

CAUSES OF HOMELESSNESS

While each person's journey is unique, the primary drivers of homelessness are:



Rising rents causing high rent burden.



Stagnant wages.



Inadequate supply of housing affordable to people with extremely-low incomes.



Institutionalization and racist policies blocking people from accessing home.

- **339,087 Californians experienced homelessness during 2023.** Almost 13% were youth under 24 and about 45% are older adults. 90% lost their housing in California.
- In California, the median time of homelessness is 22 months.
- Black Californians are over 5 times more likely to experience homelessness and Indigenous people are over twice as likely.
- 49% report a disabling condition. 22% survived domestic violence.
- 19% report entering homelessness from an institutional setting, including hospitals and residential care.



2%
Rent Increase
in Los Angeles



4,667
More People
Become Homeless

A report tracking housing costs across multiple cities showed that increases in rent where people are already paying more than a third of their incomes on rent drives increases in homelessness.

HOMELESS SYSTEMS ARE HOUSING MORE PEOPLE, BUT MORE FALL INTO HOMELESSNESS THAN LOCAL RESPONSES CAN HANDLE

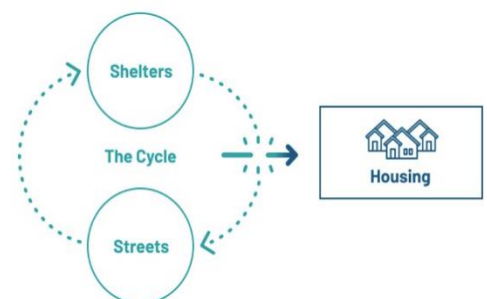


ROLE OF SHELTER

Shelter/interim housing is a temporary place to live safely while waiting for permanent housing. People are still considered homeless while in a shelter and ideally while there, they receive services to improve their housing and health outcomes. Too much funding for shelter causes bottlenecks in our shelter system and prevents people from exiting homelessness.

As a result of our housing shortages, the search for housing is long and traumatic. Californians living outside represent the hundreds of thousands still waiting for housing.

Homelessness exacerbates existing health conditions, like hypertension and diabetes, and causes additional illnesses, like onset of behavioral health conditions. Exposure to the elements, stress of day-to-day survival, lack of sleep, absence of healthy food and clean drinking water, and difficulties storing medication all lead to high rates of acute and emergent health use.





California's Response: Facts About Homelessness

SOLUTIONS

Over 30 years of evidence shows what works to solve homelessness: housing that is affordable to people experiencing homelessness (without limits on length of stay) *plus* trauma-informed services that connect people to housing, health, and social services and help people maintain housing stability.

Ongoing federal rental subsidies and intensive services for veterans experiencing homelessness reduced national veteran homelessness by 55% over the last 12 years. Thanks to recent state funding for affordable housing and homeless programs, increases in the number of people experiencing homelessness in California were lower in 2024 than they were nationally, demonstrating these investments helped people exit homelessness.

PERSON-CENTERED APPROACH

Across California, communities help people exit homelessness daily. The story behind each success is a long journey through barriers and siloed programs. Assisting people experiencing homelessness facing trauma, chronic health conditions, and daily struggles to survive requires a person-centered approach.



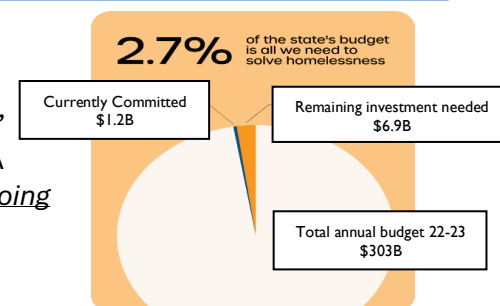
Street engagement: Homeless service providers offer in-person, individualized support, often led by people trained in trauma-informed care who earn trust and provide for successful connection to housing.

Housing: California's housing agencies define housing as unlicensed apartments or homes integrated into the community where (1) tenants have a lease and the rights and responsibilities of tenancy, (2) rental subsidies make the housing affordable, and (3) the housing is not time-limited.

Evidence-based services in housing: A subset of people experiencing homelessness—about 30% in California—need intensive services to stay stably housed. The Department of Health Care Services recognizes housing support services, offered with permanent housing, as health care, citing multiple studies showing people are able to improve their health and avoid Medi-Cal costs they incurred while homeless.

WHAT STATE FUNDING IS NEEDED?

California's recent investments have allowed over 50,000 Californians to exit homelessness for good. The Behavioral Health Services Act "housing intervention" funding, when implemented in July 2026, could lead thousands more to housing. A statewide financial model found California could solve homelessness with an *ongoing* investment of 2.7% of the state's budget.



CALIFORNIA'S PROGRAMS

Multiple state agencies administer programs impacting people experiencing homelessness, often in silos. Breaking down these silos would allow these programs to leverage resources more efficiently.

Federal funding to local homeless continuums of care for housing, shelter, services.

Grants to counties from state and federal social services programs.

State directs BHS funding to county behavioral health agencies for "full-service partnership" services, including rent and housing support services.

CalAIM Enhanced Care Management (ECM) and Community Supports (CS) offer care coordination and housing support services. (Some providers are also CoC or county providers.)

Federal funding to public housing authorities for housing vouchers.

State, federal, and local funding to build affordable housing.

Vouchers to housing

Service providers



California's Response: Facts About Homelessness

GLOSSARY

Affordable Housing: Permanent housing where the tenants pay no more than 30% of their income on rent.

CalAIM Community Support's Housing Trio: Services provided under a federal-state agreement to allow managed care plans to pay for services not typically provided, allowed for because the services are proven to lower Medicaid costs and improve care and are therefore offered "in lieu of" acute or more expensive care. The three categories of services in the "Housing Trio" include housing navigation transition services, housing deposits, and housing tenancy sustaining services.

Chronic Homelessness: A disability plus homelessness lasting at least one year or at least four episodes within the last three years, with all episodes during those three years adding up to at least 12 months.

Continuum of Care or CoC: A regional entity, regulated by the U.S. Department of Housing & Urban Development, that receives federal homeless assistance grants and decides how to allocate grants under federal guidelines. The grants fund shelter, outreach services, and housing.

Coordinated Entry System: A system that standardizes the way people at risk of or experiencing homelessness access and get referred to housing and services that they need and want for housing stability. Unlike a "first-come, first-served" process, which favored people who were highly functional, a coordinated entry system is intended to (1) allow people access to community-wide resources through "no wrong door," (2) assess the type of intervention people need to exit homelessness, (3) prioritize people with the greatest needs for referral, and (4) refer people to housing in a coordinated way. [Coordinated Entry - HUD Exchange](#).

Homeless: HUD defines four categories of experiences as homelessness:

- (1) Literal homelessness of a primary nighttime residence not meant for human habitation, residence in a shelter, or living in an institutional setting for fewer than 90 days when homeless upon admission;
- (2) Imminent risk of homelessness because will lose housing within 14 days without anywhere else to go and no resources to rely on to support the household;
- (3) Homeless under other federal law + no lease within the last 60 days + persistent instability + expected to continue to experience housing instability; or
- (4) Fleeing or attempting to flee domestic violence.

Housing First: Housing First is an evidence-based policy and housing and services model that prioritizes assisting people access permanent housing, and engaging people in services to maintain that housing as a platform from which they can pursue personal goals and improve their quality of life. Service providers connect tenants to treatment and other community resources. Housing First eliminates barriers to housing, such as requirements of sobriety first, lack of eviction history, or graduation from, or participation in programs. It does not mandate participation in programs to retain housing either. California law requires state programs follow Housing First policy, outlined in 11 core components at Welfare & Institutions Code Section 8255(b). Housing First as a housing and services model follows fidelity to the Housing First Fidelity Scale.

Homeless Services: Services that engage people experiencing homelessness to build trust, assist people in accessing housing, and assist tenants in maintaining housing stability, using principles of trauma-informed care. Services proven effective include Intensive Case Management and Assertive Community Treatment (for people with serious behavioral health conditions). Individual Placement Supports offer employment services.



California's Response: Facts About Homelessness

Housing Subsidy: Government assistance that allows a household to afford decent, quality housing that meets state and local habitability laws and building standards, typically requiring tenants pay no more than 30% of their incomes on rent, typically in the form of payment to landlords or loans to affordable housing developers. Rent subsidies typically take into consideration the costs of utilities.

Interagency Council on Homelessness: A state council working under the Business, Consumer Services, and Housing Agency that works to coordinate the state's response to homelessness and oversee the state's Housing First policy requirements. The federal government currently also operates a U.S. Interagency Council.

Interim Housing: A temporary place to stay, including transitional housing, emergency shelters, motel vouchers, tiny homes, bridge homes, and navigation centers, ideally offering services or partnerships with homeless services to connect individuals and families to Housing Transition Navigation services and permanent housing.

Low Barrier: Removal of barriers to access interim and permanent housing, barriers that have typically prevented people from accessing those settings, such as eviction history, poor credit, a history of incarceration, lack of treatment history, or sobriety from drugs and/or alcohol prior to move-in.

Permanent Housing: A structure or set of structures with subsidized or unsubsidized rental housing units subject to applicable landlord-tenant law, without a limit on the length of stay, allowing independence, and without a requirement to participate in services as a condition of access to or continued occupancy of the housing.

Rapid Re-Housing: For people without barriers to housing stability, rapid re-housing offers short- to medium-term housing subsidies with light services that help households move into housing and grow their income sufficiently to take over rent when subsidies end.

Supportive Housing: Permanent housing linked to onsite and offsite intensive services that are easily accessible to tenants and assist tenants in retaining housing, improving tenant health status, and maximizing tenants' ability to thrive and, when possible, work in the community.

Trauma-Informed Care: An approach to care that recognizes the widespread impact of trauma and promotes environments of healing and recovery. Trauma-informed care operates under six principles: (1) safety, (2) trustworthiness and transparency, (3) peer support and mutual self-help, (4) collaboration and mutuality, (5) empowerment, voice, and choice, and (6) attention to cultural, historical, and gender issues.

Voluntary Services: Services offered in conjunction with housing that is not contingent on participation in services. Tenants are not evicted based on failure to participate in services, the service provider engages the tenant to encourage the tenant to voluntarily participate in services using evidence-based engagement models, and services are flexible and tenant-centered.

RESOURCES

[Homeless Data Integration System - California Interagency Council on Homelessness](#)

[2024 Annual Homelessness Assessment Report to Congress](#)

[2023 System Performance Metrics, First-Time Homeless](#)

[Benioff Homelessness & Housing Initiative, California Statewide Study of People Experiencing Homelessness](#)

[Homelessness Assistance Programs - HUD Exchange](#)

[Center on Budget & Policy Priorities' Overview of Research on Housing with Services](#)

[Department of Health Care Services' Evidence of Cost-Effectiveness of Housing + Services](#)