

**California Behavioral Health Planning Council
Housing and Homelessness Committee**

April 2025 Meeting Minutes

Thursday, April 17, 2025

8:30 am to 12:00 pm

Council Members Present:

Lanita Mims-Beal, Susie Baker (virtual), John Black, Monica Caffey, Dave Cortright, Erin Franco (virtual), Barbara Mitchell, Don Morrison, Darlene Prettyman, Maria Sierra, Danielle Sena, Daphne Shaw, Deborah Starkey, Arden Tucker

Staff Present:

Simon Vue, Gabriella Sedano (virtual)

Item #1 Welcome and Introductions

The committee meeting began at 8:30am. Chairperson Deborah Starkey welcomed committee members and guests. A quorum was established with 14 out of 20 members present.

Item #2 Review and Accept January 2025 Meeting Minutes

The Housing and Homelessness Committee reviewed the January 2025 Meeting Minutes. The minutes were accepted by the Committee as written.

Action/Resolution

The accepted minutes will be posted to the California Behavioral Health Planning Council's website.

Item #3 Member Debrief: Housing California 2025 Annual Conference

Barbara Mitchell shared her key takeaways and highlights from the Housing California 2025 Annual Conference, held from March 5-7, 2025, at the SAFE Credit Union Convention Center in Sacramento, CA. This event brought together thousands of professionals from across the housing development system, with a central focus on securing Behavioral Health Services Act (BHSA) funding.

Critical challenges within the affordable housing landscape identified by developers include a strong demand for financial support for capital projects, occupancy assistance, and project-based initiatives. Barbara noted there was a widespread lack of understanding regarding the Behavioral Health Services Act's target population and goals.

Barbara also addressed broader issues in the housing sector, including rising development costs due to tariffs, barriers to long-term occupancy support,

uncertainty around federal budget allocations, and ongoing challenges in accessing housing subsidies. She highlighted that the absence of community planning for long-term occupancy support prevents developers from securing funding for current projects, exacerbating these challenges.

Additionally, Barbara reported on discussions about the "Housing First" approach, looking at what aspects have been successful, what challenges remain, and their broader implications for the future of housing policy.

Item #4 Housing California's Advocacy Priorities

Divya Shiv, Senior Policy Advocate, at Housing California provided an overview of the organization's advocacy priorities and initiatives to address homelessness and housing challenges in California.

She shared key statistics, noting that California has only 24 affordable rental units available per 100 extremely low-income renters. She highlighted that 187,000 individuals are experiencing homelessness, emphasizing that this figure is likely an undercount. She also shared that 68 percent of unhoused individuals are unsheltered and the majority being California natives.

Divya outlined the mission of Housing California, which is to prevent and end homelessness by advocating for safe, stable affordable housing through a racial equity lens. She highlighted the work of the Resident United Network, which consists of individuals living in affordable housing and advocating for policy changes.

Divya also discussed the Roadmap Home 2030 initiative, which focuses on policies to end homelessness and increase affordable housing from 2020 to 2030. She explained the organization's three-pronged advocacy approach: budgetary, legislative, and regulatory advocacy, emphasizing the importance of funding for housing and homelessness programs.

The current budget deficit and federal uncertainty are highlighted, with a focus on the lack of new funding for housing and homelessness programs in the Governor's January budget. Divya also discussed key legislative priorities such as the Affordable Housing Bond bills (Assembly Bill 736 and Senate Bill 417) and Assembly Bill 804 by Assemblymember Wicks, which would make Medi-Cal housing supportive services a statewide benefit leveraging federal funding to enhance service delivery and accessibility.

Housing California is focused on the Behavioral Health Services Act implementation. Efforts include educating developers on the Integrated Plans of the Behavioral Health Services Act, the Act's capabilities and limitations, and the prioritization of Behavioral Health Services Act housing funds for operating expenses and rental assistance.

The Committee engaged in a question-and-answer session with the presenter. Barbara Mitchell noted that the federal government has sent notices to current grant holders indicating they will no longer enforce Housing First provisions. She also

referenced pending state legislation that aim to modify or eliminate Housing First requirements in California, such as Assembly Bill 255 by Assemblymember Haney.

Divya emphasized that California has its own Housing First laws that must be preserved. She acknowledged the need for recovery housing but stressed that it must operate within a Housing First framework and added that the California Interagency Council on Homelessness is working on guidance on how recovery housing can fit under Housing First. She expressed concerns about recovery housing potentially:

- Being the only housing option in a community,
- Evicting individuals for substance use, and
- Not addressing broader housing needs.

Divya also clarified that recovery housing should:

- Be a choice for individuals,
- Not exacerbate homelessness,
- Operate with harm reduction approaches, and
- Provide an option for those seeking sobriety.

When asked about HomeShare and its potential to address housing issues, Divya acknowledged the question but noted that it has not been a focus of Housing California's work.

When asked whether existing funding in the state budget would stay or be cut, given that no new funding has been allocated, Divya clarified that it depends on the program. For example:

- The State Low-Income Housing Tax Credit is being zeroed out in the current budget.
- The Housing and Homelessness Assistance Prevention Program did not receive additional funding.

Divya shared that Housing California is part of a statewide housing and homelessness budget coalition that is actively advocating to ensure these programs receive sufficient funding to remain functional and continue serving individuals.

Public Comment:

N/A

Item #5	Discussion of Housing California's Advocacy Priorities
----------------	---

Barbara Mitchell highlighted concerns about the financial structure of the Affordable Housing Bond bills (Assembly Bill 736 and Senate Bill 417). Unlike typical bond financing, she shared that the bond does not generate immediate repayments. She further explained that the bond adds a long-term financial burden to the state's general fund, with no clear mechanism for recouping the investment over 55 years.

The Committee also discussed the rising costs of insurance as a significant barrier to affordable housing development. Barbara Mitchell mentioned a 40 percent increase

in insurance costs for her agency, describing it as a statewide issue affecting housing development across the state.

Committee members also discussed the unique challenges of housing people with serious mental illness, including the difficulties of placing them in congregate housing settings. The discussion highlighted the complexity of housing options, including:

- Many shelters refuse to accept people with serious mental illness,
- Some agencies use alternative housing like hotel rooms, and
- Individual preferences and comfort are crucial in successful housing placement.

The Committee conducted a roll call vote to refer Assembly Bill 804 to the Legislation and Public Policy Committee for further consideration. Daphne Shaw called the motion and Monica Caffey seconded the motion, and the motion passed with 12 ayes and 1 abstain.

Public Comment:

Aretha Groom shared the methods her community uses to assess and screen individuals, particularly those experiencing homelessness:

- Street medicine and a mobile medical van to provide direct services,
- Collaboration with California Advancing and Innovating Medi-Cal (CalAIM), utilizing programs like Enhanced Care Management (ECM) to assist with screening, expansion, and connecting individuals to additional resources,
- Partnership with a large clinic for broader healthcare access,
- Temporary housing solutions, including placing individuals in hotels, and
- LEAD record programs to track and support those in needs.

Action/Resolution

Council staff will forward Assembly Bill 804 to the Legislation & Public Policy Committee for consideration at their next meeting.

Responsible for Action-Due Date

Simon Vue – April 2025

Item #6 Proposition 1 Member Discussion

The Committee reviewed the Behavioral Health Transformation Policy Comments Crosswalk for the first module of the Behavioral Health Services Act Policy Manual. Simon shared that the purpose of the crosswalk was to provide a clear overview of changes, highlighting which recommendations were addressed, partially addressed, or not addressed at all in the final version of the policy manual.

Council staff, Simon Vue, shared that most of the Council's recommendations were accepted by the Department, underscoring the value of the Council's advocacy and the critical role Council members play in shaping behavioral health policies.

Barbara Mitchell highlighted several significant successes in the Council's recommendations:

- Broader definitions for housing eligibility,
- More flexible definitions of who is considered homeless or at risk of homelessness,
- Options for flexible housing supports or project-based subsidies, and
- Clarification that skilled nursing is not considered housing.

Simon shared that the Department is accepting feedback on Module Three through April 25, 2025.

Simon also shared the Behavioral Health Continuum Infrastructure Program (BHCIP) Outcomes document with the Committee. The document summarizes key data including beds and facility types funded during Rounds 3, 4, and 5.

Although the Behavioral Health Continuum Infrastructure Program (BHCIP) is not part of Proposition 1, the measure allocates up to \$4.4 billion to the program through the Behavioral Health Infrastructure Bond Act of 2024, positioning the program as a key vehicle for expanding California's behavioral health infrastructure. This funding supports the development of treatment facilities, including residential care settings and supportive housing. The Department of Health Care Services (DHCS) distributes these funds through competitive grants, focusing on community-based services and regional projects.

Barbara Mitchell highlighted that the current funding is primarily directed towards Adult Residential Substance-Use Treatment Facilities, Acute Psychiatric Hospitals, and Mental Health Rehabilitation Centers.

When asked about the ownership and operations of these facilities, Barbara Mitchell clarified that while counties apply for the money, they can be co-applicants with providers. She also added that non-profit organizations appear to be significant players in facility development and operations.

The discussion further explored regional funding distribution, with Los Angeles County receiving the most significant funding. The data showed funding across different regions, including Los Angeles, Bay Area, Southern California, San Joaquin Valley, and tribal entities.

Simon noted that the Department of Health Care Services will release an update in May of 2025, and staff will continue to monitor.

Public Comment:

Janet Frank from the California Commission on Aging expressed concern about Continuing Care Facilities not being considered housing. She added that both skilled nursing facilities and residential care facilities are increasingly becoming "warehouses" for individuals with medical and behavioral health needs, particularly disabled older adults. She emphasized that these facilities are often understaffed and lack proper capabilities to address the complex needs of their residents.

Mike Phillips from San Diego County added to Janet's comments, extending the concern to include not just residential care facilities for the elderly (RCFEs), but also

adult residential facilities (ARFs). He suggested that the same concerns about inadequate care and support apply across different types of residential care settings.

Action/Resolution

Staff will continue to monitor for the May updates regarding the Behavioral Health Continuum Infrastructure Program (BHCIP).

Responsible for Action-Due Date

Simon Vue – May 2025

Item #7 Recovery Housing Overview & Planning

Council staff Simon Vue presented an overview of the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) report titled “The Intersection of Recovery Housing & Housing First—A Dialogue on Collaboration and Partnership.” The report summarizes a two-day conference hosted by SAMHSA’s Office of Recovery in August 2023. This event convened over 70 participants, including individuals with lived experience of mental health and substance use disorders, homelessness, housing providers, researchers, and state and federal government representatives. The primary goals were to raise national awareness about the intersection of Recovery Housing and Housing First programs and to highlight collaboration opportunities between the two housing models.

Key topics covered in the report included:

- **Creating a “no wrong door” continuum of care:** For example, integrating Recovery Housing and Housing First approaches to expand options tailored to individual needs,
- **Innovative Strategies:** For example, combining harm reduction strategies with recovery-focused services to address the complex needs of individuals, and
- **Funding strategies:** For example, leveraging local, state, and federal resources to support and expand housing programs.

Simon also outlined several potential solutions, which included:

- Strengthening partnerships among housing providers, community organizations, and policymakers to create a cohesive support system,
- Promoting flexibility in housing models to align with individual’s unique recovery goals and preferences, and
- Advocating for policy changes that support integrated housing solutions.

Simon also highlighted Central City Concern, a Portland-based organization with a comprehensive housing model that integrates both recovery housing and Housing First approaches. He shared that the organization combines affordable housing with wraparound services, including health care, employment support, and recovery programs, and offers a wide variety of housing options, including:

- **Transitional housing** ranging from stabilization housing with therapeutic support and harm-reduction services (3-6 months) to Alcohol and Drug-Free Community (ADFC) Recovery Housing and specialized veterans housing programs through VA partnership,
- **Permanent Housing** which provides rent assistance and services for chronically homeless individuals, and

- **Affordable Housing**, which are rental units for those earning between 0-60% of median area income.

Committee members expressed strong interest in hearing firsthand perspectives from individuals with lived experience, tenants, family members, and housing providers regarding recovery housing.

One member suggested inviting a representative from the California Interagency Council on Homelessness (Cal ICH) to present their draft guidance on Housing First and Recovery Housing.

Barbara Mitchell recommended that Council staff compile and save SAMHSA resources and documents as PDF files for future reference.

Action/Resolution

Committee staff will coordinate efforts to identify and secure presenters who can share insights and lived experiences related to recovery housing. Additionally, staff will invite a presenter from the California Interagency Council on Homelessness to provide an overview of the Housing First and Recovery Housing Guidance. Staff will also compile and archive SAMHSA resources and documents in PDF format for future reference.

Responsible for Action-Due Date

Simon Vue – May 2025

Public Comment:

Theresa Comstock, representing the California Association of Local Behavioral Health Boards & Commissions, raised concerns regarding housing funding in the Behavioral Health Transformation Policy Comments Crosswalk.

Item #9 Wrap-up Next Steps

Chairperson Deborah thanked the Committee for their participation and time. The meeting adjourned at 11:10 am.