



# NEWS RELEASE

## COMMITTEE ON HOMELESSNESS

Clark County – Las Vegas – North Las Vegas – Henderson – Boulder City – Southern Nevada Homeless Coalition – U. S. Department of Veteran Affairs – Southern Nevada Adult Mental Health

Services – Clark County School District – Las Vegas Metropolitan Police – North Las Vegas Police Department

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## Officials to Reprioritize Spending to Fill ‘Gaps,’ Say Outlook for Homeless Improving Regional Plan Nearing Completion, Expected This Fall

Local governments, having allocated \$25 million this fiscal year in the fight against homelessness, are reexamining the focus of those expenditures with an eye toward getting more people off the streets.

The review will be conducted following completion of a “gaps analysis” showing where more services are needed. Officials aim to more effectively target existing funds toward higher-priority services that fill those gaps and better meet the needs of the homeless. About 105 gaps have been identified which are categorized under 10 priorities.

The matter will be weighed at a combined meeting of the Southern Nevada Regional Planning Coalition (SNRPC) board of directors, Technical Committee and the Committee on Homelessness (CoH) on **Thursday, June 16 at 3:00 p.m.** The meeting will be conducted as a facilitated workshop and held at the Henderson Convention Center at 200 Water St.

The workshop will occur at a time of unprecedented cooperation between local governments and homeless service providers, who anticipate completion of a regional homeless plan this Fall. The primary goal of that plan, being coordinated by Regional Homeless Services Coordinator Paula Haynes-Green with direction from the CoH, is to house the homeless.

“More is being done now than ever in our community’s history to help the homeless,” said Clark County Manager and CoH Chairman Thom Reilly. “Never have all the local governments and homeless providers come together and reached consensus on how to get people off the streets and into jobs or supportive services. For 18 months, the CoH has been meeting and developing consensus on where our community needs to go.”

Las Vegas Assistant City Manager Betsy Fretwell agreed: “While we’re focused on developing the long-range plan and priorities, clearly we can’t lose sight of the challenges before all of us today,” she said.

Meanwhile, recent efforts have paid big dividends in securing state and federal funding. For instance, the state Legislature recently allocated \$4 million for homeless “intervention and intensive case management.” On the intervention front, a mobile crisis intervention team will respond to emergencies declared by local governments and provide coordinated outreach efforts. Outreach would be intensive and take services to the streets so that homeless people could be aided in making the transition from homelessness to self-sufficiency whenever possible.

Intensive case management involves specialized teams of social workers who will develop plans for moving clients toward stable housing and self-sufficiency. They will work with clients to provide a support system that keeps them from returning to the streets, officials said. The CoH will be evaluating projects to fund with the state’s appropriation in the next few months.



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“We are focusing on a housing continuum that includes the prevention of homelessness as well as moving people from emergency shelters to stable housing,” said city of Henderson Deputy City Manager Bonnie Rinaldi.

In January, it was announced that the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development awarded Southern Nevada \$6 million in Continuum of Care funds. The federal grant, the highest ever received locally for homeless services, is being spent on providing permanent and transitional housing. It also funds job training, health care, mental health counseling, substance abuse treatment and child care services.

Still, officials recognize that government resources are limited and fighting homelessness is costly. In the current fiscal year 2004-05, \$25 million was allocated for homeless intervention, prevention and treatment services. This allocation is \$9 million more than the previous fiscal year.

Doing nothing is also costly, officials cautioned. They cited higher expenses associated with law enforcement and criminal justice and the strains to the mental health and health care systems. “It is critical that we maintain the integrity of our hospitals, courts and other systems,” Reilly said. “Otherwise, the entire community suffers.”

“We support all efforts to improve regional communication and coordination to ensure consistent response to homeless issues,” said North Las Vegas City Manager Gregory Rose. “We must combine our resources in order to do this effectively.”

Officials also plan to reach out to the private sector for help with a homeless trust fund. A marketing campaign that aims to encourage businesses to “buy outcomes” with their donations is being developed with free assistance from Brown & Partners. Those donations, for instance, could be targeted to aid veterans, families and children.

Currently, numerous agencies and services help people transition from homelessness to self-sufficiency. They include county Social Service, emergency shelter providers, the city of Las Vegas EVOLVE (Educational and Vocational Opportunities Leading to Valuable Experience) program, Straight from the Streets outreach, the Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department HELP (Homeless Evaluation Liaison Project) Team, the U.S. Social Security Administration, state welfare and mental health services, nonprofit U.S. Vets, faith-based groups and various housing providers.

Meanwhile, a 60-day outreach effort focused on addressing homelessness at an encampment on Wilson Avenue in downtown Las Vegas exemplifies how various agencies came together to help. “This intervention is an unprecedented, multi-jurisdictional and multi-agency response to a health and safety problem that was led by the Southern Nevada Homeless Coalition and supported by Clark County, the city of Las Vegas, Metro, NDOT and various homeless service providers,” said Haynes-Green.

Officials will continue working to improve homeless services. An SNRPC analysis has identified 10 priority categories where improvements may be made. They include homeless prevention, stable and sustainable housing, case management, emergency shelter and basic needs, mental health and substance abuse treatment services. Moving the homeless into housing is the ultimate goal of the regional collaborative effort, officials said.

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