

**OC Partnership's Strategic Plan for
Families Residing in Motels to Attain Stable Living Conditions
Necessary for Children to Succeed in School**

Presented to:

The Children and Families Commission of Orange County

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Executive Summary

While little specific information about motel families has been collected and analyzed, anecdotal evidence, service provider testimony and nationwide reporting document this experience as widespread. With the original 1998 *Orange County Register's* "Motel Children" article, the follow-up "Motel Families Report" by the County of Orange Social Services Agency produced in the same year, and two subsequent surveys done in both Santa Ana, California (Community Action Partnership's "Santa Ana Motel Families Survey Report") and this reports survey completed in Anaheim, California, Orange County is in the forefront of documentation and research of motel families. This summary will comment specifically on the "Strategic Plan to Assist Individuals and Families Residing in Motels to Reach and Sustain Stable Housing" by OC Partnership and RSS.

A profile of adults, children and families (based on averages) can be drawn from those surveyed:

- 3 persons to a surveyed room, usually consisting of one family or single person (7% were occupied by more than one family).
- 35% of individuals were children (126 school aged; 48 under five).
- Most adults were between 19 and 49 years old.
- Parents, children and extended family members occupied more than 50% of rooms.
- Over 50% of families identified themselves as white, non-Hispanic.
- The majority of families speak and read English well.
- The majority of families lived in Orange County before becoming homeless.
- The majority of families had been living in a motel for approximately 30 months.
- Financial loss was the single most frequently given reason for becoming homeless.
- The inability to accumulate the deposit on a rental unit was the most frequent reason given for remaining homeless.
- Families (including single individuals) averaged over three moves per year.
- Three most frequently mentioned reasons for moving were to obtain more services in a larger, less expensive room; because of "lockout" rules; or to find a safer environment, free of violence and vice.
- 30% of families had stayed in an emergency shelter.
- 11% of families had been in a transitional housing program.
- Of families who had graduated from transitional housing programs, most reported that they had moved into a motel upon graduation.
- Almost all school age children were attending school.
- Very few children under 5 had attended preschool.
- Over 75% of the families had one or more members who were employed.
- Over 50% of the 75% employed half were employed full-time.
- The large majority of people were paid hourly and received their pay weekly or every two weeks.
- The average family income from all sources was \$1,475 per month.
- Wages were the single, most important source of income, but wages were supplemented by a number of other income sources.
- Over 50% reported they had a reliable source of transportation.
- A large majority had access to a telephone but only a small minority had Internet access.
- On average, adults had completed 12 years of school, with over 75% completing high school, and another 33% having college experience.
- About 33% reported that someone in their family has a criminal record.

- For those who report them, drug use has a lower incidence than alcohol use.
- About 20% of adults reported a mental health problem in the family.
- Most families with children were able to get medical care for them and obtained this care most frequently from either a doctor's office or an emergency room.
- Over 66% of children are insured, mostly in the form of MediCal.
- Fewer adults are able to get medical care, but among those that do such care is most frequently obtained from a doctor's office or an emergency room.
- Over 50% of adults are insured, usually MediCal, but employer paid insurance is reported in about 25% of cases.
- Families reported their medical needs were met in about 66% of cases, but 40% also report that health problems are contributing to their housing instability.
- The most frequent health problem reported was medical illness.
- Many services are currently being received by the survey respondents, most frequently in the form of MediCal and food stamps, but secondarily in the form of WIC, cash assistance, Cal Works, training of various forms, and medical and mental health care.
- Section 8 assistance and rental housing assistance were the two most frequently named services needed. Also named nearly as frequently were training of various kinds and credit or legal assistance.
- The reasons given for not accessing available services fell into several categories:
 - not aware of services
 - not qualifying for services
 - not knowing how to apply
 - fear of being treated disrespectfully
 - concern about paperwork required
 - loss of privacy.

A total of 34 strategies designed to assist motel families into stability are presented in this document. Strategies include revising existing or creating new policies that provide more support to motel owners/operators trying to assist families, as well as the families themselves, while addressing the City of Anaheim's duty to safeguard all Anaheim residents. The report calls for the allocation of financial support those service providers already in the trenches and making a difference, as well as to develop programs and services needed to fill identified gaps. Advocacy is needed for further support of the McKinney-Vento Educational Act, legislation that demands school access for all homeless children and specific partners are identified as key to the success of keeping our children in school. And finally, a coordinating office is recommended to ensure that the strategies, and those responsible for implementing them, work in an efficient and effective manner designed to create a positive impact for families desperately in need.