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Board Approves Homeless Approach Overhaul

STOCKTON, CA – The San Joaquin County Board of Supervisors approved the creation of a Community Assessment, Response and Engagement (CARE) team and program to be headed by the County’s probation department today in response to the on-going crisis of homelessness in our community. Supervisors Paul Canepa and Tom Patti encouraged the Board to adopt the measure, as its representatives on the Ad Hoc Committee on Homelessness. The CARE Team and program will be modeled on a similar approach in Stanislaus County.

“I appreciate the input of Supervisors Canepa and Patti based on their work on the Homelessness Ad Hoc Committee,” commented Board Chairman Miguel Villapudua. “As elected officials, they have responded to the homelessness crisis by educating themselves and looking for concrete approaches that our Board can adopt to help the men and women in our community who need help. Using best practices from neighboring counties, the Board has adopted a program today that will allow us to engage already existing resources in innovative ways to try and help the most vulnerable in our community.”

The County Probation Office, under the direction of Chief Steve Jackson, gave an overview of the Stanislaus County CARE program and offered to lead a similar program in San Joaquin County. “Our community-centered probation officers are in a unique position among law enforcement and social service workers. A percentage of the homeless population are on probation or have some interaction with law enforcement. At the same time, our officers are trained to assist residents with difficult challenges to engage with services, learn how to make changes, and improve outcomes. I am thankful to the Board for the opportunity to expand our outreach to this vulnerable population to make a difference for our communities.”

CARE is an innovative initiative to strengthen the response to local homelessness through a cross-sector, cross-agency, multi-disciplinary team working together to engage individuals on a case-by-case basis. The team consists of various partners, including a CARE manager, police and fire departments, mental health clinicians, and other support services. The mission of the CARE Team is to facilitate the expedited identification, assessment, and linkage of CARE clients to supportive services. In addition, case management staff will help residents access services and community supports and ensure that each client is tracked throughout the entire engagement process for continuity of care.

“Our approach to this point has not been as successful as we want. By embracing the success of other agencies and counties, the Board is committed to doing all we can to improve that situation and most importantly, the outcomes for our residents,” commented Vice Chair Paul Canepa, who also represents the Second Supervisorial District. “Individual approaches and silos of information haven’t served us well. I support this collaborative effort which has everyone working together to expand our impact and be the best stewards of our resources.”

Supervisor Tom Patti, Third Supervisorial District representative continued “Supervisor Canepa and I have reached out and partnered with our cities, County agencies, and local non-profit groups to look for innovative, umbrella approach to this continued crisis. We appreciate the Probation Department answering the call for a structured program throughout the County, including outreach, enforcement, care, and coordination for the unsheltered homeless in our community. Their input and willingness to take on new and expanded roles will impact lives and our communities for the better.”

The department expects to be able to absorb most of the program costs through a variety of departmental savings. The Board added one additional management position and a Business Analyst position to the Probation Department to help facilitate the program and obtain data to understand the population in greatest need of services to maximize success and improve outcomes for those residents first.

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The Board of Supervisors is the governing body of San Joaquin County and serves more than 779,000 residents. The Board establishes County policies, passes local ordinances, approves the budget, sets local tax rates, supports community programs, and provides many other essential services.