



What is the City of Costa Mesa doing about Homelessness?

Homelessness is a complex and intricate problem faced by cities requiring civic collaboration with a variety of sources including the faith community, nonprofits, volunteers and other jurisdictional entities. Many of the individuals we encounter suffer from a myriad of mental health, substance abuse and physical challenges which require a great deal of skill and coordination.

It is not a crime to be homeless; yet the needs of the residents and businesses must constantly be balanced with those of the homeless including, yet not limited to, the use of public space.

Listed below are some of the programs which Costa Mesa has put into place to deal with this problem:

Homeless Prevention and Rapid Rehousing

Costa Mesa provides funding to Mercy House, Families Forward and Collette's Children's Home to assist Costa Mesa Homeless Residents who are at risk for homelessness and those that are living on the streets with funds for limited rental assistance.

Community Outreach Workers

Costa Mesa funds 1 full-time and 2 part-time Community Outreach Workers who assist both at risk individuals and the homeless. For the at-risk population, assistance includes linkages to social services, room rentals, and access to rental assistance in order to prevent these households from either becoming homeless. Outreach workers also assist both the sheltered and unsheltered homeless population. These individuals will typically not seek out help, so these workers help stabilize these individuals by forging a trusted relationship with them and helping them find housing and successfully navigate through the complex web of physical, mental and social services necessary for their survival.

Mental Health/Law Enforcement Teams

The City also accesses the services of the County of Orange Psychiatric Emergency Response Team (PERT) clinician. This clinician accompanies Costa Mesa Police two days per week and assists them in handling those experiencing acute psychiatric emergencies. Additionally, two

clinicians from the County Health Care Agency's Outreach and Engagement team accompany our outreach workers two mornings and/or afternoons a week in an attempt to identify those individuals living on the street who are need of mental health services.

It should be noted that no one can be forced to access these services even when they are readily available and will provide great benefits to these individuals.

Federal Grants for Costa Mesa Homeless Residents

The City partners with Mercy House Living Centers to fund the Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG) program designed to give limited rental assistance and case management to people who are literally homeless. Other partners include Families Forward, Collette's Children's Home and Working Wardrobes.

Maintenance of Social Service Registry

People on Costa Mesa's social service registry are those defined as Costa Mesa Homeless Residents. These individuals receive preferential services offered by the Community Outreach Workers. Additionally, all nonprofits funded by the City are asked to give preferences to those individuals in the City who are defined as Costa Mesa Homeless Residents.

Volunteer Network

The City partners with several volunteer organizations in an effort to ensure that individuals are offered non duplicative services and that those resources are provided mainly to Costa Mesa Homeless Residents. Meetings are held both weekly and monthly with these organizations where resources are shared, client case management plans are discussed and organizational updates are provided. Past partnerships have included Fresh Beginnings, Trellis Street Team, Starbucks Resource Fair, Lions Club Eyeglass clinics, and SOS Health Fairs.

Preferred Access to Medical /Public Health

The City partners with several Medi-Cal providers including Share Our Selves (SOS), a Federally Qualified Medical Clinic, in an effort to ensure that our Costa Mesa clients receive more immediate access to services. Community Outreach Workers can coordinate both psychological and medical care for their clients by making their appointments, obtaining information about medical history and ensuring that local hospitals release records to the individuals' primary care physicians. This helps the City coordinate their care and should reduce the amount of yearly emergency room visits by those who are chronically homeless in our City.

Additionally, the Outreach Workers work directly with the County's public health nurse in an effort to reach the most vulnerable homeless individuals who either do not have Medi-Cal or are unable to obtain medical services.

Street Outreach for Coordinated Entry

Costa Mesa has been chosen by the County and 211OC to implement the new Coordinated Entry Program. This process, based on the “Housing First” model, was designed to ensure that federal and state grant assistance to chronically homeless individuals be allocated as effectively as possible and is designed to provide assistance based on vulnerability and severity of needs in order to reduce barriers to housing entry. The coordinated entry process refers qualified homeless individuals to all projects receiving ESG and Continuum of Care Program funds, including rapid rehousing and permanent supportive housing through a vulnerability assessment process. Costa Mesa Community Outreach Workers ensure that individuals on Costa Mesa streets are assessed quickly and directed to the County of Orange. **To date, the City has completed 182 assessments and housed 40 individuals through Coordinated Entry.**

Even before Coordinated Entry came online in 2015, the Costa Mesa Network for Homeless Solutions collaborative, which includes our faith-based and non-profit partners, have diligently served the community to reduce the impacts of homelessness. **Since 2013, a total of 222 homeless individuals have either been placed in and remain in permanent housing or have been reconnected to family members or programs in their community of origin.** Several others were housed but fell out of housing for various reasons.

In-House Network for Homeless Solutions Coordinating Meetings

Staff from the City Manager’s Office, City Attorney, Code Enforcement, Public Services, Fire and Police Departments participate in weekly meetings designed to address specific problem properties and civic problems relating to the City’s transient population. The City takes a multi-disciplinary approach in addressing issues involving loitering, trespassing and consistent violations of municipal codes resulting in improvements in quality of life for all residents and businesses in Costa Mesa.

Ideal Future

We see opportunities for permanent supportive and transitional housing options where all persons desiring housing can be housed. We also see value in a regional shelter that services the central/coastal portion of Orange County. The County is on the verge of opening two or three Mental Health Crisis Stabilization Units that will give agencies a place to direct those in a mental health crisis for enhanced treatment options. The City is also working very closely with the County of Orange’s Director of Coordinated Care in defining and implementing regional approaches to mitigating our homeless problem. We see opportunities for the nonprofit and business communities to replicate beneficial programs like the Check In Center where the homeless can store their property, thus reducing blight on our streets and parks.

We also see a community wide effort to address this problem because the City and County cannot solve this alone.