

**LOCAL**

JULY 24, 2015

# Number of homeless people in Sacramento County largely unchanged, survey shows

## HIGHLIGHTS

'Point in time' survey counts 2,659 homeless people

Number is about 5 percent higher than in 2013

More homeless veterans getting shelter



Dustin Rae, 27, of Sacramento, panhandles on the corner of Howe Ave. and Fair Oaks Blvd. on Wednesday, Nov. 19, 2014. | **Hector Amezcua** - hamezcua@sacbee.com

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On a single night in late January, volunteers counted 2,659 people living in shelters, parks, along rivers and other places in Sacramento County where homeless people gather, according to a report issued Friday.

The number is about 5 percent higher than the last such survey, in 2013, according to Sacramento Steps Forward, which coordinated the “point in time homeless count” on the night of Jan. 28.

The count, required by the federal Department of Housing and Urban Development, gives officials a snapshot of the size, demographics and needs of homeless people in the county, officials said. The county’s numbers have “stayed pretty consistent” since 2009, said SSF executive director Ryan Loofbourrow.

Sacramento Steps Forward, which distributes money for homeless services programs in the county, recently launched a Homeless Management Information System that will yield more accurate numbers and help connect people with services from drug counseling to permanent housing, Loofbourrow said.

“The point in time count is a great benchmark for us,” he said. “But we need more data, and better data, to serve these populations.”

The new system will allow SSF to “conduct ongoing data analysis,” he said. “It will give us much better information to respond to people’s needs more quickly and more efficiently. We’ll have outreach workers interviewing people in the field. We’ll be able to look at where they are coming into the system, what their needs are, who accessed services, who did not, and why.”

He predicted that the system will lead to a dramatic decrease in Sacramento County’s homeless population in the next few years. “It’s all about making the right connections with people,” he said.

More than 300 volunteers, along with nonprofit service providers, law enforcement officers and others, worked with SSF on the most recent count.

The surveyors tallied 1,711 people without permanent housing who were living in shelters, and 948 who were living virtually on the street. More than 1,000 of those counted suffered from mental illness, chronic substance abuse or both. More than 300 of those tallied were

military veterans.

The proportion of homeless people relative to Sacramento County's overall population is well below 1 percent, comparable to the national average, according to the report. The goal is to reach "functional zero," said Loofbourrow.

Since January, about 250 homeless veterans and 200 chronically homeless people have found permanent housing in Sacramento County, the report says.

Thanks in part to a successful bid for federal money, more than 150 new permanent supportive housing units will become available this month, according to the report.

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