

# County of Santa Clara

## Office of Supportive Housing

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April 16, 2020

TO: Honorable Members of the Board of Supervisors  
Jeffrey V. Smith, County Executive

FROM: Ky Le, Director, Office of Supportive Housing 

SUBJECT: Overview of Transportation Support for Homeless Individuals During Pandemic

Under advisement from the April 7, 2020, Board of Supervisors meeting (Item Nos. 8 and 9), this memorandum summarizes the transportation resources that are or will be used to transport homeless individuals to and from appropriate congregate and non-congregate sheltering sites if individuals do not have personal vehicles and cannot obtain assistance from family or friends. This report primarily applies to the activities of the County's Housing and Placement Coordination Center (HPCC, aka Joint Departmental Operations Center or JDOC), a temporary operations center consisting of the following:

- The County's Office of Supportive Housing;
- Representatives from the County's Valley Homeless Healthcare Program (VHHP);
- Representatives from the County's Behavioral Health Services Department (BHSD);
- County staff serving as Intake and Discharge Coordinators for the Field Respite Center (FRC, aka Federal Medical Station);
- County staff serving as Discharge Planners for patients transferring to and from Skilled Nursing Facilities (SNFs) and Hospitals;
- A liaison from the City of San Jose's Housing Department; and,
- A liaison from Destination: Home.

The HPCC receives, assesses and approves all requests for temporary housing, permanent housing, and placements to/from the Field Respite Center and SNFs. The HPCC also coordinates or manages certain transportation resources in support of necessary placements.

1. **Health Systems.** Hospitals, clinics or health systems requesting placement, must provide their patients, especially COVID-19 positive patients or patients suspected of having

contracted COVID-19 (aka Persons Under Investigation, PUI), with appropriate transportation. For example, if Stanford Hospital requests assistance with placing a COVID-19 positive person at the FRC, Stanford Hospital will provide or arrange for transportation to the FRC. County hospitals and clinics are encouraged to use their existing contracts and resources to the greatest extent possible. The County's health system has a contract with WestMed, which can provide two levels of medical transport – Advanced Life Support (ALS) and Basic Life Support (BLS).<sup>1</sup> When necessary, additional resources – described below – will be provided through the HPCC or the County Emergency Operations Center.

2. **COVID-19 Positive Patients and Persons Under Investigation.** To transport COVID-19 positive patients or PUIs who are not coming from hospitals, clinics or health systems, the County would use the following options.
  - a. **Gurney Vans.** On April 16, 2020, the County executed a contract with United Ambulance to provide non-emergency medical transportation of ambulatory individuals and patients. United Ambulance would transport individuals in vans, but the vehicles would not be outfitted with life support equipment. This level of transport is sometimes referred to as Gurney Van transport, even though a gurney may not be in use. The Administration expects to execute a similar contract with Boundless Transportation soon.
  - b. **County Vehicles.** When “Gurney Vans” are not available, staff may deploy County vehicles outfitted with plexiglass barriers between the front and back seats. County drivers are provided with N-95 respirators or surgical masks and instructions on how to further reduce risk of infection (e.g., all passengers must wear masks, all windows must remain open). The County has three vehicles outfitted with the plexiglass. In the coming weeks, the United Ambulance contract may be modified to allow for its employees to drive county vehicles.
3. **Homeless Persons and Vulnerable Persons.** All of the transportation resources described above can be used for persons who are neither COVID-19 positive nor PUIs. In addition to those resources, the following transportation resources are available.
  - a. **UPLIFT.** While VTA bus routes are on a reduced schedule and light rail service has been suspended, many homeless persons are still utilizing or are eligible for the Universal Pass for Life Improvement through Transportation (UPLIFT). This

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<sup>1</sup> ALS ambulances have a paramedic on board along with an Emergency Medical Technician (EMT) to support individuals with significant medical needs who need to be transferred to medical facilities. BLS ambulances provide non-emergency transportation for individuals who need assistance getting to medical facilities or temporary shelters.

program provides free bus and light rail services to about 600 homeless persons each month.

- b. Paratransit.** Through VTA's third-party contractor, ten wheelchair accessible paratransit vehicles would be available to transport individuals.
  - c. SCCOE Buses.** The SCCOE has provided two mini-busses and two drivers available to transport homeless and other vulnerable persons Monday through Friday. To maintain social distancing, each bus can accommodate up to four passengers at a time.
- 4. Field Respite Center.** The County has also contracted with Silicon Valley Ambulance to provide ALS or BLS transport from the FRC to County or other hospitals in the event that any FRC patient requires a higher level of care. Silicon Valley Ambulance has an ALS ambulance stationed at the FRC 24 hours a day.
- 5. Program-Level Transportation.** Finally, the County is working with all departments and community-based contractors to restore transportation services that had been provided by certain programs. For example, contractors for intensive outpatient programs for persons with a serious mental illness had been transporting clients to and from necessary appointments (e.g., from medical appointments to temporary shelter), but many have ceased all transports. The County will work with the contractors to understand their concerns and barriers, provide guidance from Public Health, and assist the contractors in providing their staff with proper training and precautions.

Cc: Chief Board Aides  
Miguel Marquez, Chief Operating Officer  
James Williams, County Counsel  
Megan Doyle, Clerk of the Board  
Consuelo Hernandez, Acting Deputy Director, Office of Supportive Housing  
Director, County Emergency Operations Center  
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