# Los Angeles Homelessness and Intervention Strategies Policy Analysis

Posted on March 23, 2018

View this essay online:
https://academic-master.com/los-angeles-homelessness-and-intervention-strategies-policy-analysis/

## Introduction:

America is the richest country in the world, with great ideals of equality, liberty, and opportunity. However, there are still many issues that need to be solved on an urgent basis (Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority, 2024). Homelessness is one of those major issues. America has been facing the issue of homelessness for more than two decades, and now proper strategies are required to deal with the issue and shelter homeless people (Wolch & Dear, 2007). (U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, 2024) America has been focusing on cultural facilities, upscale housing, and entertainment zones, but legislators have always neglected homeless people (California State Auditor, 2024). It has become essential to respond to the issue and propose a bill or legislation to help homeless people in America. In this study, I will highlight homelessness in Los Angeles County and discuss how legislation has been introduced to help homeless people (RAND Corporation, 2024). Moreover, I will propose legislation to create strong strategies to help the homeless people of Los Angeles County.

## Homelessness in Los Angeles:

American society is facing a great issue of homelessness, and out of many urban regions, Los Angeles County is the one that is facing a high rate of homelessness. Los Angeles County has more than 10 million residents, 88 cities, and an area of approximately 4,100 square miles. Out of these 10 million residents, one million live in the county's unincorporated areas. Los Angeles County consists of populated as well as sparse areas. If we focus on the reputation of Los Angeles County, we can find many glories of life here. It boasts a diverse regional economy, cultural venues, major arts venues, leading universities, colleges, and numerous tourist attractions. This county of the United States also manages the largest welfare system in the country. This urban county of America has the largest disparity between low-income people and wealthy people in the nation. Despite this, the county is still facing the largest homeless population in the nation.

According to the estimates, approximately 0.24 million people experience homelessness in Los Angeles County annually, which is 2.4% of the total population of the county. 88% of these homeless people spend their nights on the streets, either sleeping in cars or abandoned buildings. Although

homelessness is so prominent in some regions of Los Angeles County, homelessness has become an issue in every region of Los Angeles County. The issue of homelessness in Los Angeles County can also be understood by the figure below:

Figure 1 Homelessness in the United States (ElBoghdady, 2014).

According to the *U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)*, a homeless person lives in a place that is not meant for the habitation of human beings or lives in transitional housing or an emergency shelter. However, the American government is doing its best to shelter the homeless. In 2005, the American government started a homeless count by which it could only shelter 12% of homeless people while leaving a majority of homeless people helpless and hopeless (Anony, 2016, p. 12).

According to the survey of homeless people, approximately 89% of homeless people were found to be unemployed, and 44% were found without any government income, such as Social Security Income or Welfare Income. Only 2% of homeless people had little income for their survival and food. This shows that homelessness is spreading due to poverty in the United States, especially in Los Angeles County. The people have no sources of income, and thus, they have no other option but to spend their lives on the street or in cars.

It is also found that in Los Angeles County, most of the homeless people are either African American or Native American. This shows that ethnic minority status is also playing a role in making people homeless and poor. Approximately 71% of ethnic minorities are homeless. Not only are ethnicity and unemployment playing a role in increasing homelessness, but disability, health issues, mental illness, and veteran status are also major factors in homelessness in Los Angeles.

According to the statistics, 57% of homeless people are found to be disabled, 18% are veterans, and 35% are people who are facing mental or other health issues. Some of the homeless people were also found with HIV/AIDS. Out of 0.24 million homeless people, 34,000 people are found to be chronically homeless. Such people are either physically disabled or have a health issue and are also facing homelessness, which is making their lives more difficult (Authority, 2006). According to the records, more people with disabilities are facing issues of homelessness because they become unable to struggle for their lives, and so they do not have enough money even to have their treatment properly. Figure 2 clearly explains how disabled people are facing homelessness in Los Angeles.

Figure 2 Homelessness in Los Angeles (Anony, 2016).

# Struggles to Meet Homelessness:

The government is struggling to address this serious issue in Los Angeles County. The government spends approximately one-half of a billion dollars annually to help the homeless by providing them with shelters to live in or by fulfilling the requirements of homeless people. The investments are not

helping the government overcome the issue, which shows that more money is required to eliminate this curse. In addition to the social cost or financial help, moral support is required for homeless people to help them recover and return to their normal lives.

The government has to take strong action to overcome the issue because not only is it causing social disturbance, but it is also causing economic loss to the country. The more the government delays, the more costs it will incur in jail systems, courts, mental hospitals, and healthcare institutions. It is recorded that people who are facing chronic homelessness are admitted to hospital emergency wards approximately 450 times in 18 months (Gladwell, 2006). This is causing the loss of thousands of dollars to the government and healthcare system. Moreover, the sheriff of Los Angeles County also estimated that more than $40 million annually is spent due to the repeated arrest rate of homeless people.

Now, the question arises: Has the government introduced any policy to deal with the issue of homelessness in L.A. County? How can that policy be beneficial for homeless people? When America is progressing on a daily basis, why do people still suffer from homelessness? How can the crime, healthcare issues, and social impact of this homelessness be controlled?

# Using Sales Tax for Sheltering the Homeless People of LA County:

Recently, in 2016, the policy, "*Homelessness Strategy,"* was introduced to discuss how assistance for homeless people could be funded. The policy was introduced to prevent homelessness, for which the five supervisors and 100 speakers voted. According to them, the government spends hundreds of millions of dollars on the mental health treatment of the people. The remaining amount is used for capital construction and other matters; thus, the problem of homelessness remains in its place. They supported the idea of designing units for homeless people who would then be able to have permanent shelter. These housing units will be provided to the people who are facing homelessness chronically. In this way, the people can sleep at least in a secure place.

Phil Ansell, the head of the homelessness initiative of the county, said that the government could only help the homeless by providing them with secure shelter, which is only possible if the tax money is used to provide subsidies and services to the homeless and helpless people. According to the estimates of 2016, 47,000 people in Los Angeles County are facing the problem of homelessness, and to reduce the crime rate and improve the healthcare of the people, it is required to deal with the curse of homelessness first. Thus, using the tax to shelter homeless people is a great option. Many speakers and members of the public supported the idea because it would undoubtedly be a great initiative for helping homeless people (Smith, 2016).

As it is found that homeless people are frequently admitted to the emergency wards of hospitals or are arrested on a daily basis, the government is spending a huge amount of money doing nothing for

homeless people. If the government uses the sales tax to provide shelter to homeless people, then actually the government is reducing its “doing nothing cost.” This way, homeless people will have a secure shelter with places to sleep. In this way, homeless people will also feel support from the government, and thus, it will reduce the negative social impacts of homelessness in LA County.

# Homelessness Strategy:

The Homelessness and Poverty Committee introduced a policy to overcome the issue of homelessness in Los Angeles County. The committee is more concerned with implementing a strategy by which the government can expand staffing, subsidies, services, and permanent housing for the homeless people of Los Angeles. According to the introduced policy, approximately $355 million of the sales tax will be used to shelter homeless people. Only the people who are facing chronic homelessness will benefit from this policy. In this way, the government will use this amount to build permanent shelters for homeless people, and thus those people will be able to live in those shelters with great peace and will no longer be a problem for society.

It is considered that this is the first time someone has taken a step for the betterment of the homeless people of LA. According to Mayor Eric Garcetti,

*“For the first time in history, Los Angeles has introduced a sustainable strategy to help our most vulnerable residents.” (Smith, 2016).*

This strategic policy has won 77% of the votes and is ready to be implemented in Los Angeles County. The people consider it the greatest step for the homeless people of LA.

Phil Ansell, the head of the homelessness initiative of the county, said that the government could only help the homeless by providing them with secure shelter, which is only possible if the tax money is used to provide subsidies and services to the homeless and helpless people. According to the estimates of 2016, 47,000 people in Los Angeles County are facing the problem of homelessness. These homeless people feel that there is no place for them in society, and thus they indulge in criminal activities. Moreover, homeless people who have disabilities or diseases are unable to work hard to get a better place to live. Thus, such homeless people spend most of their lives either on the streets or in hospitals. Now, the introduced policy may help the government handle the situation, reduce the crime rate, and improve people’s healthcare; however, it is necessary to deal with homelessness first. Thus, using the tax to shelter homeless people is a great option. Many speakers and members of the public supported the idea because it would undoubtedly be a great initiative for helping homeless people (Smith, 2016).

If we further focus on the Homelessness Strategy, then its defined principles may help us understand what actually will be done by this strategy. The policy will adopt a “No Wrong Door” approach to help homeless people. The No Wrong Door approach means that homeless people do not have to do anything wrong now because the government is providing them with safe shelter. From librarians to

police officers, employees will be able to help the homeless by providing the best services and shelter. Moreover, it is essential to organize a team to estimate homelessness in the county and present the need for more shelters for homeless people. For this purpose, a proper homelessness governance infrastructure will be established in the city to look into all the matters of homeless people.

The government will not only provide homes and shelters to homeless people but also will look after the basic needs of homeless people. The government will provide them with all vital resources, such as food and other stuff. The target of the Homelessness Strategy will be to build more houses within the available income so that more homeless people will be able to benefit from it. A team must look into whether homeless people are getting benefits from the shelters or whether the homelessness strategy has properly benefited the L.A. communities. The policy has focused on housing and aims to improve the interactions between city departments and the homeless people of L.A. County. The policy also focuses on managing mental healthcare institutions and hospitals for homeless people where they can have their treatment with great ease (Garcette, 2016).

# Problem Assessment:

Undoubtedly, the Homelessness and Poverty Committee has done a great job by introducing a great strategy for the homeless people of L.A. County. This policy will no doubt be helpful in helping the homeless people of Los Angeles, so they will not only have shelter but also be able to enjoy the benefits of their basic resources. Although theoretically, things are quite good and normal, it seems that the strategy will help the government banish the problem of homelessness in L.A. County. But I found it different. There is no doubt that the policy is helpful in dealing with the homelessness issue of L.A., but the policy needs time to show its outcomes. It takes at least one year to construct shelters for homeless people and provide them with basic resources.

Moreover, the sales tax funds will be used to build units on vacant parking lots, fire stations, and other places where ten thousand homes will be constructed for homeless people. This project will take approximately seven to ten years. Do you think that homeless people in Los Angeles can wait for 7 to 10 years to be sheltered? I am not against the policy, but I would like to recommend a few changes in the policy so that it will be able to help the homeless people of L.A. County as soon as possible.

# Literature Review

## Stakeholder Analysis:

Housing people who were currently homeless was managed by scaling up the Coordinated Entry System, which included more staff, more rapid rehousing subsidies, and more permanent supportive housing. The Coordinated Entry System (CES) quickly and efficiently matches people to available

housing resources and services by stitching existing programs into a no-wrong-door system, connecting homeless adults to the best resources.

CES allows us to know our veterans regardless of which provider they visit and generate a by-name registry to track housing placements so that we can assess their housing and health needs and then prioritize them for available housing and services.

The strategy also aims to prevent people at risk of homelessness from becoming homeless by producing and preserving affordable housing, increasing incomes (such as through an increased minimum wage), and improving transitions from high-risk institutions like jails, hospitals, the military, and foster care.

The vision for the street balances the need for health and safety on the street with the rights and needs of the people forced to live on them and a “No Wrong Door” approach whereby any city staff interaction with a homeless person would connect that person to the Coordinated Entry System.

# References


Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority. (2024). *Unsheltered Homelessness Drops and Sheltered Homelessness Rises in Los Angeles*. LAHSA. https://www.lahsa.org/news?article=977-unsheltered-homelessness-drops-and-sheltered-homelessness-rises-in-la

U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. (2024). *2024 Annual Homelessness Assessment Report to Congress: Part 1*. HUD USER. https://www.huduser.gov/portal/publications/2024-ahar-part-1-pit-estimates-of-homelessness.html

California State Auditor. (2024). *Homelessness in California: The State Must Do More to Assess Cost-Effectiveness*. California State Auditor. https://www.auditor.ca.gov/reports/2023-102-1/

RAND Corporation. (2024). *Understanding Homelessness and Service Needs in Los Angeles County*. RAND. https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/research_reports/RRA3300/RRA3310-2/RAND_RRA3310-2.pdf