

**MOTION BY SUPERVISORS MARK RIDLEY-THOMAS  
AND HILDA L. SOLIS**

**OCTOBER 29, 2019**

**Assessing the Health Care Needs of People Experiencing Homelessness to  
Address Rising Mortality Rates**

Like so many jurisdictions across the nation, Los Angeles County (County) continues to experience an epidemic of homelessness. While we are deploying coordinated and robust efforts to increase available housing and to prevent at-risk individuals from becoming homeless, we must still look at how we can better serve people while they are experiencing homelessness and are not yet housed. This is especially critical, given that mortality rates for people experiencing homelessness are much higher than those for the general population, have risen in the County over the past five years, and are expected to increase again for 2019.

A recent analysis by the County’s Department of Public Health on mortality rates and causes of death among people experiencing homelessness shed critical light on this issue and provided sobering data on recent trends. The overall mortality rate, which accounts for increases in the total homeless population over the 6-year period from 2013 to 2018, increased each year from 1,382 per 100,000 to 1,875 deaths per 100,000, with the total number of deaths among people experiencing homelessness increasing each year from 536 in 2013 to 1,047 in 2018. The leading causes of death included coronary heart disease (22%) and unintentional drug and alcohol overdose (21%), indicating that there are opportunities for interventions to prevent premature deaths.

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MOTION

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Innovative solutions are needed to address this growing inequity and to prevent unnecessary deaths among our most vulnerable residents. The County's three health departments can work together to identify opportunities to enhance access to health services, facilitate treatment for people experiencing homelessness, and provide linkages to needed services. To be most effective, these integrated efforts must directly reflect the input and elevate the perspectives of people experiencing homelessness, especially given the diversity of paths through which people fall into homelessness.

**WE THEREFORE MOVE THAT THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS:**

Instruct the Director of the Department of Public Health, in coordination with the Directors of the Departments of Health Services and Mental Health, the Medical Examiner-Coroner, the Chief Executive Officer, and the Executive Director of the Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority to:

1. In consultation with health plans and service providers, conduct a health needs assessment of people experiencing homelessness to understand their experiences accessing health, mental health, and substance use services and engaging in treatment, by deploying staff to speak directly with people across Los Angeles County (County), including at the 2019 Care Harbor Free Clinic, in encampments, at select shelters and access points, and at various convenings facilitated and led by people with lived experience across the County about their healthcare needs, concerns, and the challenges they face in accessing these services;
2. Review information from various sources, including mortality and morbidity data, program data, and interviews with homeless service providers and outreach team members, to inform the County's understanding of the current health care delivery system utilized by people experiencing homelessness; and
3. Report back to the Board of Supervisors, in writing, within 120 days with a set of recommendations, informed by findings from this assessment, on steps that can be taken to decrease mortality among people experiencing homelessness and improve treatment outcomes.

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