



**To: The community of San Joaquin County**

**Re: Local response to COVID-19 and homelessness**

**Date: March 17, 2020**

The San Joaquin Continuum of Care, which acts as the backbone agency for San Joaquin County and its communities in planning and coordinating a local response to homelessness, strongly urges local governments, agencies, and organizations to consider the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on homeless individuals as well as on the uncounted number of households that will have their housing endangered by interruptions in income due to the pandemic. Consideration of these community members must shape the fundamental actions we collectively take to address this public health crisis.

The SJCoC Board advises the following planning and actions from elected leadership:

- The establishment of a homelessness prevention fund that can be used to help pay the critical housing costs of households whose earnings have been interrupted because of the pandemic. This fund should be available to households whose income was interrupted as a direct result of business closures, layoffs, quarantines, and other restrictions related to the pandemic, and can prove that they are not able to pay critical housing costs such as rent and/or utilities without assistance.
- The creation of temporary care facilities that can accommodate homeless individuals who experience symptoms or who test positive for COVID-19 but who do not require hospitalization. Homeless shelters and transitional housing facilities do not have the proper space, equipment, or staff to safely shelter and provide for those who exhibit symptoms or test positive for COVID-19. Temporary care facilities should be established to provide for the care of these individuals as well as to protect other individuals from the virus. These care facilities should be staffed and overseen by health care professionals; they should also follow guidance for needs for these individuals and facilities as described by the Centers for Disease Control and other validated public health resources. Such facilities could include rented or converted motels, such as those being identified by the governor's office for possible use for this purpose.
- Prioritize proper resourcing of emergency homeless shelters and emergency food/feeding services, including sufficient staff and supplies

Some of these efforts are already under way within San Joaquin County and its cities. Implementing these ideas will require significant planning and logistical organization to stand up, and SJCoC Board leadership will be actively engaged in providing support for these efforts.

The SJCoC and the SJCoC Board is prepared to:

- Assist in a coordinated effort to gather donations of sanitation supplies for emergency homeless shelters, transitional housing facilities, homeless outreach teams, and emergency food/feeding services, and to assist in the equitable distribution of these supplies to operators throughout the county.

- Coordinate operation of homeless outreach teams to deliver information and supplies to persons living on the streets
- Identify nongovernmental organizations with the capacity and experience to implement homelessness prevention and other relief efforts
- Advocate for the proper resourcing of emergency shelters and other service providers that will be severely impacted by the pandemic
- Advocate to local and state leadership to direct resources toward San Joaquin County and its cities to address the impacts of COVID-19 on this community
- Encourage subrecipients of Continuum of Care Program Competition and Emergency Solutions Grants funding to incorporate new guidance regarding eligible uses of these funding sources to assist persons who are homeless and impacted by this pandemic
- Provide a platform for San Joaquin County, cities within the county, nonprofit agencies, businesses, and residents to ensure a coordinated response to this pandemic that meets the needs of all community members, including persons who are homeless
- Continue to be a reliable, validated resource for local leaders seeking actionable steps to assist persons who are homeless and persons who may become homeless

During this difficult time, we are committed to serving the community and supporting all efforts that protect the health, dignity, and well-being of individuals both housed and unhoused.

On behalf of the San Joaquin Continuum of Care Board of Directors,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jon Mendelson', with a large, sweeping flourish at the end.

Jon Mendelson  
Chair, San Joaquin Continuum of Care