



JUDICIAL COUNCIL OF CALIFORNIA

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REPORT TO THE JUDICIAL COUNCIL

Item No.: 21-070

For business meeting on: March 12, 2021

Title

Special Report: Work Group on
Homelessness: Interim Report

Agenda Item Type

Information Only

Date of Report

February 18, 2021

Submitted by

Hon. Louis Mauro, Chair
Hon. Carin Fujisaki, Vice-Chair
Work Group on Homelessness

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Executive Summary

In October 2020, Chief Justice Tani G. Cantil-Sakauye formed the Work Group on Homelessness to consider how the judicial branch might work with the Governor, the Legislature, and other entities in addressing homelessness, and how court programs and services might be improved to increase access for individuals who are unhoused or are facing the possible loss of their housing. This report briefly describes the work group's objectives, membership, structure, progress to date, and next steps.

Relevant Previous Council Action

This is the first report to the Judicial Council from the Work Group on Homelessness. Because work group recommendations are still in development, no Judicial Council action has as yet been taken in connection with work group efforts.

Analysis/Rationale

Formation

In her State of the Judiciary Address on March 10, 2020, the Chief Justice announced her intention to establish a work group on homelessness to study and recommend ways that the judicial branch might become better business partners in addressing homelessness and might better assist court users who are without permanent housing or shelter or who are at risk of losing

their housing. The formation of the work group was delayed due to the COVID-19 pandemic but was formally announced on October 23, 2020.

Work group objectives

The work group is collecting written information, hearing from knowledgeable individuals, and engaging in dialogue and analysis. Specifically, within the context of the role of the judicial branch, the work group is:

- Identifying how the judicial branch might appropriately work with the Governor, the Legislature, and other entities to complement their efforts to address homelessness;
- Reviewing court programs, processes, technology, and communications to ascertain if there are ways to improve access to court services for people who are without shelter or are shelter insecure;
- Examining existing court services, such as the services provided by homelessness courts and other collaborative courts, to identify best practices;
- Assessing whether changes in laws, regulations, or rules would be necessary or helpful to address homelessness or provide enhanced homelessness services; and
- Evaluating whether judicial branch property and resources might be utilized to advance homelessness assistance.

Work group membership

The Chief Justice appointed Louis Mauro, an associate justice with the Court of Appeal, Third Appellate District, in Sacramento, to chair the work group, and Carin Fujisaki, an associate justice with the Court of Appeal, First Appellate District, in San Francisco, to serve as vice-chair. Additional work group members include:

- Assistant Presiding Judge Vicki Ashworth, Superior Court of El Dorado County;
- Judge Gordon Baranco, Superior Court of Alameda County (Ret.), Assigned Judges Program;
- Judge James Bianco, Superior Court of Los Angeles County;
- Judge Desirée Bruce-Lyle, Superior Court of San Diego County;
- Judge Robert Burlison, Superior Court of Monterey County;
- Judge Hilary Chittick, Superior Court of Fresno County;
- Presiding Judge Joyce Hinrichs, Superior Court of Humboldt County;
- Presiding Judge Clare Keithley, Superior Court of Butte County; and
- Judge Marco Nunez, Superior Court of Imperial County.

Meetings, structure, and progress to date

The work group meets remotely every other week. Members are also assigned to subgroups to investigate and analyze specific topics. The subgroups allow the work group to explore multiple tracks simultaneously. The subgroups and their responsibilities are listed below.

- ***Causes of Homelessness and Shelter Insecurity.*** This subgroup has identified causes that might inform consideration of potential recommendations. The subgroup is winding down, and its members are focusing on other work group topics.
- ***Terminology and Definitions.*** This subgroup has identified and defined the most appropriate words to use in discussing issues pertaining to homelessness. Like the subgroup on causes, it is winding down and its members are focusing on other topics.
- ***Best Practices.*** This subgroup seeks to highlight existing court programs and services that are already helping to address homelessness.
- ***Reducing Barriers.*** The members of this subgroup are working on identifying possible barriers to court access for unhoused individuals.
- ***Remote Services.*** This subgroup is examining methods to expand remote services to unhoused and shelter-insecure court users through the use of technology.
- ***Court Websites and Information.*** This subgroup is looking at ways to improve judicial branch websites and other communications to better inform court users about programs and services pertaining to homelessness and shelter insecurity.
- ***Prevention.*** The subgroup seeks to identify the points at which the court system intersects with those who are unhoused or at risk of losing their housing, and how the judicial branch might better serve these individuals and better connect them to appropriate court and community services.
- ***Partnering.*** The members of the partnering subgroup have been engaging with other government and community leaders to consider ways that the judicial branch might work with them or support their efforts in addressing homelessness.

Fiscal Impact and Policy Implications

This is a status update and, as such, there are no fiscal impacts or policy implications to report at this time.

Next steps

Work group members will continue to interview and engage in dialogue with leaders, experts, advocates, service providers, and members of the public throughout the state. They will also continue their research and analysis of the information collected to formulate recommendations. The work group will submit its final report and recommendations to the Chief Justice in August 2021.

Attachments and Links

None.