

California Cohort 1 100-Day Challenge Case Study

Stanislaus County: Partnerships with Area Agencies on Aging, Veterans Services, and Health Providers

Stanislaus County established new partnerships with agencies initially outside the homeless response system to engage them in the system and better facilitate connections to housing and supportive services for their 100-Day Challenge populations of focus: individuals experiencing homelessness who are age 65 and older and/or with underlying medical conditions, with a particular focus on Veterans, individuals with severe mental illness and/or substance use disorder, and individuals with disabilities.

HOW STANISLAUS COUNTY MADE IT HAPPEN

From the beginning of Stanislaus County's 100-Day Challenge, the Team had a clear vision that the Challenge would focus on providing safe and stable housing to particularly vulnerable and at-risk populations of persons experiencing homelessness during COVID-19. The 100-Day Challenge Team reflected this commitment to serving vulnerable populations in their goal, which identified individuals experiencing homelessness who are 65 and older and/or with underlying medical conditions as the target population for the Challenge. Within this group, Veterans, individuals with severe mental illness and/or substance use disorder, and individuals with disabilities would be a focus for the Team's effort as well.

By intentionally identifying and targeting clear populations of focus in their goal, the Stanislaus Team was able to successfully outreach to agencies that specialize in providing services for these populations and engage them in the 100-Day Challenge. New partners brought to the table for this initiative included Golden Valley Health Centers, Disability Resource Agency for Independent Living, and the Stanislaus County Department of Aging and Veterans Services. These new cross-system partners played crucial roles in the 100-Day Challenge, including working with the Team to understand Project Roomkey guest eligibility for programs outside of the homeless response system; identifying alternate sources of funding to help provide case management for populations of focus; and participating in Coordinated Entry case conferencing calls. Stanislaus County has been able to maintain this very active participation and collaboration with new partners throughout the 100-Day Challenge and is committed to sustaining these partnerships in their continued work to address homelessness.

Key Takeaways:

- Partners such as aging/elder services, Veterans services, and health care providers can help meet the specialized needs of vulnerable populations of persons experiencing homelessness.
- Communities can utilize data to show the demographics of persons experiencing homelessness and demonstrate the mutual benefits of collaboration to partners outside the homeless response system.
- Cross-systems partners will be more engaged if the importance of their participation is clear, including through the community's goal and in direct client interactions.
- Collaboration can be encouraged through a number of outreach and engagement strategies, including public presentations, social media, and "word of mouth".
- Collaboration can be maintained by showing partner agencies the importance of their work in action.

LESSONS LEARNED

“It’s almost like every agency wants to be a part of the 100-Day Challenge, especially seeing the strides that we’ve made and a lot of the progress we’ve made to get [clients] document ready and getting them connected to different forms of stable housing.” – Kyle De Jesus, Stanislaus County Community Services Agency

1) Utilize Data to Make the Case for Collaboration

Stanislaus County used data to help establish their populations of focus for the 100-Day Challenge, as well as to make the case for collaboration with partners outside the homeless system of care. In developing its 100-Day Challenge goal, the Stanislaus County 100-Day Challenge Team analyzed demographic data for all guests residing in Project Roomkey and found the following characteristics (*not mutually exclusive*):

- 106 guests reported having a chronic health condition
- 101 guests reported experiencing chronic homelessness
- 93 guests reported having a physical or developmental disability
- 68 guests reported having a mental health issue
- 19 guests reported having an issue with drug or alcohol abuse
- 9 guests who are Veterans

The Team recognized that in order to provide appropriate housing and supportive services to Project Roomkey guests – considering the distinct vulnerabilities and needs identified through the data – it would be important to engage agencies that specialize in the fields of aging/elder services, Veterans services, and health care (including mental health and substance use treatment) throughout the 100-Day Challenge process. This data helped show partner agencies the significant overlap between their clientele and the guests residing in Project Roomkey and emphasized the need for cross-systems coordination to effectively resolve their housing crises.

2) Establish a Specific Goal that Identifies Populations of Focus

Stanislaus County developed a very specific goal that identified a number of populations of focus for their 100-Day Challenge. This detailed goal helped to create a clear connection between the work of aging/elder care services, Veterans services and health care providers and the purpose of the 100-Day Challenge, allowing cross-system partners to understand and envision their role in the initiative from the moment of their engagement. This goal also helped ensure that the range of experiences, vulnerabilities and needs of guests residing in Project Roomkey would be reflected in all aspects of the Challenge. Stanislaus’s intentionality in addressing the intersectional vulnerabilities of Project Roomkey guests in the crafting of their goal demonstrated a commitment to doing the work in new ways in order to meet the comprehensive housing and service needs of populations of focus participating in Project Roomkey .

3) Engage in Broad Outreach and Engagement Strategies for Reaching New Potential Partners

The Stanislaus County 100-Day Challenge Team utilized diverse outreach and engagement strategies to reach the partners they needed in order to be successful in serving their populations of focus. The Team shared information on the 100-Day Challenge at various public forums – including local Board meetings and CoC meetings – as well as through social media outlets such as Facebook, Twitter, and the County’s webpage. Stanislaus County also selected as an individual as one of the Team’s Leader who already had strong connections with frontline staff and leaders within the homeless system of care and potential partner systems, including social services and disability services.

These existing connections and the dedication of the Team to using “word of mouth” to spread the news about the 100-Day Challenge helped ensure that the call for collaboration reached system leaders from across the County.

4) Demonstrate to Partners the Importance and Value of Their Work

In order to maintain collaboration and sustain these new cross-system partnerships, it was important that partner agencies were fully engaged in the process and able to see the importance of their work in action during the 100-Day Challenge. Stanislaus County worked with partner agencies to visit the County’s Project Roomkey site, Modesto Hotel, and engage with guests, build rapport, and connect guests to specialized supportive services to meet their needs. Partners from aging/elder services, Veterans services and health care providers were able to step in and respond to an identified need for case management. The Stanislaus County Department of Aging and Veterans Services has offered to provide post-placement case management to up to 25 Project Roomkey guests within their clientele. Partners in Stanislaus County’s 100-Day Challenge have been able to see the importance of their participation and the crucial role they serve in providing specialized services to populations of focus in order to support their transitions into permanent housing options.