

Journey of San Diego Continuum of Care in Responding to Racial Disparity

Presented by:

The San Diego Regional Task Force on
Homelessness and Equity in Action





Objectives

Provide background
on the formation of the
Ad Hoc Committee on
Homelessness Among
Black San Diegans

Describe how
qualitative and
quantitative data
informed the report

Highlight the
committee's approach
to data

Share our advocacy
work

Year 2 objectives



Why We Exist

- RTFH exists to reduce and end homelessness in the San Diego region, ensuring that if this situation does happen for anyone, it remains a rare, brief, and non-recurring instance; not an outcome.

Our Envisioned Future

- RTFH has introduced new housing and service models and implemented best practices that end homelessness. Regional collaboration is robust, partners speak with one voice, and data is effectively used to improve system outcomes and individual lives. As a result, everyone in the San Diego region has a safe and affordable place to call home, and our community thrives.

Ending homelessness begins with a home.



<https://www.rtfhsd.org/>



We Believe...

- Homelessness is solvable.
- Ending homelessness begins with a home.
- All people can be successful in housing with the right support and opportunities.
- Housing is a basic human need and right.
- Homelessness is an experience, not a label.
- All people deserve compassion, respect and to be treated with dignity.





What We Do

RTFH is the lead agency for the San Diego City and County Continuum of Care (CoC)

A CoC is a regional planning body that coordinates housing and services for homeless families and individuals and promotes a community-wide commitment to the goal of ending homelessness

Conduct annual
Point-In-Time Count

Collaborative
Applicant for Funds-
(Federal and State)

Administer
Homeless
Management
Information System
(HMIS)

Operate
Coordinated Entry
System (CES)

Monitor system and
program
performance

Fund Homeless
Services

Promote best
practices, trainings,
and standards

Policy, advocacy,
and research





Background on the Committee

- 2020's PIT count showed Black people accounted for:
 - 21% of the unsheltered population
 - 30% of the sheltered population
 - Despite being only 5.5% of the population in the San Diego Region



Image source: <https://www.sandiegouniontribune.com/news/homelessness/story/2022-05-19/despite-more-shelters-outreach-programs-homelessness-on-rise-in-san-diego>





Formation

The Ad Hoc Committee was created to:

- Explore factors contributing to disparities
- Listen to and engage the public
- Develop a series of recommendations to the CoC
- Be a subcommittee of the CoC Board
- Provide recommendations on actions the CoC can take to eliminate racial disparities for Black San Diegans



The RTFH Commitment



SAN DIEGO
**Regional Task Force
on Homelessness**

Participation on the committee by CoC
Board members

Investing in facilitation

Letting the committee lead

Offering support from RTFH staff

Paying people with lived experience for
their contributions



Objectives of the Ad Hoc Committee

Be grounded in the voices of those with lived experience in the system

Be community driven and action oriented

Educate the larger public and key stakeholders on the issues, barriers, and systemic injustice that Black San Diegans who are at-risk of homelessness or currently homeless face. Needs to be a call to action.

Provide a series of recommendations that will promote systemic changes in local government, homeless services organizations, public/private funders, and other key stakeholders

Lay out concrete action steps to realize system recommendations





A Clear Vision



Qualitative Community Engagement

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Features of the Qualitative Community Engagement

- Open-ended participant led focus groups that incorporated elements of journey mapping
- Participant compensation-\$50 Arlene and Michael Rosen Foundation
- Focus Groups and In-depth Interviews with youth, seniors and dv program participants
- Sessions ran from 1-2 hours sometimes longer
- We met people where they were and had session in the morning and evening depending on what worked best for the people who were engaged





Engagements

2 Unsheltered focus groups

2 Emergency Shelter focus groups for singles, 1 Emergency Shelter focus group families

1 Veterans focus group

7 Senior In-depth interviews

3 Youth In-depth interview

1 Domestic Violence survivor In-depth interview

1 Permanent Housing focus group

In total, 123 individuals with lived experience shared their experience throughout this process.

145 service providers and community members shared their experiences through this process



EQUITY

IN

ACTION

“Homeless programs believe white people and their issues. They want Black people to prove their issues before they let you in”

-Participant in Unsheltered Focus Group

Being Black impacts your access to the crisis response system



Being Black in the Crisis Response System

Participants in every focus group articulated the need for more safe, low barrier shelter

Inability to access shelter exacerbated mental health, chronic health, and addiction issues

Participants described applying for shelter daily and being turned away “43 times”, “80 times” and “91 times”

‘Sicker and crazier’ you were the easier it was for you to get in

Homelessness was not treated as a real crisis or human condition by shelter entry points

Once in shelter people who are black were worried about getting kicked out



EQUITY

IN

ACTION

“You have to know the right answers
to get into housing”

-Participant in Emergency Shelter
Focus Group

**People who are black do not
know how to get into housing**



Trying to Find Housing While Black

Assessment

- Assessments were described as humiliating
- Participants described trying to provide more details about their circumstance, but assessors disinterested in information that was not on the assessment
- People who are black are more trusting of peer networks to receive reliable information
- People feel like they must lie to get into housing

Housing navigation

- Deep need for more in-depth housing navigation
- People with housing vouchers cannot find housing independently
- People in each group described losing vouchers because they couldn't find housing in time



EQUITY

IN

ACTION

“If you are black, you have to beat the door down and be persistent in getting benefits, those cats that don’t beat the door down aren’t going to get into housing”

-Participant in Veterans Focus Group

Mainstream systems do not know how to help people who are black



Interacting With Mainstream Systems While Black

PRIVATE RENTAL MARKET: Landlord discrimination against people who are black all over the region

HEALTH SERVICES: People who are black did not understand how to access substance abuse and mental health services; People who are black were never sick enough for mental health treatment.

HOUSING AGENCIES: Front line staff (many of whom are people of color) discriminate against people who are black- unwilling to answer questions, poor customer service

CRIMINAL JUSTICE: The HOT team was described in two groups as being a decent group to engage with

EMPLOYMENT: A black person's name was often identified as a barrier to obtaining job interviews



EQUITY

IN

ACTION

“Programs believe that white trauma is not black trauma and it’s the exact same trauma”

-Youth In-depth Interview

**Lack of fair and equal treatment
across the homeless system**



FAIR AND EQUAL TREATMENT IN HOMELESS PROGRAMS

Systemic racism specifically experienced in foster care, the criminal justice system and the military greatly impacted people who are black's ability to trust the homeless system

Black women told to be 'resilient,' white women treated as fragile
Black men (especially youth) treated as threatening

Asking questions about processes, wait lists etc are often viewed as being 'difficult'

Unfair treatment exacerbates race relations between participants especially in congregate sites



The toll of this work



QUANTITATIVE DATA



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Vision for Data

Racial equity describes an alternate reality, in which race no longer predicts, in a statistical sense, how one fares

Clear, understandable metrics help highlight inequities in the homeless system

Demonstrate the need for change in ways that are easy to understand and describe for Ad Hoc Committee and other stakeholders





Approach

Move beyond snapshot metrics

Identify disparity statements that demonstrate inequity

Transparent, calculated methodologies leveraging APR reports, raw data and other HMIS data sources already extracted for other dashboards

Track performance metrics over time that will improve outcomes for people who are black and homeless



EHV Advocacy Work: What we asked the PHAs

Request

- Request all PHAs provide a racial breakdown of people who have been placed into housing to monitor racial distribution of vouchers.

Provide

- Provide better training for service providers on how to connect Black San Diegans to county and city services required for EHV referrals

Ask

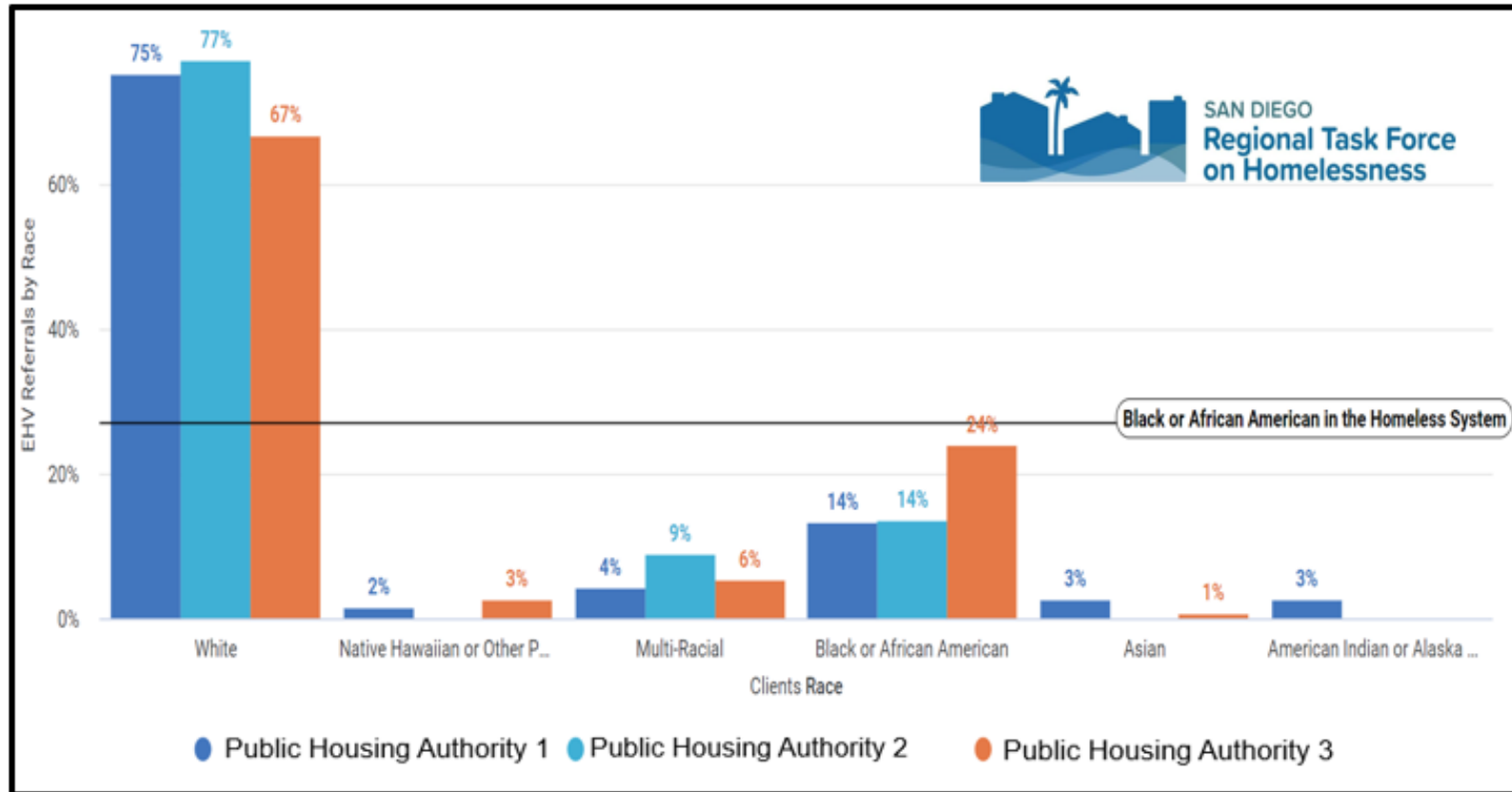
- Ask HCDS behavioral health and SDHC service partners to create targeted mobile outreach to improve access to their services by Black San Diegans
- Eliminate all permissive prohibitions related to criminality that have disproportionately impacted black people.

Incorporate

- Incorporate a race equity focus when determining the priority categories that qualify for EHVs.



EHV Literally Homelessness Referral by Race



**Ad Hoc
Committee +
CoC Board**

**Advocacy to
HUD**

- Implores HUD to affirm that it is not a violation of Fair Housing to use race as a vulnerability factor for housing placement
- Demonstrates that local efforts alone can not lead to equity in our homeless system.
- Federal leadership is needed



Data from the HMIS-Specific to the Homeless Response System

People who are black are more likely to receive referrals to Rapid Rehousing which is a time limited permanent housing subsidy

People who are black represented on the by name list for housing receive fewer referrals to permanent housing resource compared to other racial groups.

People who are black are referred to CES at a lower rate than other races

People who are black are more likely to return to homelessness than any other racial group

Individuals and/or families who are Black exit to positive destinations at lower/higher rates than White individuals and/or families.



Action Plan Data

Black San Diegans make up 28% of the homeless population in our region, even though they only represent 5% of the overall population.



Black people are:

6 times more likely than non-Black people to experience homelessness

5 times more likely than non-Black people to experience unsheltered homelessness.

7 times more likely than non-Blacks to experience sheltered homelessness.



Action Plan Goals

Develop a Homeless
Data Dashboard
on Equity

Inclusive Procurement

Training and Education

Mentorship of Black Led
Organizations

Center the Voices of
Black People with Lived
Experience

Transform the Crisis
Response System



Establish

Establish a Data
Dashboard

Collaborate

Collaborate with the
Center for Budget
and Policy Priorities
on comprehensive
analysis of HMIS
data

Develop

Develop strategies
to expand access to
PSH for people who
are black

Identify

Identify proxies for
race





Lessons Learned: Implementation

Importance of creating psychological safety for all stakeholders

Balance of urgency and thoughtful approaches

Creating space so all voices can be heard

Burnout is real

Taking the time to norm the group to working together



Thank you...



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