



BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
AGENDA LETTER

Agenda Number:

Clerk of the Board of Supervisors
105 E. Anapamu Street, Suite 407
Santa Barbara, CA 93101
(805) 568-2240

Department Name: Public Health
Department No.: 041
For Agenda Of: March 5, 2019
Placement: Departmental
Estimated Time:
Continued Item: No
If Yes, date from:
Vote Required: Majority

TO: Board of Supervisors
FROM: Department Van Do-Reynoso, MPH, PhD, Director
Director(s) Public Health Department
Contact Info: Dana Gamble, LCSW, Assistant Deputy Director, Public Health Department
SUBJECT: Report from Homeless Death Review Team

County Counsel Concurrence

As to form: Yes

Other Concurrence: N/A

As to form: N/A

Auditor-Controller Concurrence

As to form: N/A

Recommended Actions:

That the Board of Supervisors consider the following recommendations:

- a) Receive and file a written report from the Homeless Death Review Team on deaths of homeless persons in Santa Barbara County for the period January 1, 2017 through December 31, 2017; and
- b) Determine that these above action is not a “Project” within the meaning of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), pursuant to Section 15378(b)(5) of the CEQA Guidelines, since the action consists of organizational or administrative activities of the government that will not result in direct or indirect physical changes in the environment.

Summary Text:

This item is on the agenda to provide the Board with an update on Homeless Deaths in Santa Barbara County. The Homeless Death Review Team (HDRT) was created by County staff in 2008 to review homeless deaths and their causes, explore means to avert similar deaths and, where available, compile statistical data to identify trends. A report on the deaths of homeless persons has been provided to the Board of Supervisors on a regular basis since data began to be collected and analyzed in 2009. The current report includes data from calendar year 2017 with comparative data from previous years.

Background:

Responding to citizens’ and community advocates’ concerns about deaths among homeless people in Santa Barbara County, it was determined that a better understanding was needed of the extent and

circumstances of these deaths. To that end, the HDRT was formed to review and analyze these deaths in order to develop strategies to better assist this population.

The HDRT has conducted systematic reviews of the deaths of homeless persons who died beginning on January 1, 2009. Reports have been organized on a calendar year basis to promote comparisons across years. This is the sixth Santa Barbara County (SBC) homeless death review team (HDRT) report. It contains data on the number of deaths among people experiencing homelessness in the County for calendar year 2017. The definition of homelessness for the purposes of these analyses is the definition from the Federal Bureau of Primary Health Care. Data from multiple sources, including County departments (Public Health Department, Behavioral Wellness, and the Department of Social Services), was combined with data from community-based organizations (homeless shelters and hospitals) to obtain a more complete picture for each individual. The reviews were focused on answering the following questions:

- What are the characteristics and trends in the deaths of homeless individuals in Santa Barbara County?
- What are the recommendations to improve care and reduce preventable premature deaths within the homeless population?

The HDRT identified 44 persons experiencing homelessness who died in Santa Barbara County in 2017. This compares with 44 deaths in 2016; 40 deaths in 2015; and 32 deaths in 2014.

Based on the 2017 data, as well as data from previous reports and an understanding of the service area, several themes are apparent:

- Trends remain comparatively consistent. As identified in previous reports, substance abuse (drugs and alcohol) remains the most prevalent health condition identified in homeless individuals who died in 2017.
- In 2017, 16 out of the 44, or 36%, of the deaths occurred outdoors. The remaining 28 individuals, or 64%, died indoors. Of these indoor deaths, 14 died in a hospital or care facility. The percentage of outdoor deaths was lower in 2017 than noted in the 2015 and 2016 reports.
- Although more deaths occurred in the summer of 2015 and winter of 2016 and 2017, since reviewing homeless deaths in 2009, there is an overall even distribution of deaths seasonally when compared over the years.
- No deaths were attributed to the weather in 2017. In other words, no hypothermia, hyperthermia, or dehydration-related causes was listed as a cause of death for any of the 2017 decedents.
- Multiple agencies in Santa Barbara County work together to address challenges and to provide lifesaving/life prolonging services, i.e., housing, drug treatment, medical care, employment resources, etc. These interventions require intense coordination across organizations that is inherently complicated and the numbers of those in need outnumber the supply available.
- Of the 44 cases, the leading cause of death in 2017 was due to cardiovascular disease and Drug/Alcohol overdose. These individuals died prematurely with average age of death being 52 years in 2017, compared to 77 years in the housed population for the same year.

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Performance Measure:

N/A

Fiscal and Facilities Impacts:

Budgeted: N/A

Fiscal Analysis:

There are no fiscal or facilities impacts to accepting this report and reviewing the recommendations.

Key Contract Risks:

N/A

Staffing Impacts:

Legal Positions:
0

FTEs:
0

Special Instructions:

Please return one (1) certified electronic Minute Order to phdcu@sbcpd.org.

Attachments:

- A. Homeless Death Review Team Report

Authored by:

Dana Gamble, Assistant Deputy Director