

CommonSpirit Health

Homeless Health Initiative



Homeless Health Initiative

In early 2019, CommonSpirit leadership and Dignity Health facilities in California launched the Homeless Health Initiative (HHI). As the largest not-for-profit health system nationally and an anchor institution in many of our communities, CommonSpirit Health serves a vital role in providing services and supports, and coordinating the care needs of our patients and community members experiencing housing insecurities and homelessness. Many of our hospitals serve as the resource connector for our unhoused neighbors. This can result in a myriad of challenges when serving and discharge planning for this population due to varying levels of medical and behavioral health acuity, readiness to receive services, access to basic survival resources, and payer sources. Regardless of the challenges, this work has always been a part of who we are as an organization and ingrained in our mission which states “make the healing presence of God known in our world by improving the health of the people we serve, especially those who are vulnerable, while we advance social justice for all.”

The strategy of HHI is to co-locate, coordinate, and integrate health care, behavioral health, safety, and wellness services with housing and other social services to enhance the continuum of care. This strategy not only creates additional resources but it also helps providers to connect individuals experiencing homelessness with resources.

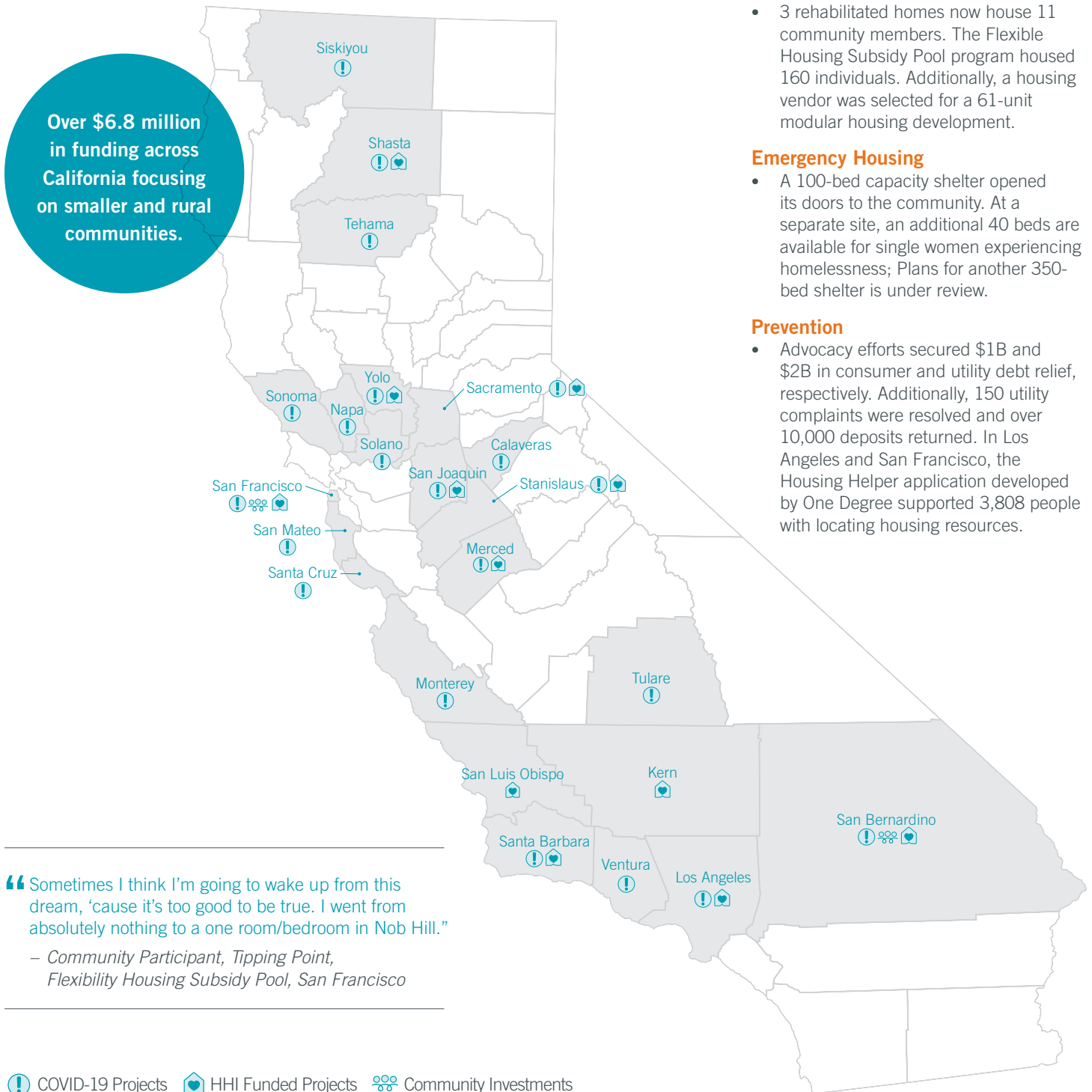
CommonSpirit has committed to invest a minimum of \$20 million across California through FY 2024 in programs that address two focus areas:

- Housing insecurities and homeless prevention for individuals and families who are at-risk of experiencing homelessness;
- Developing and strengthening collaborative efforts with local community partners, including the homeless continuum of care, homeless service providers, government agencies, and others to identify opportunities to improve coordination of care and access to community resources for populations experiencing homelessness who are being discharged from our hospitals.



FY 2021 Accomplishments

Through FY21, CommonSpirit and our Dignity Health facilities in California have invested \$18.48M in programs addressing housing insecurities and homelessness. Between July of 2020 and June of 2021, HHI approved nearly \$6.8M in funding across California with a continued focus on our smaller and rural communities. This included three new projects and ongoing support for ten existing projects.



FY 2021 impact includes:

Transitions of Care/Care Coordination

- 15 medical respite beds were activated serving a total of 59 unique persons. Groundbreaking commenced for a 32-bed medical respite facility.

Permanent/Interim Housing

- 3 rehabilitated homes now house 11 community members. The Flexible Housing Subsidy Pool program housed 160 individuals. Additionally, a housing vendor was selected for a 61-unit modular housing development.

Emergency Housing

- A 100-bed capacity shelter opened its doors to the community. At a separate site, an additional 40 beds are available for single women experiencing homelessness; Plans for another 350-bed shelter is under review.

Prevention

- Advocacy efforts secured \$1B and \$2B in consumer and utility debt relief, respectively. Additionally, 150 utility complaints were resolved and over 10,000 deposits returned. In Los Angeles and San Francisco, the Housing Helper application developed by One Degree supported 3,808 people with locating housing resources.

“Sometimes I think I’m going to wake up from this dream, ‘cause it’s too good to be true. I went from absolutely nothing to a one room/bedroom in Nob Hill.”

– Community Participant, Tipping Point, Flexibility Housing Subsidy Pool, San Francisco

COVID-19

In FY21, Dignity Health provided nearly **\$1.4M** in support to non-profit organizations in response to the COVID-19 public health crisis. As COVID-19 has become a more consistent part of our daily lives, resources for individuals experiencing homelessness have continued to be a priority despite the changing policies, mandates, and moratoriums that impact our communities. In partnership with community-based organizations across the state, we have supported the following:

731

Distribution of 731 hygiene kits and 500 outreach backpacks.

77,634

Distribution of 77,634 meals, \$100 food cards for 50 seniors/6 months, and 223 food boxes.

12/25

Provision of tablets for access to telehealth appointments and payment for 12 months of internet/broadband access for 25 seniors.

15/40

Maintenance of 15 Project Roomkey units and housing for 40 units for Project Homekey.

38,262





Rental Relief for 38,262 individuals through California Coalition for Rural Housing and United Ways, and \$500 a month rental subsidies for 40 seniors through Mission Neighborhood Centers.



“The team met a pregnant woman who had been couch-surfing for several months. She moved to California to escape an abusive relationship and was working 3 jobs to support herself and try to prepare for her new baby that was due in a month...The Outreach team connected her with one of their many partner agencies... the two organizations were able to find the woman a home before she delivered her baby.”

– Community Partner, The Salvation Army's Street-Level Mobile Outreach Program, San Joaquin

Systems Transformation and Research

- Serving as an inaugural partner with three sites participating in the Healthcare and Homeless Pilot led by Community Solutions and Institute for Healthcare Improvement. This effort brings together healthcare and homelessness response systems to make measurable progress toward ending chronic homelessness in their communities, with a focus on building racially equitable systems. 
- In partnership with Funders Together to End Homelessness, launched the Health System Funders for Housing Justice to map out and prioritize opportunities, create a shared action agenda for network, and build trust across national health systems to have a collective impact on the homelessness system at state and national levels. 
- Addressing Rural Communities and Homelessness (ARCH) was a community research project in partnership with Health Leads. Guided by a statewide Research Advisory Board of service providers and community members, the project focused on learning about the lived experience of those managing housing insecurity and/or homelessness in rural California communities during COVID-19. 
- “Capacity-Building for California Medical Respite/Recuperative Care Programs in Response to COVID-19” was conducted by the National Institute of Medical Respite Care based on interviews at four different medical respite/recuperative care facilities in California. These case studies tracked organizational responses to the COVID-19 pandemic, examining what actions took place to protect the physical safety and emotional well-being of clients and staff alike. 

Community Investments = \$10.2M

Mary Erickson Community Housing – Funding to develop 11 single family manufactured homes for low-income families seeking first-time homeownership opportunities in San Bernardino.

Neighborhood Partnership Housing Service, Inc (NPHS) – Through a \$1M line of credit to NPHS with loan proceeds used to develop 10 scattered single-family factory-built homes for low-income families on scattered, underutilized land in the City of San Bernardino.

The Kelsey – Located in San Francisco, The Kelsey received a \$1M loan with proceeds used for predevelopment costs relating to the development of 115 units of affordable housing for San Francisco.

San Francisco Housing Accelerator Fund (SFHAF) – SFHAF was awarded a \$7M loan to bolster their lending capacity to purchase and preserve affordable housing units for low-to-moderate income families. In particular, longer term capital will provide flexibility and allow SFHAF to grow its pipeline to include repurposing hotels and small housing sites with under 25 units.

“A patient who had been unable or unwilling to engage in their health planning at all, began scheduling and attending their own appointments, including lab work.”

– Community Partner, Shasta Community Health Center, Redding

Hospital Community Grants = \$1.6M

In FY 2021, the hospitals across California awarded nearly \$1.6M in community and social innovation partnership grants that focused on housing including COVID-19 response, navigation and coordination of services, emergency and permanent housing, recuperative care/medical respite, clinical services and case management services.



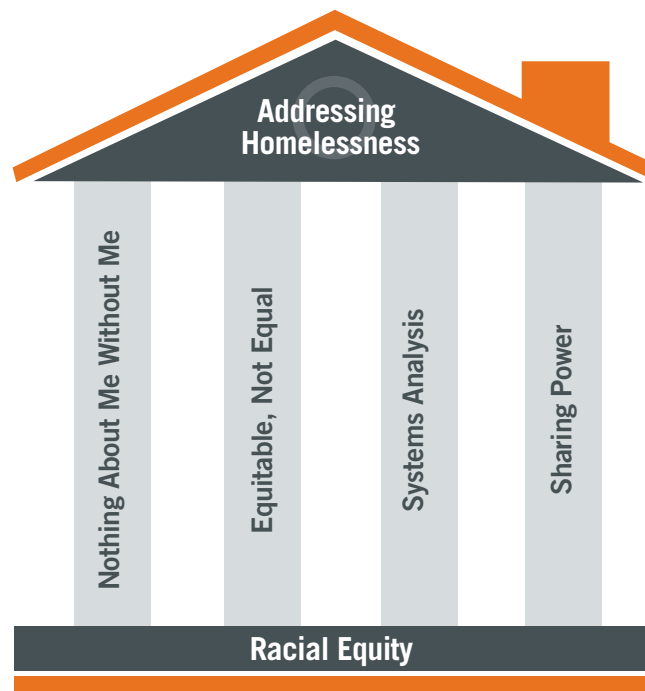
FY22 Future Progress

The HHI initiative will continue to work with community partners and payors to support the CalAIM initiative across CA, further efforts to build out medical respite/recuperative care services, collaborate with the office of public policy and advocacy, support permanent supportive housing and affordable housing initiatives, medical legal partnership, and continue investing in community research.

Images on this page: Community members connected to permanent housing through the unique partnership between the county, hospital and local non-profit in San Joaquin County.

Guiding Principles

- Recognize that housing is health care and the lack of stable and affordable housing negatively impacts an individual's health.
- Advance system transformation of the healthcare system and of communities.
- Focus on upstream and prevention interventions including activities that address social determinants of health – food security, transportation, health coverage, child care as well as housing
- Support community driven initiatives that advance **racial equity** and promote equitable access to housing and healthcare.
- Pursue a “Housing First” approach which prioritizes providing permanent housing to individuals experiencing homelessness thus positioning them to pursue personal goals to improve their quality of life.
- Provide innovative solutions including the use of new technologies and strategies.
- Serve as a catalyst for building capacity to address the need.
- Create collaborative, scalable and sustainable impact.



Want to learn more?

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