



ALAMEDA COUNTY COVID-19 HEALTH EMERGENCY

COUNTY OF ALAMEDA ★ CALIFORNIA

Office of Emergency Services
4985 Broder Blvd, Dublin, CA 94568

Alameda County Health Care Services Agency

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Alameda County Finds Stable Housing for More Than 600 Local Residents through Project Roomkey

Milestone Reflects New Office of Homeless Care and Coordination's Work Through Pandemic Is Helping Thousands

Oakland, CA – Alameda County’s Office of Homeless Care and Coordination (OHCC) announced that over the past year, more than 600 people have moved into housing through the County’s Project Roomkey hotel program, which was set up in late March of 2020 by Alameda County Health Care Services Agency (HCSA) and Social Services Agency (SSA). A team of county and provider agency partners has helped more than 3,000 residents during the pandemic, in either isolation and quarantine sites or in sites to assist people at highest risk for complications from COVID-19. Roomkey programs assisted more than 66% of high-risk people who were temporarily housed through the program to transition to more stable housing.

Governor Gavin Newsom launched the first two Project Roomkey (PRK) hotels in Alameda County in March 2020. Funded with state, local, and federal dollars, PRK has provided isolation and quarantine locations for individuals who are homeless and exposed to COVID-19, as well as residents who are homeless age 65+ or at high risk. There are two elements to [Project Roomkey](#). First was Operation Safer Ground which focused on seniors who were experiencing homelessness. Second was Operation Comfort which focused on people experiencing homelessness who tested positive for COVID-19, experienced symptoms, or had been exposed to COVID-19.

“Project Roomkey Alameda County served as a temporary home and helped residents experiencing homelessness protect themselves during this pandemic,” said Kerry Abbott, Director of the Office of Homeless Care and Coordination (OHCC). Alameda County’s Board of Supervisors established the OHCC in January 2020 within HCSA to coordinate the county’s work in homelessness response. “Many vulnerable residents – whether seniors, pregnant women, immigrants or those who were economically impacted by the pandemic – found safe shelter and ultimately a place for them to call home,” she added.

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People who were assisted through Operation Comfort were able to stay temporarily for COVID-19 exposure isolation and quarantine in Oakland's Comfort Inn, Quality Inn, and the Inn by the Coliseum. Residents housed through Operation Safer Ground stayed in seven local hotels, trailers, and other sites.

"COVID-19 has caused a lot of loss and isolation," emphasized Dr. Kathleen Clanon, Director of Alameda County Care Connect. "Project Roomkey is one of the few saving graces of the pandemic. Through this program, we have been able to move inside some of the sickest people who had been living on our streets. It is a privilege to be able to care for those folks' health in a clean, warm, private space, instead of on the sidewalk," she added.

The efforts of the Alameda County Office of Homeless Care and Coordination are just beginning. Through the state's Homekey program, and in collaboration with the General Services Agency and the Community Development Agency, the County has now purchased the former Comfort Inn and Days Hotel in Oakland to be converted within two years to permanent supportive housing. The City of Oakland also participated in Homekey and sponsored the purchase of an additional 173 units of housing for people experiencing homelessness.

"The lasting success of our work during COVID-19 wasn't just helping those experiencing homelessness find temporary shelter, it was helping individuals successfully transition to permanent housing while adding new permanent supportive housing units. We are working against a legacy of economic and racial inequities in housing and are now using every tool the county has to provide resources and solutions during a time of economic devastation," added Alameda County Supervisor and Board President Keith Carson, a key proponent of the creation of OHCC.

Sample successes:

- One of our elderly guests came to us with no family connections and with limited ability to speak English. This person had been chronically homeless for over a year. During their stay at the Safer Ground hotel this guest was able to connect with doctors, receive essential cataract surgery on both eyes, and obtain additional home support services. This person was quickly rehoused and is now healing.
- A pregnant guest came to our Safer Ground site having received no prior prenatal care. She was able to work with a housing navigator to get connected to a doctor and the medical care she

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needed. This guest was recently housed and safely delivered her baby! They are doing great and remain connected with the housing navigator as supplementary support.

“Project RoomKey is an incredible initiative that maximizes flexibility of financial resources to serve community members with dignity,” said Lori A. Cox, Agency Director, Alameda County Social Services Agency. “COVID-19 accelerated the ability to coordinate between federal, state, and county governments to rapidly shelter our residents living on the streets.”

The OHCC continues to build partnerships with property owners to end homelessness in the county. While temporary housing in hotels and motels provides short-term respite, the county continues to work to identify safe and stable housing solutions for the longer-term. Property owners interested in leasing a housing unit can contact ACHomes@acgov.org or call 510-777-2100.

Visit <https://homelessness.acgov.org/> to learn more about the work of the Office of Homeless Care and Coordination, including [Alameda County’s Home Together Plan](#), the recently released [Centering Racial Equity in Homeless System Design Report](#), the [Landlord Incentive Program](#) and more.

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About the Office of Homeless Care and Coordination:

The Office of Homeless Care and Coordination in the Health Care Services Agency is working to build a robust, integrated, and coordinated system of homelessness and housing services in Alameda County. More can be found at: <https://homelessness.acgov.org/>

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