

March 20, 2006

Santa Monica, CA

INFORMATION ITEM

TO: Mayor and City Council
FROM: Barbara Stinchfield, Director, Community and Cultural Services
SUBJECT: Proposed Expansion of the Chronic Homeless Program

Executive Summary

This item provides information regarding a proposed expansion of the City's Chronic Homeless Program through a partnership with Community Partners, a non-profit administrative agent which has previously worked on projects with the City and the Westside Shelter and Hunger Coalition. Pending approval by the Community Partners Board of Directors on April 12, 2006, Council consideration of this partnership has been agendaized for April 25, 2006.

Background

The FY05-06 Community Priority to address homelessness includes expanding the Chronic Homeless Program (CHP) to serve additional chronically homeless individuals who have been in the community for a number of years. The City Council approved a budget enhancement for this fiscal year of \$178,560 in HOME funds for rental subsidies and \$256,554 in General Funds for services. The City also applied for, and received, a grant from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development in the amount of \$948,000 to provide additional rental subsidy dollars for chronically homeless persons.

These additional resources make possible the expansion of the CHP and create an opportunity to begin local implementation of best practices that have demonstrated success in other parts of the country. These best practices include providing intensive case management to chronically homeless persons through an interdisciplinary team along with immediate access to permanent housing (an approach commonly called “Housing First”).

The current inter-agency CHP collaborative - including OPCC, St. Joseph Center, CLARE Foundation, New Directions, Step Up on Second, the Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health and City divisions including Police, Fire, Human Services and the Housing Authority - has already been successful in placing chronically homeless persons into permanent housing (17 chronically homeless persons have been placed, and remain, in permanent housing since July, 2004). Initially, the CHP partner agencies provided existing staff from their agencies to support the project. As the program expands, an interdisciplinary team of individuals fully dedicated to the program will provide the intensive case management necessary to reach more people with more complex barriers to service and to attempt a Housing First approach. Fully dedicated staff is also needed to accommodate the growing number of successful placements into permanent housing who need on-going, post-placement services to keep them housed – a key component to a successful Housing First model.

Proposed Partnership with Community Partners

Staff began exploring ways to implement a team of new, fully dedicated case managers and discussed possible options with the current CHP partner agencies. It was felt that placing the team with just one partner agency could create an imbalance within the current collaborative structure, undermining what has been a key element in the project's success. The concept of having individual agencies hire one of the team members was also discussed. But the complexity of working out the details of such a collaborative management structure could delay immediate program implementation and short-term outcomes for the project.

The proposed partnership with Community Partners will establish a workable interim management structure which will facilitate immediate program implementation, while giving the existing inter-agency CHP collaborative time to work out a management structure to insure long-term program efficiency and viability. The ultimate goal is to return responsibility for staffing and operating the case management team to the local partner agencies.

Community Partners will employ the new case management team members and will administer the operating budget for the team through funds provided by the City of Santa Monica. The proposed interdisciplinary team would be comprised of a Mental Health Specialist (also the team leader), a Housing Placement Specialist and a Life Skills/Substance Abuse Specialist. The existing Executive Committee of the CHP, comprised of the Executive Directors of partnering agencies and City staff, will serve as

the advisory group to Community Partners. The team's work will be coordinated with the existing project by a Licensed Clinical Social Worker who currently coordinates case management within the CHP.

About Community Partners

Community Partners is a non-profit organization that provides regulatory and legal compliance, as well as financial and administrative support to incubate programs and strategic community initiatives. Staff has submitted a proposal to Community Partners and attended an initial project review meeting to answer questions. The Community Partners Board of Directors will meet and decide on Community Partners' participation in the proposed partnership on April 12, 2006.

Community Partners has partnered with the City on several projects with positive results. Community Partners served as the past administrative agent for the Pico Youth and Family Center through the Human Services Division. They have been contracted by the Environmental Programs Division as the administrative agent for the Sustainable Works program for the past three years. Community Partners is also the current administrative agent for the Westside Shelter and Hunger Coalition. Community Partners charges a 9% administrative fee for their services.

Conclusion

The proposed partnership with Community Partners provides for the rapid implementation of a case management team devoted 100% to the CHP; and provides a

workable interim management structure which will give the existing inter-agency CHP collaborative time to work out a management structure to insure long-term program efficiency and viability. An added value to the proposed partnership with Community Partners is their ability to provide the CHP partners with technical assistance regarding this transition. Pending approval by the Community Partners Board of Directors on April 12, 2006, more information will be presented to Council when it considers this item at the April 25, 2006 City Council meeting.

Prepared by: Barbara Stinchfield, Director
Mona Miyasato, Human Services Manager
Stacy Rowe, Human Services Administrator