



Release Date: 08/19/2020

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SARAH Launches Diversion Pilot with Grant from The USAA Foundation, Inc.

August 19, 2020 (San Antonio, TX.) - The South Alamo Regional Alliance for the Homeless (SARAH) has launched a pilot project to help people experiencing homelessness immediately connect to a permanent housing solution in San Antonio and Bexar County.

At the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, SARAH found an 80% increased need for homeless resources and housing; with the homeless response system already strapped for adequate resources, COVID-19 exacerbated the issue, forcing homeless shelters and programs to close their intake or reduce the number of clients in congregate settings to comply with CDC guidelines. To address this increased need, SARAH obtained a \$250,000 grant from The USAA Foundation, Inc. to implement homeless diversion and a flex fund into SAHomelink, the local coordinated housing system, and the City's Homeless Connections Hotline.

Diversion is a strategy that prevents homelessness for people seeking shelter by helping them identify immediate alternate housing arrangements through a problem-solving conversation, and if necessary, connecting them with services and financial assistance to help them quickly return to permanent housing.

According to the most recent Point-in-Time Count conducted January 2020, homelessness increased 2% from the previous year. Aging adults (50+) experiencing homelessness, who are at greater risk for death from COVID-19, increased 27%. Further, 78% of all persons counted in January reported they did not have health insurance. Solutions like the SARAH Homeless Diversion Pilot are essential to ensure the most vulnerable populations in San Antonio and Bexar County have access to safe housing options.

"The impact of COVID-19 on the homeless response system is requiring creative solutions across systems of care. SARAH has been working closely with partners to identify gaps and implement coordinated, data-driven funding and programs to help our most vulnerable populations," says Katie Vela, SARAH's Director of Operations and spokesperson for the pilot.

SARAH has begun training assessors to perform diversion with clients who are seeking shelter, emphasizing problem-solving, solutions-focused conversations that aim to find safe housing. Flex funding will be available to households who need one-time financial assistance until it runs out.

It is expected that the flex fund will move 250 households out of homelessness and given the need, is likely to run out within a few months. If you'd like to make a donation to SARAH's efforts to end homelessness, please visit SARAH's website by [clicking here](#).

About SARAH: *South Alamo Regional Alliance for the Homeless, SARAH, works with agencies across San Antonio and Bexar County to end homelessness. As the local Continuum of Care Lead Agency, SARAH is charged to create an improved service system that effectively provides support, coordination, and housing to all homeless populations within San Antonio and Bexar County, with a primary focus on moving individuals and families out of homelessness efficiently and permanently. Our goal is for homelessness to be a **rare, brief, and one-time event**.*

For additional information, visit: www.sarahomeless.org or call 210-876-0720