

February 2022

SACRAMENTO AREA

HOMELESSNESS PROGRESS REPORT

Nearly 700 volunteers turn out for homeless Point-in-Time count in Sacramento

By Gregg Fishman

Nearly 700 volunteers walked for miles after dark on Feb. 23 and Feb. 24 to count people experiencing homelessness throughout Sacramento County. The biennial count coincided with record-breaking cold temperatures. Many people were counted as they sought warmth inside various respite centers, including one in the lobby of Sacramento City Hall.

Participants in the 2022 Point-in-Time (PIT) count used a mobile app to record the number of people they encountered who said they would be sleeping outdoors or in vehicles. They also conducted a brief survey with those willing to participate in order to better understand who is experiencing homelessness in Sacramento, for how long and what kinds of services could best assist them.

The Point-in-Time (PIT) count is required by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. The data provided by the PIT count will be used to allocate funding and design programs to address homelessness.

Volunteers focus on people living unsheltered outdoors, but the overall PIT count includes those staying in respite centers or shelters such as the City of Sacramento's X Street or Meadowview navigation centers.

"I'm so grateful to the community for coming together to help us in this effort," said Lisa Bates, executive director of Sacramento Steps Forward, the non-profit that organizes the PIT count. "Our volunteers really came through for us, and it looks like we had an effective count over the two-night effort. We'll have the data collated and analyzed in a couple of months, but based on reports from our staff and volunteers, we got a good count."

The volunteers all received prior training, and they met at several starting points throughout the county to pick up lists of known encampments and maps with routes to follow.

Counting crews included Sacramento State University social work students, non-profit leaders and many elected officials and staff members from city and county government, including Sacramento Mayor Darrell Steinberg and several members of the Sacramento City Council and Sacramento County Board of Supervisors.

The last PIT count, conducted in 2019, tallied 5,570 people experiencing homelessness in Sacramento County over a two-night period. Of those, 70 percent, or 3,900 people, were staying outdoors, including those sleeping in vehicles. That number likely has risen over the past two years, officials said. The COVID pandemic is almost certainly one reason more people are experiencing homelessness, but many factors can come into play.

"COVID is one factor, but people experience homelessness for a variety of reasons," said Bridgette Dean, director of the City's, Department of Community Response. "That's why the PIT Count is so important. When we know why people are experiencing homelessness, how long they've been without a permanent home, and other basic information about who they are, we and our partners can design programs and services that can help them progress toward stability."

It will take some time to collate all the information collected over the two nights of the PIT Count, officials said. Sacramento Steps Forward said it plans to issue a report detailing the data by late spring or early summer.



About this Report

The City of Sacramento, Sacramento Housing and Development Agency, Sacramento Steps Forward and the County of Sacramento are publishing this monthly report to keep the community informed about our collaborative work to address homelessness in Sacramento.



Sacramento in February experienced a stretch of near-freezing overnight temperatures, and City Hall was one of the several locations that opened as a [respite center](#) so people experiencing homelessness could come in from the cold. City Hall served a total of 112 people over three nights, starting Feb. 23.

The City of Sacramento in February also opened a new safe ground site in Miller Park, applying lessons learned from the now-closed safe ground location at W/X streets. The new site can serve up to 110 people. Read more about the Miller Park safe ground [here](#).

The City also began working on its newest land acquisition, a 102-acre site in South Sacramento purchased from the federal government. The site is large enough that it could host a variety of amenities, which will depend on community input. In the shorter term, a few acres likely will be used as a [safe parking site](#) for people experiencing homelessness.

Sacramento Housing and Redevelopment Agency

Sacramento Housing Authority was awarded 494 [Emergency Vouchers \(EHV\)](#) from the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) funded by the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) of 2021.

The program provides rental assistance for individuals and families who are experiencing homelessness, or at risk of homelessness.

Sacramento Housing Redevelopment Agency is administering the program and has issued 290 vouchers to eligible families, and 37 families have found permanent housing.

After years of living unsheltered, William received Sacramento's first EHV and recently moved into a place of his own.

[Here's his inspiring story.](#)



Sacramento Steps Forward



In Sacramento County and across the country, people of color experience homelessness at disproportionately higher rates due to historic and ongoing inequities. Sacramento Steps Forward and the Sacramento Continuum of Care (CoC) is making racial equity its highest priority. In 2021, SSF established the Racial Equity Committee (REQC) to research and identify racial inequities within the system of homelessness in the Sacramento region. The REQC created an action plan, adopted by the CoC in August 2021, that provides a framework for action toward improving our current practices and righting an inherently inequitable system. Among multiple equity-driven initiatives outlined in the action plan, SSF has created a working group dedicated to identifying the racial inequities in the coordinated entry system. This diverse group includes SSF staff and community members, centering on participants with lived experiences of homelessness. Learn more here: <https://sacramentostepsforward.org/racial-equity/>

County of Sacramento

Sacramento County is launching "Safe Stay Communities" for persons experiencing homelessness. These communities are temporary shelter settings with lower-barrier entry for unhoused community members to stay in a safer and more sanitary environment and receive critical services oriented towards exiting to permanent housing. These communities will include 24/7 security, case management services, areas on-site sanitation, and food services and County will develop good neighbor policies for the operator and occupants. Additionally, the County is concurrently standing up Encampment Services Teams that will connect people living unsheltered into the communities and provide them with deeper connections to County behavioral health services, connection to benefits like CalFresh, CalWorks, Medi-Cal, etc., linkages to longer-term shelters, and flexible funding to help support individuals' transition into permanent housing. Ultimately, all sites should be considered as a stepping stone to stabilize and support individuals on a pathway to permanent housing.

[Read more about Safe Stay Communities.](#)

