



JOHN BURTON  
Advocates  
for Youth

# Profiles of Success

HOW COMMUNITIES ARE  
USING THE HOMELESS  
HOUSING, ASSISTANCE AND  
PREVENTION PROGRAM TO  
REDUCE YOUTH HOMELESSNESS

**JUNE  
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# INTRODUCTION

**T**he Homeless Housing, Assistance and Prevention (HHAP) program is designed to support regional coordination and the expansion or development of local capacity to address immediate homelessness challenges across California. HHAP is administered by the California Interagency Council on Homelessness (Cal ICH, formerly known as the Homeless Coordinating and Financing Council) within the California Business, Consumer Services and Housing Agency. HHAP funding is allocated to three types of jurisdictions across the state: California's 44 local homeless Continuums of Care, California's 13 largest cities, and California's 58 counties, with allocations based on their region's homeless Point-in-Time count. HHAP includes a "youth set-aside," requiring a minimum percentage of funding to be devoted to addressing homelessness among youth.

California made its first large-scale investment in youth homelessness in 2018 with the establishment of the Homeless Emergency Aid Program (HEAP), funded with \$500 million, 5% (\$25 million) of which was devoted to addressing homelessness among youth. Building on the success of this program the state launched the HHAP program in 2019. The HHAP

program has been funded in three state budgets with a proportion set aside for youth: \$650 million in 2019 with an 8% (\$52 million) youth set-aside; \$300 million in 2020 with an 8% (\$24 million) youth set-aside; and \$2 billion over two years beginning in 2021 with a 10% (\$200 million) youth set-aside.

Earlier this year, John Burton Advocates for Youth (JBAY) released "Building California's Response to Youth Homelessness: Year Three of the Youth Set-Aside," a report analyzing statewide data to determine how jurisdictions across California were utilizing HHAP funding to address youth homelessness. Overall, JBAY found that the HHAP youth set-aside has helped serve an estimated 11,052 youth across California, with 86% of survey respondents indicating that HHAP was effective at addressing youth homelessness in their jurisdictions.

The 10 organizations profiled in this publication have used HHAP youth set-aside funding to make a difference in their communities. Staff surveyed from each program have witnessed first-hand the power of HHAP funding to help reach youth experiencing homelessness, and all fully appreciate how many programs could soon end without an ongoing funding commitment to HHAP.

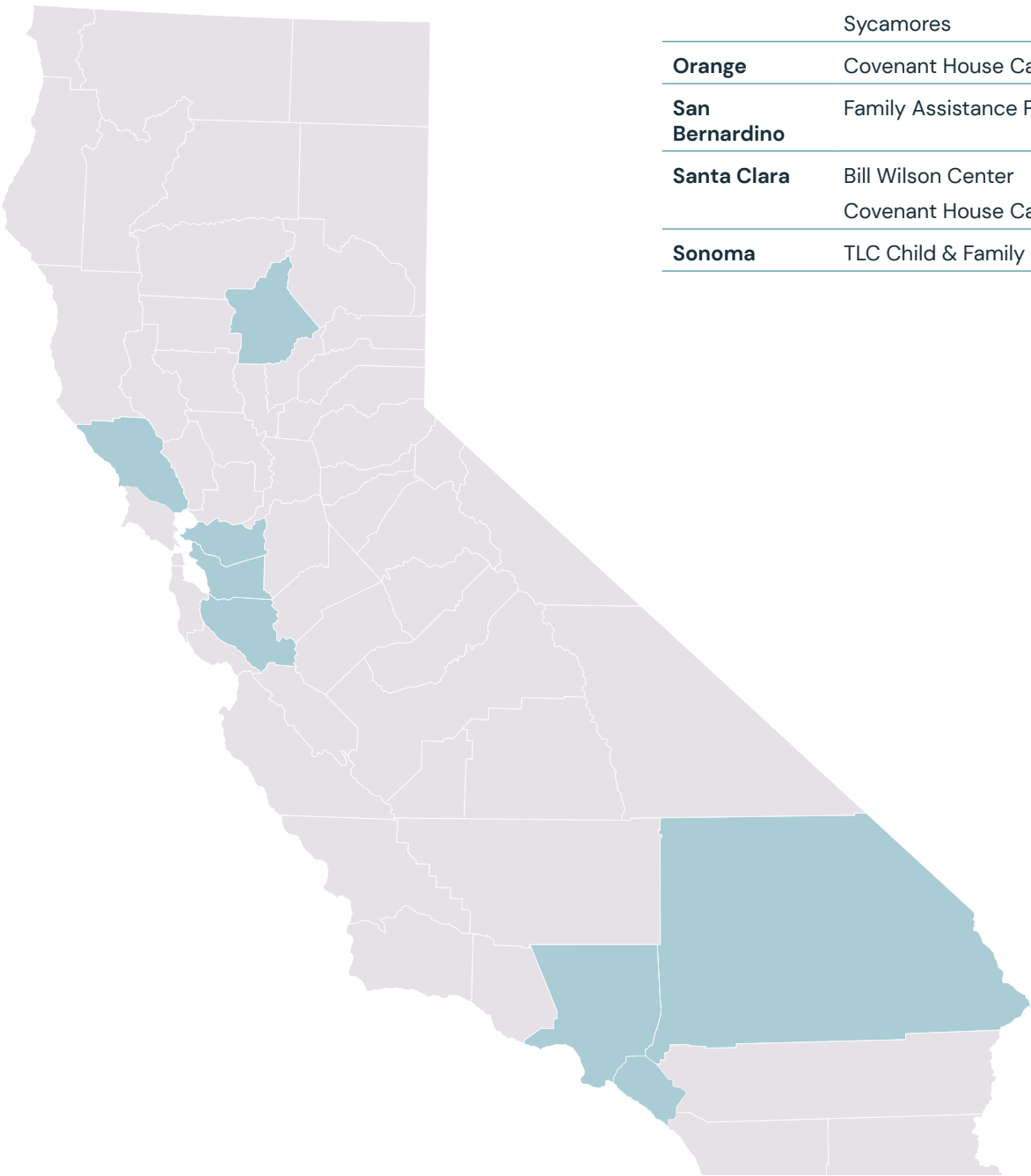
## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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# ORGANIZATIONS PROFILED



<b>Alameda</b>	Covenant House California
<b>Butte</b>	Youth for Change
<b>Contra Costa</b>	Hope Solutions
<b>Los Angeles</b>	Los Angeles LGBT Center Safe Place for Youth Sanctuary of Hope Sycamores
<b>Orange</b>	Covenant House California
<b>San Bernardino</b>	Family Assistance Program
<b>Santa Clara</b>	Bill Wilson Center Covenant House California
<b>Sonoma</b>	TLC Child & Family Services



## Youth for Change: HHAP Provides Stability for Youth in a Community Impacted by Natural Disaster

Youth for Change has been enhancing the lives of children, individuals, families and communities since 1991, when it was established with two group homes in Paradise, CA. The organization has since grown to offer a vast suite of programming across social services and behavioral health, touching the lives of children, families, and transition-age youth.

Youth for Change is located in Butte County, a community devastated by the 2018 Camp Fire—the most destructive wildfire in California’s history, with lasting impacts on housing today. HHAP has provided critical support for this community: Since 2020, Youth for Change has used HHAP funding from Butte County’s Continuum of Care to support youth through their 18-bed transitional housing program, and to address and divert and refer youth to services through their street outreach program.

“We had a housing crisis prior to the Paradise Camp Fire,” said Program Manager Emily Pereira. “After the Camp Fire our housing is pretty much non-existent. HHAP funding gave us stability for our youth and for our programs.”

With HHAP funding, Youth for Change has been able to expand case management and provide more intensive supports to youth in their transitional housing program. HHAP funding has also helped the organization cover the cost of utilities and rental

subsidies. The increase in intensive support has resulted in improved outcomes for the 30 youth Youth for Change has served to date in transitional housing with HHAP funding.

Pereira explained that HHAP funding enabled Youth for Change to enhance their street outreach as well. They’ve increased access to coordinated entry by establishing a mobile coordinated entry access point, allowing staff to assist youth and refer to services instantly using iPads.

Youth for Change has also hired a master’s level outreach coordinator, bringing clinical services to their street outreach. “With this enhanced level of support, we can avert crises and provide the intervention needed,” Pereira said.

Pereira recognizes the unique role of HHAP’s youth set-aside: “The youth homeless population is largely invisible. They blend into their peer groups and are more hidden in general—that’s how they stay safe. So people don’t see youth homelessness issues as being as big as they truly are. Without designated funding for youth, homelessness funding would likely go to the adult population.”



## Hope Solutions Uses HHAP to Bring Youth Into the Homelessness Conversation in Contra Costa County

Hope Solutions is working to end homelessness in Contra Costa County, with well-established programs to meet the needs of families and individuals experiencing homelessness. The recently released Point-In-Time Count showed that the number of homeless individuals in Contra Costa County has increased by over 35% since 2019 to 3,093. An estimated 150 of these individuals are youth. Despite this, resources for youth are limited in Contra Costa County, with just 51 shelter, transitional or permanent housing beds currently available.

According to Chief Executive Officer Deanne Pearn, Hope Solutions has historically had a limited focus on addressing youth homelessness, largely because there are very few dedicated local, state, or federal funding sources. With the establishment of HHAP in 2020, Hope Solutions embraced the opportunity to assist youth experiencing homelessness, using HHAP to establish a Rapid Rehousing program that annually assists at least 40 households headed by young adults. One-third of these households are young families.

According to Pearn, the key to the program is the combination of supportive services and a housing subsidy, which can last up to 24 months: "We've put together a team that consists of a full-time youth housing navigator, a full-time youth-focused

case manager, and now a full-time education and employment specialist. In the last two years, we have housed 82 youth-headed households—70% of whom maintain permanent housing after exit."

Pearn reports that the loss of HHAP in Contra Costa would be significant for youth and hopes the program will be made permanent. "Without HHAP, there will be no Rapid Rehousing for youth," she said. "We have all these young people who will just fall through the cracks and will become chronically homeless. Without HHAP, there's no plan for them until they hit the adult service system and at that point, they've been homeless for three years, addicted or their mental health is unstable because of the trauma that we've forced them to suffer."

Pearn sees HHAP as a game-changer for preventing chronic homelessness by serving youth earlier: "At a certain point, we have to say we're going to take care of our young people, and we're going to prevent them from becoming part of the chronically homeless population—but until HHAP, there was no mechanism to do so in a sustainable way."





**LOS  
ANGELES  
LGBT  
CENTER**

## Los Angeles LGBT Center Uses the HHAP Program to Save Lives

For the Los Angeles LGBT Center, addressing youth homelessness isn't a housing issue, it's a survival issue. According to Policy Advocacy Manager Robert Gamboa, the stakes are high: "They will die. It's that simple. We don't know how or when or where, but unless we can create a pathway of success and stability, there will not only be recidivism, but these youth will never have the opportunity to live their lives and will suffer from violence on the street. Their likelihood of long-term survival is slim."

Fortunately, the LA LGBT Center is there to help and has received funding from the HHAP program to expand its services for youth experiencing homelessness. The Center is using the funding to provide housing and supportive services for youth in Los Angeles.

According to Gamboa, LGBTQ youth disproportionately experience homelessness. "In Los Angeles and the metropolitan area, 40% of the youth that are experiencing homelessness identify as LGBTQ. Most of them have been kicked out of their homes, suffering some kind of trauma, or are victims of sex trafficking or other types of violence."

The LA LGBT Center has helped youth experiencing homelessness for over 50 years and is using HHAP to provide services in a way that will build trust. According to Gamboa, "We are trying to respond to youth in a way that is sensitive and culturally appropriate, without re-traumatizing them. So many youth come to us with a huge mistrust of the

government and a huge mistrust of adults in general because of their traumatic experiences."

The LA LGBT Center serves a broad spectrum of people, including single adults, families, and the elderly. But the organization considers reducing homelessness among youth as a special part of its mission: "We firmly believe that ending youth homelessness will end chronic homelessness," Gamboa said. "That is one of our foundational tenets working with homelessness."

According to Gamboa, the urgency to assist youth experiencing homelessness has been heightened by the rise of anti-LGBTQ bigotry and threats to the civil rights of LGBTQ youth. "There are 32 states with over 300 anti-LGBTQ bills currently passing through their legislatures," said Gamboa. "Many of them are literally saying it's not okay to be gay," said Gamboa. "Youth can't get gender-affirming care, and it is child abuse to do any kind of gender-affirming procedures. So these youth are coming to California in droves because we are trying to be a sanctuary state."

Addressing this challenge will require resources. The LA LGBT Center is working at the state-level to increase the minimum youth set-aside in HHAP from 10% to 25% and is also advocating for higher levels of youth funding at the county and city levels. According to Gamboa, "We will continue fighting for the youth set-aside. It would be disastrous if that were unable to continue."



## Family Assistance Program Utilizes HHAP to Double Youth Programming in San Bernardino

Family Assistance Program (FAP) is based in Victorville and serves the Victor Valley, San Bernardino, and Morongo Basin communities. Founded in 1985 as a domestic violence program, FAP recognized a lack of housing and supportive care for homeless youths in San Bernardino County while serving families impacted by violence and homelessness. To address this gap, in 2011 the agency opened the first homeless youth shelter in the county. Since then, FAP has expanded its youth services to include multiple youth drop-in centers, street outreach teams, and transitional housing facilities located throughout San Bernardino County.

With no other programs serving transition-age youth in the county, the San Bernardino Continuum of Care has granted the entirety of its HHAP youth set-aside funding to support FAP's youth transitional housing. Critically, HHAP funding has allowed FAP to more than double the number of beds in its TAY transitional housing from 10 to 25. In addition to housing, FAP provides these youth with programming to help them become stable and self-sufficient within six months.

Executive Director Darryl Evey shared that San Bernardino County has never designated money specifically for homeless youth before HHAP.

Through HHAP funding over the past year FAP has been able to serve approximately 40 youth. FAP has seen that young people are not afraid of work, and San Bernardino County currently offers plenty of job opportunities via distribution centers and other employment. Although robust opportunities exist, many youth cannot thrive without adequate housing and transportation. In addition to providing a roof over these youths' heads, FAP teaches them how to successfully apply for a job and become self-sufficient. Many youth enter the transitional housing program, find a job and enroll in community college. Although housing is offered for up to 24 months, most youth are able to become self-sufficient with no debt within three to six months. FAP also offers rental assistance as youth transition.

"These kids would have never been able to take advantage of career and school opportunities if they didn't have a place to live," said Evey, "and with HHAP we can give them that place to live."

Evey has seen how HHAP has helped prevent many youth from becoming chronically homeless. "We are talking about youth who went from couch-surfing to stable housing," he said. "Many young people are being kicked out of their homes and now have transitional housing instead of becoming homeless."



## HHAP Empowers Covenant House California to Reach Youth Across the State

Covenant House California provides shelter and sanctuary at multiple sites across the state to youth, ages 18–24 who are experiencing homelessness. With support from HHAP, the organization is supporting youth in their transition from homelessness to economic security.

“HHAP has been transformative in enabling youth providers to be a bigger part of the solution and to provide more options for young people to be safe,” said Chief Executive Officer Bill Bedrossian. “Having the youth designation in HHAP and then figuring out what to do with it really gave youth providers a voice.”

Covenant House California received HHAP funding from four cities—Orange, Oakland, Anaheim and Santa Clara—as well as two counties—Alameda and Orange, and has utilized this funding within each of its service regions. According to Bedrossian, Covenant House California used HHAP funding to establish the City of Anaheim’s first youth shelter, serving 25 youth. Similarly, the organization broke ground on a 30-bed shelter in Hayward, creating Southern Alameda County’s first youth shelter. In Oakland, the organization expanded its youth shelter to serve an additional 20 youth while providing emergency housing to 30 other youth at a temporary RV site. Lastly, Covenant House also established a transitional housing program for 25 youth in the City of Santa Clara.

Based on HHAP’s impact thus far, Bedrossian believes that an ongoing commitment to the program could significantly diminish homelessness in the future: “In just a short amount of time, HHAP has had such a tremendous impact,” he said. “A permanent set-aside would enable us to do incredible work. Within 10 years, we would start to see a real decrease in chronic homelessness as the result of diverting young people from becoming homeless. HHAP is one of the only tangible ways we have right now to keep people from becoming chronically homeless until we can really get upstream and change the systems that are creating homelessness.”

“Without HHAP, it would be difficult,” Bedrossian said. “We’re talking about millions of lost dollars. That means shutting down beds or portions of programs, putting more young people on the street rather than safely housing them and working towards independence and sustainability.”





## Bill Wilson Center Uses HHAP to Improve Youth Opportunities in the Bay Area

Providing programs focused on housing, education, counseling, and advocacy in Santa Clara County, Bill Wilson Center (BWC) is committed to working with the community to ensure that every youth has access to the range of services they need to grow to be healthy and self-sufficient adults. The organization serves more than 5,000 children, youth, young adults and families and reaches more than 30,000 clients through street outreach and crisis line programs.

HHAP has helped BWC fund its shelter program for youth ages 12 to 17. The program allows youth to walk in 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, and it is the only shelter available to youth in the county. In addition to a variety of mental health and case management services, the shelter program offers on-site medical services, social activities, crisis intervention, school enrollment support and more.

HHAP also allowed BWC to expand its Rapid Rehousing programs, serving approximately 20 clients in the City of San Jose. BWC subsidized rent for youth, who were subsequently able to focus on their education, careers, and increasing personal income—all of which are extremely necessary due to the high cost of living in Santa Clara County. In one case, a youth was able to take advantage of the Rapid Rehousing to pursue a project management certification and receive an internship with a major

website in the Bay Area. Overall, these efforts are elevating opportunities to gain a job with a living wage that will help keep these youth from becoming chronically homeless in the future.

“Losing HHAP funding would put us in a position where we’re scrambling to figure out alternatives,” said Deputy Chief Program Officer Daniel Gutierrez. “It would stretch us in a way where we’d either try to find an alternative or simply let go of some programs. Ultimately, we run the risk of not being able to offer the shelter.”

“Without the shelter, these youth are going to end up on the street without a safe place to go,” said Division Director of Residential Services Cheryl Rouse. “We can provide these youth with services to help enroll them in schools, get them stabilized, move forward in their lives, and use these funds for the shelter. Losing HHAP would see a lot more kids on the street.”



## Sanctuary of Hope Uses HHAP to Expand Footprint Across Los Angeles

Based in South Los Angeles, Sanctuary of Hope (SOH) serves vulnerable transition-age youth, ages 16–25, who have diverse histories of foster care, probation, homelessness, and being at-risk. SOH provides life coaching, mentoring, independent living, college access and retention, emergency services, and financial assistance. Since its inception in 2010, SOH has served more than 6,000 youth and young adults who were facing homelessness, gangs, unplanned pregnancies, substance abuse, and sexual exploitation.

According to Executive Director and Founder Janet Kelly, HHAP has helped SOH meet the increased demand for services that arose during the COVID-19 pandemic. Los Angeles County's Continuum of Care, the Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority (LAHSA) provided SOH with HHAP funding, which empowered the organization to more than double its service footprint, increasing the number of youth served from 500 to 1,200 since 2020.

The majority of these youth are facing housing cliffs and dealing with an economic crisis. HHAP funding has empowered SOH to leverage additional resources that specifically address these youth's needs. One area where SOH has significantly invested these resources is in helping youth navigate complicated application processes for government resources, such as housing vouchers and securing permanent housing.

With so many critical needs being met by SOH, several youth have experienced greater capacity to return to school and/or focus on long-term career goals. Kelly shared: "This time for youth is so critical because it is when they are making decisions about personal advancements and careers. An investment today has huge long-term impacts that the public won't see until three, four, or five years from now."

"Ending HHAP would put a dagger in the hearts of our young people. They need the funding, and they count on it because it is the only reliable resource available when they need it. When we talk about the need to invest in youth, as well as our moral obligation to do the right thing, ensuring HHAP funding becomes permanent is the right thing," Kelly said.



## TLC Child & Family Services Broadens Services Using HHAP

Based in Northern California, TLC Child & Family Services (TLC) provides comprehensive quality foster care and adoption services as well as transition-age youth housing and counseling. The non-profit organization serves more than 600 children, young adults and families each year in six Northern California counties: Sonoma, Napa, Mendocino, Marin, Solano, and Lake.

HHAP funding allowed TLC to add resources to its youth rapid rehousing contract secured with Sonoma County's Continuum of Care, the Community Development Commission. According to the Director of the Transition-Age Youth Housing Program Shelby Means, HHAP funding helped TLC expand programming to serve youth not identified as current or former foster youth, thus broadening the organization's ability to meet the needs of all youth in the community experiencing homelessness or at imminent risk. Through HHAP, TLC has been able to provide housing options to an additional 12 youth each fiscal year.

Overall, TLC has seen the flexibility of HHAP funding make a difference in the TAY population. In addition to helping the organization develop a rapid rehousing program and increase its housing inventory, partners have become more invested in TAY populations.

"It is challenging to provide a robust comprehensive case management and service program with restricted funding," Means shared. "There are not enough funds set aside for youth, and HHAP is more flexible than some other funds. Ending any youth-oriented funds is like saying our future is not worthy. These youth are our future and young enough in their lived experiences that we can actually make a significant change."



## Sycamores: HHAP Is an Essential Component to Ensuring Youth Aren't Turned Away

Sycamores is a behavioral health and child welfare agency that provides services across Los Angeles, spanning the San Fernando, San Gabriel, and Antelope Valleys, as well as San Bernardino and Riverside counties. The organization serves nearly 16,000 Californians each year through a variety of services, including youth coordinated entry, transitional housing, rapid rehousing, navigation, problem-solving, prevention, interim housing, college peer navigator programs, and more.

According to Assistant Director Erica Hoitsma, Sycamores has utilized HHAP funding awarded by the City of Pasadena to effectively help run a hotel program serving youth. "We've been so incredibly successful in getting unhoused youth linked with transitional housing or other bridge programs as needed," said Hoitsma. "Youth have been able to build the skills so that when they are done with transitional housing they are actually ready for a more permanent situation."

Hoitsma shared that the HHAP funding was "absolutely essential" to helping connect youth with housing and keep them off the streets throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. Thanks to the funding, Sycamores' Pasadena hotel program did not have to turn away any youth who qualified for the program.

Without an ongoing commitment to HHAP, these

youth could lose out on a timely method of finding suitable housing. "This is the only way that we can tangibly and immediately get youth off the street into emergency hotel housing, and that would go away without HHAP," said Hoitsma. "We are able to take youth directly from hospitals and prisons and quickly relocate them away from trauma."

Hoitsma also shared that HHAP-funded programs have prevented youth from becoming chronically homeless. "It's important to intervene for youth early so that they can be successful. Programs have put these youth in a position to learn to be productive members of the community," she said.



## Safe Place for Youth Builds Trust in Community with HHAP

Safe Place for Youth in Venice, California, is a one-stop shop for youth in need—providing a range of housing and supportive services to over 1,000 youth annually. This full continuum wasn't always in place, according to Deputy Executive Director Rachel Stich. Safe Place for Youth was founded in 2011 as a fully volunteer-run organization before significantly scaling its programs over the last four years.

HHAP has provided direct support to Safe Place for Youth, which has been able to utilize funding to support new and existing programming, including:

- Youth access center, which provides direct, urgently needed assistance to young people, taking them off the street and providing them with a range of services including education, employment, meals, clothing, and showers;
- Emergency financial assistance in the form of problem-solving funds; and
- Shelter for 54 young people, including bungalow units with on-site wraparound services.

According to Stich, HHAP has allowed Safe Place for Youth to serve an unhoused youth population, which is historically overlooked. Stich shared that programs funded by HHAP have helped establish trust—which is the key to working effectively with this youth population: “The adults that they were meant to trust did them wrong, whether that was their parents

or the systems that were meant to protect them. This can make young people very hesitant to receive services, and so it takes time for the outreach team to get out there and build the trust to help someone feel comfortable enough to come to our space”

When youth arrive, Safe Place for Youth works to restore lost trust and meet their individual needs. “When you walk through our doors, people feel this energy of resiliency and hope,” Stich said. “We want to provide youth with the same support system and resources that everyone else has been able to have. The youth we assist didn’t have the privilege to get this help because of the circumstances that they grew up in.”

Public funding, including HHAP, has been a critical part of Safe Place for Youth meeting the unique needs of youth in Los Angeles County, “We’ve grown. Now we’re an \$11 million organization and have 100 staff and eight sites. The impact that we’ve been able to have because of public funding streams that have come down has been instrumental.”