Supervisors Approve First Phase of Prop 36 Reentry Housing Plan

Housing to Provide Stability, Reintegration

SANTA CLARA COUNTY, CALIF. – Today, the County of Santa Clara Board of Supervisors approved funding to implement the first phase of the Reentry Housing Plan. The plan includes a Rental Assistance Program to serve Prop 36 Third Strikers, funding of intensive case management services with housing for offenders who are homeless, the Custody Health High User Program, and the Rapid Re-housing Program for Families with Children.

When the Board approved its Fiscal Year 2014 budget, a one-time reserve of $4 million from the AB 109 fund balance was set aside for use for housing projects for reentry clients. State AB 109 funding derived from a portion of State sales tax revenue and Vehicle License Fees offsets county costs for assuming responsibility for low-level offenders as the State meets court orders to address its prison overcrowding.

“By helping former inmates sentenced under California’s Three Strikes Law to secure stable housing, we are increasing their chances of successfully reintegrating back into the community,” said Santa Clara County Supervisor Cindy Chavez, Chair of the County’s Reentry Network.

Proposition 36, approved by California voters in November 2012, restored the original intent of the Three Strikes law by requiring that life sentences only be imposed for serious or violent crimes. Repeat offenders currently serving life sentences for non-serious, non-violent crimes can apply for new sentences, which at the discretion of a judge can be granted, if resentencing does not pose an unreasonable risk to public safety.

The Reentry Housing Program seeks to address the needs of low-level offenders who have served their time and recently have been released from state prison, returning home to Santa Clara County. Under the Rental Assistance Program for Prop 36 Third Strikers, 12-15 of these individuals may receive monthly rental assistance for up to one year. The program funds will support a full range of housing interventions and includes case management. The County is finalizing eligibility criteria for the program, which will be implemented by January 2014.

“When voters approved Proposition 36, changing the Three-Strikes Law, no funding was included for its implementation,” said Santa Clara County Executive Jeffrey V. Smith. “We are putting AB 109 funds to good use, because data shows that housing is a decisive factor related to an individual’s successful reintegration to society.”

Funding approved today by the Board of Supervisors also will enable the county to implement the following programs:
• The Regional Community Re-Integration Initiative, which establishes partnerships with north, south and central county collaborations to address the housing needs of offenders who are homeless or chronically homeless, and who significantly impact County, State or local resources.

• The Custody Health High Users Initiative, which provides indefinite tenant-based rental assistance to high users of Custody Health Services. Clients are likely chronically homeless with serious mental illness and/or severe chronic medical condition.

• The Homeless Prevention and Emergency Assistance, which provides one-time and short-term financial assistance to prevent households from becoming homeless.

**Santa Clara County Realignment Plan - Background**

In an effort by the State to comply with court mandates to reduce overcrowded prisons, associated costs and the number of inmates who reoffend and are re-incarcerated, certain responsibilities were transferred to counties through AB109. The 2011 County’s Public Safety Realignment Implementation Plan addressed how services were to be provided to both the Post Release Community Supervision population and the non-serious, non-violent, non-high risk sex offenders serving their sentence in County jails.

Santa Clara County’s implementation of the Public Safety Realignment Plan is considered a model in the State, because of its system integration of services aimed at reducing repetition of criminal behavior, commonly called recidivism. The plan involves the collaboration of dozens of county agencies and departments, law enforcement representatives, community based organizations and volunteers.

An essential component of the County’s Realignment Plan was the Reentry Resource Center, which helps build safer communities and strengthen families through successful reintegration and reentry of formerly incarcerated individuals back to Santa Clara County. With a Multi-Agency Program approach, the Center provides assessment and referral for Mental Health, Alcohol and Drug Recovery Services Counseling, Peer Mentoring, Housing Referral and Transitional Case Management, General Assistance, Cal Fresh Program and Food Pantry, Access to Health Coverage Program and Health Referrals.

The County expects to receive $40,593,280, for Fiscal Year 2014, of which $593,280 is mandated for the District Attorney and Public Defender to process parole revocation cases. To maintain current operations and fund existing activities approved by the Board in prior years, only $10.5 million remained to be allocated in ongoing expenses. As part of the FY 2014 Approved Budget, the Board allocated $9.5 million in new AB 109 programs and services and $1 million in reserve for unanticipated ongoing program needs for FY 2014. Additionally, the Board approved $8,871,145 in one-time program needs funded with anticipated AB 109 fund balance.

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