

December 5, 2005

Santa Monica, CA

INFORMATION ITEM

TO: Mayor and City Council

FROM: City Staff

SUBJECT: Update on Selected Efforts to Address the Impacts of Homelessness in the Community

Introduction

On November 8, 2005, the "Annual Review of the City's Coordinated Plan for Homeless Services and Actions Related to HUD Grant Award" was agendaized for Council review and subsequently postponed to December 13, 2005. The following report provides additional information on activities addressing the impacts of homelessness in the community. The topics include: the City's Serial Inebriate Outreach Program (SIOP) at the Santa Monica jail; efforts to establish better linkages with the criminal justice system; cost-benefits of the City's Chronic Homeless Program; a possible family reunification pilot within the City's Chronic Homeless Program; feeding programs in Santa Monica parks; the Westside Thanksgiving Day Celebration and Project Homeless Connect; and the planned program and systems evaluation of the homeless services continuum of care.

Serial Inebriate Outreach Program:

To address the problem of serial public inebriates, in January 2005, the Council directed staff to move forward with the development of a sobering center on an expedited basis and expressed an interest in a regional approach. After a disappointing delay in realizing a regional psychiatric urgent care center to include a sobering center, and

absent another viable regional option, the City developed an alternative that could be implemented promptly to gauge the potential effectiveness of diversion efforts.

CLARE Foundation staff now offers voluntary substance abuse counseling to individuals who have been arrested and are in custody at the Santa Monica jail, supported by \$20,675 from the City's Chronic Homeless Program budget. The program promotes participation by offering residential rehabilitation as an alternative to prosecution. When the arrest involves the issuance of a formal citation, as is the case with serial offenders, the City Attorney will delay filing charges until the client completes 30 days of rehabilitation services. After 30 days, the City Attorney can either ask for an extension of treatment, or not file charges, depending on the client's progress. The program is represented diagrammatically at Attachment A.

This program was modeled on the P.A.T.H. "Streets or Services" (SOS) program which offers a service alternative to the criminal justice system for individuals who are arrested for non-violent, non-drug related quality of life crimes in downtown Los Angeles. The primary goal of the P.A.T.H. and Santa Monica's program is to link people who have committed non-violent crimes with social services as an alternative to jail. Since both of these programs use the arrest process as a lever to move persons into services, an initial reduction in calls for service for police personnel is not an anticipated outcome. Whether a reduction in police calls is achieved in the long term (through reduction in the number of serial inebriates) can be measured at the individual and aggregate level, as can change in the number and nature of calls for paramedic services related to serial inebriates. A measurable reduction in calls at the individual level is a more likely long-

term outcome to local initiatives than an aggregate reduction in calls, which will require regional approaches.

The City's program has been operational since early July, and progress has been positive:

- Clare substance abuse counselors have interviewed 133 people (34% of the annual goal). 28% of those interviewed were homeless for more than 5 years;
- 26% (35) elected to participate in recovery services. Of those, 32 entered into residential rehabilitation. 9 people remain in residential recovery today, 2 of the 9 have been in recovery for more than 30 days;
- Two people have graduated from the program after 30 days, and returned to work and stable housing;
- Several of the persons who did not choose to remain at CLARE were re-arrested and re-interviewed by CLARE staff at the jail. 2 were re-admitted into residential recovery where one remains;
- One person required medical detox services. To date, none of the program participants required referral to a mental health/dual diagnosis program;
- Seven of the participants who entered treatment at CLARE had been formally cited, and chose treatment as an alternative to sentencing. The other 25 entered CLARE voluntarily, with no charges pending;
- The participation rate of 26% exceeds the 10% benchmark that was projected prior to the implementation of the project.

By way of comparison, the P.A.T.H. SOS Program saw 12% (54/457) of participants "graduate" from the program (spend 21-28 days in services plus complete 3 days of community service) in one year. So far, 8% (11/133) persons in the City's program remain in residential recovery, with 4 (3%) remaining more than 30 days. The City continues to develop benchmarks for participant success and will establish how many program participants stay engaged in residential recovery for a minimum of 30 days.

To further awareness of this new resource, CLARE Foundation staff has made presentations at Police roll calls, and has scheduled meetings with paramedic staff for

the coming weeks. Arrests have not increased or decreased since the implementation of the program. The protocol for determining whether someone who is inebriated in public should be taken into custody for the safety of themselves or others has not changed. Patrol officers have always, and will continue to, provide appropriate care for someone who is inebriated in public. Persons who need medical care are transported to the hospital by paramedics. The hospital then contacts police at the time of discharge for transport to jail. There has not been a noticeable change in paramedic calls regarding inebriated individuals since the start of this program.

A larger policy issue is whether a stand-alone, sobering center would result in different or greater outcomes for the participants. Best practice research indicates that there are two models of sobering stations: free-standing sobering stations and court-linked sobering stations. Free-standing sobering stations offer a safe place for intoxicated persons to sober-up and provide substance abuse counseling and referrals to longer-term treatment programs. For intake, intoxicated individuals must not need medical treatment, and must be non-combative. They are generally transported to the sobering centers by police or outreach teams, no arrests are made, and individuals are free to leave the center at any time. Free-standing centers like those in Santa Clara County (now closed), Santa Rosa, Escondido and Santa Barbara do not limit the number of times an individual can use the center, and generally measure outcomes in terms of numbers served and referrals made (as opposed to longer-term changes in participants' behavior). The primary benefit of these programs is to provide a safe location for public intoxicants to sober up without taking public safety personnel off the streets for the longer period of time required if a formal arrest would be made.

Court-linked sobering centers often have a facility which works like the free-standing programs described above, except that there is a limit to the number of times an individual can use the facility before an arrest is triggered. In San Diego, for example, individuals are arrested after their fifth visit to the free-standing Inebriate Reception Center. At this point, individuals enter the criminal justice system, where the judge offers participation in a residential recovery program as an alternative to their jail sentence (usually 30 to 180 days). Similar court-linked programs exist in Santa Cruz and Santa Clara County. The San Diego program reports that 32% of program participants successfully completed the 6 month treatment program. For those “graduates”, there was an 88% reduction in paramedic contacts, a 92% reduction in emergency room visits, and 85% were employed or involved in employment preparation.

It is estimated that the operation of a free-standing sobering center with on-site counseling in Santa Monica would cost approximately \$200,000 - \$250,000 per year (excluding one-time costs to develop a site). Given the initial positive results of the current City program, the question of whether an additional free-standing or court-linked sobering center would warrant such an investment could be pursued in the context of the upcoming system and program evaluation of the homeless services continuum of care by addressing the following:

- Will providing a location and services apart from the jail for police officers to transport inebriates, without requiring them to be arrested, result in significant time savings or other benefits for law enforcement?

- Are there enhancements to the existing program that would make it more effective -- either by giving counselors an opportunity to interview more arrestees at the jail, issuing more formal citations, or making a better linkage to services for those who are transported to hospitals for medical care?
- How will the new HUD funding available for rental subsidies for the serial inebriate population, and the expansion of the Chronic Homeless Program, impact service linkages for this population?
- What location would be most appropriate for the development of a free-standing sobering station that would not become a region serving center, and when could it be ready for operation?
- Are there liability or legal issues related to police transporting inebriates to a sobering center who are not under arrest?
- Would a sobering center provide a greater number of persons with an opportunity to interact with substance abuse counselors? Would this result in greater participation rates? (Initial results indicate that more people are voluntarily entering the City's program than those who are formally cited, but this may not hold up over the long term. Many communities are finding that the role of the criminal justice system is crucial for linking the most chronic public inebriates to services.)

Mental Health Court:

In addition to the criminal justice system connection with the above program, other efforts linking supportive services and housing for homeless persons with the courts are under way. On November 15, 2005, City staff and local service providers met with Judge Bernard Kamins exploring ways to expand the drug court model currently in place to include a mental health component. City staff is also scheduled to meet with Public Counsel and a consultant for the Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health in early December to evaluate the establishment of a mental health court that will serve mentally ill persons who are arrested in the Santa Monica or Westside area.

City's Chronic Homeless Program – Cost-Benefit Analysis:

Determining the total cost of providing services to a chronically homeless individual in Santa Monica - in deciding costs of emergency room and hospital, public safety, criminal justice, public entitlement and social services – is challenging. Most studies conducted to date focus on only one or two sectors. For example, San Diego tracked the reduction in hospital and emergency room visits for the 18 individuals who graduated from their Serial Inebriate Program and found a \$385,519 savings post-treatment for the group (an average of \$21,000 per person). San Francisco found reductions of approximately \$16,000 in hospital costs for high-users one year after they were placed in supportive housing. New York City found a \$12,000 cost reduction in a range of public sector services used by chronically homeless persons one year after placement in supportive housing.

Staff is currently deriving baseline cost numbers for the original 25 participants in the City's Chronic Homeless Program (CHP) for their use of paramedic and law enforcement services in the three years prior to engagement with the program and stable placement in housing. Initial analysis indicated that the highest user averaged over \$8,800 per year in police, jail and paramedic services alone. The use of these and other services will continue to be tracked post-placement in housing in order to calculate any potential cost savings or cost shifting. Strategies to identify costs incurred through other public sector and health care agencies are under development. Representatives from the Westside Council of Governments will be meeting with representatives from local hospitals to discuss conducting a study of the costs of providing health care

services to homeless persons in the aggregate and to specified individuals before and after placement in supportive housing.

City's Chronic Homeless Program – Pilot Family Reunification Program:

A relatively inexpensive and effective program to assist homeless individuals to voluntarily reunite with family members across the state and nation is provided in San Francisco, Sacramento and Reno. Programs cover transportation expenses for homeless individuals who voluntarily decide to return to their cities of origin (See Attachment II – San Francisco Chronicle article regarding Homeward Bound) and find the investment worthwhile.

The San Francisco program requires that an individual, usually a family member, in the city of origin verify that they will provide housing and support for the homeless individual upon their return. The program also requires that the individual be stable enough to ensure completion of the trip. A criminal background check is conducted to determine that the individual is not on probation or parole, or fleeing a warrant. Typically, individuals are screened and provided with transportation within 24-48 hours. All travel is conducted by bus service because it is less expensive than air travel, there are fewer restrictions on bus travel; and the boarding process is more open so outreach workers can support the individual up until the time he or she boards the bus. Individuals typically receive clean clothing and \$10 in cash for each travel day.

Since the City of San Francisco began their “Homeward Bound” program in February, 2005, over 800 individuals have taken advantage of the program. Program staff

estimate that approximately 25 of these individuals have returned to San Francisco. The average cost has been approximately \$140 per person, with approximately 27% of participants leaving San Francisco for locations within the State of California. In 2004, the Reno, NV program paid to relocated 332 persons at an average cost of \$75.00 per person. They estimate that 96% do not return to be homeless in Reno.

Programs operated by Travelers Aid of Los Angeles and the Los Angeles County Department of Public Social Service (DPSS) offer travel assistance locally, but they are limited either by the amount of the subsidy provided -- Travelers Aid will pay 25% of a bus ticket; or by who is eligible – DPSS will only assist persons who have never received public assistance in Los Angeles County. City staff will examine the feasibility of piloting a family reunification program within the context of the City's Chronic Homeless Program.

Feeding Programs in Santa Monica Parks:

For about fifteen years, organized groups, independent of the City or local service organizations, and inconsistent with City policy to link food distribution to support services indoors, have been distributing food on a scheduled basis in City parks. The number of groups conducting food distributions has varied over the years, sometimes reaching as many as several dozen groups--many of which conducted multiple feedings each week. Many of the groups come from outside the City to conduct the feedings, some traveling as far as 50 miles to distribute food in Santa Monica.

The impacts of this activity on the City, City parks and City park users have been substantial. The feedings often attract large crowds. As most of the persons receiving food are, or appear to be homeless, they usually have significant amounts of personal property with them. They often congregate, with their belongings, in the area of the feeding long before the food distribution starts and stay long after it ends. The intensity of this use tends to discourage other persons from utilizing the area for recreational purposes. Moreover, wear and tear on park property is substantial. Perhaps most importantly, the scheduled public feedings tend to facilitate homeless people staying in the streets.

In 1993, the City adopted Ordinance Number 1668 requiring a permit for use of any City park by any group of 35 or more persons. That ordinance exempted “First Amendment activities” and left to the Director of Community and Cultural Services to ascertain whether particular activity fell within that category.

Shortly after its adoption, the ordinance was challenged in federal court. The court enjoined its implementation, finding that it constituted a prior restraint on speech, was impermissibly vague and failed to meet the requirements for restrictions upon the time, place and manner of speech because, among other things, it gave the Director excessive discretion. Rubin v. Santa Monica, 823 F. Supp. 709 (1993).

At about the same time, the Los Angeles County Health Department expressed concerns about the safety of foods, particularly hot foods, distributed at the feedings in Santa Monica. In response, the City incorporated various food safety standards into the

Municipal Code in 1994. See SMMC Section 5.08.370. Later, City staff worked with the County to promote food safety and to encourage feeding groups to move indoors. In response, most feeding groups changed their practices to ensure food safety. Two providers have linked with OPCC's Access Center and now provide meals at the Access Center rather than as "stand-alone" activities in Palisades and Reed Parks.

In 2001, the City adopted its present Community Events ordinance, SMMC Chapter 4.68. That ordinance applies to all types of community events occurring on public property. Subject to certain exceptions, including an exception protecting spontaneous expression, the ordinance requires a permit for any activity or event involving one hundred fifty or more persons on City property other than a street or sidewalk. The Community Events ordinance was challenged in a federal lawsuit (Food Not Bombs v. City) and the ordinance was upheld by the Federal District Court. Plaintiffs appealed, and the case has been briefed and argued in the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals. Meanwhile, the ordinance remains in effect; and the permitting system appears to have achieved its purpose of promoting shared and balanced usage of public property. However, the ordinance has little impact on food distributions because the groups involved number less than 150.

In 2002, the City adopted an ordinance pertaining to food distribution in public parks and on the City Hall lawn. That ordinance, SMMC Chapter 5.06, regulates distributing food to the public on City streets and provides notice of requirements for distributing food in parks and or City policy favoring indoor distribution. This ordinance was also challenged and upheld in Food Not Bombs v. City.

At present, City staff estimates that there are approximately five groups regularly distributing food in City parks, down from 26 in 2002. Most distributions occur on a regularly scheduled basis in Palisades Park and Reed Park. The plan for the new, combined OPCC Access Center/SHWASHLOCK facility on Olympic Blvd. includes space compatible for food distribution to further encourage groups to locate their operations there.

Westside Thanksgiving Day Celebration and National Project Homeless Connect Day:

The Westside Thanksgiving Day Celebration was held in the Santa Monica Civic Auditorium on November 24, 2005. Approximately 2,100 guests and 1,000 volunteers participated in this year's event. Services offered at the event include:

- Medical check-ups and consultations by doctors and nurses;
- Children's immunization;
- Eye exams and prescription eye glasses;
- Distribution of clothing, blankets, sleeping bags, hygiene kits (soap, shampoo, socks, toothpaste and toothbrushes);
- Resource booklets;
- Haircuts;
- Live entertainment and a children's play area.

The Thanksgiving Day Celebration is similar in intent and scope to the Project Homeless Connect events held in San Francisco bi-monthly. The San Francisco event, however, has the added benefit of providing access to public agencies such as the County Departments of Public Social Services, Health Services, and Mental Health; the State Employment Development Department; the Federal Social Security Administration and Department of Veteran's Affairs, and the local Housing Authority. Because of the success of Project Homeless Connect in San Francisco, the Federal Interagency

Council on Homelessness is sponsoring a Nationwide Project Homeless Connect on December 8, 2005.

In considering whether the City of Santa Monica should participate in the nationwide Project Homeless Connect on December 8, 2005, two issues were considered. The first was the fact that Project Homeless Connect would occur just two weeks after the longstanding Thanksgiving Day Celebration. The second was the importance of coordinating any Westside event with activities in other locations throughout the County. This is essential in order to prevent the Santa Monica event from serving the regional homeless population. Local service providers, the Los Angeles County Chief Administrative Office, the Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority (LAHSA), and other local jurisdictions decided that a regional Project Homeless Connect throughout Los Angeles County would be considered for March 2006. This would closely coincide with the release of the final "Bring Los Angeles Home" report in February 2006, and the closure of the winter shelters on March 15, 2006. Human Service Division staff will continue to work with Los Angeles County and LAHSA staff on coordinating the upcoming regional effort.

Continuum of Care System and Program Evaluation:

A Request for Qualifications (RFQ) was recently released to identify a qualified consultant to conduct a program and system evaluation of Santa Monica's continuum of care for homeless persons, an activity that was included in the Council-approved Homeless Workplan for the current year. The goals of this evaluation are: 1) to refine the City's strategies for homeless service provision and to more effectively manage the

resources under its jurisdiction; and 2) to provide a tool for executive directors and managers with the City's non-profit grantees to better manage their programs and be effective collaborators at the system level.

The RFQ was sent to over 80 professional, research and academic organizations nationwide that were determined to have relevant experience in human service program evaluation. Information on the RFQ was posted on the listserv for the American Evaluation Association, and was sent to national homeless advocacy groups such as the National Alliance to End Homeless. The RFQ is also posted on Human Services Division website at: <http://santa-monica.org/hsd/index.htm>.

After a review of the qualifications received by December 15, 2005, interviews will be scheduled with those respondents judged most qualified given the goals of the evaluation. A short list of respondents will be asked to submit detailed proposals for staff review leading a final selection. The staff review team will include representatives of the various departments engaged in efforts to address homelessness. It is anticipated that the evaluation will be completed within 9 to 12 months and that it will inform the next cycle of grant funding, beginning July 2007.

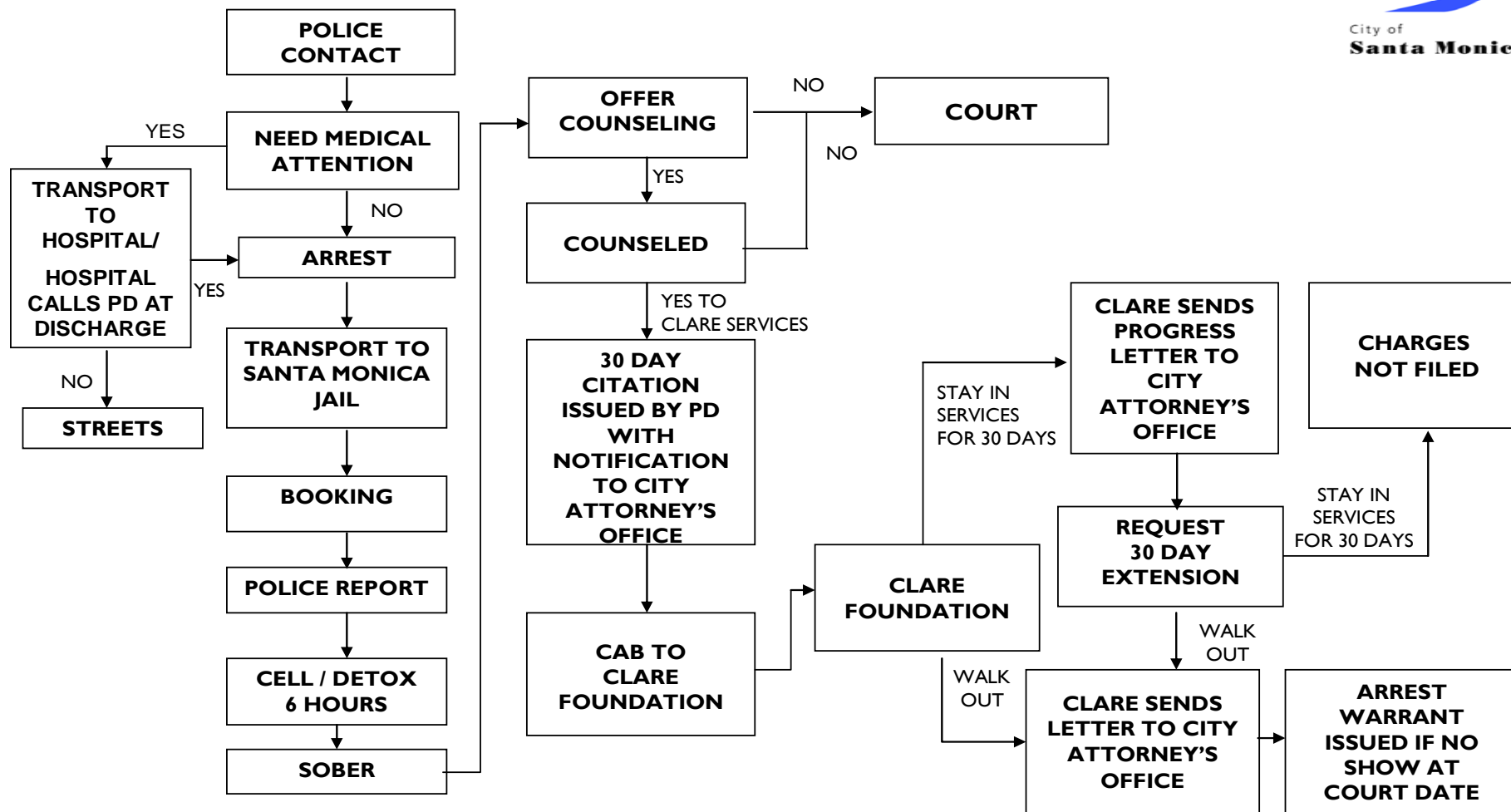
Prepared by: Barbara Stinchfield, Director
James T. Butts, Jr., Chief of Police
Marsha Moutrie, City Attorney
Phillip Sanchez, Deputy Chief of Police
Bruce Davis, Deputy Fire Chief
Mona Miyasato, Acting Human Services Manager
Stacy Rowe, Human Services Administrator
Setareh Yavari, Senior Administrative Analyst – Homeless Services
Julia Brown, Administrative Analyst – Homeless Services

Attachment I: Serial Inebriate Outreach Program

Attachment II: San Francisco Chronicle Article regarding Homeward Bound



ATTACHMENT I: SERIAL INEBRIATE OUTREACH PROJECT (SIOP)



Attachment II: San Francisco Chronicle Article regarding Homeward Bound

814 homeless given a ticket out

[Kevin Fagan, Chronicle Staff Writer](#)
Friday, November 25, 2005

Since its inception 10 months ago, the Homeward Bound program has put 814 homeless people on buses with one-way tickets out of San Francisco, to every state except North and South Dakota and Vermont, city officials say. It is the most extensive program of its kind in the nation, according to the National Alliance to End Homelessness.



Only about 25 participants have returned to the city, program managers say.

[Printable Version](#)
[Email This Article](#)

"We get people all the time who call and cry and say 'thank you for sending our brother or dad or daughter home,'" said Ben Amyes, the main street counselor for the program.

Those who come back apparently do so after getting cold feet on the bus ride. Robert Short, 38, was one who returned. Put on a bus in August for a three day-trip to Illinois, he got off at the Oakland Greyhound station and caught BART straight back to his usual panhandling spot on Van Ness Avenue.

"My aunt said she would take me back, but I didn't really want to go back," he said a week later. "I felt pressured by the cops, and it sounded like a good idea for a minute. But after I sat in that bus seat awhile, I said screw it, I'm not leaving."

Mayor Gavin Newsom was inspired to start Homeward Bound, he said, after reading a story in The Chronicle about a homeless woman, Rita Grant, who was rescued from the streets of San Francisco by her sister. She was taken by her family to Florida, where she is now healthy and happy.

"There were five or six months of debate on whether to do this program, but then I saw those pictures (of Grant), and they tipped me," the mayor said. "It made me think about how a big part of the solution to homelessness is re-engaging people with their families -- and since we started this, it's been an extraordinary thing, considering the impact on people's lives. It's been a quiet success."

In creating Homeward Bound, Newsom wasn't starting from scratch. He streamlined a process that existed for decades, through which San Francisco sent homeless people home -- but only after they qualified for welfare. The mayor called this an "absurd" requirement, since that meant linking people to a system in a city they were trying to leave.

The old way served a handful of people each year. Now, recipients can go home the same day they apply.

Since it began Feb. 7, the city has spent \$80,000 on bus tickets -- a good investment, Homeward Bound managers say, considering many of those sent home were costing thousands of dollars in jail, medical and shelter services.

The risk of a program that sends people away is that the city could be accused of dumping its problems elsewhere. So Newsom's staff consulted with several other cities with similar programs, including Sacramento, and came up with two requirements: The homeless people must be able and ready to go home, and those receiving them must convince counselors in San Francisco they truly want the person back.

"We're trying to raise the bar and be more accountable," the mayor said.

The program is run by the Department of Human Services, which hands out the bus ticket money at its welfare office and supplies two street counselors. The Police Department contributes four officers from its homeless outreach detail to also work with recipients -- one aspect that draws criticism from the Coalition on Homelessness.

"Having police officers hand out bus tickets might be seen as too forceful," said coalition Director Juan Prada. "And we think they should do more follow-up a few months later with the people they send home." Otherwise, he said, he believes "the program is being done correctly, not just dumping people."

Lt. David Lazar, who runs the police outreach team, said his officers are "extremely sensitive" to not being perceived as forceful in their bus-ticket jobs. And outreach officers Jon McMahon and Cathie Daly say they aren't out to coerce anyone.

Well-liked on the street, they call Amyes if they need extra consultation, but often they can handle the bus ticketing task themselves. It helps that they dress in plain clothes and don't look like cops.

"I never thought when I became a police officer five years ago that I'd wind up a social worker, but that's how it feels," McMahon said. "I like it. A lot."

E-mail Kevin Fagan at kfagan@sfchronicle.com.