



2025 Annual Report

In 2025, the Commission to Address Homelessness (Commission) continued to serve as a vital advisory body to the Orange County Board of Supervisors (Board) on the topic of homelessness by providing informed guidance, fostering collaboration, and navigating increasingly complex changes in policy and funding. The Commission's work throughout the year reflected a dual commitment to strengthening its internal structure while remaining responsive to emerging challenges and opportunities across the local, state and federal landscape. This annual report highlights the Commission's efforts across four key areas: structure, continuing initiatives, collaboration, and the legislative landscape.

STRUCTURE

Early in the year, the Commission reviewed and restructured the governing Bylaws to ensure effectiveness and a clearly aligned mission. The updated Bylaws included changes to the Commission name, mission, purpose and function, membership, and duties of members. These updates were designed to provide a better description of the work of the Commission in addressing homelessness through an ongoing, multi-faceted approach, clarify roles and responsibilities as they related to the established Homeless Service System Pillars, formalize operating procedures, and ensure the Commission's structure reflected both current best practices and the evolving needs of the Orange County Homeless Response System.

In alignment with the updated Bylaws, the Commission engaged in several membership recruitment efforts throughout the year. These recruitments were conducted to fill seats in accordance with the revised Bylaws to ensure balanced representation across stakeholders. Through these efforts, the Commission worked towards maintaining full membership, recognizing diverse perspectives and lived experience are essential to informed policy recommendations and meaningful dialogue. The recruitment process included

a slightly expanded application process which helped emphasize transparency and reinforce the Commission's commitment to inclusive participation.

Additionally, the Commission incorporated the "Commissioner Spotlight" as a standing agenda item in regular meetings. This item created a designated space to highlight individual Commissioners, including their professional backgrounds, areas of expertise, and personal motivations for serving. The Commissioner spotlight has helped foster stronger relationships among Commissioners and also enhance public understanding of the scope of experience represented on the Commission.

CONTINUING INITIATIVES

In 2025, the Commission continued to advance and monitor several key initiatives that were central to its work in prior years. One major area of focus was the Commission's 2024 Small-Scale Housing Unit Report. Throughout the year, the Commission included agenda items dedicated to revisiting the findings and recommendations of the report, including identifying opportunities to further advance small-scale housing as part of a broader housing continuum.

The Commission also maintained an ongoing pulse to the Weather Activated Rooms (WARM) Program, initially spearheaded by the Second District Office of Supervisor Sarmiento. The Commission reviewed program operations including activation timelines and referral process for the scattered-site motel placements and comprehensive support services. Additionally, the Commission discussed the lessons learned from the 2025 activations and approved the recommendation to operate the WARM Program again in 2026. Through their work with the WARM program, the Commission reinforced the importance of proactive and coordinated responses during inclement weather.

The Commission carried on their work with the Homeless Prevention and Stabilization Pilot Program (HPSP). This included reviewing updates related to HPSP implementation, funding considerations, and service delivery outcomes. These efforts contribute to supporting strategies aimed at reducing inflow into homelessness and stabilizing households at-risk of experiencing homelessness.

COLLABORATION

Collaboration remained a cornerstone of the Commission's work in 2025. Notably, the Commission participated in two joint meetings with the Orange County Continuum of Care (CoC) Board. These meetings represented a

meaningful opportunity for alignment, shared learning, and coordinated input on system-wide priorities.

The first joint meeting focused on the development of the 2025 Homeless Survey, aptly named *Falling Through the Safety Net: Understanding Individuals' Journey and Contributing Factors to Homelessness*. Commissioners and CoC Board Members provided feedback and insights as the survey was being crafted, drawing on their collective expertise and community connections. This early engagement allowed the Commission to weigh in on survey design considerations, priority areas, and the importance of capturing diverse perspectives across the homeless response system.

After the survey was conducted, a subsequent joint meeting was held which centered on the results. During this meeting, Commissioners and CoC Board Members reviewed key findings and explored implications for policy and practice. The dialogue of this meeting reinforced the value of data informed decision making and highlighted areas of alignment with expected results as well as opportunities for improvement.

Through these joint meetings, the Commission strengthened its collaborative relationship with the CoC Board and contributed to a more cohesive and informed regional approach to addressing homelessness.

LEGISLATIVE LANDSCAPE

The legislative and policy environment in 2025 presented challenges and complexities, which required the Commission to remain adaptable and informed. To support this effort, the Commission received presentations from the County of Orange's (County) state and federal legislative advocates, as well as County departments including Orange County Community Resources (OCCR) and the Social Services Agency (SSA), regarding proposed and enacted legislative changes that had impacts on homeless services, housing stability, or funding streams. These presentations helped keep the Commission up to date with timely analysis of policy shifts, anticipated funding impacts, and potential risks to existing programs. It also allowed Commissioners to assess scenarios and review how these changes could affect the Homeless Service System to better consider contingency planning.

At the federal level, the Commission navigated the impacts of various executive orders and bills that influenced housing, homelessness, and social service systems. These changes prompted ongoing discussions regarding potential local

implications and the need for flexibility in planning and coordination. In response to emerging fiscal risks, the Commission relayed a formal request to the Board regarding the potential financial impacts to the Homeless Service System. This included emphasizing that the collective priority of stakeholders should be to prevent households currently served by existing programs from falling into homelessness. The Commission urged the Board for collaboration across County departments and partners to identify and secure alternative funding for programs and services to help support these households' long-term housing stability. This approach highlights the Commission's commitment to prevention and continuity of care for Orange County's vulnerable residents.

The Commission also closely followed developments related to the Continuum of Care Notice of Funding Opportunity (CoC NOFO). Discussions included the uncertainty and change from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), including legal challenges and shifting guidance. The Commission engaged in dialogue to understand how these developments could affect local funding, program continuity, and strategic planning. As a result of these conversations, the Commission transmitted a formal letter to the Board noting the recommendation for HUD to renew existing CoC grants to protect against interruptions in housing and services, sustain provider operations, and provide Orange County additional time to navigate the NOFO process with greater clarity.

At the state level, the Commission monitored and discussed the work of the State Action for Facilitation on Encampments (SAFE) Task Force. These discussions centered on the potential implications of the SAFE Task Force policies and guidance for local jurisdictions, particularly with respect to encampment resolution, coordination, and balancing service-oriented approaches with public health and safety. As a result, the Commission requested Orange County Board's approval to send a letter to the California SAFE Task Force to communicate concerns and make suggestions for collaboration to achieve common goals in Orange County.

CONCLUSION

In 2025, the Commission demonstrated a continued commitment to a strong organizational body, sustained initiatives, meaningful collaboration, and responsive engagement with a dynamic legislative landscape. Through updates to its structure, ongoing attention to priority initiatives, active collaboration with the CoC Board, and careful navigation of policy changes, the Commission

reinforced its role as a key advisory body. The efforts detailed in this report reflect a year of purposeful work aimed at advancing coordination and progress toward addressing homelessness in Orange County.