

GR HOUSING SUBSIDY CASE MANAGEMENT PROGRAM ASSESSMENT

Purpose

The following assessment was conducted to evaluate the effectiveness of policies and the adequacy of services for homeless participants available through the GR Housing Subsidy Case Management Program (GRHSCMP). The following factors were considered when conducting the evaluation:

1. Policy Review;
2. Data analysis of GRHSCMP participation; and
3. County Comparison and Alternatives.

Background

The GRHSCMP assists GR participants who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless, by providing a rental subsidy of up to \$475 per month for a single person, and up to \$950 for a couple. The GR participant must contribute \$100 per month from their GR grant toward their rent. The \$475 subsidy plus the \$100 contribution totals \$575 per month for a single participant or \$1,150 (\$950 plus \$200 contribution) for a couple. The maximum allowable rent for a single adult is \$575; for an adult couple, the maximum is \$1,150. All housing subsidies are paid directly to the landlord once housing is secured by the GR participant.

GRHSCMP participants may also qualify for a once-in-a-lifetime Move-In Assistance Funds (MIAF). The MIAF may be up to \$500 to assist participants with move-in costs associated with securing housing. The MIAF may be used for:

- Security deposits;
- Utility deposits/turn-on fees;
- Moving expenses (including truck rental);
- Overdue storage facility fees;
- Refrigerator and/or stove (if the rental lacks the appliance); and
- Any other required miscellaneous expenses (e.g., key deposits, etc.).

The GRHSCMP also assists with other necessary supportive services to stabilize their housing, increase potential for employment, and/or obtain Supplemental Security Income (SSI)/Veteran Benefits (VB).

Those wishing to participate in the GRHSCMP, are enrolled in the program when they are approved for GR benefits and are either:

- Pursuing SSI/VB (unemployable); or
- Enrolled in the START Program (employable).

All participants must meet and maintain GR eligibility to receive a housing subsidy through the GRHSCMP. Once a GR participant loses eligibility for GR, the housing subsidy is terminated.

As of February 2024, there were 115,247 individuals receiving GR benefits, of which 82,205 individuals reported to be homeless. Based on the program budget for the Fiscal Year (FY) 2023-24, the GRHSCMP can provide a total of 1,892 housing subsidies. With over 82,000 GR participants reporting to be homeless, the program is only able to provide housing subsidies to approximately 2.5% of the total GR homeless population, which is not sufficient given the size of the GR homeless population.

As of February 2024, the program reached full capacity and filled all 1,892 available housing subsidies. The current disengagement rate for the program is 6.2%, with a program retention rate of 93.8%.

Policy Review

Policies associated with the program were reviewed to identify issues or challenges that could be changed to allow for greater participation in the program and ensure all rental subsidies are maximized. Major potential issues/challenges identified include:

- Limiting participation in the program to three occurrences in a lifetime.
- Having the participant contribute benefits from their GR grant towards the rental subsidy payment.
- The current subsidy payment amount is not sufficient to obtain suitable or independent (non-shared) housing.
- The rental subsidy is terminated when the participant's GR benefits are terminated, potentially returning the participant to homelessness.

District Office Visits

An assessment of our existing homeless program and services was conducted at 11 GR district offices in February 2023. Interviews were conducted with line staff to obtain feedback and recommendations about the existing GRHSCMP and homeless services. Major challenges identified by line staff include:

- The lack of emergency housing resources, such as motel vouchers for GR applicants.
- Homeless GR participants indicated that \$575 per month is not enough due to lack of affordable housing.
- Terminating the GR case due to time limits for GR employable participants who are already participating in the GRHSCMP.
- No onsite SSI Advocacy support in the district offices to immediately assist participants with additional resources.

Fiscal Analysis

The GRHSCMP is currently funded by Net County Cost (NCC) and Measure H funds received from the CEO-Homeless Initiative. NCC dollars fund the housing subsidies for employable participants, while Measure H funds housing subsidies for unemployable participants who are pursuing SSI. The table below provides the total funding received for the program for the last three years and the percentage of NCC and Measure H funds received in each year.

ANNUAL BUDGET NCC/Measure H	FY 2021/2022 \$11,768,000	FY 2022/2023 \$12,788,000	FY 2023/2024 \$12,788,000
NCC Funding	86%	72%	75%
Measure H Funding	14%	28%	28%

FMD Expenditure Reports FY 2021-24

In FY 2023/24, the GRHSCMP maximized all available housing subsidy allocations. Given the current state of homelessness in the county and the increased number of individuals reporting to be homeless, there is a significant need for additional funding to assist more GR participants through the GRHSCMP.

Data Analysis

The tables below provide a breakdown for the last three years of the number of housing subsidies available for the Employable and Unemployable populations, including the number of allocated subsidies and the number of subsidies filled at the end of each FY.

Base / Net County Cost (Employable + Unemployable)	Allocated Subsidies	Filled Subsidies
FY 21 - 22	987	843
FY 22 - 23	1,106	1,032
FY 23 – 24 (As of February)	998	865

Measure H Subsidies (Unemployable pursuing SSI)	Allocated Subsidies	Filled Subsidies
FY 21 - 22	941	751
FY 22 - 23	1,001	987
FY 23 – 24 (As of February)	894	1,044

District Summary Reports 2021-2024

The table below provides an overview of the total number of housing subsidy allocations, the total number of new approvals, and total number of disengagements for each of the last three FY.

NCC and Measure H Allocations Combined	Total Subsidy Allocations	New Approvals	Disengagements
FY 21-22	1,928	1,503	1,380
FY 22-23	2,107	2,481	2,033
FY 23-24 (As of February)	1,892	1,729	1,553

District Summary Reports 2021-2024

The data analysis also showed that nearly 50% of the disengagements each month are attributed to the following three reasons listed below:

- GR case is terminated due to time limits (35%)
- GR cases is terminated due to a GR program or Skills and Training to Achieve Readiness for Tomorrow (START) Program Non-compliance (10%), and
- GR case is terminated due to GR participant securing employment (4%)

County Comparison and Alternatives

DPSS conducted a survey of other counties in California that have a GR/General Assistance (GA) program to obtain information on how their programs are administered and the services that they offer as part of their program. The survey was conducted from November 28, 2023 through December 29, 2023. A total of 25 counties responded to the survey. As a result of this survey, the following information was obtained on housing services provided by some of the other counties.

- Yuba County's GA program offers a housing subsidy in the amount of \$693 (\$430 housing, \$90 utilities, \$173 personal & incidentals). The subsidy is paid directly to a landlord, similar to that of the GRHSCMP. However, this assistance is offered to *any* GR/GA recipient, whether they are homeless or not. This housing subsidy is available to customers for three months.
- San Benito offers up to a \$218 cash grant amount toward housing and a \$36 utility expense grant.
- Santa Clara County reported that they provide housing assistance payments in the amount of \$193. Payment is made directly to the participant as part of their GR/GA cash grant and there are no time limits. Participants must provide verification of housing costs.
- Yolo County provides housing assistance payments up to \$328 as part of the GR/GA cash grant allowance. The participant must verify housing and utility costs. Employable/Ready-To-Work customers are eligible for this assistance for up to three months. Unemployable customers are eligible for up to six months.

In addition to the housing subsidy services indicated above, other counties report that they provide other supportive services to their homeless population such as:

- Rental subsidies provided by the Housing and Disability Advocacy Program (HDAP), if eligible for SSI Advocacy.
- Veteran's transition services, if eligible.
- Mental health and county behavioral health services.
- Shelter placement services.

Conclusion

After review of the GRHSCMP policies and services, one could conclude the following:

- The number of currently available housing subsidies is not sufficient to meet the housing needs of the current GR homeless population.
- Additional funding will be needed in order to provide additional housing subsidies for the GR homeless population.

- Due to the current housing costs in Los Angeles County, the GRHSCMP subsidy amount is not sufficient for GR participants to secure independent (non-shared) housing.
- The current policy that limits participation in the GRHSCMP to three occurrences in a lifetime can be a barrier that returns GR participants to homelessness.
- The lack of emergency housing services prevents GR applicants from receiving immediate access to temporary housing services.

Discussion

Based on the assessment, below are some considerations:

- Consider increasing the housing subsidy amount to provide GR participants with opportunities to secure non-shared housing and expand their housing options.
- Consider implementing a grace period to continue receiving a housing subsidy when their GR benefits are terminated to prevent them from returning to homelessness.
- Consider implementing an emergency housing program to provide immediate temporary housing services while an individual's GR application is pending.
- Consider exploring additional funding sources to expand services offered through the GRHSCMP.