

Programs & Services

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Housing Matters

Organizational Overview

2,600+

people receive services each year

≈350

individuals housed annually

Since 2012, more than 1,800 people have found permanent housing with the support of Housing Matters programs and services. These are adults, children, and seniors who might otherwise still be living without a home.

Our programs and services touch the majority of people experiencing homelessness in Santa Cruz County. Numerous and varied, these programs and services can sometimes seem pretty complex. What's not complex is our goal: to get people into permanent, stable housing.

Rapid rehousing is a strategy that comes into play in many of our programs. It's an evidence-based approach to ending homelessness that starts with helping individuals and families quickly move into housing, with no preconditions or barriers to entry. Once housed, participants in our housing programs work closely with case managers to address the issues that led to that person's homelessness, whether they be related to health, employment, or legal disputes.

What often slows us down is a lack of capacity. There simply isn't enough affordable housing in our county to house all those who need it. This is where we lean into compassion, creativity, and collaboration in our community. It takes teams of people, working together, to help people experiencing homelessness find their way home again.

"Housing is THE foundation from which to tackle all of life's challenges."

Phil Kramer, **Housing Matters CEO**

Leadership



Phil Kramer
Chief Executive Officer

Phil leads the Housing Matters team in identifying solutions to homelessness, developing creative housing plans, and championing community efforts that lead to stable, permanent housing for individuals and families. Since becoming CEO in 2015, the organization has tripled its operating budget and successfully housed more than 1,800 individuals and families in Santa Cruz County.

Previously, Phil worked as director of strategic development at Goodwill Central Coast and as director of 180 Together, a multi-agency homeless housing initiative. He held positions in advertising and marketing at Google, AOL, and The Wall Street Journal early in his career before deciding to follow his passion for social justice and mission-driven work and join the Peace Corps.



Mer Stafford
Chief Impact Officer

Mer leverages more than a decade of nonprofit development expertise in cultivating relationships with donors, funding partners, foundations, and organizations. Since joining Housing Matters in 2021, she has helped raise significant financial support for Housing Matters programs and capital projects.

Previously, Mer served as executive director of a prominent, internationally renowned retreat center. Mer earned management certification from UC Irvine and attended Bay State College in Boston.

Tom Stagg
Chief Initiatives Officer

Tom Stagg brings more than 14 years of experience in nonprofit management to his role as Chief Initiatives Officer. He manages Housing Matters' many programs — from emergency shelter and day services to housing services and employment training.

Prior to joining Housing Matters in 2017, Tom served as program manager for Central City Concern, a Portland-based housing nonprofit. He holds a Master's degree in Public Administration from the Middlebury Institute of International Studies at Monterey.



Jane Stokes
Chief Financial Officer

Jane Stokes joined Housing Matters in November 2021 with more than 25 years of experience in nonprofit management. As Chief Financial Operator, she oversees all things budget-related, from operations to cash flow and financial planning.

Previously, Jane was the Director of Finance and Administration at Firelight, a local nonprofit working with community-based organizations in Southern and Eastern Africa. She also served as Director of Development at Kirby School. Jane holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in Humanities from San Jose State University and is a Certified Public Accountant.

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Direct Services

Our campus serves as an information and support hub for those experiencing homelessness in Santa Cruz County.

We welcome anyone in need to use our bathrooms and showers, whether they are enrolled in a Housing Matters program or not. With just a basic intake — no ID required — people can access many of our Direct Services while learning more about the programs we offer.

Hygiene Bay - ADA-accessible bathrooms and showers are open daily.

Mailroom - Provides a secure, stable mailing address for anyone experiencing homelessness.

Phone Charging & Refill Station - Provides people experiencing homelessness with a place to charge mobile phones and refill water bottles.

Kitchen - Serves three meals a day to participants in our emergency shelter programs.

Outreach & Intake - Connects people experiencing homelessness to community resources and campus-based services; completes assessment for Smart Path Coordinated Entry System and enrolls clients in Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) database.

Drop-in Workshops - Homeward Bound: The use of Housing Problem Solving funds to help unhoused individuals with an opportunity for stable housing clear hurdles to move-in. Most commonly, it takes the form of assistance with travel costs to another location where housing is being offered, or assistance with housing deposits and/or first month's rent for someone to move into a rental unit. In 2021, this workshop helped 42 individuals (comprising 32 households) transition to stable housing.

Navigation: One-on-one problem solving to help people find housing through family and friends. Also provides help with completing forms and applications.

Care Groups - Substance Recovery, Compassionate Self Care Group, Women's Group.

Full Budget + Individual Programs (smaller infographic)



Emergency Shelter Programs

Collectively, our shelters provide beds for about 160 individuals on any given night.

Welcoming, comfortable, and safe, shelter can be life-changing for those who are able to access it. However, the need in our county is much greater than we are able to meet, with an estimated 80% of our local homeless population living unsheltered.



Rebele Family Shelter

Rebele Family Shelter (RFS) provides emergency shelter for unhoused families with children under the age of 18. Families reside in apartment-style units with private bathrooms and showers while working with case managers to obtain permanent housing. As guests at RFS, families receive three meals a day in the campus dining area. There are common areas for socializing, and a community play area for kids.

RFS case managers provide housing navigation support while coordinating access to additional services to help families build stability and long-term self-sufficiency. Those services often include employment counseling, health care coordination, help with substance abuse and domestic violence, access to childcare, and enrollment in benefits programs such as CalWORKS.

RFS provides shelter for up to 100 occupants at any given time and is one of the only family shelters in Santa Cruz County. In 2021, the program helped 47 family households transition to permanent housing.

Participants served in CY2021:

Rebele Family Shelter (RFS)
47 families

Paul Lee Loft
54 adults

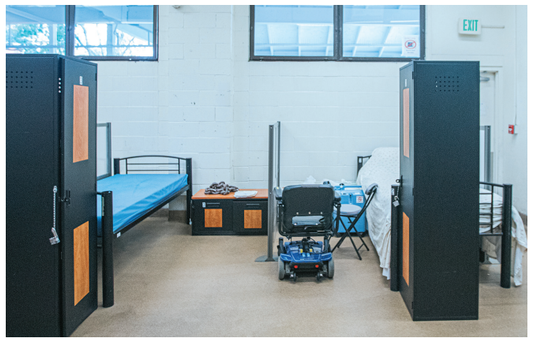
Recuperative Care Center (RCC)
XX adults

Paul Lee Loft

The Loft serves some of our most vulnerable guests. It provides a safe, temporary place to sleep for up to 57 adults at a time. The Loft consists of a men's-only, dorm-style sleeping area, as well as individual "Pallet" shelters located in what was formerly the Housing Matters parking lot.

Installed in 2020 as part of our pandemic response, the Pallet shelters are reserved for single occupancy, and accommodate all genders. (Men must be able to navigate stairs to stay in the Loft dormitory.) Both options are open to adults who are currently experiencing homelessness and who are partnering with us to end their homelessness.

Participants receive three meals a day and access to Day Services (showers, mailroom, electronics charging area) while working with case managers to find stable, permanent housing. After an initial SmartPath assessment and intake, participants are connected with community resources and services that best address their needs. These include housing navigation and employment readiness, as well as access to medical and behavioral healthcare, and enrollment in benefits programs.





Recuperative Care Center

The Recuperative Care Center (RCC) is an innovative medical respite program located on the Housing Matters campus. Its goal is to reduce recovery time from significant medical events and decrease the likelihood of recurring hospital stays. The program, which serves up to 24 individuals at a time, is a collaboration between Housing Matters and the Santa Cruz County Homeless Persons' Health Project; Dominican and Watsonville hospitals; Palo Alto Medical Foundation (PAMF); Hospice of Santa Cruz County; Kaiser Permanente; and Central California Alliance for Health.

Many RCC participants have never been in a shelter before. They arrive at RCC after being discharged from medical facilities like hospital emergency rooms. Many are disabled and need assistance with day-to-day living. Often, the goal is to find longer-term housing for these guests in a skilled nursing facility, since many require ongoing medical treatment. The length of stay at RCC is limited to six months, and during that time case managers help with benefits enrollment and assembling vital documents; arranging transport to medical appointments; and advocating for care referrals.

We meet all of our clients where they are, and work with each person or family individually to identify the steps needed to find (and keep) a permanent place to call home.



Housing & Supportive Services

Housing is the heart of what we do.

All of our programs and services, from emergency shelter to day services to housing supports, are offered with the same goal in mind — to help people move towards stable, long-term housing as quickly as possible.

Support Services for Veterans Families (SSVF)

This rapid rehousing program works with unhoused veterans (and qualifying family members) as well as veterans in danger of losing their housing. Participants are identified either through direct outreach or referral, and are enrolled once their veteran status is verified. Many receive help with identity-related documentation to verify their military service.

SSVF serves up to 50 veteran families per year, providing housing-focused case management, housing navigation, rental assistance, legal services, and healthcare navigation as needed. Participants spend an average of 255 days enrolled, and recertify for program benefits every three months. In 2021, SSVF served 40 veterans and their families. The program helped 12 veterans transition to permanent housing.

CalWORK's Housing Assistance Move-in Program (CHAMP)

CHAMP helps families with children under the age of 18 secure and sustain housing. To be eligible participants must also be enrolled in CalWORKs, a State-funded financial assistance program for low-income families with children. The program pays for housing-related costs such as security deposits; first and last month's rent; credit repair; and up to two months of back rent.

The program also covers moving costs, landlord incentives, and short-term rental subsidies for qualifying families. Housing Matters case managers provide housing navigation support and connect families with wraparound services, such as access to childcare, to help them move toward housing stability. The program serves up to 40 families at a time; participants are typically enrolled for a period of 9 - 12 months.

Bringing Families Home (BFH)

Bringing Families Home (BFH) is a state-funded program that focuses on housing families with children under the age of 18 who are involved with the child welfare system. The goal is to remove housing as a barrier for parents and families working towards reuniting with their children after a lapse in custody.

Housing Matters manages the only BFH program in Santa Cruz County, assisting families by referral from the County's Smart Path Coordinated Entry System. Participants create a Housing Stability Plan and receive personalized case management and housing navigation services, as well as financial help with rent, security deposits, utility payments, moving costs, and other housing-related expenses.

In 2021, Bringing Families Home served 55 households.



Housing Now & the Rehousing Wave

Housing Now is the program Housing Matters developed to support the Rehousing Wave. It dedicates experienced case managers to provide housing navigation and other services to help Rehousing Wave program participants secure stable housing and stay housed.

The Rehousing Wave grew out of Santa Cruz County's COVID-19 homeless response, which included temporary shelter for hundreds of highly vulnerable, unhoused individuals in motels through one-time federal and state funding.

To support the motel guests' transition to permanent housing, the Rehousing Wave was launched. The program is a collaborative effort between federal, state, and county government and community-based organizations that include:

Participants served in CY2021:

SSVF
40 veterans & families

CHAMP
46 families with children

Housing Now
108 adults

Bringing Families Home (BFH)
55 households

CFET
43 adults

Housing Matters, Abode Services, Santa Cruz County's Housing for Health Division, and the Housing Authority of the County of Santa Cruz. Residential landlords and property owners play a key role in the ReHousing Wave's success.

A total of 108 individuals (comprising 96 households) received services through Housing Now in 2021.

CalFresh Employment & Training (CFET)

Through a partnership with the County of Santa Cruz, we offer the CalFresh Employment Training (CFET) program.* This free, voluntary program helps CalFresh Food recipients gain the skills and job training necessary to find and keep stable employment.

Individuals experiencing homelessness who participate in CalFresh and/or General Assistance programs receive personalized case management to address their specific employment needs and goals. This includes help with job search, resume writing, and interviewing, as well as help accessing resources such as temporary bus passes and short-term rental assistance. Participants are referred through the County's Human Services Department. In 2021, the program served 43 individuals.

**"[Partial] Funding for this project was provided by the USDA. The USDA is an Equal Opportunity Provider, Employer, and Lender."*



Permanent Supportive Housing

Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH) is an evidence-based housing intervention that combines affordable housing with healthcare and other supportive services to help people experiencing homelessness lead more stable lives.

Harvey West Studios

This planned 5-story residence, to be built on the Housing Matters campus, will provide 120 single-occupancy units of supportive housing specifically for people experiencing chronic homelessness.

Living unhoused for a year or more while also struggling with a disabling condition (the definition of chronic homelessness) takes a steep toll on a person's physical and mental health. They rely heavily on access to daily supportive services like medical and mental health care to recover and progress toward their goals while remaining stably housed.

Harvey West Studios will be the largest Permanent Supportive Housing facility in Santa Cruz County. Construction is expected to begin in 2023.

180 Together

This County-wide collaborative of local agencies and community nonprofits works toward housing chronically homeless individuals.

Working closely with the Santa Cruz Housing Authority, representatives from participating community organizations meet monthly to connect unhoused adults (who are often disabled or medically vulnerable) with housing vouchers. Additionally, the program coordinates housing navigation services, access to medical and mental health care, and other essential resources to help people stay housed.

Since 2012, 180 Together has housed at least 1,150 adults who were experiencing chronic (one year or longer) homelessness.

801 River Street

Located right across from campus, our 801 River Street residence will provide supportive housing for some of the more medically vulnerable people we work with. This two-story victorian — purchased in 2019 — has undergone a major renovation to transform it from a single-family home into seven units of permanent supportive housing. We hope to open our doors to this newest facility in late 2022 or early 2023.

Mission

Housing Matters partners with individuals and families to create pathways out of homelessness and into permanent housing.

Vision

We hold firmly to the vision that homelessness in Santa Cruz County should be rare, brief, and non-recurring.

Our Values

- We stand for equal and just treatment of all people.
- We treat people experiencing homelessness with dignity and respect.
- We empower our participants to move forward on their pathways to housing through establishing trusting relationships and providing safe, compassionate, flexible services that meet people where they are.
- We provide leadership and advocacy for collective impact, and we support public policy that leads to a reduction and eventual ending of homelessness in Santa Cruz County.
- We value integrity, and are accountable and transparent in all interactions.









Your Generosity Matters

Housing Matters is the largest local nonprofit addressing homelessness in Santa Cruz County. Your contributions support our efforts to provide critical housing and supportive services to the men, women, children, and seniors who are currently experiencing the trauma of homelessness.

The services we offer include emergency shelter; housing navigation and placement; personalized case management; direct services such as showers and bathrooms open to the public; on-site supportive care; and the construction of permanent supportive housing.

Housing Matters

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Donate now!

Open the camera on your phone, point here and tap the link!