



SACRAMENTO CONTINUUM OF CARE (COC)

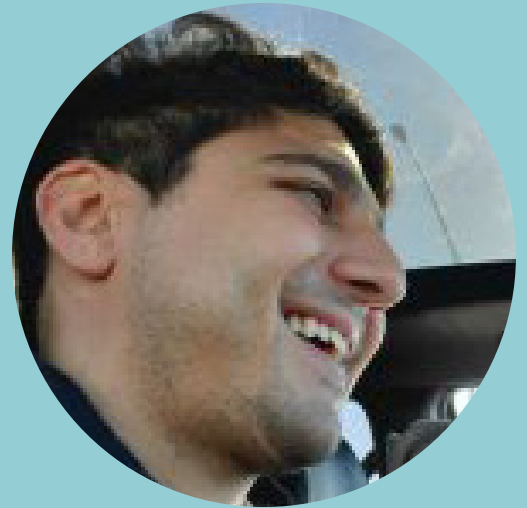
ACTION PLAN:

Findings &
Recommendations
from the CoC Racial
Equity Committee

SUMMER 2021



Angela Upshaw



Ardy Akhzari

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LETTER FROM THE CO-CHAIRS

Sacramento Continuum of Care's

Racial Equity Committee (REQC)

As co-chairs of the Sacramento Continuum of Care's Racial Equity Committee (REQC), we submit our recommendations to reduce and eliminate disparities in the homeless services system. Our recommendations are guided by: input from interviews with Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC) who have lived experience with homelessness; feedback during stakeholder forums; studies; listening sessions; and perspectives from our committee members and meeting guests. We had the pleasure of serving alongside the dedicated members of the REQC, each of whom brought a wealth of experience and vision to this work. We are grateful to all those who shared their perspectives, experiences, and potential solutions of race serving as a predictor for homelessness in Sacramento.

In Sacramento County and across the country, people of color experience homelessness at disproportionately higher rates because of historic and ongoing inequities. In Sacramento, BIPOC are three to four times more likely to experience homelessness than the general population. Disparities in homelessness are exacerbated by a wealth gap driven by racism; on average, the net wealth of a Black family in America is about one-tenth that of a white family, as it has been for the past 70 years. This dramatic wealth gap is further entrenched by Black families earning little more than half of the income earned by white families. We also know that racial and social inequities are directly connected to health inequities.

While the problems may seem vast and multi-dimensional, change is possible through our collective efforts. Meaningful change will require leaders, elected officials, public institutions, community organizations, and individuals to look at their work, policies, and decision-making through a racial equity lens and use their collective circles to influence change.

Our recommendations provide a framework for action towards improving our current practices and righting an inherently inequitable system. This action plan is not the final word on what can and should be done. Instead, it is a starting point and pathway towards addressing racial equity in our homeless services system.

Angela Upshaw, MPH, MBA

Associate Director

Berkeley Food & Housing Project-Roads Home

Ardy Akhzari

Chief Executive Officer

PacksforColdBack Inc.

Racial Equity Committee (REQC) Approval, Recruitment, & Formation

In November 2020, the Sacramento CoC Board approved the creation of a Racial Equity Committee to serve through July 2021, with the primary purpose of recommending an action plan for the board's approval. Intensive outreach efforts combined with tremendous interest from the community resulted in 66 applications being submitted. The Racial Equity Committee (REQC) membership slate was approved from this pool of applicants, with attention to ensuring robust inclusion of applicants who identified as BIPOC or as part of BIPOC families as well as those with lived experience of homelessness (a stipend was offered for members with lived experience). At the first meeting of the REQC in January 2021, the committee approved its ambitious work plan and initiated its implementation.



Subcommittee As Working Group

The committee met just once monthly, so an ad hoc subcommittee structure was utilized to move the work forward between the committee meetings. Interested committee members, along with SSF staff and members of the public, met one to three times monthly to address the project at hand. These meetings were opportunities to delve deeper into the questions and issues that were raised at the committee meetings, and to prep materials and recommendations for the full committee's consideration. The membership was fluid so that individuals could participate based on their interests and availability. It was in these meetings that the logistics and assignments for the BIPOC interviews were ironed out, that feedback was provided on the REQ data webpage, that understanding and gaps in our best practices were discussed, and that the action plan began to take shape.

Activities & Inputs

There were a number of activities and inputs that informed our findings and the recommendations that resulted from those findings.



■ REQ 3-Part Training Series:

CoC Board members, REQC members, and CoC-funded providers were invited to participate in an interactive training series in Spring 2021 designed to build a common knowledge base and move our community in the direction of collective, coordinated, well-informed action—at the individual, organizational, and systemic level. For each session, post-training professional development assignments and resources were offered along with a follow-up Courageous Conversation. The titles of the trainings were:

1

I Am a Good Person:

I Can't Possibly Have Bias And Other Myths About How Our Brains Work

2

Acknowledging Our Shared Inheritance:

Government-Sanctioned Bias, Systemic Racism, and a Renewed Demand for Change

3

Bringing It All Together:

Aligning Our Heads, Our Hearts, and Our Institutions for Equity

The materials from these trainings are available on our website sacramentostepsforward.org. To protect confidentiality and encourage transparency, the trainings were not recorded.

■ BIPOC Interviews:

To augment our quantitative data, the REQC engaged in a community-based participatory research process to design and conduct interviews with BIPOC who were currently experiencing or had recently experienced homelessness. The full report of this process and its findings can be found in **Appendix A**.

■ **Listening Sessions with Other Communities:**

SSF staff and REQC co-chairs engaged staff and consultants from other communities around the country to learn about their efforts towards racial equity, including their innovations, challenges, structures, funding, and advice.

■ **Stakeholder Forum:**

In April 2021, the REQC held an online forum to discuss with the broader community the questions that were driving the action plan. Several local leaders were invited as panelists to represent their BIPOC-led and/or BIPOC-serving organizations. Following the panel, participants met in small break-out groups that then reported out. A recording of this forum, as well as the follow-up forum in which we previewed the draft action plan, are available on our website sacramentostepsforward.org.

■ **Annual CoC Meeting:**

At the May 2021 meeting, we heard from local community members, including youth, with lived experience of homelessness. We also hosted three break-out sessions, including Advancing Racial Equity: Social Justice Through Community Engagement. In this session, we had the opportunity to explore several community-driven efforts to advance racial equity and re-imagine our homelessness system as being fully inclusive, anticipatory, and responsive. To learn more about the meeting, go to our website sacramentostepsforward.org.

■ **Community Input Forms:**

Following the first Stakeholder Forum and the Annual CoC Meeting, survey links were provided to the public to provide input on what they would like to see our community commit to. Among others, questions included: How can we ensure non-discrimination in our homelessness services system? How can we expand funding to underserved communities and non-traditional providers? How should the CoC Board partner to promote racial equity? What performance measures should we be tracking?

■ Presentations on System Performance:

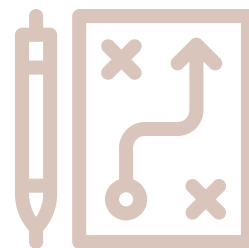
At the REQC meetings, we engaged with SSF staff to gain a clear picture of our system performance from the perspective of: Local Race and Ethnicity Data, the VI-SPDAT assessment tools used to prioritize individuals and families for housing and other services, Coordinated Entry, and the recently conducted Gaps Analysis. Committee members and the public received presentations and materials, which are posted on our website, and were able to ask questions.

■ Presentations on Best Practices:

Outside guests as well as REQC members were invited to educate us on the unique histories and needs of some of the populations that are over-represented in homelessness. Due to time constraints and availability of presenters, there were limitations on the number of presentations. There were two presentations from the Native American lens (one on housing and the other on health), and one each from the lens of Latinx Intersectionality and BIPOC with Disabilities. They can be found on our website.

Tiered Recommendations

As the recommendations have emerged from the findings, we have assigned them a number of T1, T2, or T3 based on our understanding of their ease of implementation, with T1 recommendations currently having the greatest capacity, resources, political will, partnerships, timeliness, and other considerations making them the “lowest hanging fruit”, while T3 recommendations currently present the greatest stretch. The plan has been designed to fulfill a 3-5 year vision, with the anticipation that some recommendations will be implemented sooner than others.



Racial Equity

Data & Context About the Disparities in Homelessness



In Sacramento County and across the country, people of color experience homelessness at disproportionately higher rates because of historic and ongoing inequities.

In Sacramento, Black/African Americans are three times more likely to experience homelessness than the general population. Meanwhile, American Indian and Alaskan Natives are four times more likely to experience homelessness than the general population.

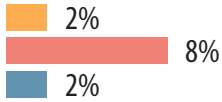
The Sacramento Continuum of Care (CoC) Racial Equity Committee (REQC) reviewed available data on homelessness by race and ethnicity and determined that it was important to share the following perspectives on the data.

The data shown below helps us understand the disparity in homelessness experienced by Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC). However, the federally mandated language and definitions used to collect and report data does not best serve BIPOC communities.*

Proportion of Race/Ethnicity by Population

■ Sacramento County
 ■ Experiencing Homelessness
 ■ Enrolled in Programs

American Indian & Alaska Native



American Indian or Alaska Native persons are 4 times more likely to experience homelessness and under represented in program enrollment.

Asian



Black or African American



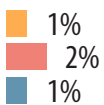
Black or African American persons are 3 times more likely to be homeless.

Hispanic or Latino



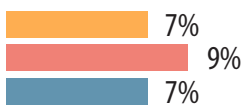
Hispanic or Latino may be of any race, so they are also included in other race categories.

Native Hawaiian & Other Pacific Islander



Unlike other racial groups, there are more American Indian or Alaskan Native multiracial persons than there are American Indian or Alaska Native only persons.

Two or More Races



White



Sacramento County population from 2019 Census Quick Facts. Population experiencing homelessness from 2019 Point-in-Time Count (1/31/19). Population enrolled in programs from Sacramento Homelessness Management Information System (1/31/19).

Race is a social construct.

There exists no clear, reliable distinctions that bind people to the racial categories, which were created as a way to define physical differences between people, and often used as a tool for oppression and violence.

Ethnicity categories are inadequate oversimplifications.

We are required to collect data on ethnicity separate from race using two ethnicity choices (“Hispanic or Latino” or “Not Hispanic or Latino”), which neglects the true diversity of shared culture, language, ancestry, practices, and beliefs. In addition, “Hispanic” and “Latino,” which the federal government defines as a “person of Cuban, Mexican, Puerto Rican, South or Central American or other Spanish culture of origin, regardless of race,” are not terms universally embraced by the labeled community. See more data on the intersection of race and ethnicity below.

Intersection of Ethnicity & Race

for those enrolled in programs on March 1, 2021

Non-Hispanic/ Non Latino	Black or African American	3,071	47%
	White	2,705	41%
	Two or More Races	425	6%
	American Indian or Alaska Native	120	2%
	Asian	108	2%
	Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	91	1%
	Unknown Race	37	1%
	TOTAL	6,557	100%

Hispanic/ Latino	White	883	63%
	Two or More Races	190	14%
	Black or African American	149	11%
	American Indian or Alaska Native	83	6%
	Unknown Race	60	4%
	Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	19	1%
	Asian	8	1%
TOTAL	1,392	100%	

Unknown Ethnicity	Unknown Race	74	76%
	White	15	15%
	Black or African American	6	6%
	Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	1	1%
	American Indian or Alaska Native	1	1%
TOTAL	1,392	100%	

The data does not reflect the true range of identity and experience.

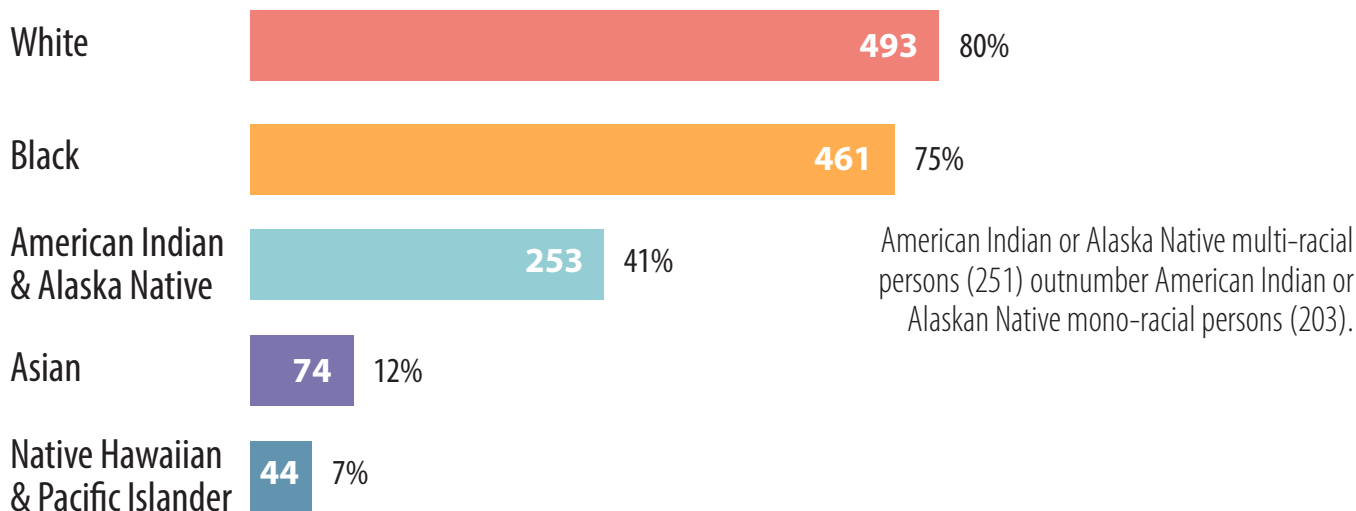
The data reflects the self-identified race and ethnicity of persons experiencing homelessness, but the categories are limiting. For example, the racial category “Asian” groups together a huge number of countries and people of very diverse cultures.

In addition, combining multiracial persons into a category such as “Two or more races,” can mask the true impacts for some racial groups. For example, there are more multi-racial American Indian/Alaska Native persons experiencing homelessness than there are American Indian/Alaska Native mono-racial persons. See more data on who is represented within “Two or more races” on the next page.

Unpacking the “Two or more races” category

for those enrolled in programs on March 1, 2021

RACES REPORTED FOR THOSE OF TWO OR MORE RACES



615 TOTAL PERSONS

The data does not represent the true burden of the housing crisis facing the BIPOC community.

By focusing on those who are unsheltered, the federal definition of homelessness leaves out other housing crisis situations that may be more common among some populations, such as over-crowding of multiple families in a unit meant for one or two persons, or couch-surfing.

Qualitative data adds critical context.

Interviews and surveys, such as the one undertaken by the REQC in 2021, shed more light on the true burden and challenges faced by BIPOC experiencing homelessness.

Despite the data’s limitations, it is clear there is disparity.

The data on this page and other data related to racial equity will be reviewed and updated regularly. If you are interested in learning more and helping address the disparity in homelessness, we encourage you to participate in the REQC meetings.

**Update: In May 2021, HUD communicated upcoming changes to the wording of the race and ethnicity categories based on feedback from communities. The visual shows the language people were allowed to choose from at the time the data was collected. For more information on the new wording, go to the HUD’s website www.hud.gov.*

Sacramento Continuum of Care's Racial Equity Committee (REQC)



The overwhelming number of those un-housed BIPOC interviewed for the Racial Equity Committee report that informs this action plan experience disabilities. This is in keeping with the national trend of the rising number of disabled and seniors experiencing homelessness who are also BIPOC. The intersection of un-housed, BIPOC and disabled means that city and county leaders must ensure that initiatives serving the un-housed are delivered in a universally accessible way and that BIPOC people with disabilities and older adults are at the table designing the programs meant to serve them.

–April Marie Dawson

CoC Board Member and Racial Equity Committee Member

Vision

- 1 Uncover the scope, causes, and potential solutions of race serving as a predictor for homelessness in Sacramento.
- 2 The 20-member committee is comprised primarily of Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC), many with lived experience of homelessness.
- 3 The committee is tasked with developing an action plan to guide the decision-making process of the CoC Board over the next three to five years. This plan will be fully informed by BIPOC with lived experience of homelessness, as well as input and recommendations from stakeholders, studies, pilots, local systems evaluations, and the learnings of other communities.
- 4 The ultimate vision is to create an equitable, accountable, and transparent homelessness system that catalyzes structural change both inside and outside of our current sphere of influence.

Process

■ **Racial Equity Committee (REQC) Approval, Recruitment, and Formation**

■ **Subcommittee as Working Group**

■ **Activities and Inputs:**

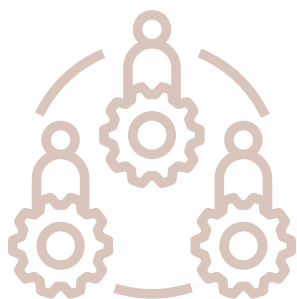
- REQ 3-Part Training Series
- BIPOC Interviews
- Listening Sessions with Other Communities
- Stakeholder Forum
- Annual CoC Meeting
- Community Input Forms
- Presentations on System Performance
 - Local Race and Ethnicity Data
 - VI-SPDAT
 - Coordinated Entry
 - Gaps Analysis
- Presentations on Best Practices
 - Native American
 - Latinx Intersectionality
 - BIPOC with Disabilities

2021 Racial Equity Committee Roster

COMMITTEE MEMBER	AREA OF REPRESENTATION	TITLE/ORGANIZATION
Aimee Zenzele Barnes	City of Sacramento	Diversity & Equity Manager, <i>City of Sacramento</i>
Alicia Gonzales	Greater Sacramento	Public Health Programs Manager, <i>Sacramento Native American Health Center</i>
★ Angela Upshaw, <i>Co-Chair</i>	Veterans	Associate Director of Programs, <i>Berkeley Food and Housing Project - Roads Home</i>
Anira Khlok	Sacramento, Health System	Community & Homeless Health Project Manager, <i>Dignity Health</i>
April Marie Dawson	People with Disabilities	Executive Director, <i>Resources for Independent Living</i>
★ Ardy Akhzari, <i>Co-Chair</i>	Sacramento	Founder & CEO (Volunteer), <i>Packs for Cold Backs</i>
Brina Sylve	Greater Sacramento Area	Paralegal, <i>California Housing Finance Agency</i>
Dawn Basciano	Sacramento	Public Policy Manager, <i>California Department of Public Health</i>
Fatemah Martinez, <i>MSW</i>	South Sacramento, Unsheltered/ Non-Profit/Outreach	President, <i>South Sacramento (HART)</i>
Henry Ortiz	Incarceration, Systemic Oppression, Community Violence	Grassroots Community Organizer, <i>All of Us or None Sacramento</i>
Koby Rodriguez	Central City, Non-Profit, BIQTPOC	Chief Program Officer, <i>The Sacramento LGBT Community Center</i>
Mike Nguy	Government Agency in the Public Health Division	Health Equity Lead, <i>Sacramento County Public Health</i>
Patricia Jones	Sacramento	Client, <i>Lutheran Social Services</i>
Shaline Hunter	Sacramento and Statewide	Civil Rights Attorney & Assistant Director of Equal Employ. Opp., <i>Caltrans</i>
Stephanie D. Thompson	Oak Park and Marina Vista	Vice Chair-Person, <i>Community Wellness Forum</i>
Stephen Hernandez	Sacramento, Veterans	Site Director, <i>Nation's Finest</i>
Steven Seeley	Mental Health Services, Sacramento County	Hope Coop Active Board Member/Volunteer, <i>Hope Coop</i>
Tiffany Glass	Elk Grove, Sacramento County	Human Services Program Planner, <i>Dept of Child, Family and Adult Services, CPS</i>
Tiffany Gold	Youth with Lived Experience, POC	Child Care transportation, <i>Waking The Village</i>
Vanessa Johnson	Sacramento County	Sheriff Lieutenant, <i>Sacramento County Sheriff's Office</i>

2021 Racial Equity Subcommittee Roster

COMMITTEE MEMBER	AREA OF REPRESENTATION	TITLE/ORGANIZATION
★ Angela Upshaw, <i>Co-Chair</i>	Veterans	Associate Director of Programs, <i>Berkeley Food and Housing Project - Roads Home</i>
Anira Khlok	Sacramento, Health System	Community & Homeless Health Project Manager, <i>Dignity Health</i>
★ Ardy Akhzari, <i>Co-Chair</i>	Sacramento	Founder & CEO (Volunteer), <i>Packs for Cold Backs</i>
Brina Sylve	Greater Sacramento Area	Paralegal, <i>California Housing Finance Agency</i>
Christina Heredia	Lead Agency	Referral Special, <i>Sacramento Steps Forward</i>
Fatemah Martinez, <i>MSW</i>	South Sacramento, Unsheltered/ Non-Profit/Outreach	President, <i>South Sacramento (HART)</i>
Henry Ortiz	Incarceration, Systemic Oppression, Community Violence	Grassroots Community Organizer, <i>All of Us or None Sacramento</i>
Patricia Jones	Sacramento	Client, <i>Lutheran Social Services</i>
Stephanie D. Thompson	Oak Park and Marina Vista	Vice Chair, <i>Community Wellness Forum</i>



Key Staff

Lisa Bates

CEO

Michelle Charlton

Continuum of Care Coordinator

Scott Clark

Systems Performance Analyst

Tamu Green, PhD

Systems Performance Advisor

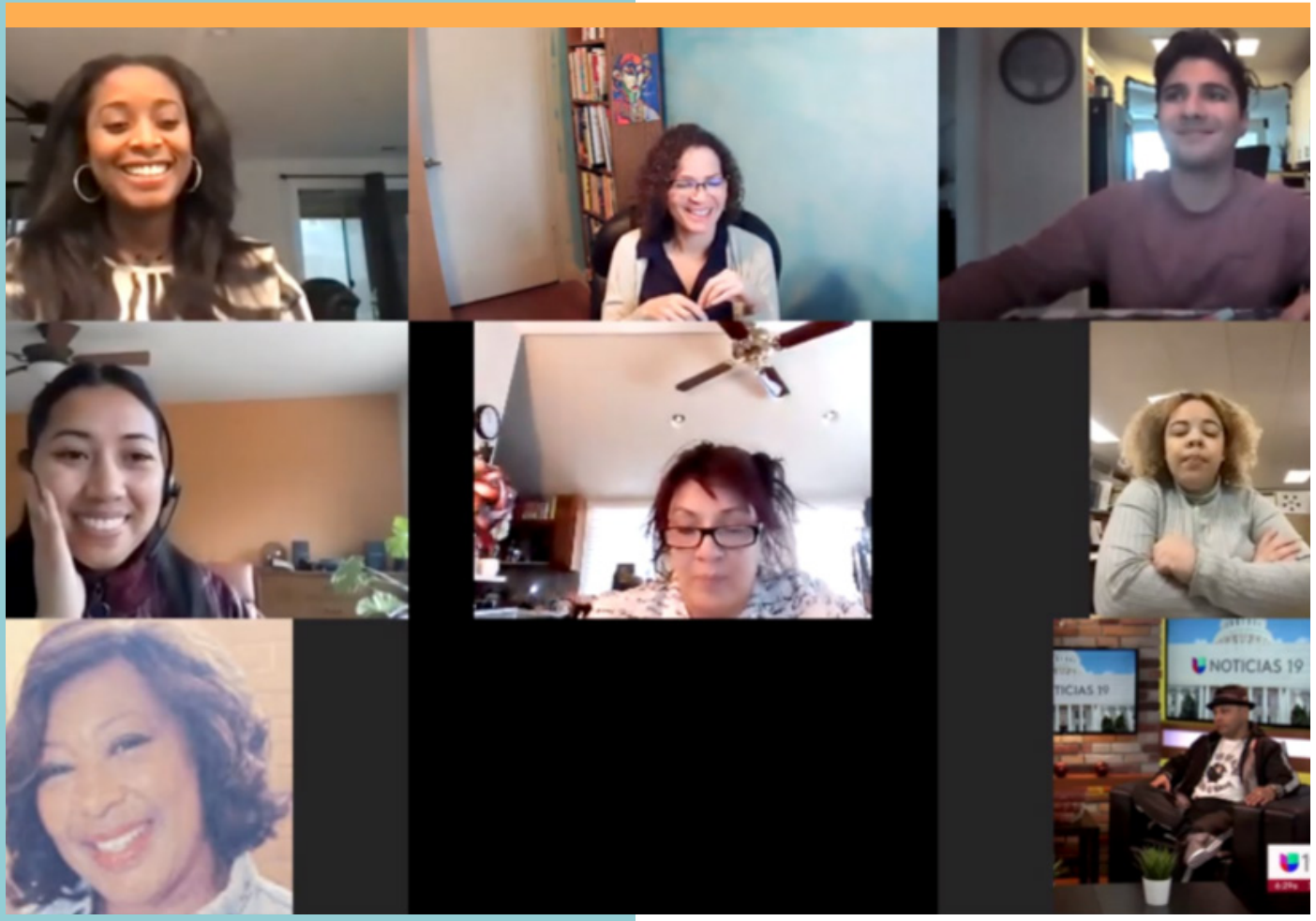
Christine Heredia

CE-Referral Specialist

Racial Equity Committee (REQC)



Screenshot of a Racial Equity Subcommittee Meeting



Findings

- The REQC was established in November 2020 to develop an action plan for the CoC board's consideration.
- The initial REQC commitment extended through July 2021 for members and staff.
- The REQC has become a valuable resource in the community, serving to give voice to BIPOC with lived experience of homelessness, to provide input on matters beyond the action plan, to foster trust and accountability, and to raise questions, concerns, and solutions in a brave space.
- Its members believe that an equitable homelessness response system in Sacramento is more likely to be achieved with an extended commitment to dedicated racial equity work.

Recommendations

- Secure funding to staff the REQC, supporting the members with committee logistics as well as meeting the liaison, training, and advocacy needs of the committee with other organizations in the community. (T2)
- Expand the term of the REQC as a standing committee of the CoC Board, which would primarily provide support for implementation of the action plan and the racial equity work of the other committees. (T1)
- Incorporate racial equity goals and tools into each of the CoC Board's committees when they develop their annual work plans. Have the REQC advise on the development and implementation of these goals and tools. (T2)

Data with a Racial Equity Lens



Photo Credit: Hector Amezcua



Findings

- The vast majority of our data is quantitative.
 - Quantitative categories do not always capture true identities or make all communities visible. This is particularly true of those that are not community-defined, as is the case for our HUD-designated racial and ethnic categories.
 - Data is generally most useful and actionable when it is disaggregated. Disaggregation can be challenging when there are small numbers of a subpopulation.
 - Qualitative data can provide meaningful context to understanding quantitative data.
 - Racial inequities can be compounded by other demographic factors such as disability, gender, gender identity, and sexual orientation, creating a multiplier effect.
 - Outside of the official HUD definition of homelessness, there are many who are housing insecure and ineligible for services.
-

Recommendations

To include a clearer picture of the BIPOC homelessness experience:

- Explore intersectionality data to understand multiplier effects of demographics outside of race and also to devise targeted universalism solutions. (T1)
- Collect, analyze, and report qualitative data when exploring issues related to equity. (T2)

To make data on racial equity more meaningful:

- Provide contextual information prepared with REQC input when presenting quantitative data. (T1)
- Disaggregate data on race/ethnicity identity as much as possible when presented. (T1)
- Develop and provide input to HUD on mandated race and ethnicity data process.
 - Explore opportunity to collaborate with other CoCs. (T1)
- If HUD presents an opportunity for community input on the definition of homelessness, advocate for a broader definition. (T1)

To incorporate more BIPOC voices :

- Discuss racial equity data initiatives with the REQC and other racial equity advocates to get input on key aspects such as data definitions, data collection, analysis, and findings. (T1)
- Work with the REQC to identify racial equity key performance measures. (T1)

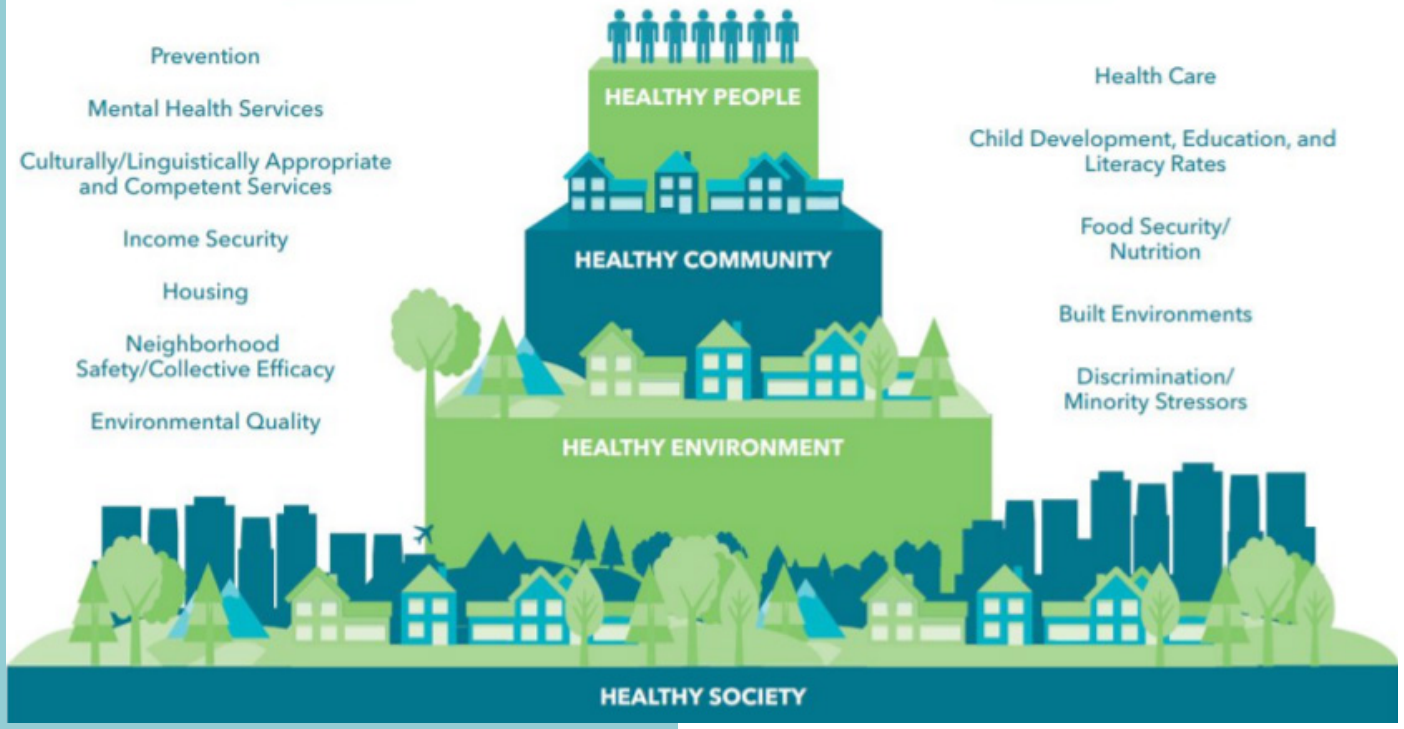
Training & Education/ Normalizing Conversations



Source: California Department of Public Health, Office of Health Equity, as inspired by World Health Organization, Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, and many others.

Achieving Health & Mental Health: Equity at Every Level

Transforming the conditions in which people are **BORN, GROW, LIVE, WORK and AGE** for optimal health, mental health & well-being.



Findings

- The community will participate in workshops, educational presentations, trainings, and courageous conversations when those opportunities are offered. There is strong interest in learning the context for racial disparities in homelessness, as well as how to take personal and organizational action.
- Some community members have requested that providers receive training in Housing First principles and good communication skills, as well as training on the unique history, needs, and best or promising practices for specific racial and ethnic populations that are little understood in relation to homelessness services.
- Intersectional issues of race/ethnicity with disability, gender identity, and sexual orientation are both prominent and largely misunderstood.
- There is a continuum of expertise within the local community, with some members newly entering these conversations and others who have significant depth of understanding.
- Bringing CoC board members, providers, volunteers, and other members of the CoC community together to learn about and openly discuss the challenges that BIPOC face demonstrates leadership and fosters trust and collaboration.

Recommendations

- Provide ongoing training and educational opportunities that are free and open to the entire community. The trainings should be determined by the needs that are demonstrated and expressed to better understand and promote racial equity, including intersectional needs. Note: Free disability training is available through the local independent living center (RIL). (T1)
- Adapt the national Culturally and Linguistically Appropriate Services (CLAS) Standards to provide guidance to the homelessness sector, and provide training on how to implement the standards. (T2)
- Draw on local and national expertise to provide this education, uplifting the experience and voice of BIPOC with lived experience of homelessness in the process. (T2)

Staff & Leadership Diversity



Coc Board Members



Erin Johansen

Chair

*Executive Director,
Hope Cooperative*

Representing:
Mental Health



Angela Upshaw

Vice Chair

*Associate Director
of Programs,
Berkeley Food &
Housing Project*

Representing: Veterans



Pixie Pearl

Secretary

*California Homeless
Youth Project*

Representing:
Transition-Age Youth,
LGBTQ Community

Findings

- While many of the organizations and institutions that comprise the CoC have line staff that reflect the racial and ethnic demographics of Sacramento's population experiencing homelessness, there is less diversity at the leadership level.
- It is often the leadership within these organizations and institutions that are recruited to the CoC board because of their authority and influence.
- As such, the CoC board does not reflect the community's racial and ethnic diversity.

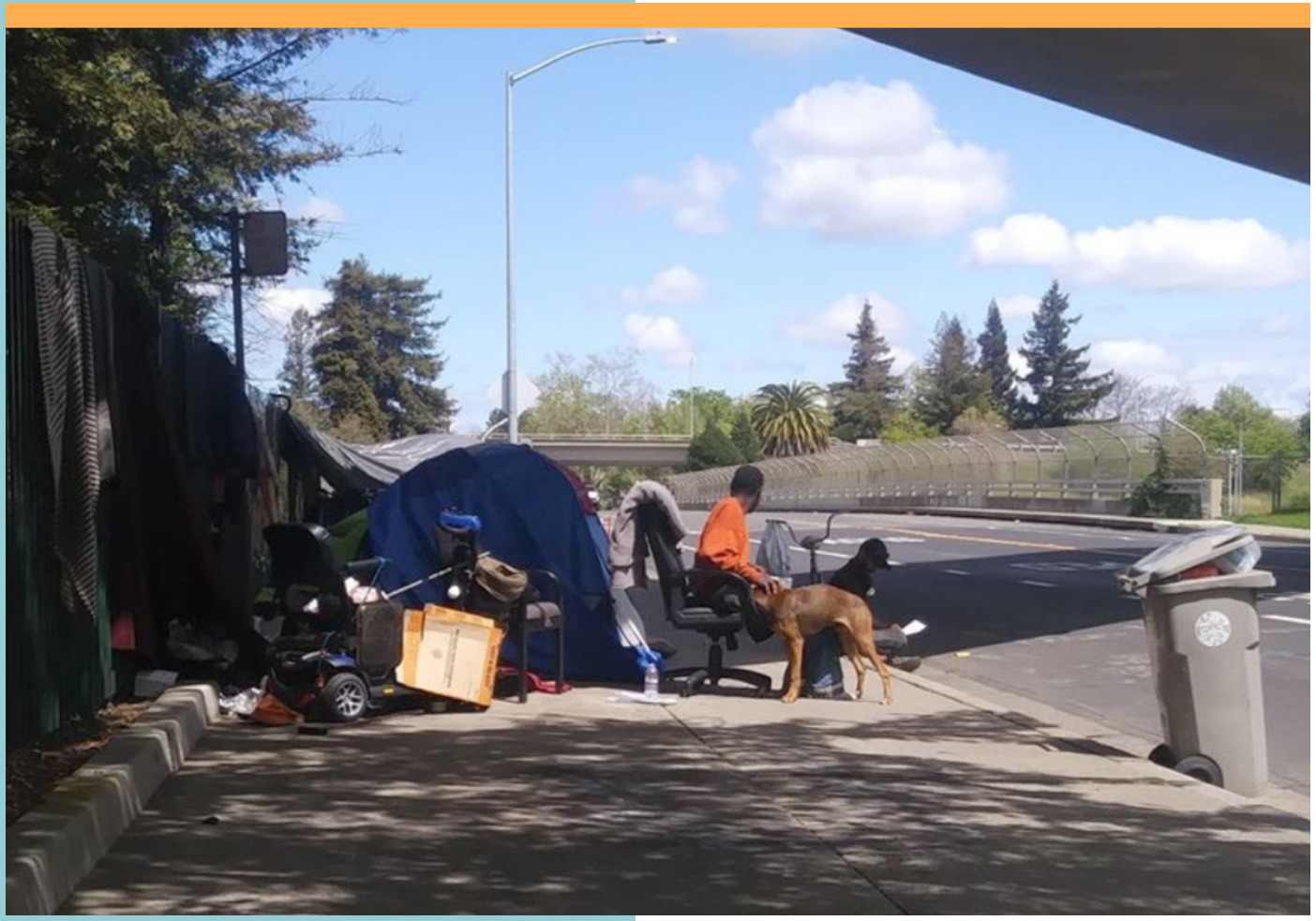
Recommendations

- Among Sacramento's homelessness service providers, encourage social equity — intentionally hiring management level individuals with lived experience. (T2)
- When recruiting for the CoC Board and committees, replicate the process of recruitment for the REQc, intentionally seeking overrepresentation of BIPOC, especially those with lived experience. (T1)
- Explicitly offer stipends for participation for board and committee members with lived experience. (T1)

Assessment & Prioritization



Photo Credit: Sacramento Poor People's Campaign



Findings

- Version 1 of the VI-SPDAT has been criticized for not properly scoring BIPOC, under-prioritizing them for services.
- Some communities have modified their assessment and prioritization process to account for communities that have experienced gentrification and displacement and/or a history of redlining.
- Many individuals in Sacramento wait for long periods of time in the Coordinated Entry process after their VI-SPDAT data is gathered.
- There is the potential for real and perceived bias on the part of anyone involved in the assessment process.
- There is also the potential for the person being assessed to feel uncomfortable with those involved in the process based on their demographics and lived experience.

Recommendations

To address/prevent potential issues with the VI-SPDAT tool:

- Involve the REQ Committee in any planned changes to the Coordinated Entry assessment process before implementation. (T1)
- Explore alternative tools and methodologies for potential future use. (T2)

To better support individuals experiencing homelessness:

- Continue to improve the Coordinated Entry process, so that people do not wait for long periods of time after data is gathered from VI-SPDAT. (T3)

To address/prevent potential assessment administrator bias:

- Educate those who conduct needs assessments about racial disparities in housing and homelessness. (T2)
 - Advocate for racial equity training for anyone who administers an assessment.
- Collect race/ethnicity data about those who provide assessments to understand to what degree administrators represent population they serve. (T2)
 - Administer survey or ask organizations to provide information.

Language Access



Photo Credit: Sacramento Street Medicine



Findings

- Because the VI-SPDAT is only offered in English, individuals and families without English as their Native language are at a disadvantage from accessing entry, assessment, resources, and housing at an equitable level.
- While there has been a transition from discouraging translation to allowing bilingual service providers to translate, this adjustment is recent, not widespread knowledge, and leaves a heavy burden on those bilingual service providers to adequately understand, interpret, and translate complex assessment tools.
- With the exception of the consent form, vital documents necessary to navigate successfully through the HMIS process are not translated into languages other than English.

Recommendations

Vital Documents: VI-SPDAT Risk Assessment, Consent Form and Additional Documents (e.g., third party verification, self-certification, disability certification, program information, practices and policies)

- Translate all necessary information and documentation into multiple languages (T2)
- Train service providers on navigating access to translated forms and delivering assessments (T2)
- Ensure that all newly implemented tools and documents are offered in multiple languages (T2)

Provide funding for free and ongoing access to realtime translation and interpreting services for providers and programs without bilingual and multilingual staff. (T3)

Assess all documents that are provided to clients for readability; as necessary, re-create them to read at a 4th-5th grade level. (T2)

Include accessibility statements on all outreach materials/brochures that includes who to reach out to if someone needs accommodations to participate in programs and services. (T1)

Equitable Funding



Photo Credit: Sacramento Poor People's Campaign



Findings

- Small, BIPOC-led organizations are at a disadvantage in the NOFA and other competitions for contracts and grants due to infrastructure challenges such as lack of board training and development, liability insurance and other requirements, internal HR processes and procedures, and prior large-scale contract or grant management.
- Small organizations are burdened with data collection, preventing them from playing to their strengths: direct service provision.
- Competition between service providers stifles collaboration, innovation, and new funding streams.
- There is community concern that legacy projects are not effective enough and continually funding them without thorough evaluation of their impact impedes the funding of other projects that may be more effective.

Recommendations

- Explore developing the capacity of small, BIPOC-led organizations by offering cohort and individual training and technical assistance annually, in preparation for competitive procurement and successful implementation of the NOFA and other opportunities to diversify Sacramento's network of homelessness providers. Explore paying existing BIPOC-led providers to provide the training and technical assistance as peer mentors. (T3)
- Incentivize larger organizations to partner with small, BIPOC-led organizations that have a longstanding history of working in the community by providing preference to their funding applications when such partnerships are in place or by requiring complementary collaboration. (T3)
- Evaluate current funded projects for effectiveness with BIPOC populations. (T3)

Partnerships



Sacramento Native American Health Center (SNAHC)

You are on Native Land

Sacramento Tribal areas consist of:

- Nisenan
- Foothills and Southern Madiu
- Valley Miwok
- Wilton Miwok
- Me-Wuk people

South of the Sacramento River, are the

- Patwin
- Wintun
- Wintu



Findings

- Federally recognized tribes have the authority to create their own CoCs. There is one federally recognized tribe in the Sacramento area, Wilton Rancheria.
- There are many organizations and institutions that provide preventative or supporting services to individuals and families facing homelessness who are not connected to or knowledgeable of the CoC.
- The disproportionate numbers of BIPOC in institutions and systems that are further upstream contribute to the racial inequity found in homelessness. Unsupported exits from the foster care, juvenile and adult incarceration, education, and health care systems increase the likelihood of experiencing homelessness.
- Youth homelessness strongly predicts adult homelessness.

Recommendations

- Offer formal support and allyship to Wilton Rancheria in the creation and sustainability of a CoC. (T1)
- Conduct outreach into the community to develop a more comprehensive database of organizations and institutions that could aid the efforts of the CoC. Include these potential partners in communications about funding opportunities, board and committee meetings and openings for membership, forums, trainings, and other engagement that will strengthen case management/case conferencing, housing development and placement, HMIS utilization, and collaborative program design. (T1)
- Establish a workgroup to learn from other communities that have established data-sharing agreements among multiple systems and provide case management prior to anticipated exits from overrepresented BIPOC systems, to determine the feasibility of replicating this type of transition coordination in Sacramento. (T2)

Homeless Management Information System (HMIS)

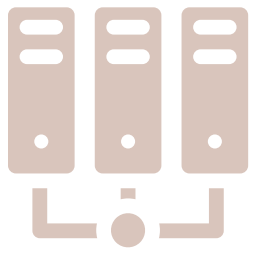


Photo Credit: Hector Amezcua



Findings

- Not all providers use HMIS, and among those that do, data quality varies — although there is widespread agreement that having a single database or integrated platform would enable better system performance.
- HMIS is considered by some to be too burdensome for data entry and too complicated to navigate.
- Some volunteers of BIPOC-led and BIPOC-serving organizations that are not currently CoC-funded have specifically requested that they be trained to enter data into HMIS.

Recommendations

- Convene leaders and database administrators to discuss opportunities to standardize data collection and reporting, reduce duplicative data entry across systems, and explore potential for future data sharing (Source: Gaps Analysis). Specifically, seek to build a data sharing system that is comprised of: a) Technical infrastructure that allows secure data transfer between SSF and its data sharing partners, b) A data sharing agreement template so that SSF can quickly and easily establish legal and binding agreements with its partners, and c) Tools to perform external data integration into HMIS. (T3)
- Identify the scope of the data quality issues in HMIS and communicate them with the operators/ providers. Log this communication to get a clearer understanding of the effectiveness of current interventions. (T1)
- Expand training and education for the providers at management and data entry levels, making sure the training curricula are themselves easy to understand and follow. (T2)
- Consider funding a diverse team of resource specialists to provide intensive hands-on coaching with current and potential HMIS users to increase their comfort and success with inputting and accessing HMIS data. (T2)
- Individuals who are serving as volunteers or staff for BIPOC-led and BIPOC-serving organizations should specifically be outreached to receive this HMIS support. (T1)



Racial Equity Committee Interviews Summary June 2021

The Sacramento Continuum of Care Racial Equity Committee (REQC) established a goal to better understand the local Black Indigenous & Persons of Color (BIPOC) homelessness experience through an interview process.

REQC members were encouraged to contribute names of persons with current or recent past experience with homelessness, who might be willing to be interviewed. 19 people were recommended for interview.

Based on the ability to connect, 20 REQC members were involved in surveying 14 people. Participants were provided with a gift card.

Participant Demographics Summary

14 people interviewed

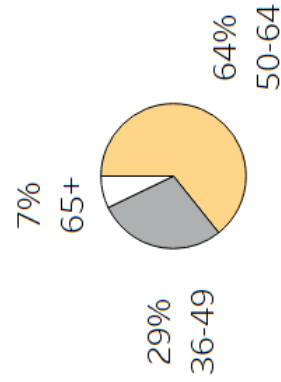
"How do you identify racially and ethnically?"

African American	5
African American/Black	2
Black	1
Native American /Black	1
Native/Black	1
Indigenous/Haitian/ Native American	1
Native American	1
Hispanic/Indian	1
Anglo/Asian/Latin	1

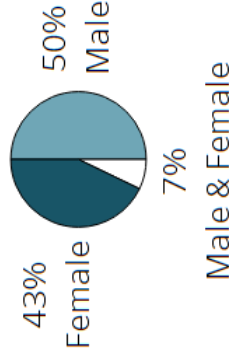
Current homelessness situation

Experiencing/connected to services	6
Experiencing/not connected to services	4
Resolved	4

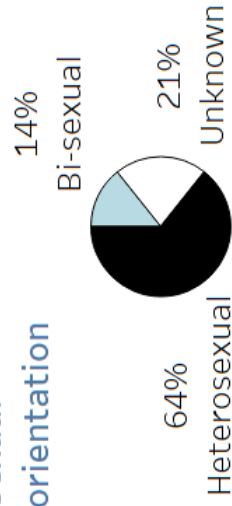
Age group



Gender



Sexual orientation



Racial Equity Committee Interviews Summary June 2021

Participant Demographics Detail:

Person ID	Race/Ethnicity	Gender	Sexual Orientation	Head of Household	Living w/ Disability	DV Survivor	Formerly Incarcerated	Veteran	Age Group	Current Situation
1	Black	Male	Straight	Yes	Yes	-	-	-	36-49	Experiencing/not connected to services
2	Indigenous & Haitian/ American	Native Male	Straight	Yes	Yes	-	-	-	50-64	Experiencing/connected to services
3	Native American	Female	Straight	Yes	Yes	Yes	-	-	50-64	Resolved
4	Black/African American	Female	Bi-sexual	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	-	36-49	Experiencing/connected to services
5	Native American & Black	Female	Not answered	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	-	50-64	Experiencing/not connected to services
6	African American Black	Male	Straight	-	-	-	-	Yes	50-64	Resolved
7	African American	Male	Heterosexual	Yes	Yes	-	-	Yes	50-64	Resolved
8	African American	Female	Not answered	Yes	Yes	-	-	-	65+	Experiencing/connected to services
9	Hispanic/Indian	Female	Not answered	Yes	-	-	Yes	-	50-64	Experiencing/connected to services
10	Anglo Asian Latin	Male/Female/Hesperus	Bi-sexual	Yes	-	-	-	-	50-64	Experiencing/not connected to services
11	African American	Male	Straight	Yes	-	-	Yes	-	36-49	Experiencing/connected to services
12	Native & Black	Male	Straight	Yes	Yes	-	-	-	50-64	Experiencing/connected to services
13	African American	Male	Straight	Yes	Yes	-	-	-	50-64	Experiencing/not connected to services
14	African American	Female	Straight	Yes	Yes	Yes	-	-	36-49	Resolved

- For Race/Ethnicity, Gender, and Sexual Orientation, the participant self-identified and was not limited to any categories.
- For Head of Household, Living with a Disability, Domestic Violence (DV) Survivor, Formerly Incarcerated, and Veteran categories, participants were asked “Which of these descriptions best describe you?”
- For Current Situation, participants chose from three options.

Racial Equity Committee Interviews Summary June 2021



Length of time homeless

Of the 12 persons who responded, all indicated a length of one year or longer. It was in some cases difficult to tell if lengths were continuous or represented multiple cases of homelessness. The range reported spanned “about one year” to 30 years.

Those who had resolved their homelessness, reported shorter lengths of time homeless.

Current homelessness situation	Average years homeless
Experiencing/connected to services	9.2
Experiencing/not connected to services Resolved	10.3 2.0
Overall average years homeless	8.3

Location of homelessness

The majority of persons had spent all of their time homeless in Sacramento.

Other locations mentioned were Los Angeles (experience was better in Sacramento) and Texas (experience was better in Sacramento).

Location of homelessness	Count
All Sacramento	8
Not just Sacramento	5
Total	13

Events leading to homelessness

All 14 persons identified events contributing to their homelessness.

8 people reported multiple events leading to homelessness, and each event was counted.

The most common themes were related to:

- Employment, including loss of job or inability to find work
- Health-related challenges, including illness or injury that prevented them from working, as well as related bills
- Family changes, including death of family member and separation from partner

Event type	Count
Multiple reasons	8
Employment	7
Health	7
Family change	6
Not enough money	5
Other	3
Drug addiction	1
Eviction	1
Total	38

Racial Equity Committee Interviews Summary June 2021

Personal impact of homelessness

10 people answered a question on how homelessness affected them. 4 people focused on challenges (1 had resolved their homelessness). 5 people focused more on things they had learned (1 person had resolved their homelessness). 1 person spoke to both challenges and growth.

Challenges identified in response to this question included:

- bad weather
- no bathroom or shower
- health issues got worse
- addicted to living outside
- realize people look down on you
- things get stolen
- getting the “run around” from providers

Changes that reflect new understanding included:

- increased empathy
- more aware of world
- helped resolve personal issues
- increased understanding of self
- realized you need others to survive

Resources accessed

13 people indicated a wide variety of services and agencies accessed or attempted to access, including navigation, housing services, shelter, and drug-related programs. 2 persons (both not connected to services) indicated that they “haven’t really tried.” Sometimes resources were referred to generally, but specific programs were also mentioned.

Sacramento programs and providers mentioned

- 2-1-1
- Covered Sacramento
- Loaves & Fishes
- Sacramento Covered navigator
- Sacramento Self Help Housing
- Salvation Army
- Volunteers of America
- Union Gospel Mission
- Sacramento Housing & Redevelopment Agency (SHRA)
- Sacramento Native American Health Center (SNAHC)

Veteran programs mentioned

- Roads Home
- VASH vouchers
- Veterans advocate program

Other programs mentioned

- Section 8
- SSI



Racial Equity Committee Interviews Summary June 2021

Housing Choice Vouchers

A little more than half (8 out of 14) indicated they had received Housing Choice Vouchers, 3 of whom reported that they received denials for vouchers or from apartments or landlords. An additional 2 people who did not receive Housing Choice Vouchers reported other housing-related denials. No reasons for denials were provided in response to this question, but related issues emerged for other questions, as captured elsewhere in this report.

Time to services

Of the 11 people who responded, 5 reported they were quick to get services (“immediate”/“daily”/“not long”). 2 people indicated months (1 of which was specific to housing), and 1 person indicated years (specific to housing). 1 person said it depends. 2 people said they had not yet received services.

Barriers to accessing services

11 out of 13 people indicated barriers to accessing services at some point in the interview. 2 people stated that they did not experience any barriers.

The most common barrier identified was transportation to appointments and/or to access services with 8 mentions, followed by health-related issues, and documentation issues.

Barriers identified	Count
Transportation	8
Health condition	4
Documentation	3
Hard to connect with providers	2
Men-only program	1
Locating housing	1
Politics	1
Long wait for housing/shelter	1
Drug use	1
Domestic Violence	1
Lack of opportunity	1
Lack of resources	1
Being a woman	1
Insurance changes	1

Racial Equity Committee Interviews Summary June 2021

Reasons rejected or denied resources

Of the people who responded, half (6 out of 12) said they had been rejected or denied services. In some cases, details were provided.

- Person 2 was told that he was verbally abusive and an “angry black man” and doesn’t meet the criteria because of his attitude.
- Person 5 said the Sheriff’s Department denied her resources when they were around, and she noticed someone else of another race get vouchers, but she didn’t receive any.
- 3 people mentioned that the call-back process is an issue, and some programs do not return calls.
- Person 14 said no call-backs leaves people feeling lost. In addition, she said “So many places have denied me along the way for having a voucher and some take advantage that you do in all type of ways – profiling, indecent behavior, or just not helping at all.”

Alternatives that played a part in resolution of homelessness

Alternatives to the homeless-related services and programs were not cited by most. Person 2 indicated an alternative, which was making relationships with people who had housing. Persons 5 and 11 referenced jail-based programs.

Ability to meet basic needs

1 person not connected to services said they were not able to meet their needs. 3 people clearly stated that their needs were met. In total 12 people listed different ways they were able to meet at least some of their needs. In general, people spoke positively about the services available to meet their basic needs, but 2 people indicated it was difficult to meet their needs.

General ways meeting needs

- Resourcefulness
- Car sharing
- Doctor service
- Food closets
- Food/supplies delivery
- Navigator
- Shelter/housing
- Wellness center

Specific programs meeting needs

- Citrus Heights Food Closet
- Loaves & Fishes
- Maryhouse
- One Community Health
- Salvation Army
- Section 8
- SHRA
- SNAHC
- St Francis house
- VA health care
- Volunteers of America
- Roads Home

Racial Equity Committee Interviews Summary June 2021

History of homelessness or other social or economic challenges related to race in family

The majority of the 8 people who responded did not indicate that there was a family history of homelessness or other family challenges related to race.

Of those who indicated there was a history, Person 2 indicated it was job-related (“you’re not getting the job because you are a black guy with dreads”), and the Person 13 mentioned challenges of growing up in “the South.”

History related to race	Count
No	6
Yes	2
Total	8

Is there a difference compared to other races in the factors that played a part in becoming homeless?

3 people indicated there was a difference.

- Person 1 said being black in America is hard. He doesn’t blame his skin color, but he clarified that it does make it a little tougher.
- Person 10 said he gets rejected because of the way he looks.
- Person 13 said he has been “undercut” on construction jobs by other races who are willing to do the job cheaper.

Is there a difference compared to other races in applying for or accessing services?

A little more than half (8 out of 14) thought there was a difference by race in applying for and accessing services. Some people provided specific examples.

- Person 1 says sometimes people look to help certain other people faster than they help you. He feels that being black “puts you at the bottom of the totem pole.”
- Person 2 said he was frustrated and upset that his word isn’t taken at face value, he wants to be treated equally when requesting resources.
- Person 4 said “When I was at the river, Discovery, there were different services and groups come out; groups would have you write down your name and social and were going to call you. White females got calls and spoke highly of them; I couldn’t get a call back. And, I was pregnant at the time. Yes, like I was saying early a couple of people swear by these services; there was a pastor that got hotel, people who got the help were white. Never saw anybody who wasn’t get much help. Not until where I work now.”
- Person 5 said it is not fair that the only time she has access to services is when she is being taken to jail.

Racial Equity Committee Interviews Summary June 2021

- Person 6 mentioned being given a “not up to par” feeling by a particular provider who wound up not providing the sought-after service to him, but providing to two others.
- Person 7 did not think race was a factor and mentioned that because he used a phone line that may have helped since they didn’t know what color he was.
- Person 12 said “it’s a certain look...they’re not hiding it.”
- Person 13 said “Man I don’t know why they hate us, what did we ever do?...I’m at this stand, grabbing coffee, he’ll just look up and move away like I’m going to do something to him or something, that hurts more than anything.” He says he is not a threat to anyone, and it is sad for him to go through things like that.
- Person 14 said “I see many pick-and-choose situations with races.”

Were services denied or delayed due to labels such as “service resistant”, “aggressive”, “violent”?

Of the 11 people who answered the question, 4 said they were delayed or denied services due to labels more readily assigned to BIPOC individuals. Specific labels were mentioned by 3 people.

- Person 1 says he was called a “lazy son of a bitch” and told “it’s just like you people.”
- Person 2 despises the “angry black man” moniker that has been assigned to him in the past.
- Person 12 has been labeled “service resistant.”

An additional person answered no, but said she had observed others get labelled as “aggressive” and “service resistant.”

Person 4 said they had not been labelled, but is impacted by the possibility of being labelled. “I try to keep myself as calm as possible because I know this; I’m a black female and of course seen as aggressive especially coming off of drug addiction, coming off the river all stacked up against me, so I try to be as pleasant as possible.”

Racial Equity Committee Interviews Summary June 2021

What would a more racially just system look like?

All 14 people responded, with a general call for equal access and treatment echoed by almost all. In addition, there were a wide variety of other recommendations.

Changes

- Remove program limitations (e.g., one bag limit at shelter)
- Better leadership
- Learn more about people served
- Provide mailing addresses
- More mental health staff
- More communication
- More funding
- More housing
- Expand Roads Home program
- Allow more time in programs
- More promotion of programs
- More training for providers
- Equality
- Compassion
- Accept imperfections
- Challenge each other
- Individual role
- Stop killing each other
- God's judgment
- Accept authority

Person 1 wishes everyone would realize that we all bleed the same blood. We should be judged by the content of our character, not the color of our skin. We need to treat each other better instead of pulling each other down. They need to realize that we are all the same.

Person 2 says equality across the board is the start. Zero tolerance on both sides, both the provider and the participant. Organization leadership needs to set a proper example. The individual coming in for help needs to be open and put their biases aside as well. Funds, more money needs to be poured into this. This is a state of emergency and needs to be addressed as such.

Person 3 says God is the only one that can judge us. She wishes everyone would just get along because we are all children of God regardless of the race.

Person 4 says the professionals in the industry of helping along with education need some training with who they are dealing with. Every staff should have one person on staff for mental health, staff for drugs and alcohol and mental health for sure, it should be required. Need people who are compassionate or do understand that mindset. Need to know if there's mental issues. A training course once a month for the staff because they can be the breaking point for a person being homeless

Racial Equity Committee Interviews Summary June 2021

Person 5 says equal access to services for all, color of skin shouldn't matter. Start handing out vouchers for everyone who is living on the street. Help those that want to be helped, shouldn't discriminate beyond that. Remove limitations, such as "you can only take one bag with you" Don't place time constraints for individuals, such as showering in 10 minutes, taking only one bag. Also, mailing addresses are needed and often times identification cards are stolen and other things like that.

Person 6 says people should just be treated as people. People who care and listed, showed compassion, understood the system are key to his/and everyone's success. Not everyone is "Cinderella." The attitudes of the employees of non-profits and legislators who are hired/and elected needs to change. They are there to serve the homeless population and he feels that they don't really follow through sometimes. When he was in the service, his job was to protect and serve the country. As a provider of services, they need to do the same. They need to care, that is paramount. You are in the public services to care and empathize with whatever your role entails that is what needs to happen.

Person 7 says if Roads Home could expand their services beyond veterans, it could be very helpful in getting more people off the street.

Person 8 says build more apartments and buildings. More funding to keep more homeless people off the street all the time.

Person 11 says try to love each other more. We got to stop killing each other before we worry about police killing us. As a whole, my race needs to take authority. We don't take authority that well, we don't like other people telling us what to do, that's what we have to get past, until we can do that, then nothing will change. Everyone's perception has to change and in order to do that, we have to look out for each other more. It falls back on that four-letter word, love.

Person 12 says a just system has no barriers holding specific races back. We should be challenging each other on how to better ourselves, society, and the world. We should come together as one, get back into the lawbooks to represent the people as one.

Person 13 says help everyone and everyone get along. Be more communicative, learn about people, don't go about old sayings and what you were you were taught in your household. Things have changed, and I hope so, we're not bad people man, we just need a break like everybody else. Everyone needs to learn how to let it flow and be good human beings. Equality is the goal, doesn't believe it'll happen in his lifetime, but he mentioned that even a little bit of change in his lifetime would be positive.

Person 14 says the reach out should be genuine to where it doesn't matter what race you are but based on the situation you are in and the desire to get out of your situation.



SACRAMENTO STEPS FORWARD

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