



COUNCIL AGENDA: 9/28/2021
FILE: 21-2117
ITEM: 8.2

Memorandum

TO: CITY COUNCIL

FROM: Councilmember Sylvia Arenas

SUBJECT: EVICTION MORATORIUM

DATE: September 28, 2021

Approved

Date 9/28/21

RECOMMENDATION

- 1) Direct the City Manager to develop a “No Wrong Door” referral system for the City’s referrals for, but not limited to, the City’s Eviction Help Center, recreational programming and scholarships, and digital literacy services to support children and families.
- 2) Direct City Manager to use the City’s Eviction Help Center as a means to pre-qualify households for scholarship eligibility for PRNS recreational programming including, but not limited to, the ROCK program, Recreational Preschool, and San Jose Clean Energy discount programs.
- 3) Direct City Manager to work with California Emerging Technologies Fund (CETF) to align grantees’ efforts with office hours at the Eviction Help center to offer technical assistance, program referrals, and resources.

BACKGROUND

Since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, our Housing Department Staff has taken great care to ensure an equity approach is centered in the development of new programs and services aimed at supporting households who are extremely low-income, those that do not have traditional rental or lease agreements, and those at high risk of displacement and homelessness. Recent milestones include the establishment of two permanent Eviction Prevention Help Centers, more than 70 pop-ups offered throughout the City since July, and four outreach campaigns underway. Thank you to our Housing Department staff for your continued hard work and dedication.

Partnerships with the County of Santa Clara and nonprofit partners have been key in ensuring that rental assistance programs are quickly and readily accessible, culturally responsive, and adaptive. At the Eviction Help Center locations and pop-ups, Rental Assistance Navigators help tenants submit rental assistance applications in various languages. The centers also offer access to legal services, with Law Foundation and Bay Legal staff onsite.

It's no secret that collaboration strengthens our systems of care, and the stakes are high when services are not integrated. A disjointed maze of eligibility criteria, forms, and programs can deter even the most determined individual from obtaining critical support for their family. By streamlining processes and implementing referral paths that make it easier for people to navigate and access the services they need – we can enable residents to make informed decisions based on the full range of services available to them. In a “No Wrong Door” system, multiple programs coordinate to ensure that regardless of which service people contact for help, they can access information about the options available across agencies and departments.

Developing a “No Wrong Door” referral system for City of San José program referrals can help ensure that more families are connected to the Eviction Help Center, that technical assistance from CETF is offered to fill out housing assistance applications (which can lead to program referrals), and that more families, especially families and single mothers with children, are referred to our City's recreation programs including ROCK and Recreation Preschool as part of a larger childcare strategy for working parents. In addition, the Eviction Help Center may also pre-qualify residents and families for referrals to City programs and vice versa including, but not limited to, San Jose Clean Energy discount programs.

The message to residents is that there is “No Wrong Door” for anyone to enter the City's system of programs and services, and that they can be easily connected and directed to other City programs through a City internal referral system. This “No Wrong Door” referral system should be led by the City Manager's Office, potentially through the Neighborhood Services CSA, and should not put the onus on any one program within the referral system. Since 2018, we've worried about the impacts of the formerly proposed changes to the Public Charge rule to immigrant and undocumented families access to our City's recreational program scholarships. We can address this concern with the “No Wrong Door” referral system which will allow us an additional pre-qualifier to easily obtain recreational program scholarships to continue to reach the highest need children and families. This additional pre-qualifier for scholarships will also be helpful as the State transitions to the State's Free Lunch for All Program.

This level of integration requires that we take concrete, unified steps towards connecting our services across City Departments to connect and inform our highest need residents about the services and programs available to them. The goal is to improve our City's connectivity and referral system to empower residents to make informed decisions about the City's offerings based on their needs.