

Sheltered Lives

:an inside look

Homeless People
Speak out
on
San Francisco's
Shelters



Shelter Outreach Project
Coalition on Homelessness
San Francisco

Title Page

Introduction	2
Background	3
Methodology	4
Experiences with San Francisco's Shelter System	7
Liked Best	7
Liked Least	8
Changes to Rules and Regulation	10
Philosophy	12
Access	14
Services	16
Physical Environment	17
Exits	19
Embracing Culture	20
Seniors and People with Disabilities	22
List of Volunteers	24

Introduction

*"As rich as this country is, there should be no homelessness here."
40 year old African American male*

San Francisco currently provides shelter for about 15% of the 11,000-14,000 men, women and children who have nowhere else to go on any given night in America's tightest housing market. The heated competition for housing in the face of skyrocketing rents in San Francisco drives the price of housing beyond the reach of low-income renters, so shelters are increasingly becoming destinations, rather than the emergency accommodations they were created to be. While homeless shelters are the least desirable method of coping with lack of housing, current federal spending practices have de-prioritized the provision of an adequate supply of permanent, low-income affordable housing. The result has, unfortunately, served to ensure these institutions will likely be with us for many years to come.

The Coalition on Homelessness led a community effort to survey 407 homeless people during the months of August and September, 2000. The purpose of this survey was to capture the input of homeless people to guide efforts in redesigning the way San Francisco provides homeless shelter services.

What we found was that homeless people had a lot to say about San Francisco's shelters, and they welcomed the opportunity to tell us their views. Survey respondents were very articulate as they expressed their views and experiences on what worked and didn't work in San Francisco's shelters. Their responses on how to improve our homeless shelters were also very clear and creative.

Background

A recent ballot initiative, Proposition E — which would have stripped single adult public assistance recipients of cash benefits — was defeated by voters on the March 2000 ballot. While it was being considered, City departments were meeting behind closed doors to develop a response by redesigning the shelter system.

The Coalition on Homelessness responded by demanding an open dialogue among homeless people and front-line staff on what changes should be made to the shelter system. The "Strengthening Single Adult Shelter System" committee was formed through the Local Homeless Coordinating Board as part of HUD's Continuum of Care process.

In addition, the Coalition on Homelessness put together this survey to specifically gather the thoughts and ideas of homeless people themselves on how they believe the shelter system should be designed.

We asked a lot of open-ended questions about various aspects of the shelter to ensure creative unlimited responses. What we received was exactly that. Homeless people were frank and open, and had countless innovative ideas. If acted upon, these recommendations will truly transform San Francisco's shelter system from places where people stay homeless to places that are responsive launching pads up and out of homelessness.

This report is meant to impact any San Francisco shelter re-design efforts and also to:

- Direct the spending of the \$240,000 currently available to re-design the shelter system,
- Inform the re-bidding process for both MSC-North and MSC-South shelters, and
- Be introduced into language regarding shelters in the City's 5-year homeless plan, entitled "Continuum of Care".

The Coalition will use responses from this survey to form our agenda for reforming the single adult shelter system. We will continue to work tirelessly to make homeless peoples' voices heard, and acted on.

Methodology

This survey is not meant to be a scientific sampling. Instead, the following survey responses offer us a reflection of what the 407 homeless people who were surveyed want and need from San Francisco's shelters.

We attempted to ensure that homeless people were adequately represented by choosing sites that, together, would represent the diversity of homeless people in San Francisco. Over 50 sites were chosen city-wide, and special attention was paid to those services targeting specific populations. However, most sites were locations where homeless people congregate, including many service sites. As a result, there are many populations under-represented that tend to be part of the hidden homeless population.

For example, of the 407 people we surveyed, only 67 were female and 2 were transgender. This is primarily a result of two things: only single adults were targeted, leaving out those with children. Women and transgenders tend to be under served in homeless services, and as a result these populations tend to be hidden (i.e. "Sofa-bed surfing") and inaccessible to survey takers. Seniors were also under-represented, as well as young adults, Asians, Native Americans for these same reasons. We did not ask for neighborhood of origin, and since many neighborhoods in the city do not have services or have few services for homeless people, we had to rely on street surveys in several neighborhoods. We can only assume that these populations would be under-represented as well. Lastly, we surveyed only in Spanish and English, so those speaking other languages would not be represented here.

Who was Surveyed

Surveys were conducted during the months of August and September 2000. Surveys were conducted at 51 different sites, including shelters, self-help centers, food lines, drop-in centers, public health facilities, low-income SRO hotels, welfare offices, and the streets and parks of San Francisco.

Survey Sites:

Senator Hotel
Cambridge Hotel
Cadillac Hotel
United Nation Plaza
Cesar Chavez St.
Day Labor Program
GA Office
Golden Gate Park
Golden Gate Lutheran Church
Mission Shower Project
Dolores Street Shelter
Third Baptist Church
Chinatown Tenants Assoc.
Chinatown streets
Marian Residence
Tom Waddell Clinic
South Beach Drop-in
Episcopal Sanctuary

MSC-North
 MSC-South
 Metropolitan Community Church
 Hospitality House Shelter
 McMillan Drop-in
 St Paulus
 Haight St.
 Castro St.
 Vehicularly Housed Residents' Assoc.
 16th & Mission St.
 24th and Mission St.
 Haight Ashbury Food Program
 St. Anthony's
 SF General Hospital
 SF Main Library
 Washington Square Park
 A Woman's Place
 A Man's Place
 ARA Hotel
 Raymond Hotel
 Swords to Plowshares
 Young Community Developers
 Bayview Hunter Point Streets Bayview MSC
 Hamilton Family Shelter
 Bayview Health Clinic
 Tenderloin Self-Help
 Powell St.
 6th & Market St.
 Coalition on Homelessness, SF
 Turk and Larkin St.
 Pine St.
 Matt's Place/Queer Youth Shelter

Survey respondents who stayed in shelters:

Yes	354	87%
No	53	13%
<u>Total:</u>	407	

Number of months those who stayed in shelters last stayed in one:

Declined to answer	40	
1 month or less	241	66%
Less than 3 months	6	2%
3 to 6 months	26	7%
7 to 12 months	41	11%
13 to 24 months	19	5%
<u>More than 24 months</u>	34	9%
Total		

Ethnicity of survey respondents:

Caucasian	132	32%
African-American/Black	119	30%
Latino/a/Chicano/a	100	25%
Native American	13	3%
Pacific Islander	8	2%
Asian	4	1%
Other	26	6%
<u>Decline to answer</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>1%</u>
Total	407	

Age of survey respondents:

18-24	29	7%
25-34	74	18%
35-54	240	59%
55+	51	13%
<u>Decline to answer</u>	<u>13</u>	<u>3%</u>
Total	407	

Gender of survey respondents:

Male	333	82%
Female	67	16%
Transgender*	3	0.05%
Other	2	0.05%
<u>Decline to answer</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>0.03%</u>
Total	407	

*Many transgenders because of safety and disclosure issues chose to identify as either male or female, the majority having been male to female.

Veteran status of survey respondents:

Veterans	97	24%
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Respondents who had children living with them:

Yes	9	2%
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Experiences with San Francisco's Shelter System

When we asked the people we surveyed who stayed at shelters what they liked most and least about San Francisco's shelters, we found that the majority of our respondents liked the most basic aspects of shelters best, and that the majority's chief complaints went much deeper than that.

Liked Best

"...That they exist"

24 year old African Latino male

Off the Streets

The most common response (175 respondents or 47%) to this question was the very basic service that shelters provide - an emergency place to get off the streets. Respondents liked that they had a place where they were away from the dangers of the street, and police harassment. Respondents articulated that they appreciated a place to go in an emergency.

Sleep

The second most common response to what people liked about shelters was that it was a place to sleep. 119 or 32% of individuals surveyed noted again, a most basic need being met, that is, the need for sleep.

Nutritional Food

The third most common response (95 respondents or 26%) was that what they liked most about the shelter was the nutritional food that was provided. This again pointed to shelters meeting the most basic needs of their residents.

Showers

Many respondents (91 or 25%) stated that the best thing about the shelters was the access to showers. While there were many comments throughout the survey about needing more and cleaner shower facilities, clients felt having regular access to them was very important.

Nothing

Significantly, 80 respondents, or 22% stated that there absolutely nothing that they liked about the shelters. This was quite startling, and calls for a closer look at what homeless people are saying about our City's shelter.

The following is a breakdown of number and percents of what respondents liked best about the shelters.

Emergency place to get off the streets	175	47%
Sleep	119	32%
Nutritional Food	95	26%
Showers	91	25%
Nothing	80	22%
Services	70	19%
Time to plan/get oneself together	42	11%
Toiletries	22	6%
They're accessible	21	6%

The following are categories 5% and under

Safe & healthy	19	5%
Staff	18	5%
Sharing with other residents	11	3%
Length of stay	6	2%
Location	5	1%
Setting/Physical space	4	1%
Rules & Structure	4	1%
Privacy	4	1%
Pets	1	.27
Culturally specific	1	.27
Volunteer program	1	.27
Storage	1	.27

*% column does not add to 100, as many respondents had multiple answers

Like Least

"I've seen them treat people very disrespectfully. A lot of cursing and overly loud voices. I think the staff could use a lot more training in dealing with people in crisis situations"
32 year old white male

Shelter Staff

The most common response (180 or 53%) to what individuals who used shelters like least about them was the staff. This was a dominant theme throughout the surveys. Many respondents felt that staff were disrespectful and unresponsive. These responses indicate that the quality of staff at shelters play a decisive role in whether residents have a positive experience. It is important to note that African Americans disliked staff to an even greater extent, as 61% reported that the staff was what they liked least about shelters.

"Drugs in shelter. Staff dealing drugs. Clients dealing drugs. Disrespectful of elders."

47 year old African American male

Dirty and Insufficient Facilities

The second most common response (153 or 45%) was that facilities were not only dirty but insufficient. Survey respondents complained about dirty floors, sheets, toilets, and showers. In addition, many respondents did not feel there was enough bathrooms and showers in shelters.

"No laundry facilities. No toilet paper. No towels. They don't clean. I guess the same sheet was on there when I got there. It was dirty. The blankets stink. And the staff are really rude."

42 year old white male

Noisy Facilities

The third most common response (90 people or 27%) was about the level of noise in the shelter. Respondents felt strongly that the level of noise interrupted their peace of mind, and for some, their sleep.

The following is a complete chart on all responses to what people who stayed in shelters liked least about them:

Shelter staff	180	53%
Dirty & insufficient facilities	153	45%
Noisy facilities	90	27%
Lack of privacy	76	23%
Drug & alcohol use on premises by staff/clients	48	14%
Other clients	41	12%
Insufficient toiletries	39	12%
Food	38	11%
Lack of equality	32	9%
Overcrowded/Too confining	31	9%
Violence & theft	30	9%
Hours of operation	30	9%
Access	27	8%
Lack of services	26	8%
Isolation	18	5%
Unsafe	16	5%

The following answers were less than 5% of responses:

Lack of beds	15	4%
Too many rules	13	4%
Lack of building maintenance	11	3%
Management (no oversight of staff)	9	3%
Spread of diseases	7	2%
Smoking	6	2%
Pests/lice	6	2%
Volunteer system	4	1%
Not enough ventilation	4	1%
Lack of respect based on identity	4	1%
Lack of client input	3	1%

**% column does not add up to 100% because many gave more than one response*

Rules and Regulations

Individuals who stay in shelters were asked what changes they would make to the rules and regulations. The responses were quite varied, however, there were numerous common themes that appear in response to not only this question, but to many others throughout the survey.

"It is traumatic being homeless anyway without not being able to be with your partner. There should be some sort of access without being written up."

45 year old white female

Better staff and management in Shelters

"Want to be treated like human beings"

*50 year old African American male
(and former Vietnam POW)*

The most common (107 or 35%) responses were around the kind of staff employed at the shelter. People wanted staff and management who are "respectful, caring and diverse". Again, this points to a common theme throughout the survey — that respondents see staff as critical to shelter operations.

People want management to ensure staff follow rules, and also ensure that staff enforces rules; that staff are educated on medical emergencies and that shelters should provide staff training, along with monitoring that rules are upheld. There should be no favoritism, and consistent use of policy.

Many of those on the streets are formerly incarcerated or have been institutionalized, and want a less intimidating atmosphere, a safe place off the streets. They did not want staff who make the shelters feel like jails.

More Flexible Hours

"More freedom to come and go so you are not restricted to the shelter. If you can go place at night it helps you feel more part of the community and get out of homelessness"

31 year old African American female

61 people, or 20%, responded as wanting more flexible hours in the shelter system. People want more flexible exit and entry times, especially those who are employed. Also, people who have medical orders for bed rest from a physician have complained of not being able to follow those medical orders due to inflexibility by shelter staff and shelter policies. Respondents would like to change the time residents get off the floor in the morning, have later curfews, and check-in times. They would like the shelters to be open 24 hours a day with flexible in and out times, especially in bad weather.

Simpler Access to Shelters

*"When it is cold and raining at 7:30 at night, we have to stand outside and wait until 9:00 p.m. to get in."
50 year old African American male*

Many homeless people (48 respondents or 16%) wanted a simplified access system to get into the shelter. These included a variety of comments like not waiting outside for beds — especially in the rain — more passes for in and out and overnight privileges, improving the lottery system, a simpler access process, and a no turnaway policy for shelters by expanding shelter capacity.

Limit drug and alcohol use and sale by staff and clients

44 people, or 14%, wanted to limit drug and alcohol use on-site in the shelters among both clients and staff. This included a stop to the rampant drug dealing by staff working on the premises. In addition, many individuals wanted to limit smoking in the shelters.

The following is a breakdown of answers to "changes wanted" to rules and regulations:

Wanted better staff	107	35%
People did not respond to question	104	25%
Wanted more flexible hours	61	20%
Simpler access to the shelters	48	16%
Wanted to limit drug and alcohol use and sale by staff and clients	44	14%
Improved Services	38	12%
Cleanliness	27	9%
Inform Clients on Rules	22	7%

less than 5% had these responses:

Allow Pets in Shelters	15	5%
Everything is O.K.	10	3%
Allow people to have own food	8	3%
Have Independent Shelter Monitors	7	2%
Have Fair Rules	7	2%
Clients help run shelter	6	2%
Better Finance System	5	2%
Smaller Shelters	5	2%
Separate Space for sub-populations	4	1%
No Sex	4	1%
Control Noise Level	3	1%
Change Money Management	2	1%
Longer stay in shelter	2	1%
More Privacy	2	1%
Wake Up calls	1	1%
Respect Confidentiality	1	1%

**% column does not add up to 100% because many gave more than one response*

Philosophy

*"The goal is to go out of business. Everyone has a right to housing."
38 year old Pacific Islander male*

Respondents were asked what the philosophy of their ideal shelter would be, and the results of this question were astounding. While responses around what they liked best about the shelter focused on survival issues — such as a safe place to get off the streets — in their ideal shelter, respondents were asking for much more.

*"Openness — respect for all and respect for the different places people are coming from, and move them out of homelessness."
42 year old African American male*

*"To assist men, women and children of all races to have a safe, clean place to live until they can find a job and affordable housing."
49 year old African American Male*

Comprehensive Services

In fact the number one response, with 158 people, or 44% was that comprehensive services would be included in the philosophy of the ideal shelter. This included meeting all the individual and varied needs any one shelter resident may have — from basics such as food to job placement, housing, and medication.

Home-like atmosphere

The second most common response (78 people or 22%) is that people wanted a "home-like" atmosphere in the shelter. Homeless people wanted a supportive, compassionate and understanding staff in a shelter that created a sense of community — free from the stress of the streets. There was a common theme in the responses that becoming and being homeless was deeply traumatizing, and in order for homeless people to move forward with their lives, they felt the shelter must be a place to heal and nurture.

Clean and Comprehensive Facilities

The third most common response (73 or 20%) to what the philosophy of the ideal shelter would be is that people wanted clean and comprehensive facilities. Responses included comments around maintaining healthy and clean facilities, and equally important, adequate facilities. Folks saw having enough clean sheets, towels, comfortable beds, storage, shower, and laundry facilities as a baseline philosophy for their ideal shelter. This issue was especially important to non-shelter users, as 28% of those who did not use the shelter responded that they wanted clean and comprehensive facilities.

Right to Shelter

The next most common response (57 or 16%), when we asked people what the philosophy of the ideal shelter would be, was that everyone has a right to shelter. Respondents who answered in this category felt that seeing shelter as a right should be a dominant theme, and as such, shelters should be accessible to all.

Well trained staff

As in other parts of this survey, people saw staff as an incredibly crucial component to the success of any shelter. An equal number of people (57 or 16%) felt that well trained staff with good attitudes would be the underlying philosophy of their ideal shelter.

The following is a breakdown of responses to this question:

Philosophy of Ideal Shelter

Comprehensive services	158	44%
Home like atmosphere	78	22%
Clean and comprehensive facilities	73	20%
Everyone has a right to shelter	57	16%
Well trained staff	57	16%
Safe place off the streets	46	13%
Understanding of all cultures	44	12%
More private space	25	7%
Free from weapons and drugs	23	6%

less than 5% had these responses:

Separate space for sub-populations	19	5%
Longer length of stay	12	3%
Flexible rules	12	3%
Help people help themselves	12	3%
Well organized	7	2%
Formerly homeless staff	5	1%
Screening who gets in	3	1%
Smaller shelters	2	1%
Mandatory showers	2	1%

**% column does not add up to 100% because many gave more than one response*

Access

"If there was enough space for everyone, the lottery system could be eliminated."

40 year old African American male

"Access is just made as easy as possible."

30 year old Middle Eastern transgender

People were asked how an individual would access their ideal shelter. Survey responses indicated that people had very strong ideas on how individuals should access the shelter system. The responses were varied, and quite diverse, indicating that no one access system would work for everyone.

Drop-In

The most common response (189 or 48%) was that individuals would just show up at the shelter in order to access it. For homeless people, this is the most practical way to access shelter — not only those with mental health issues, but for others who, because they are homeless, have a difficult time navigating a complex access process. Non-shelter users were even more supportive of having drop-in access, with 56% reporting that this would be the way to access their ideal shelter.

"Sign in, walk in. First come, first serve, but take everyone until there's no space left, even on the floor."

18 year old white male

Referral based on priority/need

The second most common response (162 or 41%) was referral based on need. Respondents mentioned populations getting priority such as disabled, elderly, women with children, youth, medical conditions, and working people. The idea here is that someone else would decide based on need.

Lottery

The third and fourth most common responses was having a lottery — with a combined 108 (19%) individuals requesting some kind of improved lottery system. Clearly, individuals wanted to see the lottery system changed to ensure it is equal, fair and simplified. However, these individuals liked the inherent fairness of having a lottery, if operated correctly.

Central Lottery for whole shelter system

The third most common response (66 or 17%) was a central lottery to access the entire system. This would mean one central lottery for all shelters as opposed to each shelter holding its own individual lottery.

Lottery for Each Shelter

The fourth most common response was for a lottery at each individual shelter (42 or 12%). These individuals wanted the fairness of the lottery, and wanted to choose which shelter.

Separate shelters for different populations

Another common response was the idea that there would be separate shelters for sub-populations. Sub-populations mentioned included people with disabilities, elderly people, people with mental illnesses, drug users/non-drug users, transgenders, and workers.

This is a list of answers on how people would access the ideal shelter.

Just show up or drop in	189	48%
Referral based on priority/need	162	41%
Central Lottery	66	17%
Lottery for Each Shelter	42	12%
Separate shelters for different populations	27	7%

less than 5% had these responses:

Centralized intake	19	5%
No favoritism/equal opportunity	19	5%
More shelter space available	18	5%
Transportation provided	12	3%
More flexible entrance hours	7	2%
More street outreach	6	2%
Slide card system	6	2%
Opportunity to choose shelter	1	.26%

**% column does not add up to 100% because many gave more than one response*

Services

"Help people live productive lives"

38 year old female

People were asked what kinds of services would be available in their ideal shelter. People responded with multiple answers to this question. The predominant responses strongly indicate that homeless people *know* exactly what they need.

Living Wage Job

Homeless people who responded stated the need for living wage jobs (211 or 56%) as well as services to get them that job, such as help creating resumes, job listings, training, skills development and job placement and retention. Non-shelter users and Latinos were more interested in this than the general respondents, with 62% and 69%, respectively, requesting this service.

Health Care

Respondents would like to have access to medical care (181 or 48%) on site in the form of either a medical clinic or mobile van. Also mentioned was having an RN available or on call. This points to the growing medical needs of homeless people who responded, and their feeling of not getting sufficient primary care. Non-shelter users requested this service more than others, with 50% stating medical care would be available in their ideal shelter.

Housing

People want shelters to provide access to housing (141 or 38%) that is permanent, low income, and affordable (including people whose incomes are GA, SSI, SSDI/SSA, or working poor). Many respondents felt housing lists should be available to everyone in the shelters, and some also felt available to people who do not consistently access the shelters — such as through drop-in services.

Mental Health Treatment

People want access to mental health treatment (130 or 35%). This included access to a psychiatrist, counseling available for people in emergency crisis, and long term therapy and support. Since people have different needs for support, a wide variety of help should be made available.

Substance Abuse Treatment

A significant number of individuals felt that access to substance abuse services (116 or 31%) should be available while they were staying in the shelters. More services should be available for those who want treatment including; NA and AA meetings, harm reduction groups, and access to treatment programs. Women requested this service slightly more than males, with 37% requesting substance abuse treatment. In addition, non-shelter users requested this more than than the general respondents with 40% listing substance abuse treatment as a needed service.

Comprehensive Case Management

People wanted case management (106 or 26%) that was comprehensive and included staff that was empathic, encouraging, and had the ability to truly listen to what people identified that they needed. Respondents wanted staff who could work with clients as a team to help them develop short and long term

plans. Many responses indicated that case management would be voluntary, client centered and directed; that staff would play interactive and responsive roles in realizing needs and goals the client has determined, with the case manager coordinating them. Referrals to services, as needed, would be made available through case management. Some felt after care should be available for those people not on case management. Money management and the ability to save up money to be used for housing and other necessities to exit the shelter are helpful to many respondents. Women had a higher proportion of requests for this service, with 37% requesting case management.

Living wage Jobs & Training	211	56%
Medical Treatment	181	48%
Housing	141	38%
Mental Health Treatment	130	35%
Substance Abuse Treatment	116	31%
Case Management	106	26%
Hygiene	84	22%
Food/ Nutrition	69	18%
Peer Information Sharing	44	12%

less than 5% had these responses:

Recreational Activities	24	6%
Transportation	22	6%
Spiritual	13	3%
Financial Counseling	12	3%
24 hour staff	11	3%
Telephone	11	3%
Resource Information	10	3%
Legal Assistance	8	2%
Disabled Services	6	2%
Space for Pets	6	2%
Senior Services	4	1%
Child-care	4	1%
Volunteer Programs	3	1%
Bilingual Services	2	1%
After Care	1	0.27%

**% column does not add up to 100% because many gave more than one response*

Physical Environment

"We are not animals on display"

38 year old white female

Respondents were asked what the physical environment of their ideal shelter would be like. The majority of responses reflect a clear message — they wanted separate spaces to meet their needs and a shelter that is both comfortable and hygienic.

More and separate spaces

The most common response (261 respondents or 68%) to this question was that shelters should have both more space, and separate spaces for a variety of uses. This included designating space for people with special needs. Other spaces requested were quiet spaces, designated smoking areas, television room, and dining. In addition, it was requested by some that there be separate spaces for detox, families, seniors, men and women. Some individuals also requested counseling offices, lockers and secure storage.

"Women have privacy rights, and freedom from sexual harassment by law."

53 year old women of mixed race

Hygienic Environment

The second most common ideal physical attribute (241 respondents or 63%) was a hygienic shelter. Individuals responded that the shelter should be clean, and some even felt that there be mandatory showers when individuals entered the shelter. In addition, some individuals requested laundry facilities and clean clothes as a way to achieve this, as well as having enough clean shower and bathroom facilities. In sum, people want and deserve an environment that is free of disease and filth.

Comfortable Shelters

The third most common response (136 respondents or 36%) was that shelters be comfortable. People felt this would allow for more commodious sleep and rest.

The following is a full list of the number and percent of responses to what the physical environment would be like in an ideal shelter.

Separate space	261	68%
Hygienic and clean	241	63%
Comfortable	136	36%
Cheerful Décor	77	20%
Exercise/recreation	25	7%
Library available	22	6%
More beds	22	6%

less than 5% had these responses:

Safe place	13	3%
Sufficient furniture	12	3%
Comprehensive services	12	3%
Better Ventilation	9	2%
Less institutionalized	8	2%

**% column does not add up to 100% because many gave more than one response*

Exits

"To exit homelessness, people need homes. "

36 year old African American Male

Individuals were asked how shelter residents would exit shelters and homelessness in their ideal shelter. The frank responses in this section strongly indicate that homeless people know exactly what it would take to end homelessness - and that the solutions are simple. In sum, they need affordable housing and income, as well as other kinds of services for some individuals.

Permanent Affordable Housing

The most common response by far was the need for permanent affordable housing to be available. Two hundred and twenty-nine respondents (56%) identified this as their primary necessity. Many respondents defined affordable as 30% or less of a person's income — indicating that housing must be affordable to even the poorest residents.

"Now there is a rotating door. Have people sign up for Section 8 housing as soon as they get into the shelter. I thought this was supposed to be a place to help you."

45 year old white female

"Need HUD housing, not slum hotels. They are roach infested, rat run hotels that the city knows about."

55 year old African American male

Living Wage Jobs

The second critical necessity that individuals needed in order to exit homelessness was living wage jobs. 225 (60% of respondents) indicated living wage jobs, or the training, education and placement needed to get that job, as a prerequisite to exiting homelessness. There was a distinctive difference among Latino respondents as the majority, 77%, felt people would exit the shelter system by getting a living wage job.

There were several other items people viewed as necessary to exit homelessness, however these numbers drop significantly. These included the need for supportive housing (63 respondents or 23%), and transitional housing (51 respondents or 14%). Mental health treatment (37 respondents or 10%) and substance abuse treatment (62 respondents or 17%) were also seen as important. Another important need identified was money management services, with 33 or 9% seeing this as a necessity before they could exit homelessness.

Such results indicate that, while many respondents are in need of support services to assist them in transitioning from homelessness, their primary necessity is simply an affordable place to live and a job.

The following is a list of numbers and percents of responses to what homeless respondents would need in order exit homelessness.

Housing	238	63%
Living wage jobs	225	60%
Supportive Housing	63	23%
Substance Abuse Treatment	62	17%
Referrals and linkages	53	14%
Transitional Housing	51	14%
Mental Health Treatment	37	10%
Money Management	33	9%

less than 5% had these responses:

Longer Shelter Stays	11	3%
Information on services	7	2%
Help become part of broader community	7	2%
Aftercare	6	2%
Self Help	6	2%
Relocation Assistance	6	2%
Case Management	6	2%
Shorter stays	4	1%
Family reunification	3	1%
Medical assistance	2	1%
Phone and voicemail	2	1%
Home ownership	1	0.27%

**% column does not add up to 100% because many gave more than one response*

Embracing Culture

"The system is racist, not because of the color of out skin, but because we are homeless."

50 year old African American male

"Respect for different cultures should be a requirement."

23 year old White / Native American / Japanese male

Learn not to be prejudiced. Ignorance breeds prejudice. Teach about different cultures."

50 year old African American female

Respondents were asked how people's different cultures should be respected within the shelter system. In general, respondents felt there should be respect for all cultures and that racism, discrimination and favoritism should not be tolerated. This section differed from other parts of the survey in that elsewhere there was a focus mainly on the staff as problematic. In this question, it became clear that both staff and clients could benefit from work on cultural issues. Many suggestions included training and various vehicles of communication, and that such activities would promote understanding and a sense of community in the shelters.

Respect for Different Cultures

175 respondents or 50% responded that there should be a general respect for people's various cultures. Most respondents believe different cultures should be honored, promoted and encouraged by both staff and clients.

Staff Should Speak Multiple Languages

116, or 33% felt that staff persons should speak the languages of those that they served, or that they should have translation services available. Given the diversity of San Francisco, this is hardly a surprising need. In a related issues, 62 or 18% of respondents felt that there should be information/training available in multiple languages.

Diverse Staff

91 or 26% felt that a diverse staff is important. Some answering this way said that this diverse staff should be sensitive, others said that they should encourage openness, and others said that a more diverse staff may succeed in engaging those who otherwise might not be reached.

Cultural Activities

20% of respondents recognized the value of cultural activities in expressing one's culture as well as promoting cross-cultural understanding. 71 people responded that there should be activities such as art, entertainment, ethnic food, presentations, films and books (and these in languages other than English).

The numbers and percents of responses to how people's cultures could be respected was as follows:

Respect for Different Cultures	176	50%
Staff should speak multiple languages	116	33%
Diverse Staff	91	26%
Cultural Activities	71	20%
Information/Training in Multiple Languages	62	18%
No Racism, Discrimination, Racial Slurs, etc.	37	11%
Diversity Training of Staff and Clients	36	10%
Everyone Treated Equal	36	10%
Cultural Support Groups	24	7%

less than 5% had these responses:

Honor Religious Desires	9	3%
Separate Spaces for sub-populations	7	2%
Self-Governing	6	2%
Not Necessary	5	1%
Fire/Don't Hire Staff Who Discriminate	5	1%
Immigration Services	2	1%
Teach Other Languages	2	1%
Employ Residents	1	0.28%
Less Institutional	1	0.28%
No Segregation	1	0.28%
Respect of Confidentiality	1	0.28%

**% column does not add up to 100% because many gave more than one response*

Seniors and People with Disabilities

"If you have a medical condition and have to go to the hospital, you shouldn't lose your bed."

60 year old African American female

"Make allowances for people with disabilities, be able to bend rules such as length of stay."

42 year old African American male

Many respondents commented that seniors and people with disabilities should not even be in shelters. Many commented that they should be in permanent housing or long-term shelters in the interim. If they are in the general shelters, many felt they should have priority in the lottery and special areas within the shelters. Although there were a few respondents who felt that neither seniors nor those with disability should get any special treatment, the vast majority showed great compassion for those with special needs. It is important that there is some consideration for this population, based on the fact that the elderly population is a considerable part of the city's population and a rapidly growing segment of the general population as a whole.

Staff Training

The most common response by far, was the need for staff training. 135, or 38% responded that the staff should have special training on how to work with seniors and people with disabilities, or be qualified to work with this population. Some also mentioned that staff should be trained on issues relevant to veterans, some of whom are seniors and/or have disabilities. Some who responded this way also suggested that the staff be trained in mental health issues for this population. Lastly, many respondents felt that staff should be more sensitive to disability and senior issues.

Separate Shelter for Seniors

113, or 32% suggested that there should be separate shelters for senior citizens. Some who responded this way brought up issues of safety, of comfort, and of disrespect for elders by younger clients. Generally, there is understanding that seniors have different needs than the general population.

Separate Shelter for People with Disabilities

100 respondents or 28%, responded that there should be separate shelters for those with disabilities. Reasons for this response were often due to accessibility issues, or to concerns that they get the services they need. In a related issue, many respondents (33 or 9%) stated that they wanted separate space set aside within shelters for people with disabilities.

Physical Accessibility

Many were concerned about the compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act. 82 respondents, or 23% expressed concern in the general area of accessibility. There were concerns that shelter facilities were not fully accessible to people with disabilities. This included showers, toilets and other areas of the shelters not being accessible.

Medical Assistance

69, or 20% of the respondents felt that a wide range of medical services should be available on site for seniors and people with disabilities. Some of the specific issues raised were refrigerated medication storage; assistance getting to medical appointments; services such as rehabilitation, medical assistance, first aid, and speech therapy offered on-site; and special supplies available, such as Depends.

The following is a list of how respondents thought seniors and people with disabilities should be served by the shelter system:

Staff Qualified/Trained on Issues	135	38%
Separate Shelter for Seniors	113	32%
Separate Shelter for People with Disabilities	100	28%
Physical Accessibility	82	23%
Medical Assistance	69	20%
24-Hour Advise Nurse	58	17%
Flexible Hours and Policies for Seniors/PWD	55	16%
Priority Placement of People with Special Needs	51	15%
Special Diet	50	14%
Support Services	38	11%
Multi-Service with Separate Spaces	33	09%
Telephone Service	19	05%

less than 5% had these responses:

Permanent Housing	15	04%
Transportation Assistance	14	04%
Email/Voicemail Service	11	03%
Safety Monitoring	11	03%
Equal (i.e., not special) Treatment	08	02%
Clear Rules	01	0.28%
Self Help	01	0.28%
Screening Before Entry	01	0.28%

**% column does not add up to 100% because many gave more than one response*

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