



Preventing Homelessness

Individuals At Risk of Losing Stable Housing



People at risk of homelessness in Los Angeles County often face multiple overlapping barriers to maintaining stable housing. To better support people at risk of homelessness, prevention strategies have shifted to more flexible and inclusive models. This report provides an overview of programs and interventions that are focused on identifying and supporting people that are at risk in Los Angeles County.

Introduction

The 2025 point-in-time count recorded 72,308 people experiencing homelessness in Los Angeles City and County on a single night in January.¹ Although this reflects a slight decrease from the year prior, a steady inflow of newly unhoused individuals emphasizes the need for enhanced prevention efforts. In response, stakeholders across county agencies, homeless services, and housing systems are reconfiguring their approach by broadening their definition of homelessness prevention and who is considered at risk of becoming homeless. Drawing on interviews with representatives from county agencies, service providers, people with lived experience, and key documents, this brief report provides a snapshot into the current landscape of homelessness prevention programs in LA County that identify and serve people at risk of becoming homeless. We define success as stabilizing housing and preventing entry into homelessness, based on available metrics and on qualitative accounts from providers and people with lived experience, with an emphasis on timely, flexible support. The audience for this report includes system funders, government agencies, community organizations, and other groups that focus on homeless preventions strategies.

The key research questions of focus are:

- How do prevention programs for at-risk populations define success, and how is success measured?
- What programs exist within LA County to provide housing stabilization for people at risk of experiencing homelessness?
- What gaps and opportunities exist for improvement for at-risk programs?

Background

Defining Who is at Risk of Becoming Homeless

The 2025 U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) definition of at-risk of becoming homeless establishes federal guidelines and eligibility criteria for identifying and serving individuals who qualify for federally

funded homelessness prevention programs. These programs include those that use federal Emergency Solutions Grants, Emergency Housing Vouchers, and Continuum of Care prevention resources. In practice, service providers in the Greater LA area that serve at-risk populations with federal funds screen applicants against these criteria to determine eligibility for receiving prevention support (Exhibit 1).²

Exhibit 1. HUD Criteria for “At-Risk” Individuals or Families

- Annual income below 30 percent of median family income
- Insufficient resources and support to prevent homelessness
- Meets *at least one* of the following risk factors:
 - Moved two or more times in the past 60 days due to economic reasons
 - Living with others due to economic hardship
 - Received written housing termination notice within 21 days of application
 - Living in an unsubsidized hotel/motel
 - Living in severely overcrowded housing (single room occupancy/efficiency with >2 people, or >1.5 people per room in larger unit)

Barriers That Increase the Risk of Homelessness

HUD criteria provides a common standard for prioritizing federally funded prevention resources to people in precarious housing situations. In LA County, however, additional vulnerabilities put people at greater risk of homelessness. Notably, the region has a disproportionately high rate of unsheltered homelessness and a limited supply of traditional public housing. At the same time, voucher holders face significant challenges using their subsidies to secure stable, affordable housing due to the tight rental market and limited landlord participation.³ LA County also has some of the highest housing costs in the country. In 2024, 494,446 people did not have access to affordable housing.⁴ Renters in LA County must earn \$48.04 per hour to afford a two-bedroom rental home, or two times the minimum wage, to afford the average monthly rent on a two-bedroom rental.³

In response to the lack of affordable housing and the high cost of living, LA County has expanded upon federal guidelines to include a more inclusive and flexible approach to homelessness prevention. Leaders recognize that traditional prevention models, influenced by federal guidelines and often triggered by narrow thresholds such as 3-day eviction notices, fail to capture the full range of risk for homelessness. This gap is reflected in a 2023 survey for people experiencing homelessness for the first time and for less than one year in the greater LA area. The survey found that over half had experienced at least *one* challenge prior to their housing instability (Exhibit 2).⁵ More than 50 percent of survey respondents cited economic hardship as a reason for falling into homelessness.

Exhibit 2. Reasons for Falling into Homelessness

Economic hardship	54%
Weakened social network	38%
Disabling health condition	17%
Recently discharged from an institutional setting	14%
Experienced violence	4%
Other reasons	10%

People at risk often have multiple, coexisting barriers which compound their vulnerability. These additional risk factors can include:

- Substance use disorders
- Undocumented legal status
- Living in a “doubled up” household or one that would incur other lease violations
- Loss of benefits and/or social services, including a change of status following military discharge
- Loss of employment
- Loss of transportation
- Prior evictions

Relationship dynamics and disputes can also contribute to housing instability, such as conflicts between tenants and landlords or unresolved issues among family members and partners. In addition, structural and policy-related barriers can contribute to difficulty finding and maintaining housing. This includes restrictions on eligibility for public housing or private rental markets due to factors such as criminal history or prior evictions. It also includes difficulty securing employment and stable income due to discrimination, gaps in work history, and the stigma associated with past involvement with the criminal justice system.

Key Prevention Strategies in LA County

The multiple and coexisting barriers that place individuals at risk such as economic hardship, health conditions and structural and policy challenges, show that housing instability often stems from cumulative and intersecting factors.

In LA County, stakeholders are responding to this complexity by adopting more innovative approaches to homelessness prevention. These strategies try to proactively identify and support individuals and households *before* they reach a crisis point. Current homeless prevention efforts in LA County include:

- Legal aid and eviction prevention
- Referral-based interventions and targeted support
- Data-driven, targeted interventions
- Cash assistance and general relief

Each of these strategies typically involves multiagency coordination, financial assistance, and individualized case management or legal support to help people remain housed. Together, they reflect a shift away from restrictive, crisis-driven responses toward earlier and more flexible, customized interventions.

Legal Aid and Eviction Prevention

A cornerstone of LA County’s prevention strategy is legal and tenant protection services. These services include providing legal advice, education on tenant rights, representation in eviction proceedings, and assistance navigating housing disputes. They are designed to help renters understand and assert their rights, avoid unlawful evictions, and stabilize their housing situations.⁶

On average, 7,493 residents in LA County receive eviction notices each month.⁷ In 2025, the LA County Department of Consumer and Business affairs launched its **Right to Counsel Program**, which supports tenants facing eviction. While the program is designed for people facing eviction for any reason, this expansion came at a critical time as residents faced rent gouging the wake of the January 2025 LA wildfires.

Stay Housed LA is a collaborative initiative between LA County, the City of LA, and a coalition of legal aid nonprofits and is jointly administered by Liberty Hill Foundation, which plays a central

role in coordinating outreach, education and advocacy components. The umbrella program provides a range of supportive services aimed at crisis stabilization for those facing eviction. This includes “know-your-rights” workshops and legal clinics that help tenants understand local eviction protections and navigate the legal system. Stay Housed LA also offers full-scope legal representation for eligible tenants in eviction proceedings. While the initiative is rooted in local government efforts, it also operates within a broader landscape of statewide tenant protections, often connecting residents to resources such as California’s Housing is Key program for additional support.

Tenants with legal representation are significantly less likely to be evicted, and tenants with representation have a much stronger chance of avoiding homelessness.⁸ Whereas 90 percent of landlords in LA County have legal representation, only 10 percent of tenants have the same.⁹ Legal aid is an integral tool in homelessness prevention, and for helping stabilize individuals and households who are at risk of homelessness because of the threat of eviction.

Since its inception in 2020, **Stay Housed LA** has connected over 27,000 tenants with legal services and reached more than 2 million residents with information and resources

Inner City Law Center, a core partner in the Stay Housed LA initiative, leads the Tenant Defense Project. Each year, the Project helps more than 1,400 people facing eviction avoid homelessness and recovers over \$1.2 million in relocation and rental assistance, demonstrating how direct legal representation in eviction cases can support people at risk of homelessness.¹⁰

Inner City Law Center also offers legal services that extend beyond eviction defense. People who

are currently homeless or at risk of homelessness can receive help with legal issues that affect their housing stability. These services include clearing outstanding fines, securing public benefits, addressing consumer finance problems, adjusting immigration status, obtaining vital documents, and certifying pets as emotional support animals.

In 2023, Inner City Law:¹⁰

- Kept 728 people in their homes
- Achieved 47 percent success in defeating eviction
- Negotiated a move out agreement 52 percent of the time¹²

In addition, Inner City Law also provides an online toolkit to help tenants understand their rights, along with a toll-free hotline staffed by legal professionals. These resources offer support to individuals facing a housing crisis who may not yet be engaged in formal legal proceedings. Legal representation to support eviction prevention is one of the most effective tools to keep people housed. They partner with the Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority (LAHSA), County Social Services agencies, Veterans Associations and hospitals, homeless shelters throughout the county, drug and alcohol rehabilitation facilities, and housing providers who support people with HIV. They are the only full-time legal provider located on Skid Row, which increases their visibility and accessibility to people currently experiencing homelessness and allows people at risk of homelessness to self-identify and walk into a physical location for assistance.

We Are LA is a second LA city-backed initiative. Part of the Mayor’s Fund for Los Angeles, We Are LA is designed help people avoid eviction and homelessness by connecting them to housing and financial support services. A core feature is a 7-days-a-week eviction prevention hotline that links callers to trained caseworkers, in conjunction with proactive outreach to

individuals who have received eviction notices by going door-to-door to reach people where public records show they are at risk of eviction.¹²

Through in-person clinics, one-on-one case management, and a partnership with the Eviction Defense Network, the program connects tenants with assistance. The program does not distribute unrestricted cash but helps tenants access rent assistance through existing County programs. Since mid-2023, We Are LA has engaged more than 411,000 people and connected over 30,000 to resources to stabilize their housing. A 2024 evaluation found that 68 percent of participants reported improved finances, 74 percent reported improved housing stability, and 85 percent reported improved overall circumstances.¹³

Referral-Based Interventions and Support

The LA County Homelessness Initiative and Measure H

LA County launched the Homeless Initiative (LA HI) in 2016 to coordinate a unified countywide response to homelessness across dozens of county departments and agencies. In 2017, this effort expanded with the passage of Measure H, a dedicated revenue stream for addressing homelessness based on a quarter-cent sales tax.

While replaced by Measure A on April 1, 2025 (described below), the County used Measure H funds to support a wide range of LA HI strategies. The Measure demonstrated the potential powerful impact of applying dedicated resources toward the issue of homelessness.

As reported by the LA County Chief Executive Office, Measure H is credited with preventing 37,920 people from entering homelessness between 2017–2023, 27 percent of whom were kept in their current housing with support from Measure H funds.¹⁴ While these data are not causative, they are part of the current narrative in LA County to explain how 2025 became the

second consecutive year of decreased homelessness and the importance of investments.

Measure H Funds Distribution¹¹

- 200 non-profit agencies
- 15 County Departments
- 15 Cities
- 5 Councils of Government
- 4 Continuum of Care systems

LAHSA's Problem Solving Program and Flexible Referral-Based Prevention

In response to limited funding for traditional, referral-based prevention efforts, LAHSA piloted the Problem-Solving program in 2018, formally adopting it in 2019. Problem-Solving is a flexible, low-cost intervention used to support individuals and families at risk of homelessness. Each Problem-Solving intervention is tailored to the individual and may include rebuilding relationships with landlords, mediating domestic disputes, or connecting people with supportive services to quickly deescalate a housing crisis.

Problem Solving uses cash assistance to stabilize people who are at risk. Case managers may mediate disputes between tenants and landlords by paying fees associated with additional occupants not listed on a lease. The program can also provide grocery gift cards or cover overdue utility bills. In cases where tenants face eviction due to hoarding or property damage, Problem Solving may be used to fund professional cleaning services or maintenance repairs.

Participants in the Problem-Solving program are referred to LAHSA by other service providers, county departments, probation and other criminal justice entities, hospitals, community-based organizations, faith-based groups, and schools. Because of its flexible approach, Problem-Solving reaches a broader range of people at risk of homelessness. Based on a LAHSA service provider's estimate, it also requires 60

percent fewer financial resources than more narrowly constrained prevention models, which often require formal eviction notices. On average, Problem Solving costs about \$4,000 per person over the course of engagement with the program and stabilizes approximately 20 percent of participants.

Statewide Housing Support

CalWORKs Housing Support Program (HSP) is a statewide initiative for families in CalWORKs (California's public assistance program) that provides housing-focused navigation, case management, linkages to legal services, and credit repair, all aimed at promoting housing stability.¹⁵ There is also a financial component of the program, which consists of financial support paid directly to the landlord or creditor seeking rent payment. The **Permanent Homeless Assistance (HA) Arrearages** component supports individuals with permanent housing who have received any notice that would lead to eviction, providing direct payment of up to two months back rent (not exceeding 80 percent of household income). **Emergency Assistance to Prevent Eviction (EAPE)** offers a once-in-a-lifetime benefit of up to \$5,000 for a CalWORKs family to remain in their current home.

A 2023 state audit found CalWORKs HSP to be one of only two cost effective programs (the other being Homekey),¹⁶ though outcome data for LA County specifically is not available.

Data-Driven, Targeted Interventions

The LA County Homeless Prevention Unit

Situated within LA County's Department of Health Services (DHS) and in partnership with the Department of Mental Health (DMH) Services, the Homeless Prevention Unit (HPU) uses a multi-disciplinary problem-solving approach to identify people who are currently using county services and who are identified as being at the highest risk of homelessness. These programs rely on internal

data sharing within County services and flexible service models to reach individuals at imminent risk of housing loss.

Supported by the University of California Los Angeles (UCLA)'s California Policy Lab (CPL), HPU uses predictive analytics to identify individuals most likely to experience homelessness within the next 12 months. The model draws on over 500 factors to assess risk—built with anonymized administrative data from several county agencies including health, social services and criminal justice systems—to assign risk scores. By leveraging this data, HPU proactively identifies individuals who are at risk of homelessness before they seek help or come into contact with the homeless service system.

After clients are identified as at-risk, full-time HPU specialists begin their outreach. As a first step, specialists send letters to each person explaining how they have been identified and that HPU's goal is to provide stability. The following week, they attempt to reach people over the telephone, continuing to call as needed.

Once contacted, case workers identify resources to support at-risk individuals. Similar to Problem Solving, HPU staff provide flexible and time sensitive support, such as short-term financial assistance to resolve landlord disputes, assistance to de-escalate domestic conflicts, or paying past utility bills. Case workers provide highly individualized, responsive, and tailored case management, limiting their caseloads to 15 clients. With lower barrier, unrestricted funds, people at risk of homelessness can be stabilized more quickly and at lower cost than homelessness prevention programs with more narrow eligibility requirements that require eviction notices and formal lease agreements.

While this model of support may resemble services provided through LAHSA's Problem Solving program, this approach marks a significant departure from traditional referral-based strategies, which rely on individuals

recognizing their own vulnerabilities or being referred by a service provider. Instead, using administrative data expands the reach of prevention efforts by identifying a different population than programs that are referral-based.

"If you look at the Venn diagram of people who are identified on our high-risk list and the people who ultimately interact with lots of prevention or Problem Solving, we're talking about thousands of people in both of these circles. There's no overlap."
– *Targeted intervention service provider*

While data-informed prevention outreach reflects a broader shift toward proactive, systems-level engagement, case workers often find it challenging to connect with people at risk. HPU case workers attempt to reach 60 people a month, however case workers must call significantly more people to meet this quota, as getting in touch with their clients can be a significant challenge.

Cash Assistance

Beyond the commonsense connection between income and housing stability, there is compelling research evidence supporting cash assistance as a tool for homelessness prevention. For example, a rigorous study in Santa Clara, California found that participants who received a cash payment in addition to financial counseling were 81 percent less likely to fall into homelessness than those who received counseling alone.¹⁷

Within LA County, **cash assistance** programs take multiple forms and vary in their flexibility and the degree to which assistance is specifically tied to rental or housing expenses. Some county and state programs provide cash assistance towards housing costs as part of their model to serve individuals below a certain income threshold. Examples of these appear below. General Relief (GR) and Guaranteed Income (GI)

typically provide unrestricted funds, though also require meeting income and asset thresholds. As described in more detail below, GR is a statewide program with implementation at the county level, which means that the payment amount and documentation requirements may differ across the state. Other key aspects of GR are that it is a short-term program, and the amount of aid is generally very low (especially relative to expensive areas like LA County).

GI programs typically provide unconditional cash transfers to individuals, offered without restrictions on how the funds can be used; indeed, evaluations of GI programs (typically embedded within implementation) often focus on documenting how recipients choose to spend their funds through dashboards and other mechanisms.¹⁸ GI programs and pilots may serve broad populations, but many within LA County are focused on specific groups in addition to meeting income thresholds, such as being pregnant or parenting or based on age (such as transition-aged or older adults). Since GI is a relatively new concept in terms of large-scale implementation, many programs in LA County are still in a pilot phase.

While all forms of cash assistance can be effective in preventing homelessness, respondents noted that the documentation requirements such as proof of income associated with GR in particular can present barriers for some individuals.

Housing Focused Cash Assistance

Emergency Financial Assistance for People with HIV serves individuals with an HIV diagnosis whose current income is below 500 percent of the federal poverty level and who are not receiving any other form of emergency assistance. The program offers up to \$5,000 over a 12-month period which can be used for rent (with the stipulation that the agreement must be in the applicant's name), utilities, food, and transportation.

Home Safe is a statewide homelessness prevention program supporting older adults and individuals with disabilities at risk of homelessness due to abuse, neglect, or exploitation.¹⁹ In LA County, it operates in partnership with Adult Protective Services (APS), the Area Agencies on Aging, and LAHSA. Financial assistance for rent and security deposits is one component, alongside three to six months of intensive case management, home safety upgrades and deep cleaning, and links to essential services. Since 2018, Home Safe has supported approximately 15,600 individuals statewide, with 62 percent of participants transitioning into permanent housing and 76 percent retaining housing six months after exiting the program.

The Short-Term Eviction (STEP) Fund—launched in 2023 and operated by the nonprofit Better Angels United—provides zero interest microloans. The program is open to LA County residents earning below 50 percent of the area’s adjusted median income^a (AMI) and who are at risk of losing their housing because of a recent hardship. Loans range from \$500 to \$2,500 and require income verification to ensure ability to repay, which begins 60 days after the loan is approved. The Lab for Economic Opportunities (LEO) at the University of Notre Dame is currently conducting an evaluation of this program.

Solid Ground Homelessness Prevention Program is operated by the City of Los Angeles Community Investment for Families Department (CIFD). General eligibility includes income at or below 50 percent of the AMI, and being “at risk” of homelessness, defined as delinquent on rent or facing a financial hardship that could lead to loss of housing. The program uses the [Prevention](#)

[Targeting Tool \(PTT\)](#), developed by CPL, to determine service intensity.

The core offering of Solid Ground is wraparound services, including assistance with landlord disputes and referrals to community resources and legal services. Cash assistance is a key but limited resource, covering emergency rent or utility arrears, security deposits and moving costs, and is typically limited to three months. This support is always paired with services.

Solid Ground has demonstrated strong, sustained impact. Based on Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) data, zero participants between 2018 and 2020 became homeless within 12 months of program exit, and only one family became homeless during 2020 and 2021.²⁰ CIFD has integrated Solid Ground into its broader anti-poverty initiatives and continues to operate the program through 19 FamilySource Centers. Since 2023, the program has served 2,195 individuals across 569 households, distributing \$3.3 million in financial aid.²¹

Unrestricted Cash Assistance

GR and GI programs can help individuals at risk of homelessness by providing a consistent and predictable source of income. The County-funded **GR Program**, administered by the Department of Public Social Services (DPSS), provides time-limited cash to individuals who meet strict asset and income thresholds. Participants must self-identify their needs and meet established program criteria (Exhibit 3).²²

An analysis by the County’s Poverty Alleviation Initiative examining homelessness among the GR population concluded that, “all of the individuals receiving General Relief are housing insecure.”²³

^a Area Median Income (AMI), sometimes referred to as “adjusted median income,” is the midpoint income for a region, with adjustments made for household size and

regional housing costs. HUD calculates it annually. In 2024, 50 percent of AMI for a one-person household in Los Angeles County is \$45,200.

Exhibit 3. LA County GR Eligibility Criteria

- Net monthly income \$221 or less per month per individual; less than \$375 per month per couple
- Personal property valued at \$2,000 or less
- Motor vehicle valued at \$4,500 or less
- Mobile home valued at \$15,000 or less
- Cash on hand is \$100 or less per individual; \$200 or less per couple/family
- Real property (residence) is valued at \$34,000 or less and includes an agreement to sign a lien to the County

Although an important program that provides a steady source of income, GR's relatively low monthly payment—\$221/month for individuals and \$375/month for couples—has been a longstanding concern for many in the County. Not only has the amount remained the same since the 1990s, but the GR for Los Angeles is the lowest among all the counties in California.²⁴

Within LA County, there have also been a number of **GI pilots**, past and present. Cash amounts vary but generally range from \$500 to \$1000 monthly with few restrictions on how the funds are spent. Most of these pilots offer unconditional cash with no spending requirements or housing goals, although some, like the **City of Pomona Household Universal Grants Pilot Program**, provide counseling and encourage participants to apply the funds to rent.

Many of these GI pilots incorporate random assignment to evaluate the impact of the additional income on a range of outcomes. While data availability varies (especially for newer programs), some show promising results on housing stability. For example, mid-program data from the **Long Beach Pledge** show that 54.8 percent of participants in the second cohort used funds for rent—the fifth most common use.²⁵ A report on the **Compton Pledge GI Program** found

a *decrease* in spending on housing but statistically significant improvements in housing security indicators.²⁶ The City of Los Angeles's GI pilot **BIG:LEAP** reported that, "to a person, all interview participants credited the GI with assisting them in offsetting rental costs and most in preventing homelessness."²⁷

Breathe: LA County's Guaranteed Income Program is among the largest in the state, initially targeting adults and now including former foster youth. As of June 2025, Breathe's data across all ages of recipients showed that participants spent 8.65 percent of their funds on housing and utilities, similar to the 9.2 percent reported by the GI Pilots Dashboard, which aggregates data from more than 30 GI pilots nationwide.²⁸

Anticipated Impact of Measure A

As noted above, Measure A is a countywide ballot initiative approved by LA County voters in November 2024 that replaced Measure H as of April 1, 2025. Rather than a quarter-cent tax, Measure A enacts a half-cent sales tax to fund affordable housing development, homelessness services, and homelessness prevention, and is expected to raise more than \$1 billion annually.

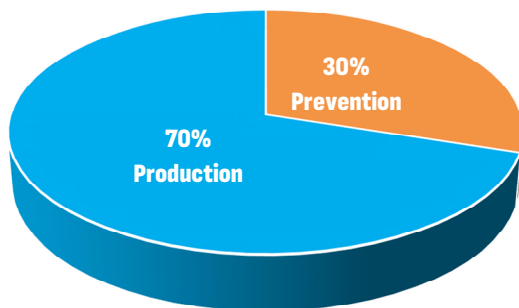
LA County Affordable Housing Solutions Agency

Approximately 36 percent of Measure A revenue, or \$382 million per year, will be allocated to the newly formed LACAHS to provide a countywide, centralized approach to support both the production and preservation of affordable housing and homelessness prevention.²⁹ This investment is designed to expand efforts to address the drivers of homelessness, with a focus on prevention and support for vulnerable renters.

Of the funds the LA County Affordable Housing Solutions Agency (LACAHS) will receive from Measure A in fiscal year 2025–26, 30 percent will go to homelessness prevention, tenant protection, and renter protection (see Exhibit 4).

It is anticipated that LACAHSAs definition of “at risk for homelessness” will be broader than the federal definitions. For example, it currently includes people who are living doubled up. This expanded approach to defining “at risk” will increase the population eligible for services. However, this remains under active policy deliberation, pending the release of official guidance.

Exhibit 4. Measure A Funds Towards LACAHSAs²⁹



Within the amount allocated for prevention, 70 percent goes to the eligible jurisdictions.

LACAHSAs goal is to create an integrated, countywide system for homelessness prevention, accessible to all community-based organizations and connecting individuals with prevention case management through an integrated portal. In contrast to traditional approaches, LACAHSAs envisions a model where at-risk individuals can self-identify their needs *outside* of formal systems and supportive services, such as at churches and other community-based locations. LACAHSAs has set a measurable goal: to reduce the number of people who are newly experiencing homelessness by 20 percent by 2030—lowering the annual number of newly homeless cases from about 63,00 recorded in 2023–24 to approximately 50,000.²⁹ This goal was also adopted by County Board of Supervisors and recommended by the Executive Committee for Regional Homeless Alignment and the Leadership Table for Regional Homeless alignment.

LACAHSAs hopes to “create unified system, where there are no wrong doors and the referrals can happen appropriately across wherever the service delivery is happening.”
–LACAHSAs Staff

As a very new agency, expectations for LACAHSAs prevention role are primarily based on press releases and early planning documents. One recent release notes that LACAHSAs will prioritize prevention efforts such as, “rental assistance, legal aid and stabilization programs” to help people remain housed.³⁰

Measure A Prevention-Related Activity

In addition to LACAHSAs, the FY2025–26 Chief Executive Office–Homeless Initiative funding recommendations (approved in April 2025)³¹ includes several prevention-focused programs that serve those at risk of homelessness:

- **Permanent Housing for Older Adults.** This new initiative, targeting 700 people per year, will provide direct housing assistance to landlords for older adults receiving GR experiencing or at risk of experiencing homelessness. The goal is to help them transition into permanent housing and maintain long-term stability. The program will also strengthen their connection to LA Countys broader safety net. Partners include The Homelessness Initiative, Poverty Alleviation Initiative, DPSS, the Aging and Disabilities Department, and other County agencies.
- **Homeless Prevention Case Management & Financial Assistance** will support families, individuals, and transition age youth at risk of homelessness through individualized, client-driven assistance, including rental arrears, rental assistance, and case management to retain existing or secure other permanent housing.

- **Subsidized Housing for Homeless Disabled Individuals Pursuing SSI** is designed to provide time-limited rental subsidies for disabled people experiencing homelessness or who are at risk of homelessness and are receiving GR benefits and pursuing Supplemental Security Income (SSI).
- **Benefits Advocacy** is an existing program that will receive Measure A support to help individuals who are at risk of homelessness access benefits like SSI, SSDI, and Cash Assistance Programs for Immigrants. Operated under DPSS, this program leverages federal matching funds to maximize resources. Program teams provide personalized support to guide clients through the complex application processes for these critical benefits.
- **Legal Services** are supportive legal services for clients that include assistance with eviction prevention, landlord dispute resolution, credit resolution advocacy, criminal record expungement, and others that relate to housing retention and stabilization, as well as resolving legal barriers that impact a person's ability to access permanent housing, social service benefits, and stable employment.

What's Working in LA County

As noted above, this report defines success as the extent to which housing is stabilized and entry into homelessness is avoided. This may be demonstrated through available program metrics such as housing retention rates, reductions in eviction filings, or timely resolution of housing crises, as well as through feedback from service providers, agency representatives, and people with lived experience. Across programs reviewed, respondents frequently noted that success also depends on delivering assistance quickly, offering flexible resources tailored to each situation, and minimizing barriers to eligibility. However,

programs in LA County lack consistent measurement, so the definition used here reflects both quantitative indicators where available and qualitative accounts of avoiding eviction, maintaining housing, or securing alternative permanent housing.

Across intervention strategies, organizations and providers in Los Angeles identified several approaches that appear to successfully help people avoid homelessness.

Targeted interventions identify people who might not otherwise be reached or recognized as at risk. Many individuals on the verge of losing housing may not self-identify as “at risk” or are reluctant to engage with public systems. Data-informed approaches (namely, the predictive analytics used by the HPU), reach individuals who would fall through the cracks of traditional referral-based systems. This early identification allows providers to intervene before a crisis escalates into homelessness.

“I think I think our clients do not know their level of risk necessarily. Even if they did recognize that their housing was slipping away, they would not necessarily know where to look for assistance or would not reach out for assistance because of mistrust of systems”
— *Targeted intervention service provider*

Embedding prevention programs within systems that already serve high-acuity populations enables more effective outreach. For example, HPU operates within DHS, alongside Housing for Health and the DMH. This positioning means that outreach teams already have clinical knowledge and skills in working with high acuity populations and are therefore more effective.

The cash assistance component of programs in LA County appear to work because they are flexible, quickly deployable, and relatively easy for participants to access. Even modest amounts can resolve immediate financial crises

such as covering overdue rent or utility bills. Providers noted that the speed and flexibility of these funds are key. Giving tenants the opportunity to make decisions that best meet the needs of their household is effective and empowering. There are, however, many aspects of cash assistance programs that need further specification—such as what amounts are sufficient to sustain gains, how long assistance should be provided, whether conditional or unconditional funding works best, and whether wraparound and other services must also be provided to maximize the benefits of cash assistance. These and other aspects are covered within a recent review of promising practices for successful implementation of GI pilots and coalitions, based on a review of over 14 pilots that are part of the Los Angeles Guaranteed Income Coordinating Council (LA GICC).¹⁸

Legal aid is critical because it levels the playing field for tenants who would otherwise have no representation. In eviction proceedings, landlords almost always have legal counsel, whereas tenants almost never do. Without representation, tenants will almost certainly face eviction. Legal aid ensures that tenants understand their rights and also creates opportunities to connect clients with financial assistance and other stabilizing supports. Legal aid is especially effective for individuals in informal living arrangements or who are excluded from other prevention programs. This is because legal aid provides necessary protection for tenants not covered by formal lease agreements.

Shared referrals and data integration across county systems help remove cumbersome barriers and speed up assistance. Programs like HPU exemplify best practice in this area, operating within a unified framework where real-time data sharing and shared referral pathways allow outreach staff to identify and engage with clients more efficiently. This integrated approach allows staff to triage and provide more tailored support through collaboration.

While these examples highlight promising strategies, they also raise critical questions about whether current prevention efforts are sufficient in scale, reach and timeliness to meet the needs of people at risk. Addressing these gaps will require not only continued evaluation but also clear guidance on the types of changes that can strengthen and expand these approaches.

Opportunities for Program Improvement

Respondents identified several opportunities to strengthen homelessness prevention and support for individuals at risk.

1 Expand inclusive eligibility criteria. One key improvement is the need to remove barriers that leave high-risk populations unsupported. Several respondents emphasized the need for more inclusive eligibility criteria for cash assistance and stabilization services, noting that many programs exclude people based on their citizenship, leaseholder designation, or proof of income. These restrictions disproportionately impact undocumented residents and people living in informal housing arrangements, such as doubled up or shared housing.

Eligibility criteria can also be made more inclusive by accepting broader indicators of instability, such as repeated late rent notices, informal evictions or threats to tenants, and utility shut-off notices. Additionally, eligibility criteria should include unsafe or uninhabitable living conditions. Expanding eligibility criteria should also include prioritizing people who have experienced chronic homelessness, even if currently housed.

2 Improve communication about available services within County systems. Caseworkers across County agencies such as DPSS, DHS, and DMH would benefit from clearer, centralized information on available prevention programs, eligibility requirements, and referral processes. As evidence of this complexity, one respondent who works in social services and who was also at risk of homelessness herself felt she was unable to

continue to provide support to her clients. She herself was struggling to navigate the system to maintain her own housing and did not feel well-equipped to address these challenges for her clients. Expanding efforts like those undertaken by We Are LA, 211, and ECRC—initiatives that already help clients navigate resources across programs—could be one way to address this.

3 Strengthen interagency coordination and data sharing. Respondents noted that individuals at risk of homelessness frequently interact with multiple County systems, but those touchpoints are not well documented or shared across agencies due to siloed systems. Strengthening interagency training and resource sharing between agencies would help facilitate coordinated efforts and shared pathways to stabilizing housing.

4 Extend data system access to community-based organizations. Participants pointed to limited data access and coordination between nonprofit providers. Many community-based organizations regularly engage with at-risk populations but lack access to HMIS or coordinated entry systems. LACAHSAs plan to create a unified approach to sharing data and accessing resources could help remediate this structural issue and expand the reach of prevention efforts.

5 Simplify documentation and intake processes. Respondents pointed to the opportunity to reduce documentation burden for

clients, particularly around proof-of-income requirements. Streamlining intake processes could reduce barriers and make it easier for people to access help at a time when they may already feel overwhelmed or embarrassed.

6 Address transportation and system mistrust as barriers to access. Prevention programs can also be improved by recognizing and reducing practical barriers like lack of transportation, and by fostering trust with clients who may have experienced harm from public systems in the past. People who were at risk noted that services requiring clients to articulate their own eligibility and risk factors was a process that some found overwhelming and even embarrassing.

7 Emphasize human-centered service delivery. Reframing intake and eligibility determination as a collaborative problem-solving moment rather than a gatekeeping process or opportunity for education would help ensure that individuals feel respected and supported. While many service providers noted that their positions should require more training, service providers often already draw on their own personal experiences with homelessness or living at risk of homelessness to support their clients.

“When I was homeless, I had to advocate for myself. So now that’s why I advocate for others, because I didn’t have a voice.”
— *Targeted intervention service provider*

Conclusion

LA County’s homelessness prevention system for people at risk of homelessness requires a multi-pronged approach that reflects the complexity of housing instability across populations. Eviction prevention and broader homelessness prevention strategies serve distinct groups and deploy different tools, but each is essential. Legal aid is particularly effective because it interrupts the process of eviction by providing tenants with representation they would not otherwise be able to access and empowers individuals to know their rights. Referral-based and data-informed interventions also play a critical role, especially when they identify risk early and deliver flexible support outside the legal system. Cash assistance, whether targeted rental support or flexible use of funds such as through GI pilots, provides relief that can resolve immediate crises and help maintain housing.

Each of these strategies plays a role. A system to support people at risk of homelessness works best when it integrates multiple entry points and allows community members, service providers, and individuals at-risk themselves to access a range of support options. To meet this goal, future investments through Measure A and LACAHS must prioritize inclusive flexible funds, eligibility criteria, provide better support for frontline workers, and build more robust systems for data sharing and coordination. Additionally, future investments should include homelessness prevention that address racial disparities. Measure A targets an 80 percent increase in the total number of people moving into permanent housing, and mandates that racial disparities in housing placement for Black, Latinx, and Native American/Alaska Native populations decrease by 10 percent with required public reporting on these equity metrics- highlighting the broader goals for more inclusive program design for the greater LA region.³² Strengthening the infrastructure for holistic legal services and improving linkages across County agencies and community-based organizations will also help ensure that resources reach individuals before they fall into homelessness.

Acknowledgments

- Los Angeles County Affordable Housing Solutions Agency
- Los Angeles Homelessness Service Authority
- California Policy Lab
- Homelessness Prevention Unit
- Homelessness Outreach Program Integrated Care System
- Inner City Law
- Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health
- Los Angeles County Chief Executive Office Policy Implementation and Alignment Branch

Citation

Florence, N., Daley, T. & Fiore, N. (August 2025). *Preventing Homelessness: Individuals At Risk of Losing Stable Housing*. Abt Global. Rockville, MD.

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