



Response to Cal Matters Article

December 12, 2023

We are deeply disappointed by the story that ran in Cal Matters this morning, which has a categorically false headline saying that hundreds of SSG/HOPICS clients served through our rapid rehousing programs were evicted. We want to make sure you hear directly from us with the facts.

As we were working with landlords who sublet to our clients in shared housing, we became aware that some of them were in fact bad actors, not providing us the needed documentation to be compliant with our contracts, charging us for rent when no one was living in the units, failing to pay their own rent to the building owners in the hopes of receiving COVID relief payments, and more. As soon as we learned what they were doing, we immediately notified our funders and sought to remedy the problem, including working as quickly as possible to secure new housing for those impacted. We are saddened and angered that these actions led to some of our clients being displaced, but want to be clear that our clients themselves were never evicted. In fact, it was the problematic landlords who were evicted by the building owners and did not notify us or the clients in advance, which resulted in the need for immediate relocation. We continue to pursue an investigation with our funder to hold these landlords accountable.

In addition, the three landlords featured in the misrepresentative article submitted outlandish claims of outstanding rents owed. After an exhaustive review of canceled checks, client notes, bank statements, HMIS documentation, and more, the majority of those claims were entirely unsubstantiated. Even those that were verified had never been previously submitted to us using the appropriate mechanisms. Nonetheless, upon the conclusion of this review, we have paid all amounts that have been legitimized.

As you know, SSG/HOPICS has grown tremendously in the past several years as the City, County, and State have dedicated significant funding to address the unprecedented homelessness crisis. With more than a hundred contracts and grants, we are committed to being good stewards of public money and are working closely with our government funders to ensure there is full transparency and accountability as programs evolve and we move people off the streets and into housing.

As part of the effort to improve our service delivery, ensure we don't face these same challenges in the future, and continue to meet the needs of community we serve, we have committed to taking the following steps:

- Re-evaluate current program design and determine what areas require change.
- Provide additional case management training and support to case managers.
- Address hiring practices to ensure we hire high-quality candidates who meet the agency's culture and ethics.
- Provide additional support to all levels of management to reduce reactionary and crisis responses, and increase proactive solutions.

As one of the largest homeless service organizations in Los Angeles County, we see everyday that our client-centered “whatever it takes” approach works and we are extremely proud of our work. Just last year, we helped permanently house more than 1,000 people and provided additional services to more than 36,000 others. This success is largely due to the passion, expertise and integrity with which our dedicated staff implement these programs and provide services to our clients, and to the communities in which our clients and staff live, work and play. We genuinely believe that one of the most significant reasons that the region we serve was the only part of LA County that saw a *decrease* in homelessness last year is due to the tireless efforts of our staff in serving our clients, who are typically some of the most vulnerable and underserved people in our community.

We are and will always be the community we serve, and we are grateful for your support.