



# county of Santa Cruz

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## HUMAN RESOURCES AGENCY

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February 12, 2001

Agenda: February 27, 2001

### BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

County of Santa Cruz

701 Ocean Street

Santa Cruz, CA. 95060

### **RE: SHELTER AND CARE NEEDS OF THE ELDERLY AND DISABLED**

Dear Members of the Board:

As you recall, the Long Term Care (LTC) Interagency Commission submitted a letter to your Board in September, 2000 regarding the housing crisis that is escalating in Santa Cruz County. The letter specifically noted the impact of this issue on the low to middle income elderly and disabled populations in the county. The purpose of this letter is to provide your Board with an update on efforts underway to address the housing issue.

As noted in the LTC Commission letter to your Board, the housing crisis is particularly problematic for the elderly and dependent adults in our county who are subsisting on fixed incomes. The impact of the dramatic escalation of housing costs is further compounded by other factors such as the rate increases for utilities and the difficulty in obtaining services in the home. The entire continuum of housing is affected, from the lack of low-income independent units to the decreasing availability of Supplemental Security Income (SSI) level beds at facilities for people needing assistance.

In the LTC Commission letter, several recommendations were made to your Board that addressed both short and long-term approaches to the housing dilemma. This letter summarizes those recommendations, with additional clarification about strategies already in place, and possible avenues for future efforts.

#### Short Term Recommendations by the LTC Commission

1. Develop an ordinance requiring designated SSI level beds for any new Assisted Living Facilities and Residential Care Facilities. This would incorporate possible policy issues such as changes in permits or waivers for unique projects.

2. Develop a funding mechanism to augment some SSI level and other low-income placements at residential care facilities.
3. Develop a collaborative work plan involving County agencies and the private sector to evaluate the housing issue and devise possible recommendations.
4. Coordinate with the Housing Authority around options regarding the housing waiting lists.
5. Coordinate with the Mobile Home Commission to consider measures that might minimize the impact of the housing crisis on mobile home park tenants.

## **CURRENT INITIATIVES**

To address these short-term recommendations, the following strategies are underway:

- The Human Resources Agency (HRA) and the Health Services Agency (HSA) collaborated during the past few months in the development of an Innovation grant proposal that was part of the Governor's Aging with Dignity plan. This proposal, called Under One Roof, described the development of a facility in South County that would encompass several services, including an Adult Day Health Care Center (Elderday) and the establishment of a Residential Care Facility component for low income / SSI eligible individuals in need of that level of care. Additionally the proposal included the designation of a small number of beds for emergency shelter care use for victims of abuse or neglect. Though the proposal was not awarded to our county by the California Department of Aging, efforts are occurring to identify and pursue other funding sources for this proposal and for the development of the site in South County.
- The Housing Authority has received new vouchers designated for disabled individuals. Both HRA and HSA are collaborating closely with the Housing Authority to assist in the processing of these vouchers for our eligible clients. Though 111 vouchers are available, there are many community agencies also applying on behalf of their clients. Besides the very competitive market for rental units, the difficulty is identifying landlords who are willing to accept a voucher for a rental rate that is less than the actual market rate. Continued coordination with the Housing Authority will occur as they are expecting issuance of additional vouchers from the Federal Housing and Urban Development (HUD) agency.
- Representatives from HRA and HSA, along with community agencies, have met with Assemblyman Fred Keeley to inform him about efforts to address the housing crisis, and to seek his support for the Innovation grant proposal.

An overview of the Long-Term Care Integration Project, which is currently in the second year of a grant administered by HSA, was also provided to Assemblyman Keeley. This project seeks to identify and to develop an integrated system of care for Medi-Cal recipients in the county. We are continuing to work with Assemblyman

Keeley around the development of an integrated network of services, which would include the availability of low-income housing. The Long-Term Care Integration Project has the potential to address a funding mechanism to augment placements at the SSI level of care.

- Both HRA and HSA are actively collaborating with several other commissions and agencies as part of the partnership network needed to address the housing crisis. Informational meetings have occurred with the LTC Commission and the Seniors Commission. Future meetings are planned involving the Housing Advisory Commission and the Mobile Home Commission.

#### Long Term Recommendations by the LTC Commission

1. Support or sponsor legislation at the State and / or Federal level pertaining to affordable housing and increases in the SSI out of home care rate.
2. Assess the feasibility for development of a funding source for a short-term shelter for the elderly who become homeless due to rent increases, unsafe living conditions, etc.
3. Create increased access to care and housing for persons not on SSI but who can not afford the high cost of residential care.
4. Collaborate in the development of a residential care facility that targets the SSI level elderly.
5. Encourage support for waivers (e.g. Medi-Cal) for supported living to avoid unnecessary displacement from independent settings or inappropriate placements.
6. Integrate the work of the Long Term Care Integration Project into the planning efforts to address the continuum of care and the housing crisis.
7. Explore ways to expand resources for home maintenance and modification assistance.

#### PLANNED INITIATIVE%

To address these long-term recommendations, the following strategies are planned:

- HRA and HSA are closely monitoring and supporting opportunities at the Federal level to support legislation for waivers concerning Medi-Cal eligibility for supported living to avoid unnecessary displacement from independent settings or placement at inappropriate levels of care. We will continue partnerships with existing groups, such as the LTC Integration Project and the In-Home Supportive Services Advisory Committee to take advantage of any waivers that can address the housing needs.

- As indicated in the Current Initiatives section, HRA and HSA are pursuing other avenues of funding for a short-term shelter that would also encompass a residential care component at a site in South County.
- Close collaboration will continue with the participants of the Long Term Care Integration Project, as planning occurs to move ahead in the next stage of developing a more efficient service system in the county. The plan for an integration of services will include the issues of the availability of service care needs and housing for the elderly and disabled populations.
- HRA and HSA are monitoring efforts at the State legislative level to seek changes in the parameters of the Special Circumstances program, which provides very limited financial assistance for SSI recipients for special needs such as modifications and repairs in the home. Legislation has been proposed to increase the funding parameters for this program and the County Welfare Director's Association is supporting these efforts. If changes do occur, this program can more effectively assist clients to remain at home, rather than ending up in a higher level of care unnecessarily.
- HRA and HSA are monitoring efforts at the State level, including legislative proposals, that might impact the reimbursement rate for SSI recipients or that might address the development of affordable housing.
- HRA and HSA are reaching out to private foundations to identify funding for housing and support programs for seniors including the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, Wellness Foundation, and others.

## CONCLUSION

As the housing crisis continues to escalate, heightened attention is needed to develop an array of strategies to assist the low-income elderly and dependent adults who are most vulnerable to the costs. Both HRA and HSA will continue efforts to work with the various commissions and community agencies to address the housing issue, including pursuit of funding sources, support for legislation, and development of community partnerships to maximize vouchers and to establish affordable housing units.

IT IS THEREFORE RECOMMENDED that your Board:

1. Accept and file this report on the Shelter and Care Needs of the Elderly and Disabled;
2. Direct the HRA and HSA Administrators to continue current and planned efforts to address the special care needs of the elderly and disabled populations.

Very truly yours,

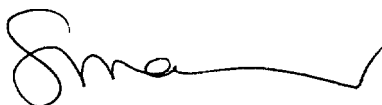


CECILIA ESPINOLA  
HRA Administrator



RAMA KHALSA  
HSA Administrator

RECOMMENDED:



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Susan A. Mauriello  
County Administrative Officer

cc: Long Term Interagency Commission  
County Administrative Officer  
Human Resources Agency Administrator  
Health Services Agency Administrator  
Housing Authority  
Mobile Home Commission  
Seniors Commission  
Commission on Disabilities  
Human Services Commission