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Marisa Creter  
Executive Director, San Gabriel Valley Council of Governments  
1000 S. Fremont Avenue, Unit 42-A  
Alhambra, CA 91803

**Re: Responses to Project Roomkey Questions**

Dear Ms. Creter,

The Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority (LAHSA) extends our deepest gratitude to the San Gabriel Valley Council of Governments (COG) for your invitation to present at the April 16, 2020 meeting. We appreciate the COG's thoughtful questions and ongoing partnership in our efforts to create housing solutions for our most vulnerable neighbors.

We also appreciate the ongoing openness to discussing the State's Project Roomkey, a critical response to the worldwide COVID-19 crisis. We look forward to continued work together to bring unsheltered and vulnerable residents into safety, which will in turn assist Los Angeles County to slow the spread of COVID-19.

Please see below for LAHSA's responses to the COG's questions from the April 16 meeting:

1. *How are people experiencing homelessness selected to be placed into participating hotels? How does this relate to Coordinated Entry System (CES)?*

To qualify to participate in Project Roomkey, individuals must meet one of the following conditions:

- 65 years of age or older;
- Has underlying medical conditions;
- Is medically compromised.

This group of people is significantly more likely to require hospitalization and critical care if infected with COVID-19. That surge of hospitalizations would severely impact our region's healthcare system's capacity to provide care.

To participate in Project Roomkey, clients must be referred to the program by a homeless services provider or system partner to include medical institutions. The eligibility process is different from the Coordinated Entry System (CES). A participant in Project Roomkey will be connected through onsite staff for housing placement and could be placed through CES but participation in CES is not a prerequisite for Project Roomkey.

2. *How are the hotel occupants assigned to hotels? Are people being sent from one community to another if rooms are not available in their original community?*

The goal of Project Roomkey is to protect communities by preventing the spread of COVID-19. With that in mind, the selection of clients who are eligible to participate in the program is intentional and community-focused. Homeless services providers and outreach teams, working in the communities they serve, are first identifying clients who are already in the community where the Project Roomkey site is opening. With that intention in mind, clients are placed into Project Roomkey sites that are located within the Service Planning Area (SPA) in which they were homeless prior to placement.

3. *Why were cities excluded from the site selection and contract negotiation process? Will cities be notified prior to hotel opening going forward?*

Experts from the State of California, Los Angeles County, and private sector real estate began working with local hoteliers in March to determine interest in the program. Los Angeles County and LAHSA will continue to work to improve communications with cities throughout the region at earlier phases in the process. Cities will be notified by the County as soon as there is an interest expressed by the private property owner to engage in negotiations prior to opening a new Project Roomkey site.

4. *What plans are in place to address community concerns and impacts?*

Project Roomkey has been designed to include benefits to each community. These benefits include:

- Identifying clients who are already in the community where the Project Roomkey site is opening and ensuring they are safely sheltered, thus reducing their personal and overall COVID risk;
- Paying transient occupancy tax at every site;
- On-site supportive services;
- Onsite nursing and 24/7 security.

Please see attached the attached frequently asked questions (FAQs) for more information.

5. *Is Transient Occupancy Tax (TOT) still being paid to cities if these rooms are in use by Project Roomkey?*

Yes.

6. *How are the hotel occupants traced during the time they are in Project Roomkey? If they are absent, is there a plan to find the person who is missing?*

Project Roomkey participants are given a health check twice a day and are all asked to wear an identification wristband. If a participant needs to leave the hotel for some reason, the participant is asked to check-in their room key with the site administrator to help us account for individuals during their stay at each site.

7. *Given that there may be an increase in calls made to local police departments, will those costs be covered for those expenses related to Project Roomkey.*

We believe that Project Roomkey may result in significantly fewer calls to first responders given the reduction in unsheltered individuals, as well as bringing more vulnerable individuals into a safe environment where they are less likely to contract COVID-19. In addition, transient occupancy taxes will be paid to cities during a period of time when few hotel units are occupied and issues of vacancy will be

avoided, thus increasing revenue to support municipal services while also reducing the likelihood of neglect at these hotel sites.

8. *What is the status of the effort to address the possible residency implications for individuals placed 30 days or longer?*

This program is authorized through the Governor's emergency powers and does not trigger issues of residency. Under Project Roomkey, participants are not considered persons that can hire property and therefore do not gain tenancy in so long as their stay is being funded by a third-party entity.

9. *When the crisis ends, how quickly will the hotel be restored to normal operations?*

Each hotel owner enters a lease agreement with a start and an end date. When hotels resume private operations will depend on the term of the contract, the length of pandemic, along with State and local health orders.

10. *When the crisis ends, will there advanced/early notice to cities so they can prepare?*

Yes.

11. *When the crisis ends, are there plans to convert some or all of the participating hotels into long-term housing for the homeless? If so, how will cities be engaged?*

Project Roomkey is a temporary leasing agreement in response to the pandemic. Acquisition is not a part of Project Roomkey. If funding were identified and acquisition were considered, this would be a separate program that would involve robust community and city engagement. Moreover, in many cases, conversion of a hotel to permanent housing would require changes to zoning that would necessitate community input.

12. *When the crisis ends, what happens to those participants who are not placed into housing? Will they be transported back to their community of origin or will they stay in their new neighborhood?*

LAHSA, the County, and partners from the non-profit and philanthropy sectors are working together to develop a comprehensive plan for placement into permanent housing for Project Roomkey participants so that they do not return to the streets once the COVID-19 crisis ends. While participants are staying at these hotels, on-site service providers are actively working with each client individually to develop an exit plan, with the goal of moving them to a situation that permanently resolves their homelessness. In cases where this isn't feasible, LAHSA will use existing shelter capacity to move people from Project Roomkey sites and into other existing interim housing or will explore other options.

13. *If an occupant breaks house rules and is evicted, what happens to the individual?*

Clients are expected to abide by the rules in their Participant Agreement, which includes but is not limited to hotel/motel rules. If a client chooses to exit Project Roomkey, all efforts will be made to secure alternate accommodations for that client.

14. *If there are complaints and questions from residents nearby, where can they direct concerns? Please provide a specific contact.*

The County has set up contact e-mails and phone numbers for community questions by Supervisorial District. These contacts are:

- Supervisorial District 1: [Losangelessd1@gmail.com](mailto:Losangelessd1@gmail.com), (213) 413-7425
- Supervisorial District 5: [sd5losangeles@gmail.com](mailto:sd5losangeles@gmail.com), (818) 473-5102

15. *If Project Roomkey continues beyond the 90 days, will these individuals count towards the Point-in-Time Count total?*

No, Project Roomkey is expected to conclude before the next Point-in-Time Count, which will take place in January 2021.

16. *Please verify that the following is correct: We understand that LAHSA is looking to place 15,000 Tier 1 homeless people in Project Roomkey motels. According to Chairwoman Dusseault, those in Tier 1 must meet one or both of the following conditions: A) 65 years or older, B) Have underlying health conditions.*

To qualify to participate in Project Roomkey, individuals must be 65 years of age or older **OR** have underlying medical conditions **OR** be medically compromised. This group of people are significantly more likely to require hospitalization and critical care if infected with COVID-19.

17. *Are residents screened for criminal records?*

No. Residents are selected based on vulnerability to COVID-19 and likelihood of requiring hospitalization or critical care if infected with COVID-19.

18. *Will there be any kind of reporting to the city or the region on how this is working?*

Yes. For up-to-date information on the number of hotels/motels participating in Project Roomkey and the number of rooms secured, please visit: <https://covid19.lacounty.gov/incident-updates/>.

19. *Are the residents allowed to bring illegal drugs or weapons into the Project Roomkey motels? Are residents subject to screening for these items at check-in and periodically during their stay?*

No, residents are not allowed to bring illegal drugs or weapons onto the premises. Prior to entering a Project Roomkey facility, participants must go through a security screening to ensure the well-being of all clients and staff. Additionally, all constitutional rights regarding search and seizure of property will be abided by.

We appreciate the San Gabriel Valley COGs continued engagement and partnership in our efforts to bring our vulnerable neighbors into safety. We look forward to continuing to work with you and answer any questions that arise.

Sincerely,



Sarah Dusseault  
Chair, LAHSA Commission



Heidi Marston  
Interim Executive Director, LAHSA