

Date of Hearing: April 2, 2024

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES

Alex Lee, Chair

AB 1948 (Rendon) – As Amended March 12, 2024

**SUBJECT:** Homeless multidisciplinary personnel teams

**SUMMARY:** Allows the homeless adult and family multidisciplinary personnel teams (MDTs) established in the Counties of Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside, San Bernardino, San Diego, Santa Clara, and Ventura to continue indefinitely, and adds the County of San Mateo to the list of participating counties. Specifically, **this bill:**

- 1) Removes the January 1, 2025, sunset that authorized homeless adult and family MDTs in specified counties to additionally have the goal of facilitating the expedited identification, assessment, and linkage of individuals at risk of homelessness to housing and supportive services with that county, and the goal of facilitating the expedited prevention of homelessness for those individuals.
- 2) Adds the County of San Mateo to the list of counties authorized to establish homeless adult and family MDTs pursuant to 1) above.

**EXISTING LAW:**

- 1) Permits a county to establish a homeless adult and family MDT with the goal of facilitating the expedited identification, assessment, and linkage of homeless individuals to housing and supportive services within that county and to allow provider agencies and members of the MDT to share confidential information for the purpose of coordinating housing and supportive services to ensure continuity of care. (Welfare and Institutions Code [WIC] § 18999.8(a))
- 2) Allows members of a homeless adult and family MDT engaged in the identification, assessment, and linkage of housing and supportive services to homeless adults or families to disclose to, and exchange with, one another, information and writings that may be designated as confidential under state law if the member of the team reasonably believes it is generally relevant to the identification, reduction, or elimination of homelessness or the provision of services. (WIC § 18999.8(c))
- 3) Defines “homeless” as any recorded instance of an adult or family self-identifying as homeless within the most recent 12 months, or any element contained in service utilization records indicating that an adult or family experienced homelessness within the most recent 12 months. (WIC 18999.8 § (b)(1))
- 4) Defines “homeless adult and family MDT” as any team of two or more persons who are trained in the identification and treatment of homeless adults and families, and who are qualified to provide a broad range of services related to homelessness. Further specifies that the MDT shall include, but not be limited to, mental health and substance abuse services personnel, law enforcement entities, legal counsel, and medical personnel, among other entities. (WIC 18999.8 § (b)(2))

- 5) Defines “homeless service provider agency” as any governmental or other agency that has as one of its purposes the identification, assessment, and linkage of housing or supportive services to homeless adults or families, and further allows a homeless provider agency to share information with certain entities, including social services, health services, probation, and law enforcement, among others. (WIC 18999.8 § (b)(3))
- 6) Allows any person trained and qualified to serve on an MDT to be deemed a part of the team as necessary, for the purposes of a particular case, provided the reasons for deeming the person a member of the team are specified in writing. (WIC § 18964)
- 7) Authorizes a homeless adult and family MTD established pursuant to 1) above, in the Counties of Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside, San Bernardino, San Diego, Santa Clara, and Ventura to additionally have the goal of facilitating the expedited identification, assessment, and linkage of individuals at risk of homelessness to housing and supportive services within that county, and the goal of facilitating the expedited prevention of homelessness for those individuals. (WIC § 18999.81(a))
- 8) Defines an “individual at risk of homelessness” as an individual who is indigent or receiving or eligible to receive public benefits in the form of cash aid, and who meets specified conditions. (WIC § 18999.81(b))
- 9) Requires the homeless adult and family MTDs to also include persons who are trained in the prevention of homelessness. (WIC § 18999.81(c))
- 10) Requires the MDT member who first establishes contact with an individual at risk of homelessness to notify the individual that the individual’s confidential information may be shared for the purpose of coordinating housing and supportive services to ensure continuity of care, and is required to attempt to obtain the individual’s consent for that information sharing. (WIC § 18999.81(d)(2)(A))
- 11) Authorizes members of the MTD to share with other members of the team confidential information related to individuals at risk of homelessness, for either of the following purposes:
  - a) Identifying individuals at risk of homelessness, unless and until the individual affirmatively opts out of having their information shared; or,
  - b) Coordinating housing and supportive services to ensure continuity of care for a period not to exceed 30 days from the time a team member first establishes contact with the individual, or unless and until the individual affirmatively opts out of having their information shared, whichever occurs first. (WIC § 18999.81(d)(2)(B))

**FISCAL EFFECT:** This bill has been keyed nonfiscal by the Legislative Counsel.

**COMMENTS:**

**Background:** *Multidisciplinary Teams.* AB 1049 (Bader), Chapter 353, Statutes of 1987, permitted the use of MDTs to allow for a coordinated interagency response to elder and child abuse cases. Prior to that, MDTs were a relatively new concept and had primarily existed as pilot projects administered at the county level. Specifically, child abuse MDTs were formed and

operated at the county level and were enabled to share certain confidential information among team members in order to prevent, identify, and treat child abuse. MDTs also serve to facilitate coordination among the different participating agencies and entities to ensure decisions are made through a team decision-making process.

AB 210 (Santiago), Chapter 544, Statutes of 2017, authorized counties to develop a homeless adult and family MDT in order to identify and assess individuals experiencing homelessness and link them to housing and supportive services. AB 210 also allowed certain entities, including mental health service providers, law enforcement, schools, and social services representatives, to participate in homeless adult and family MDTs.

The scope of these MDTs serving adults and families experiencing homelessness was expanded through the enactment of AB 728 (Santiago), Chapter 337, Statutes of 2019, by including individuals at risk of homelessness within the purview of homeless adult and family MDTs. AB 728 defined an “individual at risk of homelessness” to mean an individual who is indigent or receiving or eligible to receive public benefits in the form of cash aid, and who meets both of the following conditions:

- Is exiting, or exited within the most recent 12 months, a state-funded or locally funded detention or treatment setting, including, but not limited to, a jail, prison, health facility, mental health facility, or substance use disorder treatment program or is aging out, or aged out within the most recent 12 months, of the child welfare system or the juvenile justice system; or,
- The individual presents with, or received services within the most recent 12 months for, significant health, mental health, or substance use issues.

AB 728 also specifically allowed the Counties of Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside, San Bernardino, San Diego, Santa Clara, and Ventura, who established MDTs pursuant to AB 210 to additionally have the goal of facilitating the expedited identification, assessment, and linkage of individuals at risk of homelessness to housing and supportive services within that county, until January 1, 2025. This authority has allowed MDTs in select counties to exchange relevant, but otherwise confidential, information on clients at risk of becoming homeless, for the purpose of service coordination.

This bill would remove the sunset date placed on these MDTs and would authorize the County of San Mateo to also establish a homeless and family MDT.

*Homelessness in California.* Homelessness can take many forms; federal law speaks to individuals who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence, which can include shared housing with others due to the loss of housing or economic hardship, living in emergency or transitional shelter, or having a nighttime residence that is not designed as a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings, such as cars.

As of 2023, over 171,000 people are experiencing homelessness in California, according to a report (The California Statewide Study of People Experiencing Homelessness [CASPEH]) issued through the Benioff Homelessness and Housing Initiative at the University of California, San Francisco. The issue of homelessness has escalated significantly in recent years. The 2022 Annual Homeless Assessment Report to Congress issued by the United States (U.S.) Department of Housing and Urban Development states that between 2007 and 2022, homelessness in

California surged by more than 23% and notes that just from 2020 to 2022, the number of homeless individuals in the state increased by 6.2%. California now accounts for 28% of the entire nation's homeless population. Nearly half (47%) of individuals with chronic patterns of homelessness in the U.S. were in California (67,510 people). California also accounts for 56% of all unsheltered individuals with chronic patterns of homelessness in the United States (53,169 people).

Just in Los Angeles County alone, according to the 2023 Greater Los Angeles Homeless Count, there were 75,518 people experiencing homelessness on a given night, a 9% increase from 2022.

This bill authorizes select homeless and family MDTs to continue to link individuals at risk of homelessness to housing and supportive services to facilitate the expedited prevention of homelessness. As stated, an individual is considered at risk of homelessness if they are receiving or eligible to receive public benefits in the form of cash aid and if in the last year, they have exited a detention or treatment setting, such as jail, a mental health facility, or substance use disorder treatment program, or they are aging out of the child welfare system or the juvenile justice system, or if the individual presents with, or received services within the last year, significant health, mental health, or substance use issues.

*Homeless Service Provider Agencies* are defined as either a governmental or other agency that has as one of its purposes the identification, assessment, and linkage of housing or supportive services to homeless adults or families. Existing law allows a homeless provider agency to share information with certain entities, including social services, health services, probation, and law enforcement, among others.

Californians continue experiencing homelessness at an increasing rate. Many of these individuals suffer from chronic health, mental health, and substance-use disorders, and have had contact with the criminal justice system. Unaddressed, these factors contribute to these individuals' path to homelessness. If stabilized through coordinated multifaceted supportive services, individuals can avoid becoming homeless in the first place.

Many of these individuals at risk of becoming homeless have had contact with government entities before, and thus have information that can be shared in order to assist them and includes individuals who are indigent or receiving, or eligible to receive, public benefits in the form of cash aid. Below is a list of programs that provide cash aid and are also aimed at preventing homelessness that could potentially share information with a homeless and family MTD authorized by this bill:

- The California Work Opportunity and Responsibility to Kids (CalWORKs) Homeless Assistance (HA) Program was established to help families in the CalWORKs program meet the costs of securing or maintaining permanent housing or to provide emergency shelter when a family is experiencing homelessness. The HA Program provides payments for temporary shelter for up to 16 cumulative calendar days and assists with securing or maintaining housing, including security deposits, last month's rent, or up to two months of rent arrearages.
- The Bringing Families Home Program (BFH) focuses on homeless families involved with the child welfare system and aims to reduce the number of families in the child welfare system experiencing homelessness, increase family reunification, and prevent foster care placements.

BFH offers housing supports to facilitate successful family reunification.

- The Housing and Disability Advocacy Program (HDAP) assists homeless and disabled individuals in applying for disability benefit programs while providing housing support. Participating counties offer outreach, case management, benefits advocacy, and housing supports.
- The Home Safe Program supports the safety and housing stability of individuals involved in Adult Protective Services who are experiencing or at imminent risk of homelessness due to elder or dependent adult abuse, neglect, self-neglect, or financial exploitation. The Home Safe Program provides housing-related assistance using evidence-based practices for homeless assistance and prevention.

Additionally, the California Interagency Council on Homelessness oversees the implementation of Housing First guidelines and regulations, identifies resources, benefits, and services to prevent and end homelessness in California.

**Author’s Statement:** According to the Author, “AB 728 (Santiago of 2019) provided an effective and now proven method to address the growing homelessness crisis in our state. We must use every tool we can to continue this work, including preventing homelessness in the first place. The ability to target and deliver the homelessness prevention solutions mentioned in AB 728 expires on January 1, 2025. Multidisciplinary Personnel Teams in the specified counties will no longer be able to utilize this particular authority to coordinate housing and resources for individuals at risk of homelessness. This would eliminate an important means of identifying people who are eligible for and likely to benefit from these services. [This bill] will indefinitely extend the availability of critical intervention and assistance, allowing these counties to endeavor to stop homelessness before it can occur.”

**Equity Implications:** The CASPEH found that nearly half of single adults who are homeless are over the age of 50. This bill would allow counties that have established a homeless and family MDT to continue to serve individuals at risk of homelessness, while preserving client privacy and confidentiality protections, beyond January 1, 2025. Many of the individuals targeted by the provisions of this bill suffer from chronic health, mental health, and substance use disorders, oftentimes co-occurring, and have criminal justice system involvement. By continuing to allow the necessary information to be shared to effectively coordinate services, many individuals can avoid falling into homelessness, and assistance can be provided to those who are already living on the streets.

#### **RELATED AND PRIOR LEGISLATION:**

**AB 728 (Santiago), Chapter 337, Statutes of 2019**, allowed until January 1, 2025, the counties of Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside, San Bernardino, San Diego, Santa Clara, and Ventura who have established homeless adult and family MDTs to have the additional goal of facilitating expedited identification, assessment, and linkage of individuals at risk of homelessness to housing and supportive services, and the goal of facilitating the expedited prevention of homelessness for those individuals.

**AB 210 (Santiago), Chapter 544, Statutes of 2017**, allowed counties to develop homeless adult and family MDTs in order to facilitate identification and assessment of homeless individuals,

link homeless individuals to housing and supportive services, and allow service providers to share confidential information to ensure continuity of care.

*AB 2229 (Brownley), Chapter 464, Statutes of 2010*, established time-limited authority for counties to create two-person MDTs engaged in the investigation of suspected child abuse or neglect.

*AB 2322 (Feuer & Bass), Chapter 551, Statutes of 2010*, broadened the scope of information that may be included in a county MDT computerized database to include information regarding nonrelatives living in the home of a child.

*AB 1518 (Soto), Chapter 919, Statutes of 1999*, established a three-year, three-county pilot in Alameda, San Bernardino, and Ventura counties to create an integrated coordinated case management system using MDTs for CalWORKs families with multiple barriers to employment.

*AB 1049 (Bader), Chapter 353, Statutes of 1987*, authorized the use of MDTs for both child and elder abuse.

#### **REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:**

##### **Support**

County of Los Angeles Board of Supervisors (Sponsor)  
California State Association of Counties  
City of Long Beach  
County of San Bernardino  
County of Ventura  
John Burton Advocates for Youth  
Los Angeles County  
Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department  
San Mateo County Board of Supervisors  
Steinberg Institute

##### **Opposition**

None on file.

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