

## Access Center in Stanislaus County, CA<sup>1</sup>

First envisioned through an extensive community strategic planning process, the Access Center in Stanislaus County serves as a “one-stop” location for city and county services, non-profit organizations, and service providers. The project was a recommendation developed by the Homeless Action Council, a sub-committee that formed out of the larger Focus on Prevention strategic planning initiative. which was spearheaded by staff from the County Executive’s Office in 2014.

Launching as a temporary modular site on city property with co-located services in fall of 2017, the “Initial Outreach and Engagement Center” started small, with five staff from Behavioral Health and Recovery Services (BHRS) and the Community Services Agency (CSA). In the first six months, the Initial Outreach and Engagement Center helped 188 people receive referrals to housing and supportive services, 11 individuals received assistance from the Homeless Court Program that helped resolve charges against them, and the staff worked to place 31 households in temporary or permanent housing. Due to the wide ranging and strategic co-located services, the temporary site was also able to bring in over \$1 million in public and private grants ranging from access to nurses, funding for the Homeless Court, and special housing advocates and housing services.

Building on the success and popularity of the initial project, the Access Center opened in early 2020 as a one-stop hub and physical entry point for individuals at-risk of or currently experiencing homelessness to access a wide range of co-located housing, benefits, behavioral health, and employment services.



*Initial Outreach and Engagement Center, Source: ModestoBee*

In eight months of operation beginning February 2020, the Housing Assessment Team at the Access Center served approximately 3,892 unduplicated individuals:<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> [The Board of Supervisors of the County of Stanislaus Board Action Summary](#), Stanislaus County Chief Executive Office, February 2018, pg. 2-62.

<sup>2</sup> [The Board of Supervisors of the County of Stanislaus Board Action Summary](#), Stanislaus County Chief Executive Office, December 2020, pg. 2-47.

- 582 individuals were aided with vital documents (IDs, Social Security cards, birth certificates);
- 540 individuals received Coordinated Entry System (CES) assessments;
- 333 individuals were approved for CalFresh (SNAP) benefits for food and basic needs and 222 individuals were approved for Medi-Cal (Medicaid) benefits for health coverage and insurance purposes;
- 175 individuals were aided with transportation and 133 individuals were provided hygiene kits (food/clothing);
- 50 individuals have been connected to employment training and case management through the Downtown Streets Team; and
- 48 individuals have been connected to mental health services and 22 individuals have been connected to substance abuse treatment.

The Access Center model reflects certain key components that have been particularly effective in supporting the success of the project:

- **Multi-Sector Community Engagement:** When the Focus on Prevention initiative launched, it included representatives from multiple sectors to create a successful public-private partnership that resulted in an initial \$1 million private donation to acquire the temporary facilities and required improvements. Sectors included were: government, business, health, non-profit, philanthropy, education, faith, neighborhood groups, media, arts, entertainment, and sports.
- **Early Strategic Partnerships:** Access Center staff identified early partnerships with Behavioral Health and Recovery Services (BHRS), and the Community Services Agency (CSA) as vital to quick and early success. BHRS was able to integrate mental health and existing outreach programs, and CSA made connections to cash aid, General Assistance, and access to EBT cards. With Focus on Prevention being spearheaded by the County Executive's Office, this also brought decision making and convening power for a faster integration. For the initial location, each Department contributed 1/3 toward the operating costs.
- **Partners and Leadership with Strong Community Connections:** When staff at the Access Center were trying to advertise its location and services, the Downtown Streets Team became a key partner with its extensive network of community members. After the organization was integrated into the Access Center, it introduced a whole new population to the Center's service providers. They were able to leverage those new partnerships to bring in new clients. Having a staff member at the Access Center who has the duty of coordinating partners was also key in achieving success. The current Access Center Manager spoke of utilizing his experiences and relationships through his

previous position in the County Executive's Office to bring on partners like the Downtown Streets Team.