

MITIGATION



Strengthen safety net programs

Counties run or administer eligibility for most health and human services programs on behalf of the state and federal governments. The major programs include CalWORKs, Medi-Cal, mental health and substance use disorder services, In-Home Supportive Services, Child Welfare Services, Adult Protective Services, and CalFresh. Counties also are responsible for administering a General Assistance program for indigent individuals who are not eligible for the state CalWORKs program. Successful implementation of these core health and social services programs are the front lines of preventing homelessness. This is the safety net in California.

State supports and initiatives are essential for effective health and human services programs. However, funding is often prescriptive and not aligned to the cost of service delivery through a skilled and trained workforce or reflective of actual county costs. Furthermore, the infrastructure grants and other state grant opportunities are often complex and challenging for counties to maximize, especially smaller counties. The state should make efforts to maximize federal resources through Medi-Cal that can be deployed to support serving individuals experiencing homelessness. The state should also consider streamlining reporting and providing additional flexibility when allocating funding to counties to allow for additional local efforts that will focus on preventing homelessness across the programs administered by the counties. Ensuring counties have sufficient resources to administer these key programs will help individuals maintain their health, self-sufficiency, and housing.

THE FOLLOWING ARE RECOMMENDED ACTIONS TO IMPROVE MITIGATION EFFORTS FOR INDIVIDUALS EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS AND TO PREVENT INDIVIDUALS FROM BECOMING HOMELESS:

- Increase flexibility for county behavioral health funding to maximize federal Medi-Cal funds and expand the reach of county behavioral health investments for the unsheltered population.
- Ensure adequate funding and resources for county administration of key safety net programs to ensure eligible individuals can be enrolled and receive the services they need timely.
- Pursue opportunities to obtain matching federal funds including Medi-Cal Administrative Activities and claiming for social services, health, and behavioral health activities to help stretch investments.
- Continue support and partnership on the California Behavioral Health Community-Based Continuum Demonstration federal waiver request (Institutions for Mental Disease or IMD) to increase reimbursement for short-term inpatient costs.
- Leverage funding and coordination opportunities with the recent approval of the federal Medicaid 1115 demonstration waiver that will establish a coordinated community reentry process and provide for a targeted set of Medi-Cal services to youth and adults in state prisons, county jails, and youth correctional facilities for up to 90 days prior to release.

- Provide state funding for county conservatorship activities, which are currently underfunded. There is a growing demand for these services and resources must also be provided for any expanded duties or increased populations served.
- Increase opportunities for counties to participate in California Advancing and Innovating Medi-Cal (CalAIM) for homelessness supports.
- Seek federal approval to make housing support services a guaranteed Medi-Cal benefit that managed care plans must offer within CalAIM.
- Increase the payment levels for individuals with a mental health condition residing in board and care facilities and other applicable facilities.
- Increase state funding to expand availability of and access to programs and residential treatment that provide recovery services for substance use disorder.

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