

**ORANGE COUNTY CONTINUUM OF CARE
LIVED EXPERIENCE ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

Wednesday, March 5, 2025

10:00 a.m. – 11:30 a.m.

Location:

**County Administration North (CAN) Building
Multi-Purpose Room 101**

400 W. Civic Center Dr., Santa Ana, CA 92701

[Click here](#) for parking instructions.

Virtual Meeting Option:

Zoom Meeting Link: [Click here for meeting link](#)

Join by phone: +1 669 444 9171

Webinar ID: 923 4439 7221

****Listen-in option only****

Committee Chair: Robert “Santa Bob” Morse, Individual

Committee Vice Chair: Paul Kaiser, Individual

Committee Members:

Reha Agar, Individual

Elizabeth Flores, Individual

Nichole Gideon, Individual

Deborah Kraft, Individual

Miranda Mears, Individual

Jason Mercado, Individual

Larry “Smitty” Smith, Individual

Vinny Zarrella, Individual

MINUTES

Welcome and Meeting Overview – Robert “Santa Bob” Morse, Chair

Chair Robert “Santa Bob” Morse called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m.

Present: Reha Agar, Elizabeth Flores, Nichole Gideon, Paul Kaiser, Miranda Mears, Jason Mercado, Robert “Santa Bob” Morse, Larry “Smitty” Smith, and Vinny Zarrella

Absent Excused: Deborah Kraft

Public Comments – Members of the public may address the Lived Experience Advisory Committee (LEAC) on items listed within this agenda or matters not appearing on the agenda so long as the subject matter is within the jurisdiction of the LEAC. Public comments will be limited to three minutes. If there are more than five public speakers, this time will be reduced to two minutes. Members of the public utilizing interpreter services will be given double the amount of time to provide public comment

To address the LEAC during the Public Comment period, members of the public are to complete a Request to Address the Committee form prior to the beginning of each agenda item and submit it to Continuum of Care (CoC) staff. Staff will call your name in the order received. Members of the public may also submit public comment by emailing CareCoordination@ocgov.com. All comments submitted via email at least 24 hours before the start of the meeting will be distributed to the LEAC members, and all comments will be added to the administrative records of the meeting. Please include “LEAC Meeting Comment” in the email subject line.

LEAC Member Comments – Members of the LEAC may provide comments on matters not appearing on the agenda so long as the subject matter is within the jurisdiction of the LEAC. Comments will be limited to three minutes. If there are more than five members wishing to speak, this time will be reduced to two minutes.

- Vinny Zarrella raised concerns about Santa Ana Housing Authority’s (SAHA) relationship and coordination with both youth and case management staff at Orangewood. Additionally, Vinny Zarrella noted that communication strategies have caused stress, confusion and uncertainty among youth receiving or working towards housing with SAHA.
- Nichole Gideon asked for County staff to clarify whether voting done as a CoC Board member was meant to be on behalf of the LEAC or solely based on Nichole Gideon’s own insight as a CoC Board member with lived experience of homelessness. In response to Reha Agar’s request to receive a record of all CoC Board voting from the past two years, Nichole Gideon requested this question be entered into the record of the meeting.
- Chair Robert “Santa Bob” Morse shared receipt of an email from Doug Becht, Director of the Office of Care Coordination, requesting LEAC participation in the upcoming Same Day Solutions Fair and requested for staff to explain more about the event. Chair Robert “Santa Bob” Morse expressed interest in having LEAC members serve as prime examples of people who have improved their situation and prove that there is “light at the end of the tunnel”. Chair Robert “Santa Bob” Morse asked LEAC members about willingness to participate in the Same Day Solutions Fair and inquired about a flyer for the event.

CONSENT CALENDAR

1. Approve the LEAC Meeting Minutes from February 5, 2025.

Paul Kaiser motioned to approve Consent Calendar Item 1. Nichole Gideon seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously.

BUSINESS CALENDAR

1. **CoC Strategic Plan** – Felicia Boehringer, CoC Administrator, and Cameron Pastrano, CoC Staff Specialist, Office of Care Coordination

Felicia Boehringer and Cameron Pastrano provided a brief overview of the CoC Strategic Plan and shared a debrief of the February 5, 2025, LEAC meeting discussion. The Office of Care Coordination integrated feedback from the February 5, 2025, LEAC meeting into the Strategic Plan and outlined Aims, Objectives, and Strategies for the committee to consider.

Felicia Boehringer and Cameron Pastrano facilitated discussion for committee members to share what Strategic Aims or Objectives stand out and/or feel relevant to the work of the LEAC, if any updates are requested, and if any additional Strategies or Actions should be included. The Office of Care Coordination will compile feedback and notes from the discussion, and insights will be prepared for presentation at a future LEAC meeting and/or CoC Board meeting as CoC Strategic Plan implementation planning continues.

Committee Discussion:

- Nichole Gideon appreciated the inclusion of past discussions in the presentation according to which points best connected to each Objective, and noted significant feedback on Objective 1A. The goal is to compile key points for the CoC Board chair, recognizing areas for improvement. The Coordinated Entry System (CES) falls under the committee's purview, and if the LEAC strongly supports prioritizing its marketing or operations, that should be emphasized. The CoC Strategic Plan will help support the CoC Board Officers to develop a forward-looking plan. Collaboration, such as securing bus passes through Orange County agencies, could greatly support access to services. While not directly within the committee's control, advocating for provider partnerships could be a starting point to more effective collaboration.
- Elizabeth Flores also appreciated the presentation and asked if there is a navigation center in Orange County, noting that American Family Housing (AFH) has a navigation center in Whittier where people can access resources and information. A navigation center could help people without phones or computers navigate resources, including calling 2-1-1. Elizabeth Flores expressed interest in understanding how the CoC Strategic Plan works and agreed with Vice Chair Paul Kaiser's points. Elizabeth Flores recalled lived experience receiving hotel vouchers and bus passes from the Social Services Agency, emphasizing the importance of having a clear starting point for those in need.
- Chair Robert "Santa Bob" Morse supported the Strategies and Actions laid out, noting that the committee's focus is clear, and encouraged members to email Felicia Boehringer and Cameron Pastrano with any additional thoughts. Chair Robert "Santa Bob" Morse highlighted Orange County Transportation Authority (OCTA)'s changes to bus payment methods and suggested inviting someone from OCTA's board of directors to an LEAC meeting for discussion.
- Vinny Zarrella emphasized the need for improved access to CES, noting that many people in need, even those familiar with housing services, are unaware of CES. Vinny Zarrella highlighted Strategic Aim 1A, pointing out concerns with service provider grievance processes and the opportunity to provide further transparency and accountability for people accessing the homeless service system. Vinny Zarrella advocated for expanding public transit access for those experiencing homelessness, suggesting discussions with OCTA about buses transporting individuals to shelters, similar to existing safe-space initiatives for victims and survivors of human trafficking.
- Larry "Smitty" Smith expressed frustration with the lack of coordination in CES, noting that while the system has changed over time, there has been little explanation of how it currently works. The gap in understanding between those who were present when CES was first introduced and newer participants accessing CES has led to confusion, with case managers and outreach workers often unaware of CES's intended function. Larry "Smitty" Smith emphasized the need for training and policy changes to bridge this gap and align with strategic aims. Additionally, Larry "Smitty" Smith questioned the effectiveness of outreach efforts, highlighting concerns about the

distribution of information regarding specific programs and events in Orange County, stressing that collaboration and transparency need significant improvement.

- Vice Chair Paul Kaiser emphasized the need for better education and outreach about CES and housing programs, noting that many individuals remain unaware of CES eligibility or how to navigate the homeless service system. Vice Chair Paul Kaiser shared personal experience struggling to find resources, highlighting challenges with 2-1-1 referrals and lack of follow-up from street outreach agencies. Vice Chair Paul Kaiser stressed that people experiencing homelessness are motivated to change their situation but lack clear guidance and access points for resources. The upcoming Same Day Solutions Fair presents an opportunity for resource access, if proper outreach and marketing is facilitated to increase turnout and impact for people experiencing homelessness. Vice Chair Paul Kaiser suggested the County of Orange further collaborate with the Social Services Agency and other County agencies, similar to LA County, to create centralized navigation centers that efficiently connect individuals with housing, benefits, and essential resources.
- Reha Agar echoed concerns about CES inefficiencies, highlighting issues with service provider intake coordinators lacking knowledge about CES and individuals experiencing long waiting periods without follow-up. Reha Agar shared an example of an individual who experienced challenges with service providers when working towards housing. Reha Agar emphasized that the burden of case management should not fall on individuals in crisis, advocating for clearer roles and responsibilities for service providers and case managers as it relates to CES enrollment. Reha Agar questioned the purpose of CES and suggested a one-stop resource center for comprehensive support, noting issues with existing navigation centers, such as long wait times and understaffing.
- Jason Mercado inquired about what defines a navigation center.

2. CES Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) Resource – James Bacon, CES Staff Specialist, Office of Care Coordination

James Bacon presented an update regarding the CES FAQ resource document, sharing that feedback provided by the LEAC in Fall 2024 was incorporated into the document and implementation planning process. Additionally, CES-specific training is being developed as a response to past recommendations from the LEAC to provide regular training on CES policies, procedures and processes to homeless service providers, Access Points and community partners. James Bacon requested feedback and thoughts from the LEAC regarding the CES FAQ resource.

Committee Discussion:

- Vinny Zarrella asked whether CES resources would be publicly accessible or limited to internal use, and expressed interest in sharing the information with the community. Vinny Zarrella inquired about the availability of the Coordinated Entry training site as a public resource. Additionally, Vinny Zarrella inquired how individuals can file grievances or seek direct assistance when Access Points fail to help.
- Vice Chair Paul Kaiser asked whether CES-referring agencies, which take applications but do not enter them into CES, would also receive training on CES. Since clients often ask questions at this stage, Vice Chair Paul Kaiser emphasized the need for referring agencies to have clear information to reassure them about CES processes. Vice Chair Paul Kaiser also questioned the messaging around CES "not being a waitlist," pointing out that while it prioritizes referrals, it still functions similarly to a waitlist with shifting preferences.

- Reha Agar stated that the first paragraph describing CES is well-worded, making it clear that CES is a way to prioritize the most vulnerable people to limited opportunities.
- Larry "Smitty" Smith asked if completion of CES training would be mandatory across the CoC and its agencies. Larry "Smitty" Smith emphasized that training should be mandatory, as too many individual policies within the system contradict the intended function of CES. Larry "Smitty" Smith argued that if CES is being changed, all service providers involved and accessing CES should receive training. Larry "Smitty" Smith also suggested removing the term "waitlist" entirely from the document, noting that the term "community queue" is used and its function is well explained in the first paragraph of the documentation.
- Nichole Gideon expressed appreciation for the opportunity to provide feedback and see it incorporated in the CES FAQ resource document. Nichole Gideon mentioned that advocating for CES can feel like a mystery, especially regarding how it will work and the length of time it may take. The goal, however, remains focused on helping clients. Nichole Gideon thanked the Office of Care Coordination and CES staff for their efforts and asked if CES has a grievance policy in place. Nichole Gideon also inquired about the impact grievances could have on agencies and whether it would affect the CES process. Finally, Nichole Gideon acknowledged that while it is difficult to predict what it would look like, exploring the possibility of a CES-specific grievance process might be worth considering.

3. CoC Updates – Felicia Boehringer, CoC Administrator, Office of Care Coordination

Felicia Boehringer shared an overview of key entities involved amidst the federal updates and provided a timeline of actions that took place in January. Felicia Boehringer also shared that Scott Turner was confirmed as U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Secretary and reviewed actions taken since that appointment. Felicia Boehringer provided resources for staying up to date on information and advocacy opportunities as it relates to CoC Program and other federal funding for homeless services. Additionally, Felicia Boehringer provided updates on the Homeless Housing, Assistance and Prevention (HHAP) Program Round 5 award announcement and Round 6 funding availability announcement.

Nichole Gideon shared updates from the February 26, 2025, CoC Board meeting and Felicia Boehringer shared information about upcoming CoC Board and Committee meetings.

Committee Discussion:

- Nichole Gideon suggested moving CoC updates to the beginning of the meeting and inquired about having a grievance process that CoC committee members can utilize.
- Chair Robert "Santa Bob" Morse suggested that Miranda Mears and Elizabeth Flores speak with the Office of Care Coordination about the Same Day Solutions Fair update.

Meeting adjourned at 11:33 a.m.

Next Meeting: Wednesday, April 2, 2025, 10:00 a.m. to 11:30 a.m., at the County Administrative South (CAS) County Conference Center, 425 W. Santa Ana Blvd. Room 104, Santa Ana, CA 92701