



# Common Cents

January - October 2015

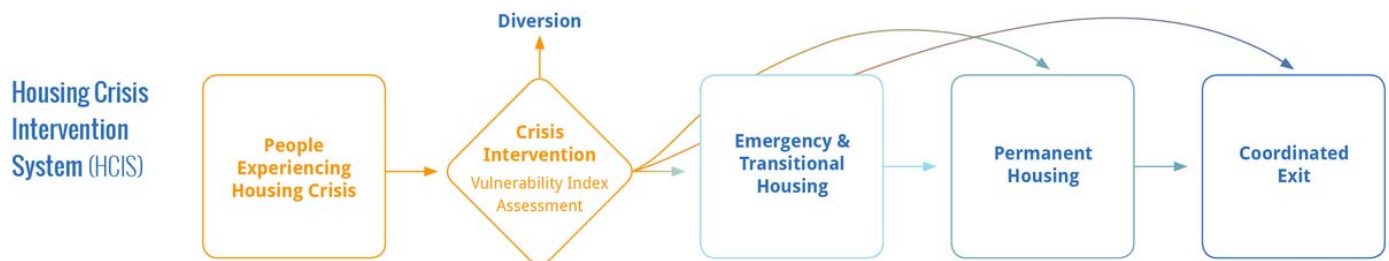


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Ending Homelessness. Starting Fresh.

## Common Cents: A Systematic Approach to Solving Homelessness in Sacramento

**Overview:** Common Cents - Sacramento Steps Forward's initiative to end homelessness in Sacramento County - stitches together existing programs into a system where anyone experiencing homelessness can be quickly matched to appropriate housing and services based on their unique needs. In its first year, 2015, Common Cents initially focused on homeless veterans and chronically homeless people, but has expanded to include youth, families, and all populations of people experiencing homelessness in Sacramento. This has resulted in a system that can accommodate the needs of all people experiencing homelessness, moving them quickly from homelessness into permanent housing and towards self-sufficiency.



Research and best practices suggest that the most effective solutions to ending homelessness are those that have an established process to quickly identify people as they become homeless, efficiently assess their needs and rapidly transition them into appropriate housing. The Common Cents model contains the following elements:

### Integrated street outreach (outreach):

Homeless outreach navigators meet people where they are, connecting them to services and assisting them toward housing. To achieve the best placement, navigators conduct a vulnerability index assessment with each person to capture their needs and which matches them to the appropriate housing and supportive services.

### Outreach Points of Entry

Places of high concentration:  
Along transit, riverbeds,  
central city, jail discharge,  
hospitals and winter shelter



EMS, Youth, Veterans,  
Park Rangers, Mental Health  
and Law Enforcement





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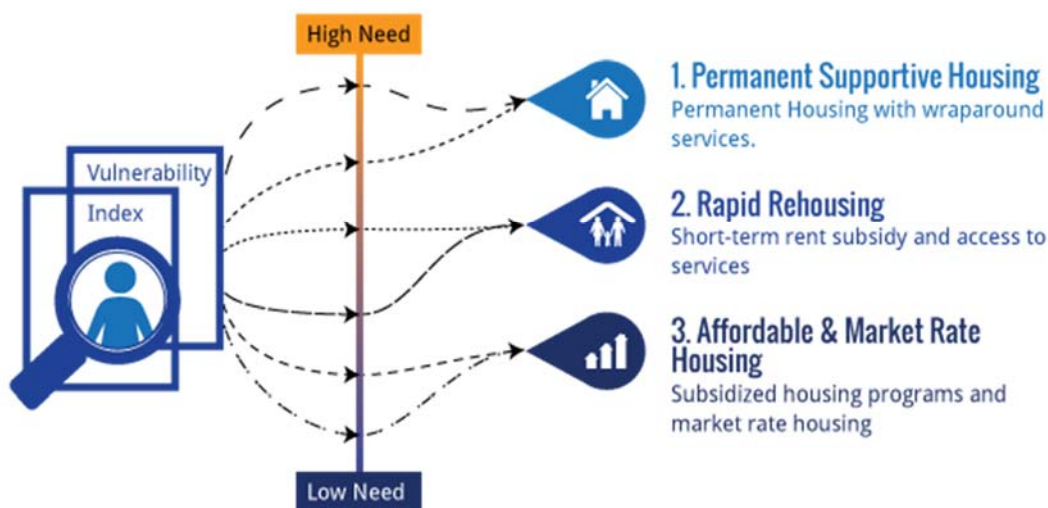


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**Coordinated assessment and entry to the system (coordinated entry):** Coordinated entry improves and standardizes program access and admissions. Homeless service providers who receive federal Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) funding through SSF for homeless programs are required to participate in coordinated entry. Other service providers in Sacramento voluntarily participate, helping to strengthen the overall effectiveness of the system. Each provider has agreed to accept referrals from Sacramento Steps Forward's "community queue", which has mapped individuals' vulnerability to the appropriate participating program. HUD-funded programs prioritize those with the highest vulnerability. This means helping the long-term homeless that are most vulnerable and hardest to house first, as we work toward eliminating street homelessness. Furthermore, this entails using a housing first approach – also federally required – and removing barriers such as sobriety requirements, pet restrictions, and credit and income standards that often prevent individuals from accessing housing.

## Standardized Assessment to Match Housing to Need



**Data collection and analysis for performance management and continual improvement (data analysis):** The data generated through coordinated entry provides Sacramento Steps Forward with critical insights into the needs of individuals experiencing homelessness in Sacramento, program cost-effectiveness, system- and program-level efficiency, and system gaps. This data helps inform the appropriate program changes and system level investments needed to end street homelessness as quickly as possible.



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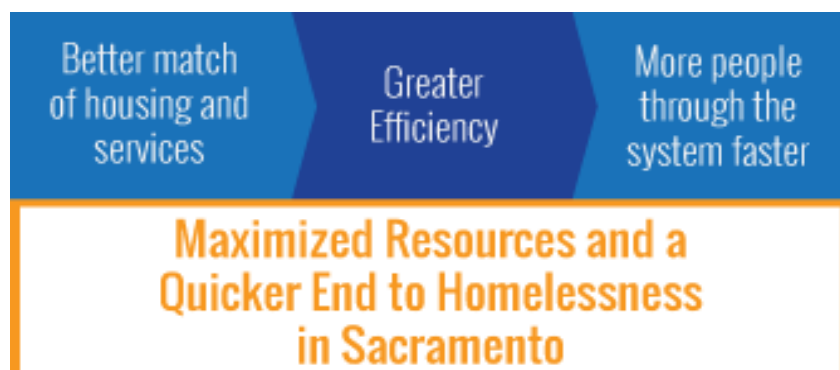
**Continual adjustment to programs, services, and capacity to reflect the size and needs of the homeless population (right-sizing the system):** A right-sized system will have enough capacity (units) and the right kinds of programs and services - things like mental health care, emergency shelter, permanent housing, rental assistance, and employment services - to ensure that when an individual or family becomes homeless, they have a place to go immediately. To right-size the system, agencies may need to adapt programs, or the community may need to find more permanent housing.

## Right Sizing the System



**Preventing homelessness through connections to community-based services (diversion):** Ideally, our community will be able to prevent homelessness, not merely react to its occurrence. Many individuals and families may be able to avoid homelessness with some support; such as help with avoiding evictions or connections to public assistance benefits. By 2020, Sacramento Steps Forward will build a diversion system to help keep people from becoming homeless in the first place, whenever possible.

Common Cents is based on nationally proven practices that increase system efficiency, program effectiveness, and reduce homelessness overall. By coordinating all federal, state, and local resources, our community can maximize its resources to end homelessness in Sacramento.





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## Program Implementation Progress

**Summary:** Outreach and Coordinated Entry are fully operational. To date, Common Cents Navigators have conducted vulnerability assessments for over 1500 individuals experiencing homelessness throughout Sacramento County. This has provided a rich dataset for SSF and its partners to understand the needs of those in our community and begin to assess where we can create opportunities for access to additional housing, as well as identify gaps that will require different methods and additional resources, in particular, permanent supportive housing.

Program Implementation Status Key:



Complete



In Progress



Not Started

### Outreach



#### January – October 2015

- 13 homeless outreach navigators hired, with two additional openings
- Stationed in several business districts, near hospital emergency departments, and in areas with high concentrations of people experiencing homelessness, such as Loaves & Fishes, the downtown Sacramento library, Regional Transit vehicles (starting in January 2016), and along the river beds.

### Coordinated Entry



#### January 2015

- Vulnerability assessment in use for all individuals experiencing homelessness.

#### March 2015

- Vulnerability assessment in use for families.

#### January – October 2015

- All individuals and families assessed are added to the Community Queue. This list allows SSF to make appropriate referrals based on the specific needs of each person. All new permanent supportive housing units (roughly 150 in 2015) are part of coordinated entry.
- SSF follows up with clients to determine whether they still require assistance. It also has enacted an “inactive” status for individuals that have not seen a navigator or entered into the system within the preceding 90 days.
- Demographic, vulnerability, service connections and coordinated entry placement data are listed below:

Assessment Results	City of Sacramento	City and County
Individuals Contacted	1556	1903
Assessments Conducted	1228	1537
High Vulnerability	768	962
Medium Vulnerability	367	474
Low Vulnerability	93	101



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## Demographic Information – aggregate for all respondents



**84% of individuals assessed reported a physical, mental, or emotional impairment**

**56% have been homeless for two years or longer**

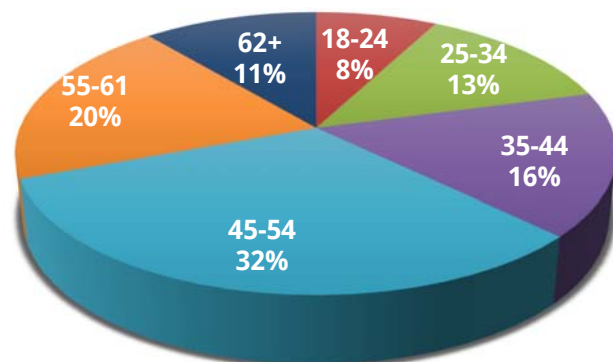


**67% visited a hospital emergency department within the last six months**

**37% reported in-patient hospitalization within the past six months**

- Nearly 1/3 of respondents are age 55 and over
- Less than 10% are transition age youth
- Over 60% are between 25 -54

**Age Distribution**  
(Sacramento County)





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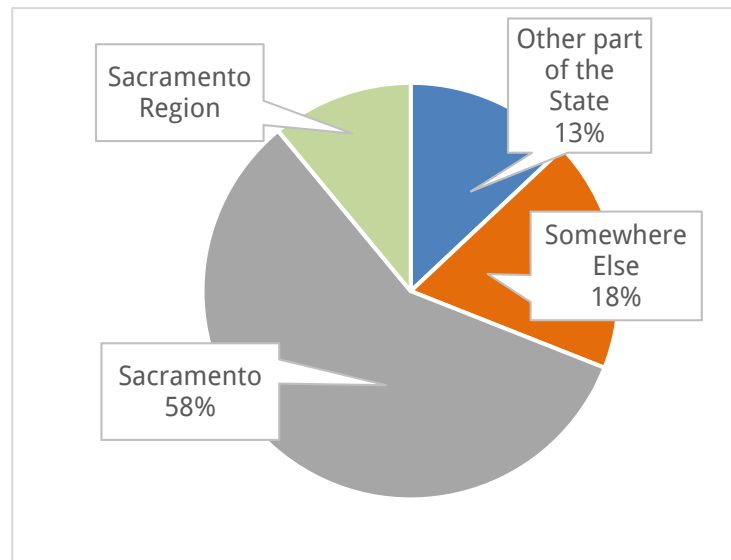
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## Where They're From



## Where They Sleep

- Street, sidewalk, or doorway – 49%
- Riverbed, park or beach – 23%
- Shelter – 11%
- Car, van, or RV – 9%
- Other – 8%



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STATE

**Sacramento State and River District Partnership:** The River District area has a consistently high concentration of individuals experiencing homelessness. While many are from the Sacramento area and are in the area due to its proximity to homeless services providers, many arrive in Sacramento via the Greyhound station in the River District. Sacramento Steps Forward has partnered with Sacramento State University and the River District to survey individuals arriving in Sacramento via Greyhound. Individuals who self-identify as experiencing homelessness will be interviewed by a volunteer navigator, trained to use SSF's standard vulnerability assessment protocol. In addition, navigators will use an addendum to the assessment geared toward understanding the reasons why people experiencing homelessness are coming to Sacramento. Sacramento State researchers will also survey Greyhound employees and local business owners and their employers to document the impacts of homelessness on the River District.



THE RIVER DISTRICT





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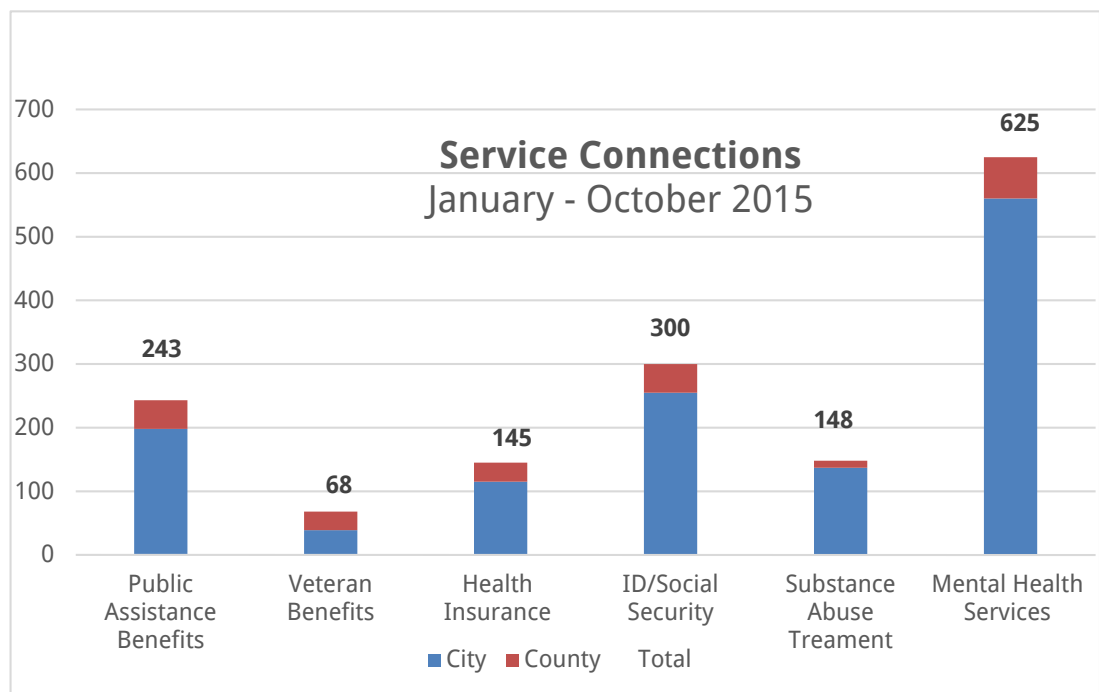
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- Service Connections:** Common Cents homeless services navigators begin to connect individuals experiencing homelessness with services and benefits as quickly as possible. Benefits can help provide income to these individuals, which can be used to pay a portion of their rent once housing is located. Furthermore, mental health evaluations are a prerequisite for certain programs; getting individuals assessed by mental health professionals helps ensure they are placed in appropriate housing.



- Housing placements - not cumulative**

Program	City	City and County
Common Cents Placements (via Coordinated Entry, new units only)	57	73
Zero: 2016 - Veterans	N/A	438
Zero: 2016 - Chronically Homeless	N/A	350
Continuum of Care Placements in Permanent Housing (Total system-wide placements year to date)	N/A	3,218



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## Data Analysis



### September 2015

- Completed system-level and program analysis of:
  - Utilization rate
  - Rate of system entry from homelessness
  - Rate of system exit to permanent housing
  - Rate of return to homelessness
  - Cost per permanent housing exit

### October - November 2015

- Program performance review meetings with providers
- System- and program-level modeling to determine options for changes to reduce homelessness more quickly

## Right-Sizing the System



### November 2015

- City of Sacramento, Sacramento County, and Sutter Health have committed \$2.4 million to fund rapid rehousing and employment programs for individuals experiencing homelessness.
- SSF has developed a landlord liaison program to increase the likelihood that landlords will rent to formerly homeless individuals.
- Service providers are training clients using a nationally recognized curriculum that helps build skills necessary to maintain housing.
- Sacramento Steps Forward is creating a 24-hour hotline in case of emergencies, and a fund to address any property damage.

### December 2015

- SSF has estimated the 2016 unmet permanent supportive housing need at approximately 700 units.
  - Based on assessment data from outreach, SSF estimates that 1,100 individuals will need permanent supportive housing over the coming year. Given a turnover rate of ~13% for PSH (equivalent to roughly 400 units), 700 individuals will require housing 2016.

## Diversion



### September 2015

- Data analysis indicates that 40% of homeless families enter the shelter system from housing. This suggests that the community can find ways to prevent many homeless families from entering the system in order to receive services. SSF will begin conversations with family services providers to develop elements of this part of the system in early 2016.





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## Success Story

**Name:** David Elliott

**Occupation:** Common Cents Homeless Services Navigator

**David's Story:** David Elliott is a member of Sacramento Steps Forward's Common Cents navigator team. He brings more to the position than compassion and a desire to help those in need, he also understands the experience of homelessness first-hand.

Born in Stockton, CA, David's parents divorced when he was three years old.

Eventually the family ended up living with his stepfather, at whose hands the family endured persistent abuse. David left home at age 13. The abuse had taken its toll: David was disciplined regularly at school, and had begun using drugs and alcohol to cope with the stress. After dropping out of high school in 11<sup>th</sup> grade, David bounced between the street and jails until age 49. During that time, he was married twice, and has one son from each marriage.

While living on the streets, David performed odd jobs for money, sold and used drugs. He ended up cycling in and out of jail until he was given an ultimatum: an 8-year prison term or a drug diversion program. David chose the diversion program. He had tried unsuccessfully to become sober in the past, and didn't know whether he would succeed but, he "was sick and tired of being sick and tired, and had no other option other than to die."

During his stay in the treatment program, David began to piece his life together. He enrolled at American River College, eventually graduating with two degrees, with honorable distinction. In recent years, David has committed himself to serving others and spending time with his family – he has reconciled with his mother and spends every Saturday with his granddaughter.

David acknowledges the power of choice and the stability offered to him as key to his success: "Until I made the decision to change my life, there was nothing anybody could do. Once I decided to do something different and try, it was because there was a program in place so I could get stable in order to make those changes, and make positive, not negative changes. I was never without a stable place – a place to come home, take a shower, and a case manager to help [me] maintain and guide daily activities, I would probably have returned to a life on the street, doomed for failure."