach to populations of people experiencing homelessness who may not be available for conversations during working hours. For people experiencing homelessness who are employed, and especially those who live in their cars, they may be away during daytime hours when LAHSA's Homeless Engagement Teams (HETs) are in the field, and they may not be regularly observed by outreach staff. Reports from community members who see these people in the evenings or during weekends can assist HETs to reach populations that may otherwise be difficult to locate during daytime hours.

Several enhancements have been made to LA-HOP since its launch to make the system more user friendly, both for those residents making reports through the portal, as well as for outreach workers receiving the information. These enhancements include:

- A new streamlined web page which is friendly to mobile users;
- The launch of an animated video explaining how LA-HOP works to make the site and its functions more easy-to-understand for new users; and
- A prompt to create an icon on iOS smart phones and tablets, thus creating the feel and convenience of an app without the added steps of navigating through a web browser.

Other Enhancements Using Technology

In addition to the launch of the shelter bed tracking application and LA-HOP, LAHSA is in the process of utilizing technology to further enhance the function of the homeless services system. These enhancements include:

- A new application for LAHSA procurements. For both the Request for Proposal (RFP) process and the Request for Statement of Qualifications (RFSQ) process, LAHSA has launched a new platform for users to submit their RFP and RFSQ responses. This has both improved ease of use for providers submitting proposals and allowed LAHSA staff to collect real-time data on proposals as they are submitted.
- In the Spring of 2019, LAHSA facility review staff began using an online facility assessment tool during their regularly scheduled visits to publicly-funded interim housing sites. This tool is enhancing staff's work to review interim housing sites and ensure these locations meet LAHSA quality standards. Having a digital online tool allows LAHSA staff to have more time to review sites for critical standards and spend less time transcribing written notes from site reviews.