



UNIT 3

What Impact Can I Have On Homelessness?

How should I interact with people experiencing homelessness?

What people and organizations are currently working to end homelessness?

What can I do to help?

Middle School

UNIT 3: Collective Action

Essential Questions

1. How should I interact with people experiencing homelessness?
2. What people and organizations are currently working to end homelessness?
3. What can I do to help?

Overview

- Students will learn about some of the people working to end homelessness throughout L.A. County and the barriers they face, as well as build an understanding of the progress that is happening.
 - Students will learn about young people who are doing amazing things to help people in their community experiencing homelessness and what they can do as well, and commit to at least one personal action they will take in their own lives.
-

Materials

- Impact Statistics Graphics Sheet (printed or projected)
- Outreach worker bios (printed unless distributed electronically)
 - a. Eddie, Antelope Valley
 - b. Eric, San Fernando Valley
 - c. Renee, San Gabriel Valley
 - d. Yvette, Central L.A.
 - e. Breanna, West L.A.
 - f. Michael, South L.A.
 - g. Jose, East L.A.
 - h. Howard, South Bay
- Outreach worker videos (to be projected)
 - a. [Antelope Valley](#)
 - b. [San Fernando Valley](#)
 - c. [San Gabriel Valley](#)
 - d. [Central L.A.](#)
 - e. [West L.A.](#)
 - f. [South L.A.](#)
 - g. [East L.A.](#)
 - h. [South Bay](#)

UNIT 3: Collective Action

Materials (cont'd)

- Outreach worker blogs (if needed)
 - a. [Meet Jeannie and Amanda](#) (Everyone In)
 - b. [Meet Elyse and Joseph](#) (Everyone In)
 - c. [Meet the people working to end homelessness in L.A. County](#) (Everyone In)
- News Articles
 - a. [9-year-old girl builds shelters for the homeless](#), Bored Panda
 - b. [How a 17-year-old is helping feed 12,000 homeless people](#), Reader's Digest
 - c. [Good Works: Local teens and tweens collect with love](#), LA Times
 - d. [Culver City High School students work to combat homelessness in L.A.](#), LA Times
 - e. [Students spread awareness of SoCal homeless crisis with documentary](#), ABC7
 - f. [Student-Run Program for Homeless Youth Spreading to More Cities](#), Next City
 - g. [A California teen is providing homeless people with sanitizing kits amid the novel coronavirus outbreak](#), Insider
 - h. [California teen donates more than 150 coronavirus sanitation kits to the homeless](#), CNN
 - i. [12-Year-Old Middle Schooler Has Helped Feed 9,000 Homeless People: 'I Want to Help Them All'](#), People
 - j. [California girl raises money to help Chicago's homeless during severe cold](#), Chicago Sun Times
 - k. [Boy, 8, Break Dances for Southern California's Homeless](#), NBC Los Angeles
- Action commitment cards for each student (printed)

Prep

Read through the lesson to determine how you will divide students into groups, and whether you will have individual groups watch the video for their region or you'll watch one or more videos as a class.

Print out the outreach worker bios for each group and either print Impact Statistics Graphic Sets or plan to project them where all students can see and analyze them.

Print out an Action Commitment Card for each student.

Read through article options in step 6 of the procedure to determine which are best for your students to read—these can be printed out for group or individual reading, assigned electronically, or even given as pre-reading or homework. There are additional videos linked in the “Supplementary Materials” section at the bottom of this lesson that can be used for discussion at the beginning or end of the lesson.

UNIT 3: Collective Action

Procedure

1. In this lesson, students will first learn about the people who are working to end homelessness in L.A. County—what their work entails, the impact they are making throughout the 8 regions of L.A. County, why they chose this work, and the barriers they face on a daily basis. After learning about what people are already doing, students will explore what impact they can have on the housing and homelessness crisis.
2. Distribute or project Impact Statistics Graphic Sets for students. Give them time to analyze and share out observations or questions that they have about the work to end homelessness in L.A. County. You may need to start the lesson with a quick refresher on the basic types and components of graphs and charts.
 - a. Number of people housed in L.A. County each year by homeless service providers:
 - 9,658 in 2014
 - 11,904 in 2015
 - 15,131 in 2016
 - 17,558 in 2017
 - 21,631 in 2018
 - 22,769 in 2019
 - b. Despite a 23% increase in amount of people housed in 2018, housing affordability still increased homelessness from 52,765 in 2018 to 58,936 in 2019
 - c. Of the 22,769 people housed in 2019
 - 28% were placed in a rapid re-housing program
 - 23% were placed in supportive housing
 - 49% were placed in another form of permanent housing
 - d. A major part of fighting homelessness is prevention. In 2015 (prior to measure H) 1,346 people were prevented from falling into homelessness. In 2019 6,310 people were prevented from falling into homelessness
 - e. Out of the 14,075 people experiencing chronic homelessness in 2018, 979 were sheltered. In 2019, 16,528 people are experiencing chronic homelessness but 1,991 are sheltered.
 - f. Over the past two years, voter-approved funding has enabled Outreach Teams to provide these services in Central L.A.:
 - 9,147 people contacted
 - 2,535 people engaged
 - 4,059 people connected to services
 - 354 individuals into immediate housing
 - 222 individuals placed in affordable or supportive housing

UNIT 3: Collective Action

Procedure (cont'd)

- g. Over the past two years, voter-approved funding has enabled organizations to provide these services in South L.A.:
 - 3,308 people placed into immediate housing
 - 4,973 people assisted by the rapid rehousing program
 - 3,287 people contacted by outreach teams
 - h. There are 6,303 people experiencing homelessness in the South Bay. In the last 2 years:
 - 4,520 people placed into immediate housing,
 - 2,891 people assisted through the rapid rehousing programs
 - 2,003 people contacted by street outreach teams,
 - 2,163 people placed in permanent housing.
 - i. There are 5,095 people experiencing homelessness in East L.A. In the last 2 years:
 - 1,984 people placed into immediate housing
 - 2,296 people assisted through the rapid rehousing program
 - 1,192 people contacted by street outreach teams
 - 1,428 people placed into permanent housing
3. Divide students into up to 8 groups representing the Service Planning Areas (SPAs) that make up L.A. County. Each group will receive one Outreach Worker bio for a real person that is currently working to end homelessness in that region. Each outreach worker is also featured in a short (1-2 min) video about the work to end homelessness in their region, you may choose to play one or several of the videos, or have each group watch the video for their region if technology is available. Videos linked below and in the “Materials” section above.
 - a. [Outreach Workers in Antelope Valley](#), Everyone In
 - b. [Outreach Workers in San Fernando Valley](#), Everyone In
 - c. [Outreach Workers in San Gabriel Valley](#), Everyone In
 - d. [Outreach Workers in Central L.A.](#), Everyone In
 - e. [Outreach Workers in West L.A.](#), Everyone In
 - f. [Outreach Workers in South L.A.](#), Everyone In
 - g. [Outreach Workers in East L.A.](#), Everyone In
 - h. [Outreach Workers in South Bay](#), Everyone In

UNIT 3: Collective Action

Procedure (cont'd)

4. Have each group read the bio AND watch the video of their outreach worker, and then share out to the class:
 1. Share Out: Have each group briefly outline the story of the outreach worker.
 2. Class Discussion: Does the story match up at all with any of the 'service provider' stories from Unit 2?
 3. Share Out: Have each group share out one question with the class, write these on the board.A few additional blog posts about L.A. County outreach workers are linked below if more materials are needed:

- a. [Meet Jeannie and Amanda](#), Everyone In
- b. [Meet Elyse and Joseph](#), Everyone In
- c. [Meet the people working to end homelessness in L.A. County](#), Everyone In

5. Using the list of barriers that were generated from discussion question #3 in Unit 2 plus any additional barriers you may have gleaned from learning about your social worker, select 3 barriers that their outreach worker faces or would likely face, ask each group to select 3 barriers that they think their outreach worker might face (some answers are found in the videos, so it might be worth taking some time to watch a few of them as a class). For reference, the discussion question from the last lesson is included below along with a list of possible answers—the list of possible answers has been expanded based on new information students may have gathered from watching the outreach worker videos:

For services and programs that help people keep their housing or exit homelessness, what are 3 barriers that you think might prevent those services and programs from reaching more people in L.A. County?

- a. Not enough funding
- b. Not enough supportive and affordable housing available
- c. Not enough community support to build supportive and affordable housing in certain neighborhoods of L.A.
- d. Restrictive policies
- e. Blaming people experiencing homelessness and therefore not passing policies or funding measures that support homeless services
- f. Rent increases
- g. Destruction of affordable or rent stabilized units
- h. Lack of financial incentives for developers and cities to build more affordable and supportive housing
- i. NIMBYism (people who say they want more affordable and supportive housing but "Not In My Backyard")
- j. Burdensome building requirements (such as # of required parking spaces) that make it much more difficult to build affordable and supportive housing
- k. People don't want the help (this is almost never the case)

UNIT 3: Collective Action

Procedure (cont'd)

- l. People living outside don't know about the services available to them
 - m. People living outside may have pets that are their family and certain immediate housing facilities do not allow pets
 - n. People need certain types of support (mental health care, physical health care, counseling) before they are ready to move into stable housing
 - o. People are struggling with substance use disorders
 - p. People might feel ashamed to ask for help
 - q. People who have been through really difficult situations might not initially trust outreach workers who offer them help and support
6. Each group should share out what they see as the biggest barrier their outreach worker has faced, and the group's reasoning for why they think it's the biggest barrier. In at least 3 sentences, imagine a possible solution to resolve this barrier. Try to have a different student from the group share out each time. Write answers on the board.
7. Now, students will take the time to learn about things that young people around their own age are doing to support people experiencing homelessness. You can distribute one or more of the articles linked in the "Materials" section of this lesson, or students can find their own examples from the news. You can choose to have students read the articles independently or in groups, project an article on the screen and discuss it together, or assign the reading as homework. In the next part of this lesson, students will explore what they can do to help people impacted by the housing and homelessness crisis.
8. After students have read one article (or you have read together as a class), ask students to share out what they noticed about the kids in the articles. Was there anything special about them? Or did they just find ways to use their talents and abilities to give back to people experiencing homelessness? Allow students to discuss organically and make connections to things they could do to help. Below are some examples of things young people their age have done to give back.

Twelve year-olds in Sandwich, Massachusetts testified at their state capitol to help pass a law that would ban smoking on public school grounds. The law was passed and several other states adopted similar laws.

In Chelmsford, Massachusetts a twelve-year old started a petition and testified with friends at a town meeting to protect a wooded area from being destroyed by a condominium development project. The woods are still there.

A Chicago community health clinic that provides services for poor, pregnant women and infants was about to be shut down for lack of funds. Fifty children organized a protest in front of the clinic drawing the attention of the media and lawmakers. The clinic remained open.

UNIT 3: Collective Action

Procedure (cont'd)

Fourth Grade students in Kittery, Maine ran a canned food drive at their school and donated the food to the local food pantry. Representatives of the classes helped prepare the food for distribution to the clients of the food pantry.

Another group of Fourth Graders in Eliot, Maine conducted a fundraising event at the school and presented the money they raised to their local food pantry.

Students in Concord, New Hampshire hosted a “banquet” for their parents. Everyone was required to bring canned food for the local food pantry.

Students experiencing homelessness created a book of poetry and art called *Animals Are Out of This World!* to raise money for other children without stable homes. 100% of proceeds go to benefit young people experiencing homelessness.

9. Distribute an Action Commitment Card to each student and give them some time to read it over and select any actions they would like to take. Let them know that they will *already* be able to check off one of the _____ boxes, because they are taking one of the following actions as a class (or another action you come up with together!) Refer to the list below for ideas:
 - a. Help students identify their elected official and write a letter to them
 - b. Plan and run a food or gift drive for a local homeless service organization
 - c. Write notes to people in the community experiencing homelessness to be distributed via a local homeless service organization
10. Save or display the cards in the classroom and revisit the discussion in a few weeks, opening up a dialogue about what actions and conversations students have participated in and what barriers they have encountered. This can be an ongoing conversation throughout the school year that is responsive to the news cycle and to things your students might observe or hear.

UNIT 3: Collective Action

Supplementary Materials

- Videos:
 - a. [What is L.A. County doing to end Homelessness?](#), Everyone In LA
 - b. [Powered by the People of L.A. County: A place for the grandkids to visit](#), County of LA
 - c. [Powered by the People of L.A. County: Street Medicine and compassion](#), County of LA
 - d. [Progress Is Building](#), Everyone In
 - e. [Everyone In / Supportive Housing at Marv's Place](#), Everyone In
- List of homeless service organizations and places to volunteer (in appendix)
- Articles:
 - a. [Veterinarian gives free pet support](#), Today
 - b. [What are people doing to end homelessness across L.A. County](#), Everyone In
- Books
 - *The Family Under the Bridge* by Natalie Savage Carlson
 - *Crenshaw* by Katherine Applegate

Sources

- [2019 Greater Los Angeles Homeless Count](#), Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority
- [What Kids Can Do](#), Kids Can Make a Difference

UNIT 3: Outreach Worker Bios

Eddie, Antelope Valley

- **Organization:** Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority (LAHSA)
- **Title:** Outreach Specialist
- **Job Description:**

Eddie once experienced homelessness living on the streets of Skid Row. He now works as an outreach specialist, connecting unhoused people with essential services and documentation to help them transition into housing.

“I know it might sound silly, but I’m trying to end homelessness. I don’t know how I’m going to do it but I’m still trying to figure out a way. I get home every day exhausted from this but it’s a good exhaustion. It’s not draining just knowing that I’m trying to make a change.”



Eric, San Fernando Valley

- **Organization:** Los Angeles Family Housing (LAFH)
- **Title:** Outreach Specialist
- **Job Description:**

Eric’s goal as an outreach supervisor is to coordinate a team of outreach workers as they help people living outside transition into stable housing. He forms personal relationships with clients, offering guidance, essential services and a consistent support system.

“In 2014, I was the only outreach worker here. Since then, there are 150 outreach workers in [this region]. Helping people is a process of trust-building, of us keeping our word, which is very important in the work that we do.”



UNIT 3: Outreach Worker Bios

Renee, San Gabriel Valley

- **Organization:** Union Station Homeless Services
- **Title:** Outreach Housing Navigator
- **Job Description:**

Renee is part of a mobile outreach team dedicated to working with people experiencing chronic homelessness. She helps provide medical services, substance abuse counseling, case management and referrals for mental health services -- all of which help people on the path to securing a home.

“People think all homeless are drug addicts and lazy, that’s the stigma surrounding homelessness. I meet people all the time who had jobs and homes and then had family members die and they couldn’t keep up with the bills, so they became homeless. I was homeless on these same streets of Pomona, so I like being able to come back to the city and give back.”



Yvette, Central L.A.

- **Organization:** The People Concern
- **Title:** Case Manager
- **Job Description:**

Yvette works to connect people experiencing homelessness on Skid Row with critical services, like medical and mental health care, with the ultimate goal of helping to end homelessness for those in her service area. She and her outreach team go out and meet the people in their community, find out what their needs are, and then bring them the supplies or specialized care they need right where they are.

“Our community members are some of the most vulnerable and I don’t like how on the news people often criminalize them. Homelessness is not something to be criminalized. These are people with needs and they just need care.”



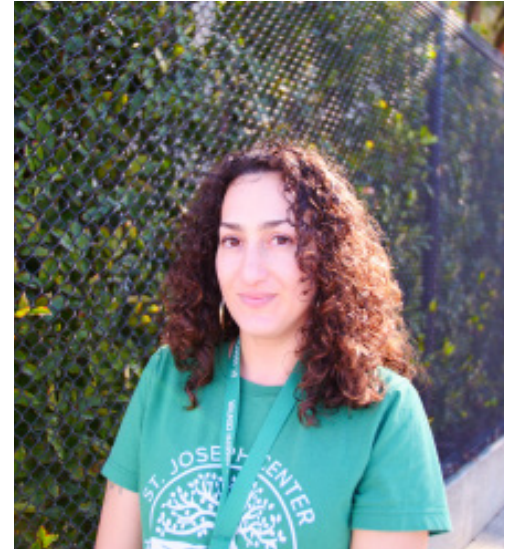
UNIT 3: Outreach Worker Bios

Breanna, West L.A.

- **Organization:** St. Joseph Center
- **Title:** Mental Health Specialist
- **Job Description:**

As a Mental Health Specialist, Breanna engages with clients on the street and helps meet their immediate needs (food, clothing, etc.) while assessing their long-term mental health care needs and connecting them to medical services. She also helps clients prepare documents for housing and helps identify and eliminate any barriers to housing that exist for her clients.

“[Homelessness] is a complex intersection of issues- whether it comes to stagnant wages, affordable living, housing costs, basic social service safety nets for folks, dealing with community trauma. There is a rich history of socioeconomic struggles behind this crisis.”

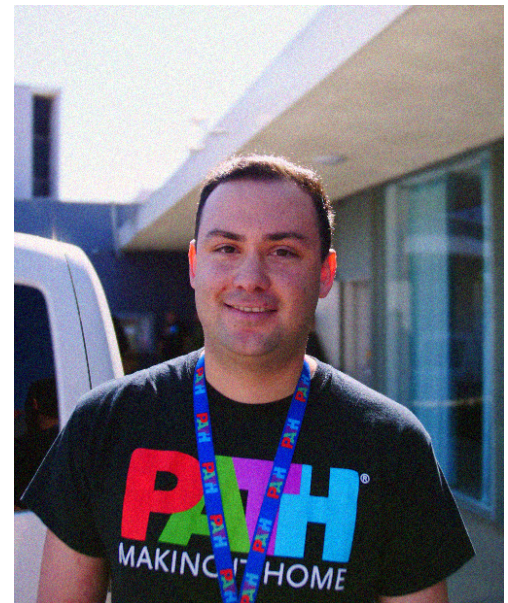


Michael, South L.A.

- **Organization:** People Assisting the Homeless (PATH)
- **Title:** Mental Health Specialist
- **Job Description:**

Michael works with a team that provides outreach to people experiencing homelessness on the metro transit system. When Michael's team finds people experiencing homelessness, they find out and address the root cause of their situation, connecting them to things like substance use counseling, health care, and housing navigators.

“We try to do a lot of trauma-informed care. It's asking “what happened to you?” not “what's wrong with you?” We talk to people and humanize them. We ask them what their life has been like up to this point, how they got to where they are, and how we can help them get to where they want to go.”



UNIT 3: Outreach Worker Bios

Jose, East L.A.

- **Organization:** People Assisting the Homeless (PATH)
- **Title:** Outreach Navigator and Substance Use Specialist
- **Job Description:**

Jose connects people experiencing homelessness to essential services - like mental and medical health care - to help them transition into housing. He helps create a path for people experiencing homelessness to move off the street and into a safe home. This can mean finding someone immediate housing while they wait for a home of their own, or helping transport his clients to medical appointments, or even helping his clients get an ID from the DMV—these are all steps in the pathway to housing.

“We link our homeless population to any community service there is. Sometimes quickly, sometimes slowly. We just meet them where they’re at and try to help them in all their needs. Whatever it takes. It’s a team effort- we collaborate with one another and we all want the best for our homeless population and that’s what works.”



Howard, South Bay

- **Organization:** Harbor Interfaith Services
- **Title:** Outreach Specialist/Housing Navigator
- **Job Description:**

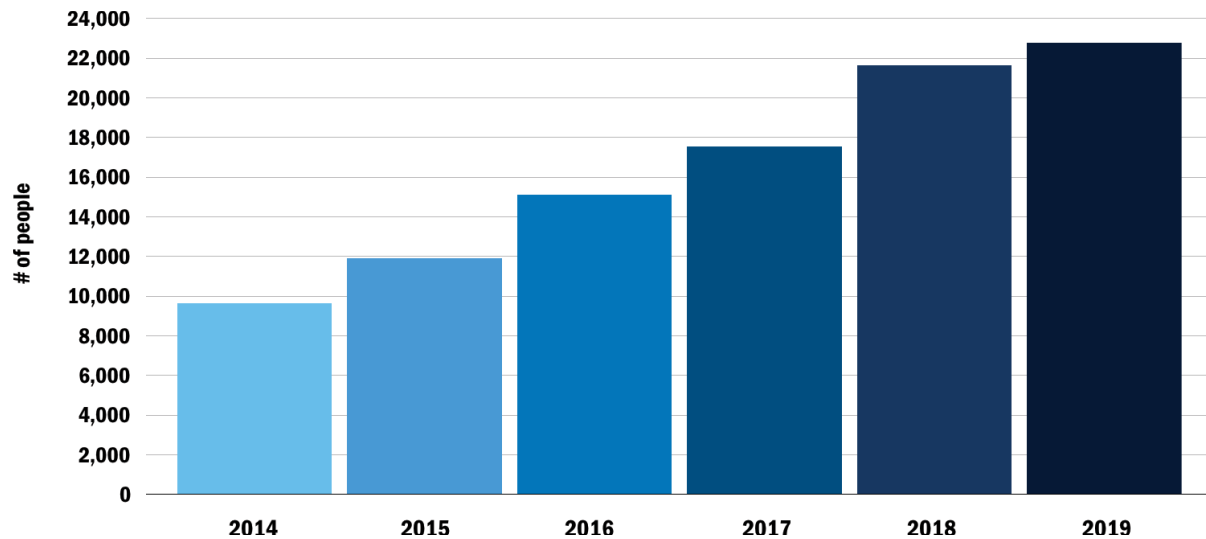
As a housing navigator, Howard helps people transition from a shelter into a permanent home by supporting them through paperwork and housing appointments. He also engages in direct outreach by helping to meet the more immediate needs of people experiencing homelessness.

“Truly getting someone housed is a team effort. No one individual or one organization can do it, we need the support of one another. Getting someone housed is one of the victories that we have here, it’s very rewarding, and it makes me feel well.”

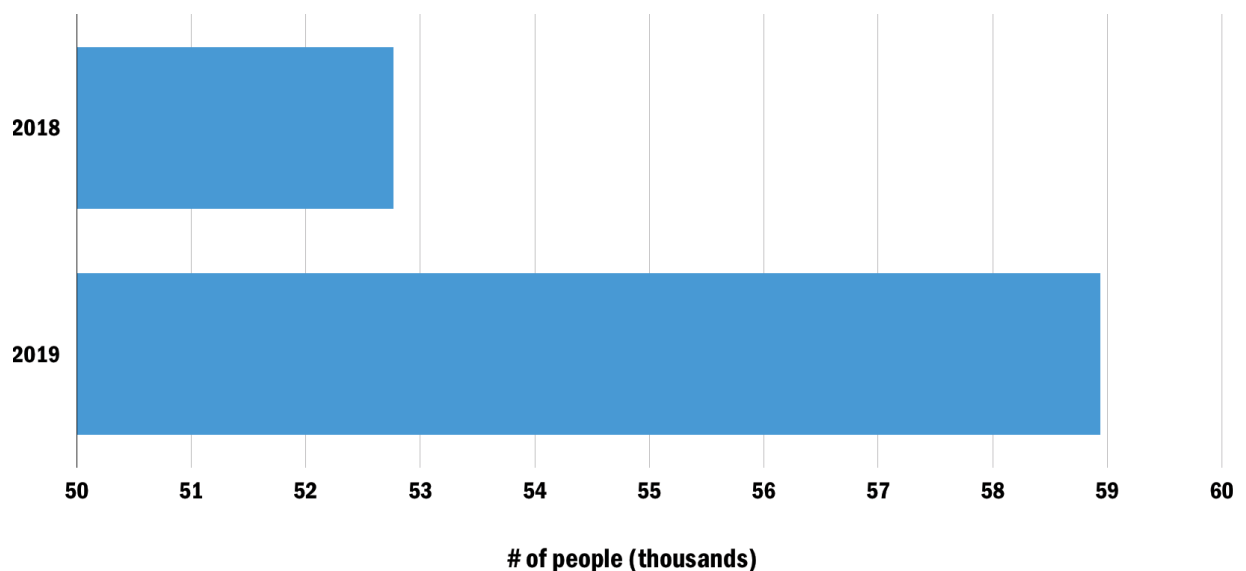


UNIT 3: Statistics

People housed in L.A. County each year by homeless service providers

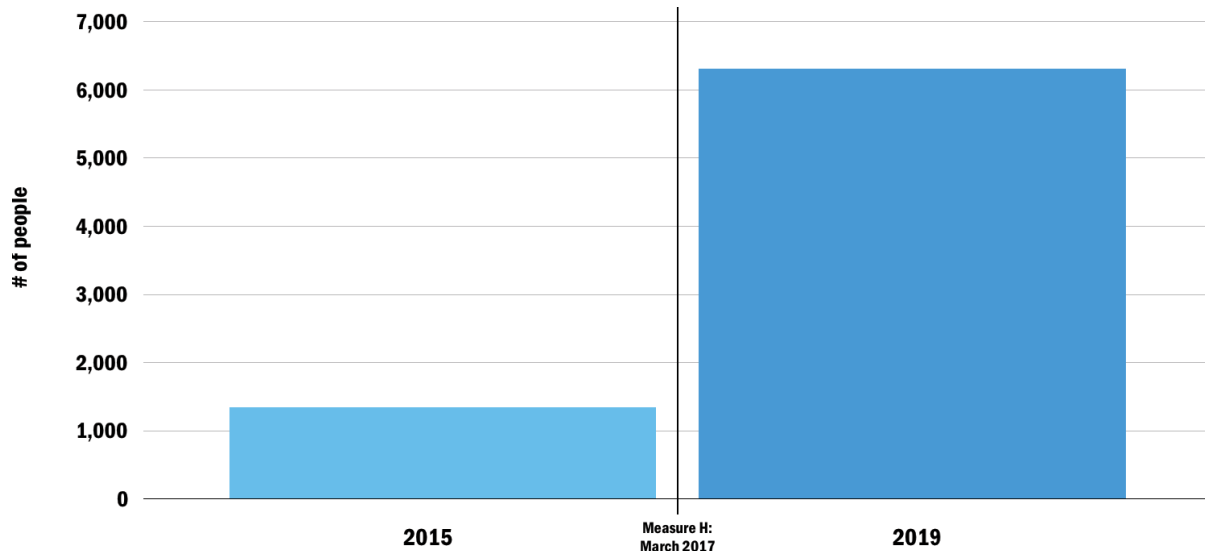


**Despite a 23% increase in amount of people housed in 2018
Number of individuals Experiencing Homelessness
(due to an increase in housing affordability)**

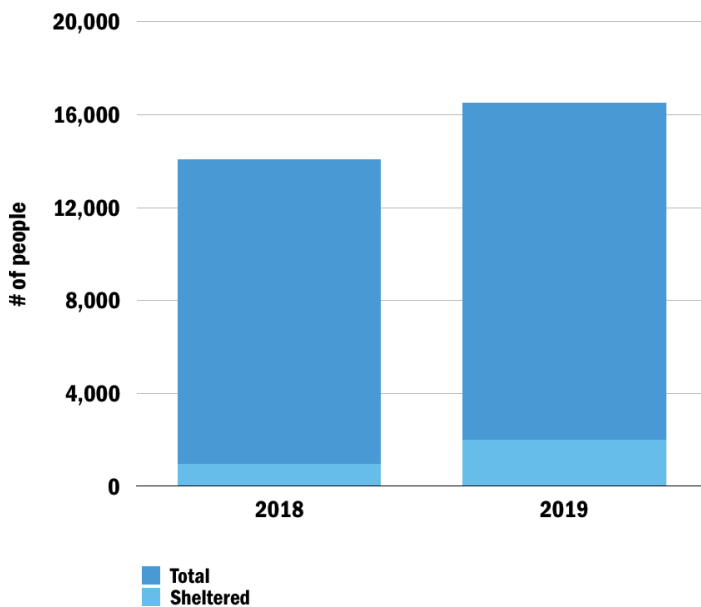


UNIT 3: Statistics

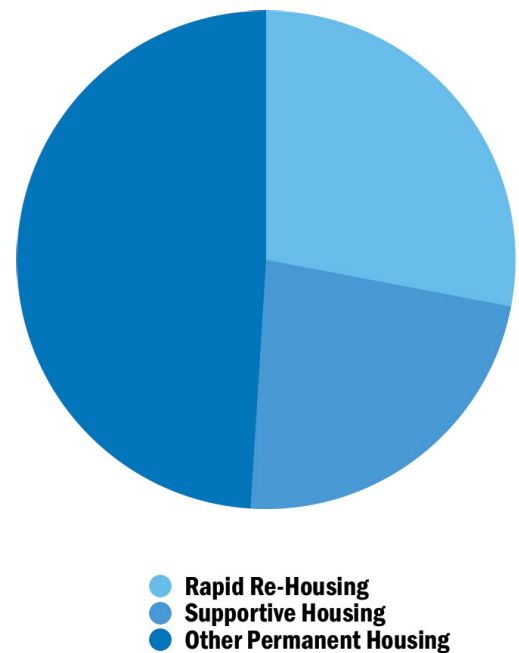
People Prevented from Falling into Homelessness



People Experiencing Chronic Homelessness (Total vs. Sheltered)



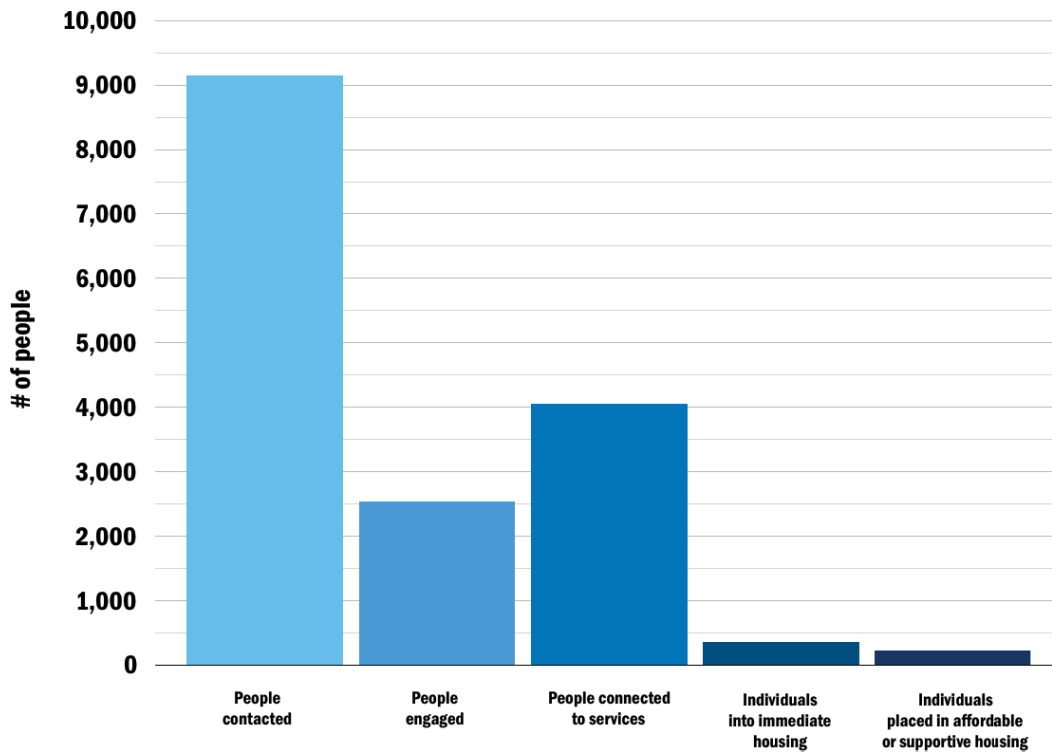
Of the 22,769 people housed in 2019:



UNIT 3: Statistics

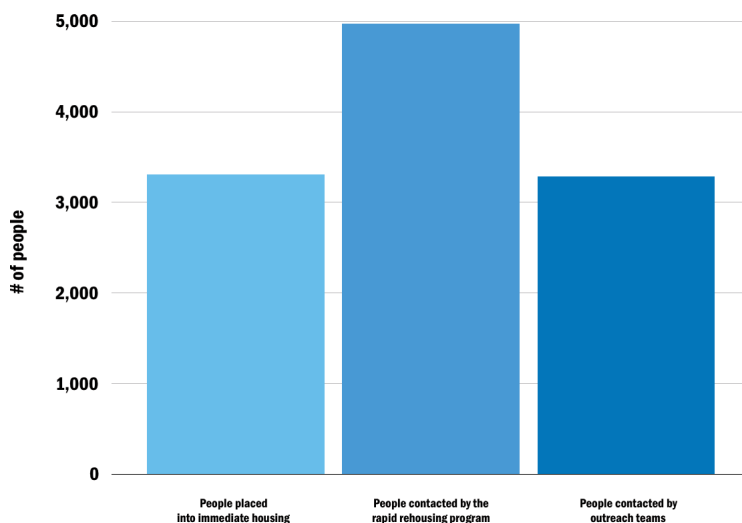
- CENTRAL L.A.**

Over the past two years, voter-approved funding has enabled Outreach Teams to provide these services in Central L.A.:



- SOUTH L.A.**

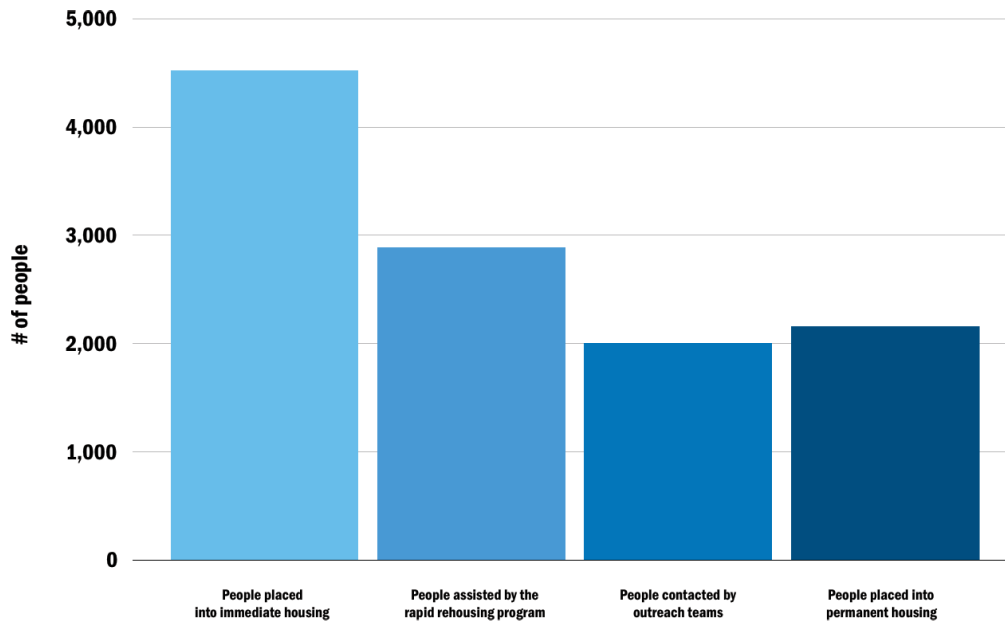
Over the past two years, voter-approved funding has enabled organizations to provide these services in South L.A.:



UNIT 3: Statistics

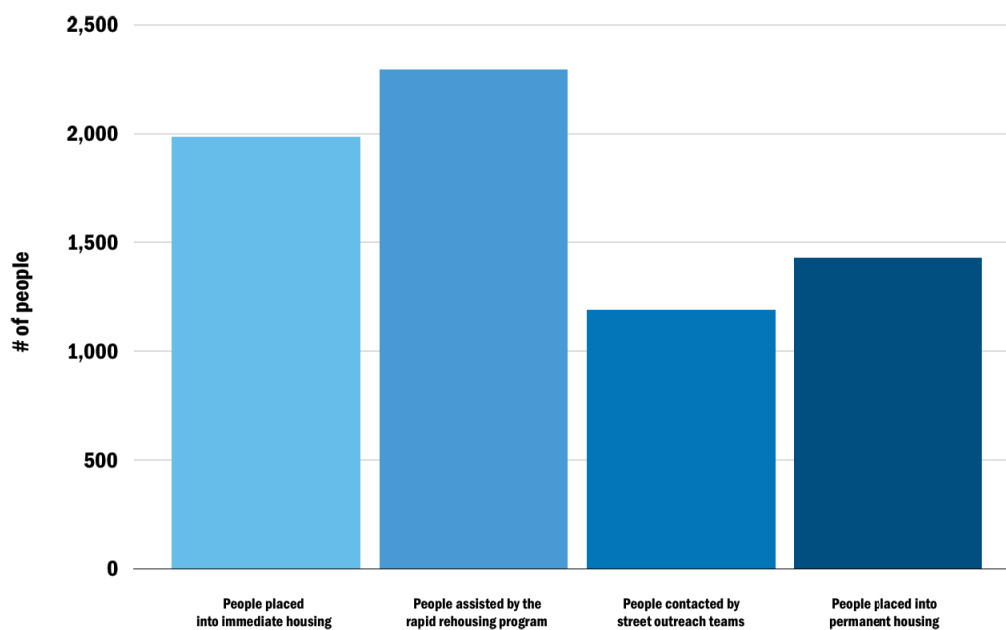
- SOUTH BAY**

There are 6,303 people experiencing homelessness in the South Bay. In the last 2 years:



- EAST L.A.**

There are 5,095 people experiencing homelessness in East L.A. In the last 2 years:



Name: _____

Action Commitment Card

I commit to take the following actions to support my neighbors experiencing homelessness, change people's perception and understanding of the housing and homelessness crisis, and advocate for solutions that will end homelessness for good:

(check all that apply)

- ☐ Write a letter to my local elected official to let them know that I support more affordable and supportive housing for people who need it
- ☐ Write a letter to a person who is experiencing homelessness in my community and have an adult help me deliver it
- ☐ Create a care package for a person who is experiencing homelessness in my community and have an adult help me deliver it
- ☐ Help organize a food or gift drive in my classroom or school for a local homeless service organization
- ☐ Help gather food, clothing, or toy items from my home to donate to a local homeless service organization
- ☐ Talk to my family and friends who may not understand why people experience homelessness and help them understand the reasons for the housing and homelessness crisis and how we should see and treat people who are impacted
- ☐ Volunteer with a parent or guardian at a homeless service organization in my community
- ☐ Smile and say hi to someone living on the street when I am out with a parent or guardian

Name: _____

Action Commitment Card

I commit to take the following actions to support my neighbors experiencing homelessness, change people's perception and understanding of the housing and homelessness crisis, and advocate for solutions that will end homelessness for good:

(check all that apply)

- ☐ Write a letter to my local elected official to let them know that I support more affordable and supportive housing for people who need it
- ☐ Write a letter to a person who is experiencing homelessness in my community and have an adult help me deliver it
- ☐ Create a care package for a person who is experiencing homelessness in my community and have an adult help me deliver it
- ☐ Help organize a food or gift drive in my classroom or school for a local homeless service organization
- ☐ Help gather food, clothing, or toy items from my home to donate to a local homeless service organization
- ☐ Talk to my family and friends who may not understand why people experience homelessness and help them understand the reasons for the housing and homelessness crisis and how we should see and treat people who are impacted
- ☐ Volunteer with a parent or guardian at a homeless service organization in my community
- ☐ Smile and say hi to someone living on the street when I am out with a parent or guardian