

LOCAL NEWS

A North County encampment shrinks as officials offer more than just shelter

The Housing First approach to homelessness isn't always followed correctly. A California program is trying to change that.



Union-Tribune

A homeless encampment along South Oceanside Boulevard in 2021. (U-T file)

By **BLAKE NELSON** | blake.nelson@sduniontribune.com | The San Diego Union-Tribune

UPDATED: July 7, 2025 at 6:26 AM PDT

Dozens of people who had been living at a large encampment in Oceanside have already moved into housing because of a state grant that's allowing leaders to provide more than just shelter beds.

Officials said about half of the 65 individuals who were regularly sleeping by the Buena Vista Creek are now in their own homes. Crucially, California's Encampment Resolution Fund then helps those residents apply for jobs and temporarily pays the rent, among other services.

Oceanside and Carlsbad hope the \$11.4 million grant will ultimately house around 200 people in North County and connect many others to a range of aid.

"We are intentional about making housing a core part of the approach — not simply clearing encampments," Tamera Kohler, CEO of the Regional Task Force on Homelessness, said in a statement. "When services and housing are offered with consistency, compassion, and credibility, people accept them."

The region has long relied on a method for ending homelessness known as Housing First, which prioritizes getting people under a stable roof before other issues are addressed. While a large body of research has found the strategy to be effective for most (though not necessarily all) homeless residents, some programs that bill themselves as "Housing First" don't necessarily come with the supportive services needed to keep everyone housed. San Diego County's brutal rental market and sky-high costs of living aren't helping either.

Furthermore, while certain homeless individuals do reject offers for help, their reasoning can be complex. Some may have once been given false hope about whether housing was available. Others might have had a bad experience in a shelter or given up on waiting for a bed. During the month of May in the city of San Diego, only 128 out of 2,216 requests for shelter succeeded, largely because [facilities are full](#).

[Read More](#)

00:00

02:00

“Clients have said, ‘I’ve been handed a pamphlet, or offered shelter or a hygiene kit,’” said Abigail Perez, a case manager with Community Resource Center, one of multiple organizations working with the encampment resolution grant. “But none have seen an agency that actually offered something permanent.”

Perez now meets weekly with people who just got their own place. Even though many have struggled with addiction or been arrested in the past, several have already lined up job interviews, she said. “Housing, clothing, food and water: What a difference that really makes.”

Almost everyone at the creek encampment accepted some form of aid, according to Sofia Hughes, the project’s leader and a management analyst with the city of Oceanside. Hughes noted that the success rate may be partially due to their timeline: Instead of telling people they had 24 hours to leave or get a ticket, which is sometimes the case during encampment sweeps, outreach workers began visiting the site in April.

The program initially pays the full rent. Participants ideally begin shopping in

Michael Aplikowsky, a leader and co-founder of Convicted 4 Christ Ministries, spent more than a decade living at the Oceanside encampment before overcoming addiction a few years ago, and he now helps people around the region escape homelessness. Aplikowsky said he has some apprehension about getting individuals into housing so quickly, as there were periods in his life when he thought a similar opportunity might have been squandered. But the cooperation he's seen between city leaders and local nonprofits made him optimistic.

"What's happening there is really, really, really positive," Aplikowsky said.

Outreach is to continue until July 15. The area will then be cleared of tents and trash, freeing up officials to move on to other encampments.

A related effort is [about to begin in Lemon Grove](#).

Last year, the city of San Diego used the same type of grant [to remove a massive encampment](#) under an Interstate 5 overpass, not far from Sea World. All 91 people at the site accepted at least some aid, according to city spokesperson Matt Hoffman. Thirty-six individuals moved into shelter or temporary housing while 31 got a permanent place. Nobody has so far lost their long-term housing, Hoffman said.

Originally Published: July 6, 2025 at 5:00 AM PDT

Around the Web

REVCONTENT

