

MOTION BY SUPERVISOR SHEILA KUEHL

August 11, 2015

On March 3, 2015, the Board of Supervisors approved a motion instructing the Department of Public Social Services (DPSS) and County Counsel to report back to the Board on information concerning the 33 affiliated hotel/motels and emergency housing sites utilized in the Department of Public Social Services (DPSS) General Relief (GR) Emergency Housing program.

On April 3, DPSS reported back in relation to the proposed feasibility analysis for a competitive bid process for emergency shelter services contracts, potential options for this process included a fiscal analysis if the county were to increase funding for the General Relief Emergency Housing Program, as well as other housing options available for this population.

The DPSS GR Emergency Housing program was created to provide temporary housing for homeless individuals waiting for their GR applications to be processed. Applicants are issued housing vouchers that are redeemable at 33 specific motels and 3 contracted homeless shelter sites which participate in the GR Emergency Housing Program.

There has been growing concern that some motels are also being used for human

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trafficking activities and other illegal activities. Though these motels have recently agreed to display posters and send staff to training regarding human trafficking on their property, this process is new and only relates to a fraction of the negative activities that may be taking place at these motels.

Currently, the associated motels house one person per voucher for an average of fourteen days. The voucher must be signed daily by the recipient in the presence of motel personnel to ensure that the recipient is using the motel room provided. The reimbursement rate per voucher is \$24.00 per night, funded by DPSS. The applicant may cancel or shorten the length of stay and is not required to stay at the motel for the duration of the voucher period. According to reports from DPSS, the 33 motels participating in the Emergency Housing Program as of August 2015 offer a capacity of 552 beds per night set aside for GR applicants. Of the 552 beds available per night, GR homeless applicants utilize an average of 203 beds per night. Additionally, the three contracted shelters offer 105 beds per night. Of the 105 beds available per night, GR homeless applicants utilize an average of 79 shelter beds per night. Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority (LAHSA) conducted an informal survey of its crisis housing program providers and found that 7 homeless service providers providing crisis housing services are willing to provide up to 199 additional beds, which exceed the capacity currently being utilized in both motels and shelters.

Unlike motels, the homeless crisis housing programs offer assessment and services to the GR applicants which help connect to the resources they need to end their homelessness. Additionally, staff at the crisis housing sites provide intake into the Coordinated Entry System and some sites provide meals to GR applicants staying in their crisis housing.

Homeless crisis housing providers participating in the GR Emergency Housing

Program provide a safe, crime-free, and supportive environment with well-trained staff to support GR applicants. This is in contrast to the motels currently being used by the program where human trafficking and other illegal activities may occur.

DPSS and LAHSA should work together to develop a revised GR Emergency Housing Program aimed at phasing out the use of motels, expanding the use of homeless crisis housing programs, and creating a pathway to permanent housing. This is particularly important for disabled GR applicants and transition age youth. DPSS and LAHSA should utilize targeted interventions and resource strategies for these particularly vulnerable populations.

I, THEREFORE, MOVE that the interim Chief Executive Officer work with the Department of Public Social Services and the Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority to report back to the Board of Supervisors in writing in 90 days with the following information:

1. A description of the current GR Emergency Housing program, including the ways in which applicants access the program, how the department funds the program, existing case management practices and procedures, including how disability information is obtained, how disabled applicants are linked to appropriate mental health treatment, primary healthcare, substance abuse treatment, a description of the training provided to DPSS staff to identify and support homeless and disabled applicants and outcomes for participants in the program;
2. The feasibility of providing emergency housing through crisis housing provided by homeless service agencies instead of motels, including the rate per night to provide adequate crisis housing, a recommendation for the appropriate length of stay in crisis housing, recommendations regarding whether assessment and/or an initial meeting with a case manager at crisis housing sites should be required

for GR applicants, whether GR applicants with disabilities should be provided with a greater length of stay in crisis housing as well as receiving additional case management, and whether GR applicants under the age of 26 years old should receive specialized crisis housing , extended length of stay, and case management;

3. Additional information on the feasibility of providing 24 hour-day crisis housing, geographically dispersed crisis housing, and crisis housing that would provide applicants with private rooms and/or congregate crisis housing;
4. Opportunities for linking GR applicants who need crisis housing with the coordinated entry system in Los Angeles County, the GR Housing Subsidy program, single adult model and/or other systems to address longer term housing needs, the Homeless Management Information System, and/or diversion from the homeless system when possible;
5. A timeline for phasing-out the use of motels in the Emergency Housing Program; and
6. An update regarding housing referrals and outcomes from DPSS related to the November 12, 2013 Board motion which directed the CEO, in coordination with DHS, DMH, DPSS and DPH, to establish a single adult model (SAM) plan to provide an infrastructure to reduce homelessness for the single adult population.