



## COVID-19 Emergency Operations Center PRESS RELEASE

### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## L.A. COUNTY LEADING UNPRECEDENTED RAPID EXPANSION OF INTERIM HOUSING SYSTEM TO PREVENT SPREAD OF COVID-19

*Under Project Roomkey, County and partners are booking hotel & motel rooms as massive prevention effort so highly vulnerable people experiencing homelessness can also be "safer at home"*



**Los Angeles, CA (Wednesday, April 8, 2020)**— The Los Angeles County Homeless Initiative, the Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority (LAHSA) and a network of service providers for people experiencing homelessness are leading the rapid expansion of its interim shelter system in a massive public health effort that aims to bring as many people as possible inside to protect their health and prevent the spread of COVID-19.

As part of this work, the County will use state and federal funding with the goal of securing 15,000 hotel and motel rooms that will operate as temporary shelters as a prevention measure for highly vulnerable seniors and those suffering from chronic illness. This includes people experiencing homelessness who are over 65 years old, or who have an underlying health condition, and who **do not** currently have symptoms but are at high-risk for hospitalization if they contract the virus.

The first hotel site of this effort, dubbed Project Roomkey, opened on April 3 in Los Angeles. A total of 1,069 beds at 15 sites are targeted to be operational by the end of this week.

Los Angeles County, LAHSA and the City of Los Angeles have collectively allocated \$39.3 million in state emergency homeless funding for Project Roomkey.

"Project Roomkey is part of Los Angeles County's multi-pronged effort to bring the most vulnerable in our community indoors. I am grateful for the collaboration with our state, federal and private sector partners to find critical housing solutions that will prevent the COVID-19 virus spread and help flatten the curve," said Supervisor Kathryn Barger, Chair of the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors.

"Individuals experiencing homelessness often lack a safe space to self-isolate or practice physical distancing," said Los Angeles County Supervisor Hilda L. Solis. "In addition, the unsheltered homeless population is particularly vulnerable to COVID-19 because many are older and/or have a higher burden of cardiopulmonary and immunocompromising conditions. By providing our unsheltered neighbors a place of their own, we can slow the spread of COVID-19 among those experiencing homelessness and protect them from exposure to the virus. Through Project Roomkey, federal agencies, the State, LA County, local cities, the Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority, and private sector partners will make sure no one is forgotten during this public health crisis."

"LAHSA is proud to step forward at this historic moment to bring together the resources of Los Angeles' homeless services community to provide shelter for thousands of our most vulnerable neighbors through Project Roomkey," said Heidi Marston, interim Executive Director of the Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority (LAHSA). "Our dedicated teams are working around the clock to help preserve the health of all of our housed and unhoused neighbors."

The sites are geographically dispersed throughout the County, in communities including West L.A., San Fernando Valley and Antelope Valley. The locations are not being publicly identified because they are not walk-up sites. Guests must be referred by homeless service providers based on eligibility criteria established by the state and federal government.

Project Roomkey is a partnership between several agencies working together to procure housing solutions quickly and stem the spread of the COVID-19 virus:

- The **Los Angeles County Homeless Initiative** has partnered with the **State of California** to procure the hotels and motels.
- The **Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority (LAHSA)** is leading the efforts to staff and operate the new interim housing sites and has been designated as the lead by the **Los Angeles County Emergency Operations Center**, which is the coordinating body for disaster response in the County.
- **The Los Angeles County Fire Department** is assisting with logistics to quickly stand up the interim housing effort.
- Staffing at the sites will include case management services by **homeless service providers** and **County employees** deployed as disaster service workers.
- Clients will have access to **health care and behavioral health services** from the County.
- The entire effort is supported by **FEMA** and the **State of California**, which have allocated funding for the leasing of temporary shelters for people experiencing homelessness throughout the state.

This program is distinct from the County's current effort to provide medical sheltering sites, which designates quarantine and isolation rooms for people who have tested positive for COVID-19, are symptomatic and waiting for test results, or have been exposed to the virus.

Project Roomkey is one of three main areas of focus in Los Angeles County's comprehensive response to COVID-19 in relation to people experiencing homelessness. For more information about the rapid expansion of the shelter system, the intensive outreach operation, and how we are securing resources and staffing and enacting policies, see [LAHSA's Fact Sheet on COVID-19 and homelessness](#).

For more information, on Project Roomkey in Los Angeles, see the [FAQ](#).

For more information and resources from LAHSA, please visit [LAHSA.org](#).

For more information and resources from the County of Los Angeles, please visit the Los Angeles County [COVID-19 website](#).



