
**Alameda County Health Care for the Homeless Consumer/Community Advisory Board
Climate Change and Extreme Weather Planning for County Residents Experiencing Unsheltered
Homelessness**

The ACHCH Consumer/Community Advisory Board (CCAB) is an advisory board made up of community members including people with lived experience of homelessness. The ACHCH CCAB provides advocacy, feedback and input into ACHCH health center operations, assessment and planning, as well as carrying out community, state and federal advocacy around issues of homelessness and health care.

Ten persons with lived experience of homelessness, recruited by and including members of the ACHCH CCAB, have participated Listening Session carried out by GSA to support the development of Alameda County's Climate Action and Resilience Plan for Government Services and Operations (GOCAP). Members of the ACHCH CCAB continued their work after the meeting, and on 11/12/21, the CCAB approved the following draft statement with recommended next steps around Alameda County, climate change and extreme weather:

The key insight of this group was:

- **People who are unhoused want to see action – budgeting, planning, response, and mitigation of the effects of climate change -- because unsheltered people are vulnerable, exposed and directly experience the impacts of extreme weather.**
- **People who are unhoused have great resilience and strength. They need trusting relationships and resources from city, county and community partners in order to survive and overcome extreme weather emergencies.**
- **As long as homelessness exists, County, city and community can support existing encampments to build resilience through supporting basic needs and safety, rather than ignoring or criminalizing them.**
- **Safe, affordable housing for all residents is the key to building community resilience to be able to meet the challenges of climate change.**

Based on these key insights, the ACHCH program would like to propose the following framework for Alameda County planning and response to the extreme weather events that we are already experiencing as a result of climate change, and which disproportionately impact people experiencing homelessness and other vulnerable populations:

1. Recommended County-Led Planning and Preparation for Vulnerable Populations Experiencing Extreme Weather Events:

These were the climate related issues identified as having been experienced and ranked roughly in order of level of concern:

- a. Drought and Water Supply Issues
- b. Extreme Cold
- c. Extreme Heat
- d. Smoke and Wildfire Effects
- e. Flood/Extreme Rainfall Events
- f. Power Shutoffs

a. Drought, Heat and Water Supply

- Access to potable drinking water is a **key concern** to unsheltered persons. With increasingly hot weather and drought conditions, cities and County should ensure that unsheltered persons in camps have access drinking water through:
 - i. Distribution of potable water to established encampments along with portapotties and hygiene stations.
 - ii. Engage with EBMUD to allow legal access to fire hydrants adapted for use as a source of drinking water.
 - iii. Ensure sufficient funding/stock/storage of bottled water for distribution by outreach providers to unsheltered persons.
 - iv. Being prepared for distribution of bottled water to vulnerable persons during heat emergencies.

b. Extreme Heat

- County should direct planning for extreme heat events:
 - i. Establish County-led planning, contracts and communication plan for identification of extreme heat, action triggers, roles and chain of command, and plans, including pre-contracts with cities and CBOs, to carry out response to extreme heat events:
 - **Cooling Centers:** Develop contracts with cities and providers to enable readiness to quickly stand-up emergency Cooling Centers in accessible, geographic regions. These must be larger and more widespread to account for the numbers of non-homeless fragile persons without air-conditioning, vulnerable to extreme heat events. They must have extended/nighttime hours, be low-barrier for entry, and must allow persons to take their pets with them.
 - **Extreme Heat Outreach Teams:** Contract and plan with City, County, outreach, EMS and law enforcement providers to enable Extreme Heat Outreach Teams to outreach to vulnerable and unsheltered populations and distribute cooling supplies such as water, assess & identify impacted individuals for transport to cooling centers. Ongoing mapping of sites for outreach.
 - **Extreme Heat Supplies Center:** Be prepared to distribute up to 100,000 bottles of frozen bottled water during an extreme heat event, and have regional supplies depot/freezers ready to support distribution of supplies to outreach teams and community volunteers.

c. Extreme Cold

- County should direct planning for annual extreme cold weather events:
 - i. Ensure sufficient winter shelter beds and supports countywide
 - ii. Establish a County-led communication plan for identification of extreme cold, action triggers, roles and chain of command to carry out extreme cold response:
 - **Warming Centers:** Engage in contracts with cities and providers to enable readiness to quick stand-up of emergency Warming Centers in accessible, geographic regions.
 - **Nighttime Outreach Teams:** Contracts and plans with City, County and providers to enable Extreme Cold Outreach Teams to carry out night-time outreach to vulnerable populations to distribute warming supplies, and identify impacted individuals for transport to warming centers.

d. Smoke and Wildfire Planning

- County should lead planning for extreme/unhealthy air quality efforts, including triggers and public communication, cleaner air centers, outreach and supplies distribution. County should also keep in mind the possibility of emergencies such as refinery and industrial explosions and how to lead alert and evacuation efforts.
 - i. **Cleaner Air Centers:** Engage in contracts with cities and providers to enable readiness to quickly stand-up emergency Cleaner Air Centers in accessible, geographic regions.
 - ii. **Smoke/Unhealthy Air Outreach:** Contracts and plans with City, County, providers to enable Unhealthy Air Outreach Teams to carry out outreach to vulnerable and unsheltered populations to distribute supplies such as masks and water, assess & identify impacted individuals for transport to Cleaner Air Centers. Ongoing mapping of sites for outreach preparedness. Training and preparedness for rapid response to non-wildfire industrial air quality emergencies.
 - iii. **Distribution of N95 masks:** Be ready to distribute N95 masks to unsheltered persons at street settings.
 - iv. **Wildfire Evacuation:** Identify locations and have outreach plans to support outreach and evacuation when needed in wildfire-prone regions of Alameda County.

e. Flood/Extreme Rainfall Events

- County lead planning/preparedness for extreme rainfall and flood events affecting unsheltered homeless, including Warming Centers, outreach and supplies distribution and evacuation of flood areas.
 - i. **Warming Centers:** Stand up emergency Warming Centers in accessible geographic regions to be opened in anticipation of extreme rainfall events.
 - ii. **Flood/Extreme Rainfall Outreach:** Contract and plan with City, County, providers to enable Outreach Teams to outreach to vulnerable and

unsheltered populations, to give warning and distribute supplies such as tarps, ponchos, sandbags; assess & identify impacted individuals for transport to Warming Centers. Ongoing mapping of sites for outreach preparedness.

- iii. **Flooding and rough campers:** Many people are living in floodplains and riverbed areas where they would be at high risk of death in a flood situation; Need plans and teams able to provide outreach, warning and evacuation in the case of impending floods.
- iv. **Recovery from Flood Events:** People experiencing homelessness may lose all of their supplies in a flood event. Be prepared to support them with new supplies (tents, sleeping bags, supplies) rapidly, and get access to FEMA or other rebuilding resources.

f. **Power Interruptions**

- Unsheltered persons already have serious barriers to accessing information that can help them seek shelter or safety in times of impending emergency. Ensuring that unsheltered persons have access to smartphones and to resources to charge their phones is critical. Electrical power is critical to provide safety in the form of lighting, and heating where possible will be an important element in preventing frequent fires at homeless encampments.
- When rolling power outages happen, it affects vulnerable housed persons, however goals of supporting energy needs for unsheltered should be worked on.
- People experiencing homelessness need access to solar batteries for their cell phones and devices.

Endorsed by the Alameda County Health Care for the Homeless Consumer/Community Advisory Board July 14, 2023