



On June 23, 2016, the California Research Bureau hosted a forum on homelessness policy, “Housing First and Beyond: Toward a Comprehensive Homelessness Policy,” at the California State Library in Sacramento. Four panelists, a moderator and one state senator spoke to an audience of about forty, including legislative and administrative staffers as well as interested members of the public. The purpose of the event was to explore “Housing First,” a promising policy framework for helping the chronically homeless—people with disabling conditions who have been on the streets for long periods of time—as well as other innovations for the majority of homeless people who are not chronically homeless. A full video of the event can be found [here](#).

Jason MacCannell, assistant director of the California Research Bureau, opened with remarks about the significance of public libraries for homeless people. ([0:04:51-0:07:32](#) and [0:16:16-0:23:35](#))

Senator Ben Allen (D-Santa Monica) commented on the legislative progress of a bond measure to provide Housing First and other housing options for California’s homeless. ([0:08:15-0:16:13](#))

Susie Shannon, director of Poverty Matters, spoke about the State of Utah’s successful effort to eliminate chronic homelessness ([0:23:28-0:35:34](#)).

Tom Byrne, assistant professor of social work at Boston University, discussed the evidence base for Housing First programs, which have demonstrated improved housing stability and reduced service utilization costs for chronically homeless clients. He went on to describe more recent innovations for homeless people who are not chronically homeless. Promising programs in this area (“crisis homelessness”) focus on housing stabilization during transitional periods such as release from jail or a hospital (Critical Time Intervention) and rapid re-housing for the recently homeless. ([0:35:38-1:06:15](#))

Shahera Hyatt, director of the California Homeless Youth Project at the California State Library, discussed the particular needs and vulnerabilities of homeless youth (very few of whom are chronically homeless) and the dearth of programs suitable for them. She described her own experience with an innovation for homeless youth called “host housing,” in which she actually took a homeless young person into her home, and discussed the possibility of programs or policies to make host housing a more widespread and viable option for homeless youth. ([1:06:46-1:29:15](#))

Steve Watters, anthropology instructor at Los Rios Community College District and executive director of First Step Communities, discussed his experiences as an ethnographer embedded in Sacramento’s “Safe Ground” movement for an autonomous homeless community, and how these experiences led to his vision for a “tiny home” community that could serve the short-term or “crisis” as well as chronically homeless individuals. He emphasized the importance of culture in creating intentional communities to serve the homeless and help them develop a sense of meaningful engagement beyond what Watters, borrowing from Italian philosopher Giorgio Agamben, calls “the bare life.” ([1:29:29-2:13:39](#))

Presenters then made themselves available to the audience for discussion. ([2:14:03-2:41:52](#))