



Addressing Chronic Homelessness

The United Way of San Diego County in December 2010 approached the San Diego Housing Commission (SDHC) seeking help in addressing the problem of chronic homelessness through Project 25.

Fortunately, SDHC was in a position to step in.

On July 1, 2010, we became one of the first housing agencies in the nation to receive approval from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to use federal housing vouchers to provide long-term housing for chronically homeless individuals.

As one of 39 “Moving to Work” agencies designated by HUD, SDHC has the flexibility to test innovative programs for our housing needs. For Project 25, we awarded to St. Vincent de Paul Village, which manages the program for United Way, 25 federal Sponsor-Based Housing Vouchers to place 25 homeless San Diegans into long-term housing. St. Vincent de Paul Village, working off a list of the highest users of public services referred to them by hospitals and law enforcement, issues the vouchers in the individuals’ names after SDHC confirms their eligibility. There’s a waiting list for future participants.

Project 25 focuses on adult men and women who account for some of the costliest demands on medical, law-enforcement and emergency services, frequently stemming from mental-health or substance-abuse issues. It begins by providing them with a place to call home – one of the most critical components of Project 25. Then, it builds on this by providing participants access to mental and physical health services, substance abuse counseling and other supportive resources they need to stabilize their lives.

Launched on January 12, 2011, Project 25 is making a profound difference for people who are now rebuilding their lives. The federal housing vouchers have become an essential component in the success of this program and the significant savings it has meant for public services and safety, as you will see in the story of James Marsh.

We are honored to be part of a collaboration with United Way, the County of San Diego and many other public and private organizations. We look forward to continued progress in the effort to address chronic homelessness – a national priority.

Sincerely,

Richard C. Gentry
President & Chief Executive Officer
San Diego Housing Commission



[“Home Again” Project 25 News Conference - April 10, 2012](#)

Richard C. Gentry (right), President & CEO,
San Diego Housing Commission

Brian Maienschein (left), former Commissioner of Plan to End
Chronic Homelessness, United Way of San Diego County

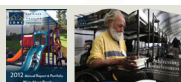
First-Year Results from Project 25 Announced on April 10, 2012

One year into the three-year pilot program, results from the combination of long-term housing and supportive services provided under Project 25 are compelling:

- Emergency-room visits were down 77 percent
- Ambulance transports were down 72 percent
- In-patient medical stays were down 73 percent
- Arrests were down 69 percent
- Jail days were down 43 percent

In April 2013, Project 25 updated the cost savings the program has provided.

According to St. Vincent de Paul Village, the 35 people whom Project 25 has helped cost the community \$4.2 million in 2010. In 2012, the cost to the community was \$2 million. Including the operating cost, the program saved more than \$1.4 million in the first year (January 2011-2012).





Success Story – James Marsh, Army Veteran

To James Marsh, a federal housing voucher provided by SDHC through a partnership with United Way has meant a new start on life.

Marsh, 48, is among the formerly homeless adults helped by Project 25, which addresses chronic homelessness and the burden it places on public services. As a former restaurant worker, he had been living on the streets since arriving in San Diego in 1998, battling alcoholism and coping with a degenerative joint disease. Marsh, an army veteran, now lives in his own apartment and also receives support services funded by the County of San Diego.

“It’s given me so many great opportunities,” Marsh said shortly after Project 25 celebrated its first anniversary. “I want to show them that I can succeed, and I want to show myself that I can succeed.”

Marsh and other sponsor-based voucher recipients select their own apartments or other housing with help from case managers at St. Vincent de Paul Village.

The dramatic impact of the program can be seen in Marsh’s own experiences. He went from 54 ambulance rides in 2010 to only one last year, 51 emergency-room visits in 2010 to one in 2011, and seven hospitalizations totaling 39 days in 2010 to none last year. He spent one night in jail in 2011, compared with 34 days the year before, and had no days in detoxification, compared with 15 in 2011.

Marsh said his apartment is “awesome – I can wake up and I know that I’m safe.”

He added that it feels good to have someone at his back “if I’m messing up – they don’t give up and it means a lot.”



James Marsh - Army Veteran

Under Project 25, he went from:

- 54 ambulance rides in 2010 to one in 2011
- 51 emergency room visits in 2010 to one in 2011
- 34 jail days in 2010 to one in 2011

[Read SDHC News Release](#) and [Watch the Project 25 News Conference on SDHC's YouTube Channel](#)

“Home Again” Project 25 Partners

- Alpha Project
- County of San Diego District Attorney
- County of San Diego Health and Human Services Agency
- Family Health Centers of San Diego
- St. Vincent de Paul Village
- San Diego County Sheriff’s Office
- San Diego Housing Commission
- San Diego Medical Services Enterprise
- San Diego Police Department
- San Diego Rescue Mission
- United Way of San Diego County
- UC San Diego Medical Center



Established in 1979, the San Diego Housing Commission provides a variety of award-winning affordable housing programs and services that stimulate the local economy, revitalize neighborhoods, and impact the lives of more than 125,000 individuals in the City of San Diego annually.

Updated: 04.08.14