

73. Under advisement from November 7, 2023 (Item No. 19): Receive report from the Office of Supportive Housing relating to implementation of the Long-Term Services and Supports Housing Pilot Program. (ID# 24-4969)

County of Santa Clara
Office of Supportive Housing



24-4969

DATE: April 16, 2024

TO: Board of Supervisors

FROM: Consuelo Hernandez, Director, Office of Supportive Housing

SUBJECT: Long-Term Services and Supports Housing Pilot Program Six-Month Update

RECOMMENDED ACTION

Under advisement from November 7, 2023 (Item No. 19): Receive report from the Office of Supportive Housing relating to implementation of the Long-Term Services and Supports Housing Pilot Program.

FISCAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no fiscal implications resulting from the recommended action.

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION AND BACKGROUND

On November 7, 2023 (Item No. 19), the Board of Supervisors approved referral from Supervisor Ellenberg requesting that Administration provide a report in six months relating to the implementation of the Long-Term Services and Supports (LTSS) Housing Pilot Program. The LTSS Housing Pilot Program was developed to respond to the lack of housing options for individuals who no longer need skilled nursing care but would otherwise be homeless if discharged.

The Office of Supportive Housing (OSH) worked with the Santa Clara Family Health Plan (SCFHP) and Blue Cross of California Partnership Plan, Inc., and its affiliates (Anthem), the County's two Medi-Cal Managed Care Plans (MCPs) to develop and implement the LTSS Housing Pilot Program for their members. Part of the County's commitment was to identify a County-funded development that included permanent supportive housing units that members could exit to after their stay at skilled nursing facilities. After several attempts the MCPs and OSH ultimately agreed to test the LTSS Housing Pilot Program initially at Kifer Senior Apartments (Kifer) in the City of Santa Clara for up to 46 units.

Since the start of the pilot program, the staff at the MCPs conducted and submitted housing assessments for 46 members. Of those assessed, 27 members were identified as needing Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH). Of the 27 eligible individuals, six (6) have moved in or are scheduled to move into apartments at Kifer by the end of March 2024. The other 21 households who were eligible based on their housing assessment did not move forward in the program because they were unable to live independently, were already housed and could exit

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to their home, were ineligible for other reasons (age, documentation status, etc.), or are deceased. The six (6) individuals being served in the program have just recently been housed (or will soon be housed) in the program and outcomes, such as housing retention, are not yet available. Due to the inability to identify qualified participants, OSH identified unhoused individuals from the community queue to move into the unfilled units at Kifer to meet lease-up deadlines. As apartments are vacated at Kifer, priority will be given to approved participants of the LTSS Housing Pilot Program who are awaiting placement.

Summary of Challenges

In the first few months of the pilot program OSH has identified two primary challenges with implementing the LTSS Housing Pilot Program. One of the most significant challenges has been the amount of time it takes identifying members who are eligible and appropriate for the program. Affordable housing developments have tight timelines to meet lease-up deadlines. The assessment rate for Skilled Nursing Facility (SNF) participants did not meet the timeline for leasing up at the Kifer property and units cannot remain vacant for extended periods while awaiting new assessments and referrals from SNFs.

To fill the 46 apartments at Kifer by the scheduled lease-up of December 2023, the goal was to refer 138 members (three times the number of available units) by August 1, 2023 (120 days prior to occupancy). Assessments did not begin until mid-August and 46 assessments were completed by September. Of the 46 assessments completed, 27 assessments indicated the needed PSH assistance. Additionally, as described above, several of the individuals referred to the program were unable to live independently or were already housed. To increase the number of participants, OSH staff estimate that four to eight referrals per unit will be necessary.

The second challenge OSH has identified is the high level of County staff time needed to implement the program. While the MCPs have identified staff to assess the households for the program, it has been necessary for the OSH team to confirm eligibility and complete the paperwork for both the program and the housing authority voucher attached to the identified PSH units. At the time of referral, individuals referred to the program were often unable to leave the SNF where they were residing and did not have the support needed to collect necessary documents for housing placement. Many were unable to participate in appointments required for the housing process. To fill this gap, OSH assigned a dedicated Rehabilitation Counselor to meet with the potential program participant at the SNFs and discuss their needs with medical staff and social workers to confirm the participant can live independently. OSH staff also coordinated with the client and family members to obtain necessary identification and paperwork for the program.

Following approval and enrollment in the program, the OSH team also supported participants with moving into their new apartment. In the initial five months of the pilot program, a full time Rehabilitation Counselor was needed to support the document collection, housing voucher approval process, and transition of six MCP members from SNFs to their permanent housing unit. This staff person was redeployed from their regular tasks on OSH's Client Engagement Team to support the LTSS Housing Pilot Program. For the program to reach the target of housing 46 MCP members, the MCPs would need to identify staff who can be

trained by OSH on the documentation, approval, and move-in process and assume those responsibilities. Alternatively, the MCPs could contract with the County to provide these services.

OSH will continue to work with the MCPs to improve the referral and housing placement process to prepare for referrals to Kifer as units become available. OSH staff have also identified future senior housing developments that will be available for occupancy in 2025 and 2026, which could be utilized for housing placements for people exiting SNFs. However, staff resources for both the MCPs and OSH would need to be identified to support housing placements in future developments. In addition, the MCPs and OSH may need to work together to identify other housing opportunities for LTSS members. In most cases, the housing developments include mixed populations and have certain eligibility factors that make it difficult for individuals being discharged from nursing facilities to be linked to housing that fits their needs. For instance, a member might be ready to be discharged from a SNF, but the apartment unit is not available for a few weeks to a couple months.

CHILD IMPACT

The recommended action will have no/neutral impact on children and youth.

SENIOR IMPACT

The recommended action will have no/neutral impact on seniors.

SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS

The recommended action will have no/neutral sustainability implications.