



For Immediate Release

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Leadership Forum Bolsters Countywide Support for Reducing Homelessness County Public and Private Leaders Convene in First Ever Forum to Find Collaborative Solutions to Homelessness

(STOCKTON, CA) San Joaquin County Health Care Services (HCS), in partnership with leaders from city and county government and nonprofit shelter partners, is actively working toward a more cohesive and effective system of support to reduce homelessness.

On August 25, 2023, HCS hosted a Homelessness Leadership Forum, facilitated by United Way of San Joaquin County (UWSJC). The forum convened more than 40 key leaders that included city managers, nonprofit CEOs, County supervisors and law enforcement. The meeting was a first step in designing a strategy to explore new and innovative ways of working together to strengthen the connections between the cities of Stockton, Lodi, Manteca, and Tracy with unincorporated communities in San Joaquin County.

“In the past two years alone, San Joaquin County invested nearly \$200 million for Countywide projects ranging from permanent supportive housing, emergency shelter, responding to calls for service to the unhoused, hospital treatment, and enhanced care management. These investments will result in the addition of over 700 new units of permanent supportive housing, and increase shelter capacity Countywide by 166 percent,” said San Joaquin County Health Care Services Director, Greg Diederich. “While there has been significant progress to increase shelter beds, services, and supports in the last three years, working in tandem is critical to ushering in sustainable methods to address the crisis of homelessness jointly and expeditiously.”

HCS has been looking for a way to play a larger, countywide leadership role on the topic of homelessness and had been encouraged to do so by Supervisors Canepa and Patti, both of whom serve on the Ad Hoc Homeless Review Committee.

The timing of the Forum coincided with notification that the agency, in partnership with STAND and St. Mary’s Dining Room, will receive [\\$11.1 million in State grant funding](#) to move people from encampments into housing.

“The San Joaquin August Forum on Homelessness was a critical step in unifying the whole County in our joint efforts to solve the housing and homelessness crisis that confronts us,” said Harry Black, Stockton City Manager. “Thank you, San Joaquin County Health Care Services and United Way of San Joaquin County for your leadership on this.”

With a central focus on convening and strengthening nonprofits, UWSJC will take the ideas generated by the group and create a report for the San Joaquin County Board of Supervisors within the next 45 days.

“This was the first-time leaders from government and nonprofits had the opportunity to talk for three hours about challenges they experience in their daily work to address homelessness in our county and to share insight and ideas for real solutions,” said Kristen Birtwhistle, CEO of UWSJC. “The energy and engagement in the room affirmed the notion that leaders across the board want to break down silos and develop a collective process that will help us move much faster toward real change.”

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