



City and County of San Francisco
Edwin M. Lee
Mayor

San Francisco Department of Public Health

Barbara A. Garcia, MPA
Director of Health

August 19, 2013

The Honorable Cynthia Ming-mei Lee
Presiding Judge
Superior Court of California, County of San Francisco
400 McAllister Street
San Francisco, CA 94102

Re: 2012-2013 Civil Grand Jury report, *"Golden Gate Park's Homeless Population: Are San Francisco's Policies Serving Us Well?"*

Dear Judge Lee:

The following is the response of the San Francisco Department of Public Health (SFDPH) to the 2012-2013 Civil Grand Jury report, *"Golden Gate Park's Homeless Population: Are San Francisco's Policies Serving Us Well?"*

Since 2004, SFDPH's San Francisco Homeless Outreach Team (SFHOT) has successfully engaged and housed (a) chronically homeless adults with disabling conditions, including mental illness, addiction disorders, and significant medical conditions and (b) transitional age homeless youth 16-24 years of age who often have involvement in the mental health, foster care and juvenile justice systems. Additional priorities for SFHOT are homeless individuals who are public inebriates, aggressive panhandlers, and individuals with shopping carts and/or large amounts of belongings since these factors have demonstrated a higher risk of the individual being or becoming chronically homeless. The Engagement Specialist Team (EST) is the outreach arm of SFHOT and they have often been deployed to public spaces where homeless individuals sleep, such as encampments under bridges, freeways and parks.

In 2006, the estimated count of park dwellers was 200. In 2007, SFHOT was deployed to Golden Gate Park (GGP) to work with Park and Rec staff and SFPD to engage homeless individuals into needed services and to house them. As noted in the Grand Jury Report, five years later, the count had dropped to 50 dwellers with seasonal variations. Despite this recent successful trend, current estimates reveal that this population decline has plateaued. Unfortunately, homeless encampments continue to exist in the park. San Francisco has aggressively worked on this issue over the past decade.

In response, SFDPH's EST is dedicating at least one outreach worker to serve the GGP population on an ongoing, as-needed, and until needed basis. To assist with this additional focus on GGP dwellers, SFDPH will rely on its existing Coordinated Case Management Services System (CCMS), an electronic charting, reporting, and communication tool that routinely pulls client histories from twenty databases (e.g.,

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We shall ~ Assess and research the health of the community ~ Develop and enforce health policy ~ Prevent disease and injury ~
~ Educate the public and train health care providers ~ Provide quality, comprehensive, culturally-proficient health services ~ Ensure equal access to all

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citations, psychiatric emergency, shelter) from five City departments and integrates them into one electronic medical record to provide critical information to teams working with high-need clients. SFDPH has carefully considered the findings and recommendations of the Civil Grand Jury, and respectfully responds as follows:

FINDINGS

Finding 1. City agencies lack specific data on the characteristics of GGP dwellers, which prevents accurate profiling of individual problems and needs.

Response: *Agree in part, disagree in part.* City agencies understand the general characteristics of GGP dwellers. On the whole, young, transient homeless are closer to the panhandle. Older, often military veteran, chronic homeless are on the west side of the park. In addition, through the CCMS system, cross-departmental encounter data is available on many high-risk homeless individuals, including park dwellers, though additional information would be useful in planning for outreach, programs, and services.

Finding 2. With better information about GGP dwellers, their histories, and their needs, the City would be better able to move these individuals out of the Park, into a more stable situation.

Response: *Agree.* Additional information on park dwellers would be helpful. The dedicated EST worker will assist with this by performing the initial outreach, engagement and assessment of homeless individuals in GGP. The information collected will be shared with the larger SFHOT so that the individual's record is updated in CCMS and a support services response, including a further evaluation of the need for case management, can then be tailored to individual park dwellers.

Finding 3. Because the City does not track individual park dwellers and their interactions with social services, it is difficult to determine the efficiency and success of outreach efforts in reducing the park population.

Response: *Agree in part, disagree in part.* While individual park dwellers are not specifically tracked, to the extent they are high-utilizers of multiple City services, information on their service utilization is documented in CCMS. The GGP population has fallen over the last decade due to concerted outreach efforts. While there are still homeless encampments in GGP, this overall trend should be considered a success.

Finding 4. Outreach efforts to GGP encampments by EST are limited, which inhibits positive results.

Response: *Agree in part, disagree in part.* Currently, EST responds to requests for homeless outreach across the city. Requests come primarily from 311, SFPD, HOPE, and other city departments for outreach under bridges and freeways, in parks, and at other locations. While EST outreach in GGP has occurred, it has not recently been routinely done or regularly scheduled.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 1: The City should formalize a system to gather information on the characteristics of GGP dwellers and why they live in the Park.

Response: *Recommendation has already been implemented.* CCMS is a web-based database designed to function as an electronic charting, reporting, and communication tool for City teams working with homeless clients served across multiple systems of care. CCMS currently has data imputed from SFDPH, Fire, Jail Health Services, Direct Access to Housing, and the Engagement Specialist Team. This system is used to gather information on the homeless population as a whole and can be used to enter specific information on individuals in GGP. Aggregate information, such as profiles of the population, can be developed through CCMS.

Recommendation 2: Information about GGP dwellers should be used to tailor support services to specific populations, whose age and circumstances affect their needs and acceptance of services.

Response: *Recommendation will be implemented in the future.* With the additional information gleaned from dedicated EST outreach, support services could then be tailored to individual dwellers in the park.

Recommendation 3: The City should establish a system to track its outreach efforts among park dwellers and use the information to evaluate effectiveness in reducing the number of park dwellers.

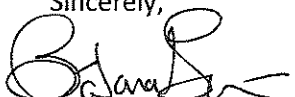
Response: *Recommendation will not be implemented.* Instead of establishing a new system to track outreach, CCMS will continue to be used to monitor service utilization by high-risk individuals accessing multiple City services. The information collected will be shared with the larger SFHOT so that the individual's record is updated in CCMS and a support services response, including a further evaluation of the need for case management, can then be tailored to individual park dwellers and tracked over time.

Recommendation 4: The EST should conduct in-person, proactive outreach to park dwellers at different times of day and night in order to maximize their efforts.

Response: *Recommendation has been implemented.* SFDPH has changed EST policy to dedicate at least one outreach worker to immediately and on an ongoing, as-needed, and until needed basis, conduct in-person, proactive outreach to GGP dwellers at optimum days of the week and times of day to occur in tandem with SFPD and/or Rec & Park security. Additionally, the Mayor's HOPE Office will coordinate one SFHOT employee to attend the "Ops Park" monthly meeting with SFPD and Rec & Park staff to continually monitor need for EST outreach at GGP.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this Civil Grand Jury report.

Sincerely,


Barbara Garcia, MPA
Director of Health