

Safe and Healthy Library Strategies
City of Glendora
June 2018

Cities across the West are struggling with an increase in unsheltered homelessness. In Los Angeles County that number increased almost 40% in the last three years.¹ As a result, many areas of the County have become havens for people sleeping outside and utilizing public facilities to satisfy basic needs. City- or County-funded libraries often fill both of these roles because they provide inviting areas to sit and relax, as well as access to restrooms, electric charging stations, and internet access.

In the City of Glendora (City), a small group of people use the city library each day to satisfy their basic needs, including access to water and toilet facilities, and to use the computers and internet. Some concerns that this raises include:

- People “bathing” using the bathroom sinks and leaving water on the counter and floor;
- General hygiene issues that impact other library patrons;
- Security concerns, including people sleeping outside and theft of library property;
- Abandoned belongings left inside and outside of library;
- Rare occasions of verbal abuse

In addition to these, library staff have expressed interest in having a better set of tools for assisting patrons who are homeless. The section below highlights some such tools that are included in the City’s new Plan for Preventing and Reducing Homelessness (Homeless Plan), as well as additional strategies the City may wish to consider that are specific to the city library’s issues.

Permanent Housing and Supportive Services

A strategy to reduce the effects of homelessness on the library and other open spaces around the City is, in essence, a strategy to enable people to move into homes. For this reason, the City’s highest priority should be to identify housing and appropriate supportive services for individuals experiencing homelessness throughout the City.

Current City strategies related to housing and supportive services:

- The City’s Homeless Plan calls for better utilization of County resources for housing and supportive services, and for exploring funding sources for City housing programs, including rapid re-housing and permanent supportive housing.

Recommended additional strategies:

- Actively support the development of additional permanent housing throughout the region.

Emergency Shelter

People who use the library for basic needs like sleeping and bathing would also benefit from more access to emergency shelter and services.

¹ Los Angeles County Homeless Services Authority. 2015 and 2016 Greater Los Angeles County Homeless Count Results.

Current City strategies related to emergency shelter:

- The City hosts the East San Gabriel Valley Coalition for the Homeless rotational shelter for a month every winter.
- Some families qualify for motel vouchers through the Glendora Welfare Association.
- City police refer individuals experiencing homelessness to shelters in Pomona and Los Angeles.
- The Homeless Plan recommends exploring funds for an emergency shelter (crisis housing) in the City, as well as a safe parking area for people who live in their vehicles.

Recommended additional strategies:

- Actively support the development of additional permanent housing throughout the region.

Outreach and Coordination

One important aspect to helping people find homes is knowing where to direct them for assistance. A related challenge is locating and staying in touch with people throughout the process of preparing documents and identifying housing resources. Coordination of services at the city level helps with both of these things.

Current City strategies related to outreach and coordination:

- The Homeless Plan recommends forming a committee that could, among other things, coordinate referrals for services.
- Glendora Police Department participates in the Homeless Assistance Liaison Officer (HALO) program, which connects people to CES and refers them to housing resources.
- The Homeless Plan also includes language on improving coordination with regional and local providers, including the County's Coordinated Entry System and outreach teams.

Recommended additional strategies:

- The City and library management could consider hosting a service provider(s) to enter patrons into CES (see "Other Libraries" in Additional Resources section below).
- Library management may wish to train staff on productive ways to engage patrons experiencing homelessness, such as Trauma Informed Care and Motivational Interviewing techniques. Many organizations offer free online trainings that library staff could take advantage of (see examples in Additional Resources section below).

Security

The library may wish to consider additional security measures to address the theft and safety concerns mentioned above, such as:

- Installing exterior lights and interior/exterior security cameras on the premises
- Securing items on the loading dock or hiring security staff to prevent theft

Additional Resources

Other libraries

- The City of Azusa's Neighborhood Connections program operates from the city library and serves as the primary source in the city for referrals to housing and services. <https://www.azusaca.gov/1495/Neighborhood-Connections>
- The San Diego City Library offers Coordinated Entry access, entitlements assistance, housing resources, mental health referrals and a variety of other services onsite through a County-funded program. <https://www.sandiego.gov/public-library/central-library/mental-health-services>

Storage Models

- Volunteers of America Los Angeles includes storage lockers at the Armory shelter in Pomona. The City of Pomona included creation of these lockers in their [2016 Strategic Plan](#), as well as a public education plan to inform homeless individuals about how to utilize the service.
- The organization Think Dignity provides "[Transitional Storage](#)" for individuals experiencing homelessness in the City of San Diego.
- The City of Los Angeles released its [Report on Homeless Encampments](#) in 2017, including a section on storage homeless individuals can access (pp 21-22).

Training

- There are numerous free trainings on Trauma Informed Care and Motivational Interviewing that staff can access online, for example:
 - <https://www.nhchc.org/training-technical-assistance/online-courses/trauma-informed-care-webinar-series/>
 - <https://www.nhchc.org/2011/08/motivational-interviewing-overview-application-outreach-hch-setting/>
- The Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health also offers training and workforce development on a variety of topics including Critical Time Intervention and self-care for people who work in a social work context.

Opportunities for Funding or Programs

- To offer services such as outreach or CES access at the library, one option would be to partner with service providers operating in the region and provide them with material support for their work.
 - Union Station Homeless Services, the CES lead agency for the San Gabriel Valley, operates CES access points and outreach from several satellite offices, for example in Irwindale and Arcadia.
- Grant funding is a potential resource for developing programs. One example is the City of Azusa's Neighborhood Connections program, mentioned above, that relies in part on a grant from the US Institute of Museum and Library Services.