
November 13, 2024

Agenda Item 7.a

BAHFA Rental Assistance Pilot Program: Progress Update

Subject:

Progress update on BAHFA's Rental Assistance Pilot Program to prevent homelessness in Napa County

Background:

On November 8, 2023, BAHFA awarded \$5 million to Napa County Housing and Homeless Services to design and administer a rental assistance program focused on seniors at risk of homelessness. This award was made through a competitive RFP process, and Napa County was selected based on their strong qualifications and proposed approach, including a contribution of an additional \$1.6 million to the program. The \$6.6 million program is expected to serve approximately 150 individuals over the next three and a half years, providing a combination of monthly rental assistance and case management.

In April 2024, BAHFA entered into contract with Napa County to administer the program, which they locally call the SHARE program (named to coordinate with the local Seasons of Sharing program). This item provides an update on the program launch and an overview of the first participants in the program.

Progress Update:

Overview of Program

Participants in the SHARE program apply through a public portal or referral from community-based service providers, and case managers and county staff work with participants and their landlords to complete documentation required for the transmittal of monthly rental assistance. Participants may directly receive rental assistance if their landlords do not wish to participate in the program or if they are not a leaseholder, however this additional reported income can cause ineligibility for other critical support programs and is not preferable for participants.

Program eligibility requirements are based on best practices and research regarding risk of homelessness and were finalized by a committee of service providers in Napa County to ensure they considered local conditions. To be eligible for the program, participants must be:

- 65 years or older
- Have lived in Napa County for at least one year
- Earn less than \$30,850 if living alone (30% AMI or below);
- Spend 70% or more on rent
- Receive no other rental assistance; and
- Have no more than \$7,500 in assets.

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Participants are also prioritized for the program based on additional evidence-based factors for homelessness risk: if they have been homeless in the previous three years, if they have received a recent eviction notice due to lack of funds, if they have been evicted in the previous three years, if they have lost a person paying for housing costs such as a spouse, if they are not eligible for federal assistance due to immigration status, if they have a felony conviction, and/or if they have been a victim of financial fraud in the past three years. Disability will be added as a prioritization criteria in the coming months.

Once in the program, participants or their landlords receive a monthly rent check for up to \$800, or the amount needed to ensure they are paying no more than 30% of their income toward rent if less than \$800. Participants also receive case management, which includes assistance with transportation issues, medical care and medications, family and social reunification, home accessibility and hoarding, and if the participant needs to relocate housing, housing navigation services.

Profile of SHARE Program Participants

The first 43 participants in the SHARE program are all above 65, and 26% are older than 80 years old. They are all highly rent burdened, and 53% of participants pay more than 101% in rent each month. A 100%+ rent burden is obviously problematic. For some clients, survival has included temporary assistance from friends, family members, or short-term governmental grants, such as Rapid Re-Housing. In other cases, participants sold personal possessions to afford rent. In all cases, a 70%+ imposes an extremely high risk of homelessness.

One challenge the SHARE program seeks to immediately address is the racial diversity of participants, which does not reflect the demographics of the county. 88% of participants identify as white, 4% as two or more races, and 8% as other. Ethnically, 21% of participants identify as Hispanic or Latino, compared to 42% of the county overall. The program will be increasing outreach efforts to the Latinx communities in Napa County through presentations at community centers, faith-based communities, and other settings to ensure that the communities served by the program reflect the demographics of the county who are at greatest risk.

SHARE Program Evaluation

The evaluation of the program will be conducted by the Napa County Department of Public Health to understand how the program has impacted participants' health and wellbeing. The evaluation will focus on five main areas: housing, financial wellbeing, social inclusion, physical and mental health, and other needs. The evaluation will include a baseline verbal survey with participants within the first 60 days of program entry, and a shorter version completed annually.

Issues:

None

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Recommended Action:

Informational

Attachment:

A. Presentation

Reviewed:

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