



BUDGET FACT SHEET

Adult Protective Services (APS)

Home Safe

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Homelessness Prevention for Vulnerable Seniors

PROPOSAL

Provide one-time funding of \$15 million General Fund in 2018-19 to establish Home Safe, a homelessness prevention demonstration grant program for victims of elder abuse and neglect served by county-run Adult Protective Services (APS). Across California, APS social workers are finding that seniors and adults with disabilities who are the victims of financial exploitation, physical abuse, or caregiver neglect are at risk of losing their housing and becoming homeless. APS programs are uniquely positioned to help individuals in a moment of crisis – but currently do not have the funding to prevent victims from becoming homeless. Home Safe would allow participating counties to help APS clients maintain their housing through services such as short-term rental or utility assistance, legal assistance, and expanded case management services.

VICTIMS OF ELDER AND DEPENDENT ADULT ABUSE, NEGLECT, AND EXPLOITATION AT RISK OF HOMELESSNESS

Victims of elder and dependent adult abuse and neglect are at unique risk of becoming homeless. New research shows that nearly half of the homeless adults over age 50 in Oakland are experiencing homelessness for the first time. These adults typically led “conventional” lives until a crisis led them directly to homelessness – a crisis such as being financially exploited by a scam artist or family member, or being left unable to care for themselves after the death of a spouse or caregiver.¹ These destabilizing events that lead to homelessness are instances of elder and dependent abuse and neglect that get reported to APS.

LIMITED FUNDING KEEPS APS PROGRAMS FROM PREVENTING HOMELESSNESS AMONG VICTIMS OF ABUSE

When APS receives a referral for an older or dependent adult who has been abused or exploited, APS social workers investigate those claims and create a plan to help the individual stabilize and recover. But, county social workers are finding that they are unable to provide the assistance necessary to help victims of abuse maintain their homes as they recover. This is because APS was originally designed to be a bare-bones program. With \$126 million, it investigates 150,000 referrals and provides short-term services to 25,000 clients each year. In contrast, the child welfare system serves a population 4 times larger than APS, but receives 40 times the funding – \$5 billion a year. Unlike child welfare, APS simply does not have the resources to provide a more in-depth intervention, especially during a housing crisis.

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WITH HOME SAFE, APS PROGRAMS WOULD INTERVENE AT THE TIME OF CRISIS TO PREVENT HOMELESSNESS

A one-time \$15 million General Fund investment to establish Home Safe would allow participating county APS programs to demonstrate over three years how intervening at the moment of crisis can prevent homelessness among victims of abuse and neglect. Home Safe counties would identify clients at risk of losing their homes and provide services including short-term rental and utility assistance, heavy cleaning, immediate mental health treatment, and intensive case management to ensure clients are able to maintain their homes. Home Safe builds on the best practices and evidence-based principles of homelessness prevention and rapid re-housing supported by the Legislature in recent years. Proven to be cost-effective and have better outcomes than many other housing models, these approaches prioritize intervening at the moment of crisis, maintaining individuals in permanent housing, providing short-term supports, and maximizing community-based resources to bolster housing stability.² Since APS already works with individuals in moments of crisis, the program is in a unique position to target assistance to those most likely to become homeless at the moment they need it most.

THERE IS NO MEDICINE AS POWERFUL AS HOUSING

As a three-year demonstration grant program, the one-time \$15 million General Fund investment in Home Safe would include an evaluation component to evaluate the effectiveness of Home Safe at: reducing the risk of homelessness, preventing future incidents of elder abuse and neglect among California's older adults, and saving taxpayer dollars in the long run. A recent study demonstrated that providing modest financial assistance (about \$1,000) to families most at risk of homelessness reduced their likelihood of becoming homeless within six months by 76 percent. These small investments lead to averted costs – and taxpayer savings – of well over \$10,000 per person by reducing shelter costs, emergency room visits, and law enforcement calls.³ Older and dependent adults who become homeless later in life are particularly at risk of falling ill and using high-cost emergency rooms instead of less costly primary care.⁴ The health hardship of homelessness makes older homeless adults likely to die nearly 30 years earlier than similarly-situated adults who have housing.¹ By evaluating Home Safe, we will be able to test what the research strongly suggests: that preventing victims of elder and dependent abuse and neglect from becoming homeless will not only save tax payer dollars – it will save lives.

REFERENCES

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² National Alliance to End Homelessness. Homelessness Prevention: Creating Programs that Work. (2009).

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³ Evans, WM et al. The Impact of homelessness prevention programs on homelessness. *Science* (2016).

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⁴ Baggett, TP et al. Mortality among homeless adults in Boston: shifts in causes of death over a 15-year period. *JAMA Internal Medicine*

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