



# Statewide Study of People Experiencing Homelessness

**Michelle Schneidermann**  
**CHCF Board of Directors**  
**Meeting**

**September 28, 2023**

Photo by Sam Comen from the documentary  
*Unhoused*. Marilyn Forte pictured.

# UCSF Benioff Homelessness and Housing Initiative published *The California Statewide Study of People Experiencing Homelessness* in June 2023.

- In the [largest study of homelessness since the mid-1990s](#), researchers recruited a representative sample of 3,200 Californians experiencing homelessness across eight counties to complete a survey. Researchers also conducted 365 in-depth interviews with participants. The research was conducted between October 2021 and November 2022.
- To guide their work, the researchers convened **three advisory boards**: (1) composed of people with lived experience of homelessness; (2) with leaders from each of the representative regions; and (3) with people who work on local, state, and national homelessness programs and policies.
- The study demonstrated that most **people become homeless primarily because they can't afford housing in a sector which has grown unsustainably expensive.**
- Researchers also drew a direct connection between health and homelessness. Key health findings from the study include:
  - 45% report poor or fair health
  - 60% have a chronic illness
  - About half have symptoms of serious depression and/or anxiety
- The report provides policy recommendations, including several related to homelessness prevention, behavioral health, delivery of care outside of traditional health care settings, and health equity.

CHCF commissioned photo and audio essays to accompany the report and bring it to life (report cover shown).

A related project, [Unhoused](#), a photographic and audio essay, invites you to meet some of the Californians coping with the state's homelessness crisis and hear from them in their own words.

# Toward a New Understanding

The California Statewide Study  
of People Experiencing Homelessness

June 2023

Benioff Homelessness  
and Housing Initiative

UCSF

University of California  
San Francisco



# The study has received substantial media coverage. Here is a sampling (click logos to see coverage).

## BROADCAST



## PRINT



# Many government officials have been briefed.

## **Members of the California legislature:**

- Senator Catherine Blakespear, Senator Scott Wiener, Assemblymember Kevin McCarty, Assemblymember Phil Ting, and Assemblymember Buffy Wicks
- UCSF Benioff Homelessness and Housing Initiative hosted a well-attended legislative briefing, open to all members of the state legislature and their staff

## **Governor Gavin Newsom's administration:**

- Jason Elliott, deputy chief of staff; James Hacker, deputy cabinet secretary; and Hafsa Kaka, senior advisor on homelessness

## **Mayors:**

- Fresno Mayor Jerry Dyer and Los Angeles Mayor Karen Bass

## **Health and housing state policymakers:**

- Mark Ghaly, secretary of the California Health and Human Services Agency; Corrin Buchanan, deputy secretary of the California Health and Human Services Agency; Lourdes Castro Ramirez, secretary of Business, Consumer Services and Housing; Dhakshike Wickrema, deputy secretary of Business, Consumer Services and Housing; and director-level officials in various state agencies

## **Federal officials:**

- Jeff Olivet, executive director of the United States Interagency Council on Homelessness; Chad Maisel, White House's special assistant to the president for housing and urban policy; and senior officials at the Department of Justice

## **General public:**

- Hammer Forum's "Homelessness in Los Angeles: In Search of Solutions," August 22, 2023

# Policy Recommendations for Health Care Systems

## Physical and Mental Health Services

- Increase street medicine outreach.
- Increase access to mental health care in all settings.
- Increase availability of recuperative care/ medical respite.
- Embed robust screening and homelessness prevention services in health care settings, including institutional settings.
- Leverage Medicaid home and community-based services to better serve older adults experiencing homelessness.



## Substance Use

- Increase access to substance use treatment and harm reduction services (e.g., naloxone, needle exchange, drug test strips).
  - Embed harm reduction services in homeless outreach, mobile health, and medical respite.
  - Provide linkage to harm reduction and substance use treatment in emergency departments.
  - Spread and scale sobering centers.
- Prioritize investments in promising treatments for stimulant use disorder.

Photos by Sam Comen, from the documentary *Unhoused*. Pictured left to right, Griselda Flores, Raven Gardner, Marilyn Forte, and Ennix Blackmon.