



24-4281

DATE: February 6, 2024 (Item No. 35)

TO: Board of Supervisors

FROM: James R. Williams, County Executive
Ky Le, Deputy County Executive

SUBJECT: Actions to Address Family Homelessness and Proposed Next Steps to Further Coordinate Support Services for Recent Arrivals

RECOMMENDED ACTION

Consider recommendations relating to assisting recently-arrived migrant families and individuals who are seeking asylum with accessing critical housing and safety net services. (LA-1)

Possible action:

- a. Approve delegation of authority to the County Executive, or designee, to negotiate, execute, amend, or terminate an agreement with Amigos de Guadalupe Center for Justice and Empowerment relating to providing coordination of temporary emergency shelter and referrals to support services for families and individuals who intend to seek asylum and who entered the United States after the end of Title 42, increasing the maximum contract amount by \$200,000 from \$510,000 to \$710,000 with no change in term of the agreement, following approval by County Counsel as to form and legality, and approval by the Office of the County Executive. Delegation of authority shall expire on June 30, 2024.
- b. Approve Request for Appropriation Modification No. 159 - \$200,000 transferring funds from the General Fund Contingency Reserve to the Office of the County Executive's budget relating to providing coordination of temporary emergency shelter and referrals to support services for families and individuals who intend to seek asylum and who entered the United States after the end of Title 42. (4/5 Vote)
- c. Approve delegation of authority to the County Executive, or designee, to negotiate, execute, amend, or terminate agreements with 16 organizations relating to providing immigrant legal support services in an amount not to exceed \$24,392,770 with no change in term of the agreement, following approval by County Counsel as to form and legality, and approval by the Office of the County Executive. Delegation of authority shall expire on June 30, 2024.

FISCAL IMPLICATIONS

Appropriations in the Office of the County Executive Fiscal Year (FY) 2023-2024 budget would be increased by \$200,000 to increase funding for the County's current agreement with Amigos de Guadalupe Center for Justice and Empowerment ("Amigos") by the same amount. The increased appropriations would be drawn from the County General Fund Contingency Reserve.

The Adopted Budget for the FY 2023-2024 General Fund Contingency Reserve is \$218,587,995. The balance of this reserve as of February 6, 2024, is \$208,875,262, indicating that a net of \$9,712,733 has been allocated for other purposes. There may be additional pending actions that would impact this balance once they are approved and processed. Board Policy 4.3 states that the contingency reserve should be 5% of general revenues net of pass-through revenue. Since the use of the contingency reserve impacts compliance with this policy, the mid-year budget analysis may include a recommended action to replenish this reserve.

CONTRACT HISTORY

The County's agreement with Amigos to assist individuals and families who are seeking asylum was initially approved by the Board on June 27, 2023 (Item No. 85). It was amended on January 23, 2024 (Item No. 61). The agreement, as amended, ends on June 30, 2024, and cannot exceed \$510,000. Single-source exceptions to competitive procurement were approved by the Procurement Department.

The County's agreements with 16 community-based organizations (CBOs) to provide legal and other support services to immigrants were initially approved on December 17, 2019 (Item No. 36 and Item No. 39)

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION AND BACKGROUND

On January 23, 2024 (Item No. 61), the Board approved amending an agreement with Amigos related to provision of services to recently-arrived migrant families and individuals who are seeking asylum, increasing the contract amount by \$150,000 from \$360,000 to \$510,000. This contract amendment was necessary to ensure that 60 families (202 adults and 167 children) currently served by Amigos would continue receiving emergency shelter at two motels while longer-term and/or more sustainable options could be developed. On January 23, 2024 (Item No. 2.11), the City of San José also approved \$150,000 in additional funding for Amigos to augment the funding Amigos received from the County.

Further, on January 23, 2024 (Item No. 61), the Board directed Administration to return in February 2024 with additional recommendations related to services to recently-arrived migrant families and individuals who are seeking asylum, as well as recommendations to address the needs of unhoused families with children more broadly.

Introduction

The County has a longstanding commitment to supporting new arrivals from all over the world, including those seeking protection and asylum in the United States. Equally important,

in October 2021, the County made a commitment to reducing and preventing homelessness among families with children and pregnant women. These commitments are fundamentally connected to the County's mission and core values. While the County faces significant financial constraints, honoring both commitments is a priority for the Board and Administration. This report:

- Details the immediate actions the County will take to address the core needs of 60 newly-arrived migrant families currently being supported by Amigos;
- Summarizes efforts to develop a more robust system of support for new immigrants and asylees/asylum seekers; and,
- Previews a request from Administration that will be the subject of a report and recommendations at the Board meeting on February 27, 2023, which will seek approval to increase resources for the Heading Home Campaign by \$10 million.

Immediate Actions

Below are current and proposed actions to address the short-term emergency shelter need for the families currently being served by Amigos, to assess their longer-term needs, and to support benefits enrollment, access to health care, school enrollment, and access to immigration-related legal support services.

Administration requests a delegation of authority to amend and increase funding for the agreement with Amigos by \$200,000. If matched by the City of San José, the additional funds would cover the costs of motels for 60 families through the end of March 2024, allowing time for any housing services needed by these families to be met under the County's broader Heading Home Campaign through which the needs of all families living in Santa Clara County are addressed as part of the larger continuum of housing services and supports administered by the County's Office of Supportive Housing (OSH). Although delegations of authority are discouraged except under certain circumstances, this delegation of authority is necessary because there was not sufficient time since the last Board meeting on January 23, 2024, to finalize a second amendment to the agreement with Amigos. In addition, Administration needs the flexibility to potentially modify the scope of work based on the County's assessment of families' needs.

Administration, in partnership with Amigos, is also mobilizing a County team to further assess needs and organize support services to ensure that the immediate health, educational, legal, and shelter needs of the 60 families will be met. Staff from OSH, the Office of Immigrant Relations (OIR), and the Department of Employment and Benefits Services (DEBS) will be meeting with each of the 60 families on February 5, 2024. Through direct engagement with County staff, Administration seeks to gain a better understanding of these 60 families' current needs and how to meet them. Specifically:

- a. The County interdepartmental team will ensure that all individuals and families have applied or are enrolled in all safety-net assistance programs for which they may be eligible, such as Medi-Cal. DEBS staff are part of the team so that they can immediately identify eligible families and assist them in enrolling in safety-net programs. In addition, DEBS has identified a leadership position in its largest intake

office to be the single point of contact for all asylum seekers and/or the agencies that are assisting them.

- b. In addition to assisting families obtain health insurance (i.e., Medi-Cal), County staff will help families access health care services. As part of the outreach to the 60 families, staff will determine whether families are enrolled in Medi-Cal and have been assigned a medical provider. Families who have been assigned to Santa Clara Valley Healthcare but who have been unable to access services will be helped. Staff will coordinate with the Managed Care Plans to help families who have been assigned to another medical provider or medical group that is not a part of the County health system. Additionally, urgent care clinics in Santa Clara County are available to anyone with an urgent medical need, regardless of status. Valley Health Center Downtown is the largest urgent care clinic in Santa Clara County and is the one closest to the two motels used by Amigos. Medical providers can assist patients with mild to moderate behavioral health needs, but the Downtown Clinic of the Behavioral Health Services Department (BHSD) will provide additional support, including specialty mental health services as needed. BHSD's Downtown Clinic could be supported by other teams in the BHSD system to ensure that families receive services that are linguistically and culturally appropriate to the greatest extent possible.
- c. Children are most likely to be enrolled in the San José Unified (SJUSD) and Alum Rock Union (ARUSD) School Districts based on the location of the motels. County staff will partner with Amigos and school district staff to ensure that all children are enrolled in and are able to attend school. Staff from OIR reached out to ARUSD and will be reaching out to SJUSD.
- d. In addition to meeting the immediate shelter needs of the 60 families through increased funding for Amigos, OSH staff will help staff from Amigos and other CBOs better assess families' ongoing shelter and housing needs and access available resources through the countywide shelter hotline and the homelessness prevention system, which includes Amigos as one of several providers of temporary shelter to unhoused families.

Additionally, County staff will ensure that all families are receiving appropriate and necessary legal support services. Primarily this means that all families have appropriately submitted their applications for asylum and have submitted or will be ready to submit applications for work permits. In addition, the legal support services will include helping families follow up with requests and applications as needed.

The County currently has nearly \$6 million in contracts with 16 organizations to provide various legal and other support services to assist immigrants in FY 2023-2024. To ensure that legal and other support services are available to meet the needs of the 60 families and the emergent needs of other immigrants, including asylees/asylum seekers, Administration may need to amend scopes of work and/or shift funding among contracts. A delegation of authority, as described in Recommended Action "c," would enable Administration to expediently modify contracts as staff gain a better understanding of service gaps. This delegation of authority, if approved, would expire on June 30, 2024, and would be limited to the contracts with these organizations that end June 30, 2025 (with the exception of one

contract that ends June 30, 2024). The reason the contract terms (with the one exception) are different from the delegation of authority is because any proposed amendments would apply only to the remainder of FY 2023-2024, and the proposed funds to be used are one-time funds. Administration is continuing to evaluate and explore other possible long-term solutions to better meet the current needs of our immigrant communities.

Evolving the Rapid Response Network

The County interdepartmental team is also working to ensure that a longer-term plan is in place to assist asylees/asylum seekers who have left the motel shelters but still need additional assistance and also to respond to the needs of new arriving families. The County's additional actions to support the 60 families provides Administration the opportunity to improve the network of support services to be more responsive to the current needs of immigrant families.

Based on current experience, the County would continue to organize safety-net services so that those services are more accessible to immigrant families. The County would also use the lessons learned from this effort to more effectively deploy resources whenever there is a large influx of new immigrants. And, as noted during the Board meeting on January 23, 2024 (Item No. 61), the County is reassessing how its contracts for legal support services to immigrants should be modified and improved.

Administration will seek, and need, the partnership of CBOs, workforce investment boards, cities, and other partners. Roles for city partners may include assisting immigrant families with employment and providing immediate short-term temporary shelter when there is a large influx of new arrivals.

Increasing Resources for the Heading Home Campaign

Access to temporary shelter and permanent housing options are critical needs for most, but not all, new arrivals. These needs are shared by many unhoused and unstably-housed families in Santa Clara County. In addition to the pressing needs of the 60 families referenced above, OSH has identified significant needs in the countywide network of shelter and supportive housing. Due to decreases in one-time State funds, the County's CalWORKs Housing Support Program is expected to have a funding shortfall over the next 18 months, thus jeopardizing the shelter and permanent housing options of 240 families. There are also approximately 125 unhoused families on the waitlist for temporary shelter. Further, the countywide Homelessness Prevention System is experiencing diminished capacity because the average financial assistance needed by families has increased from \$4,000 in 2017 to \$6,500 as of December 2023, and the average length of time in the program has increased.

To address the temporary shelter, permanent housing, and homelessness prevention needs of all unhoused families, including those who have recently arrived, Administration recommends significantly increasing resources for the Heading Home Campaign (Heading Home), which was launched in October 2021 by the County, Destination: Home, the City of San José, the Santa Clara County Housing Authority (SCCHA), and other partners. The overarching goal of Heading Home is to reduce and prevent homelessness for families with children and pregnant women, with an additional goal of ensuring that all unhoused families

with children and pregnant women have access to temporary shelter. As reported in November 2023, from October 2021 through September 2023, the campaign helped 1,403 families (2,051 adults and 2,637 children) obtain permanent housing and prevented homelessness for 1,990 families.

The next Heading Home report from OSH to the Board will be on February 27, 2024. In this report, Administration will outline a plan to increase one-time funding for Heading Home by \$10 million. Sources to fund the augmentation could include an additional \$1 million from Destination: Home, \$8 million in ARPA funds that were allocated to OSH and BHSD projects that may not proceed, and potentially \$1 million from SCCHA. In addition, OSH staff have reached out to the City of San José and will also be reaching out to other cities in Santa Clara County to request matching funds to further increase funding for Heading Home to meet critical needs for families in their cities.

CHILD IMPACT

The recommended action would have a positive impact on children and youth, particularly newly arriving migrant youth—as measured by the County indicators “**Safe and Stable Families**” and “**Healthy Lifestyle**”—through supporting the coordination of critical housing and safety net services for new arrivals seeking asylum.

SENIOR IMPACT

The recommended action would have a positive impact on seniors, particularly newly arriving migrant seniors, through supporting the coordination of critical housing and safety net services for new arrivals seeking asylum.

SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS

The recommended action would have positive sustainability implications in alignment with the County indicator “**Enhancing social equity and safety.**”

CONSEQUENCES OF NEGATIVE ACTION

Without approval, Administration would be unable to 1) amend the existing agreement with Amigos to support the coordination of temporary emergency shelter and referrals to related support services for newly arriving asylum seekers and 2) amend the existing agreements with the 16 CBOs that provide legal support services to address immediate and emergent needs of immigrants, including asylees/asylum seekers.

STEPS FOLLOWING APPROVAL

The Clerk of the Board is asked to notify Ky Le, Shawn Whiteman, and Maggi Jiménez, Office of the County Executive.

ATTACHMENTS:

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