



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: November 14, 2017
Placement: Departmental
Estimated Time: 20 min
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 and an oral presentation from the Homeless Death Review Team on deaths of homeless persons in Santa Barbara County for the period January 1, 2015 through December 31, 2016.
- 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 a presentational 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 years 2015 and 2016 with comparative data from 2011 through 2014.

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. 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?

Based on this data and an understanding of the service area several themes are apparent:

- 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.
- As identified in previous reports, substance abuse (drugs and alcohol) remains the most prevalent health condition identified in homeless individuals who died in 2015 and 2016.

For the study completed in 2017, the HDRT analyzed 40 cases of deaths of homeless persons occurring in 2015 and 44 cases of deaths of homeless persons occurring in 2016. The number of homeless deaths has continued to increase from prior years. For both years at least 65% of the decedents had insurance to cover health care. 81% of the deaths were male, 19% were female. Looking at race, the majority of deaths in 2016 (50%) were Caucasian, while the next largest group in 2016 (43%) were Latino, an increase from previous reports. The average age at time of death in 2015 was unchanged from 53 years old, but increased slightly in 2016 to 55 years old. A comprehensive view of the findings from 2015 and 2016 in concert with data from the previous calendar years is included in the report.

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.

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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
- B. Homeless Death Review Team Report Presentation

Authored by:

Dana Gamble, Assistant Deputy Director