

# RESEARCH PROJECT UPDATE

Partner Agencies:  
Santa Clara County and  
HomeFirst

Policy Focus Area:  
Housing and homelessness

Investigators:  
Jim Sullivan, David Phillips

# Evaluating Rapid Rehousing

## PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Rapid rehousing services in Santa Clara County, provided by HomeFirst, offer homeless individuals progressive rental assistance subsidies that ease the transition back to stable housing. The value and duration of the subsidy depends on each client's income. In addition to rental assistance, participants receive case management services that including assistance in finding an apartment. Rapid rehousing clients are typically housed within 60 days of program enrollment. Rental assistance and additional services last, on average, 9 months.

## SIGNIFICANCE

Despite its affluence, Santa Clara County has the 7th largest homeless population in the country. On a given night, there are 39 individuals experiencing homelessness per 10,000 people. Of this population, 75% are unsheltered, placing Santa Clara as the major metropolitan area with the highest unsheltered percentage of homeless persons in the U.S. Additionally, homelessness in Santa Clara is exacerbated by rental rates five times higher than the national median, an increasingly expensive rental market, and historically low vacancy rates. These factors combine to make finding stable housing especially challenging for homeless persons in Santa Clara.

## RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The evaluation will explore the effect of receiving rapid rehousing services on homelessness, health, employment, criminal justice involvement, and public benefits usage. LEO seeks to answer the following questions: How does rapid rehousing affect days spent in a shelter? Does rapid rehousing impact arrests or other involvement with the criminal justice system? Does receiving services affect hospital admissions?

What is the impact of rapid rehousing on wages and usage of public benefits programs?

## EXPERIMENTAL DESIGN

LEO is evaluating rapid rehousing services through a randomized controlled trial (RCT) design. Eligible clients are randomly assigned to receive rapid rehousing or care as usual. Clients are considered eligible if they are homeless, a single adult, and score within the appropriate range on the VI-SPDAT (Vulnerability Index – Service Prioritization Decision Assistance Tool), a survey designed to assess risk and prioritization for homeless or at-risk-of-homelessness persons. LEO will determine the causal impact of rapid rehousing services by comparing the difference in average outcomes for the treatment and control groups. Randomization ensures that these groups are comparable.

## PROJECT STATUS

Enrollment into the study began in July 2018. Study enrollment will continue on a rolling basis for at least three years, with the intention of enrolling 360 participants. To date, almost 100 participants have been enrolled in the study. Outcomes will be tracked for two years for each cohort.