



SAN DIEGO
HOUSING
COMMISSION

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SAN DIEGO HOUSING COMMISSION FEDERAL HOUSING VOUCHERS ARE DIRECTLY ADDRESSING CHRONIC HOMELESSNESS

***Housing Vouchers are Helping Project 25 to Successfully Move Individuals into
Long-Term Housing, Reducing Strain on Public Resources***

San Diego, CA—To James Marsh, a federal housing voucher provided by the San Diego Housing Commission (SDHC) means more than a new home – it’s a new life.

Marsh, 48, is one of the formerly homeless adults taken off the streets by Project 25, an initiative by United Way of San Diego County and multiple partners to address chronic homelessness and reduce the burden it places on public services and safety.

“It’s given me so many great opportunities,” Marsh said today in a [news conference](#) at United Way headquarters highlighting the successes of the program after its first year. “I want to show them that I can succeed, and I want to show myself that I can succeed.”

SDHC is one of the first agencies in the nation to make federal housing vouchers available to provide long-term housing for chronically homeless individuals, the goal of Project 25. SDHC provided United Way and its partner St. Vincent de Paul Village, which manages the program, with 25 sponsor-based vouchers under approval granted in 2010 by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.

The vouchers “are making a profound difference for people who are struggling not just to get their lives in order but to get a roof over their heads as well,” said SDHC president and CEO Richard C. Gentry.

With cross-cutting issues at stake, Gentry said the results could be achieved only through collaboration by the United Way, SDHC, the County of San Diego, HUD, St. Vincent de Paul Village and others. Among those attending the event was Ed Moses, HUD public housing director for the region that includes California.

Brian Maienschein, United Way’s commissioner of San Diego County’s Plan to End Chronic Homelessness, said the partnership has proven itself in short order.

“We’re very excited about the success of this program at the one-year mark,” Maienschein said. “We’re looking forward to continuing this.”

(more)

Project 25 targets 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. Besides a safe place to call home, it provides participants ready access to mental and physical health services, substance abuse counseling and other supportive resources they need to stabilize and improve their lives. Project 25 has expanded beyond its name to enroll 35 participants.

As illustrated by Maienschein, the program has made a dramatic impact. In tracking and compiling the cost of public resources attributable to each person in the program, Project 25 found total costs reduced to \$3.4 million in 2011 from more than \$11 million in 2010. The per-person average was \$97,000 in 2011, down from \$317,000 per person in 2010.

In 2011 total emergency-room visits were down 77 percent, ambulance transports were down 72 percent, in-patient medical stays were down 74 percent, arrests were down 69 percent and jail days were down 43 percent.

Marsh, for example, 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.

Marsh, a former restaurant worker, said it's good to have someone at his back "if I'm messing up – they don't give up and it means a lot."

Also speaking at the news conference were County Board of Supervisors Vice Chairman Greg Cox and Sister Patricia A. Cruise, president and CEO of St. Vincent de Paul Village, Inc.

For more information about the San Diego Housing Commission, visit www.sdhc.org.

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