

County of Santa Clara

Office of Supportive Housing

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December 7, 2020

TO: Honorable Members of the Board of Supervisors
Jeffrey V. Smith, M.D., J.D., County Executive

FROM: Consuelo Hernandez, Director, Office of Supportive Housing

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SUBJECT: Rental and Financial Assistance Component of the Isolation and Quarantine Support Program

Under advisement from the November 17, 2020 Board of Supervisors meeting (Item No. 11), this memorandum provides an update on the Isolation and Quarantine Support Program's (IQ Program), focusing on the rental and financial assistance component, and responds to several questions from the November 17 meeting.

Pilot Period and Participating Cities

The County began piloting the IQ Program for all county residents in mid-June. From June 17, 2020 through November 30, 2020 the IQ Program helped 1,686 households. Of these, 205 households were moved to motels to safely isolate or quarantine and 1,481 households received support to isolate and quarantine in their own homes. Starting in July, the Administration began working with cities to determine the extent they would offer isolation and quarantine support for their respective residents. Currently:

- A. The cities of Campbell, Cupertino, Los Altos, Los Gatos, Monte Sereno, Palo Alto and Sunnyvale, are operating their own IQ Programs, have not responded to Administration's inquiries, or are unable to provide assistance to cases and contacts in their cities. Of these cities, Cupertino, Los Gatos and Sunnyvale are using existing or ad-hoc financial assistance programs but those programs may not be solely for households who need help to isolate or quarantine.
- B. The cities of Gilroy, Mountain View, and Santa Clara are only participating in the County-administered motel component of the IQ Program. These cities have their own rental and financial assistance programs, but those programs may not be solely for households who need help to isolate or quarantine.
- C. The cities of Los Altos Hills, Milpitas, Morgan Hill, San José, and Saratoga are participating in all three components of the County-administered IQ Program.

Rental and Financial Assistance Component

From June 17 until mid-September 2020, the County offered rental and financial assistance to residents countywide to give cities time to establish their own programs or decide to participate in a County-Administered program. Currently, the County provides financial assistance for residents of the unincorporated county, Los Altos Hills, Milpitas, Morgan Hill, San José, and Saratoga. Of the 1,686 households who were assisted by the IQ Program, 1,149 households requested rental or financial assistance. Table 1 summarizes the disposition of the 1,149 households through November 30, 2020.

Table 1 – All Households Requesting Financial Assistance (June 17 through November 30, 2020)

	Number	Percentage
Total Households	1,149	100%
Ineligible	179	15.6%
Declined Assistance	44	3.8%
Could not be Reached	79	6.9%
Cancelled for Duplication	3	0.3%
Assistance Provided	440	38.3%
Pending Approval	15	1.3%
Pending Documents from Household	376	32.7%
Trying to Contact	13	1.1%

On September 10, 2020, the Office of Supportive Housing (OSH) distributed an off-agenda report describing the status of 552 families who had requested rental or financial assistance. The Board and the Administration were concerned because a significant number of families had not received the requested assistance. Specifically, 180 families' applications were still in process with the County's contractor, Sacred Heart Community Service (SHCS); and 219 families had not yet been contacted by SHCS. Of the 399 families, the County assisted 290 as some were not eligible, could not be reached, or declined assistance.

The delays were attributable to (1) insufficient staffing at SHCS to meet the demand generated during the late-June surge in cases and (2) the difficulties that residents had in providing documents required to obtain Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds were being used. To clear the backlog the County added County personnel to the IQ Program and used \$600,000 of its Coronavirus Relief Funds (CRF) to provide an alternative payment method.

Rental and Financial Assistance Since Mid-September 2020

The IQ Program offers two types of financial assistance to help COVID-19 positive persons ("cases") and persons who have been in close contact with COVID-19 positive persons ("contacts"). The first type of assistance is up to \$5,000 to pay rent, utilities, and/or other critical needs. A household's city of residence determines whether they are eligible for financial assistance and, if so, what type of financial assistance and documentation is required. The second type of assistance is a flat payment of \$2,000 or \$2,500 if the household has more than one income earner.

The flat payment option requires less documentation and can be distributed more quickly. While the flat payment option offers less financial support, residents who select the flat amount do not have to substantiate the requested

amount by providing copies or images of rental agreements, utility bills or other bills. In addition, the flat payment can be conveyed directly to the individual instead of a third party (e.g. property management company). Conveying funds to a third party requires additional documentation, coordination and time thus delaying the issuance of the assistance.

Not only is the flat payment faster and easier, for many households, the flat payment is the only option. The IQ Program reports that, since September, two-thirds of households do not have a rental agreement or have significant difficulty providing a copy of their rental agreement or getting the landlords to complete W-9 forms.

While the flat payment option is faster and has less requirements, it has not always been available. The County made this option available in mid-September to clear the backlog from the pilot period. However, since the pilot period, it has only been available to residents of the unincorporated county, Los Altos Hills, Milpitas, Morgan Hill, and Saratoga on a limited basis because the County had access to a small amount (\$70,000) of private funds. After the initial backlog from the pilot period was cleared, the Administration anticipated that the bulk of the needs would be from San José residents and that the City of San José would allow its CRF to be used for both payment options. Unfortunately, the flat payment option did not become available until November 3, 2020, when the San José City Council approved a proposal developed by County and City of San José staff. Of all households requesting financial assistance, 82% are San José residents. As a result, there have been delays in administering financial assistance, and the OSH has been working through the backlog since early November.

Program Adjustments and Plan for December

The Board asked for the percentage of residents who had “all the required documents” and what the County could do to assist the residents with obtaining and/or completing all of the required documents in order to expedite financial assistance. With approximately two-thirds of households not having or unable to provide the documentation required for the CDBG-funded rental assistance program and with the flat payment option only being available at certain times, it has taken an average of 40 days to issue payments to eligible households. These averages reflect all requests received and paid from June 17 through November 30.

With the flat payment option now available for San José residents, for requests received between November 3 and November 30, it takes an average of 12 days for the IQ Program staff to receive the necessary documents and issue the financial assistance. For non-San José residents the average is 18 days.

The IQ Program’s task for the rest of December is to disburse assistance for approximately 700 households. This includes an estimated 300 new requests – an average of 12 per day – that will be received from December 6 through December 30, 2020. The IQ Program is currently issuing/approving 11 payments per day. The estimate of 700 households also includes nearly 400 requests that are already in process. To increase and sustain the daily disbursement rate through December and to clear the 400 pending requests by December 18, one program manager and six County staff will join the IQ Program team through December. At least seven OSH staff will supplement the IQ Program team from December 7 through 14. The OSH staff have significant experience helping and coaching vulnerable populations complete complex applications (e.g., helping disabled homeless adults fill out Housing Choice Voucher intake forms). They and other IQ Program staff will assist residents through the required steps while they are on the phone with the staff rather than simply offering instructions and checking back later.

- IQ Program Staff Currently: 16 FTEs
- IQ Program Staff December 7 through 14: 30 FTEs
- IQ Program Staff December 15 through 31: 23 FTEs

In addition, with the flat payment option available, and increased personnel resources, the IQ Program will have more time to help residents determine if they meet the requirements of the more substantive financial assistance program; thus, initiating the flat payment option more quickly.

OSH will continue to collaborate with the County's Emergency Operations Center Public Information team, Case Investigation and Contact Tracing (CICT) team, and community outreach liaisons to ensure that the IQ Program's most recent information is disseminated to clinics, hospitals, community-based organizations, and other stakeholders so that residents are prepared to meet the IQ Program's requirements and are aware that the IQ Program is distinct from other rental/financial assistance programs that are available to those who are not considered cases or contacts. The Community-Based Strategy led by Public Health Department is piloting a High-Touch Case Investigation and Contract Tracers to provide door-to-door testing and outreach in neighborhoods impacted by COVID-19. OSH has been coordinating with this team to provide training to staff about the available resources as well as helping residents complete the referral form and collect the required documentation during the outreach process.

Until a public dashboard can be finalized, the OSH will provide a daily report on the status of the IQ Program. This report will be incorporated into the daily housing report.

IQ Program in 2021

Administration intends to continue operating the IQ Program through June 30, 2021. The County would fund all three program components for unincorporated county residents. For the financial assistance component, OSH staff are still working on alternatives or solutions for households who do not have rental agreements or need time to provide a copy to the IQ Program staff.

The agreements with the seven cities would expire on December 30, 2020. The Administration has reached out to these cities to discuss extending the term of the agreements through June 30, 2021, and to determine which program components would be kept, added, or removed. Most cities should be able to execute no-cost extensions. However, due to the high level of need among San José residents and the uncertainty of additional federal relief funds, the City of San José will likely need the most time to consider options and funding sources.

The Administration is finalizing an agreement with the City of Gilroy's to formalize its participation in the County-operated motel component from December 1, 2020 through June 30, 2021. On September 22, 2020, the Board approved a delegation of authority to the County Executive to finalize agreements with cities

CC: Chief Board Aides
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Ky Le, Deputy County Executive
James Williams, County Counsel
Megan Doyle, Clerk of the Board
Director, County Emergency Operations Center
Dr. Sara Cody, Health Officer and Director, Public Health Department

Appendix 1

	Flat Amount	Deep Financial Assistance
Eligible for Residents of	San José	Unincorporated county, Los Altos Hills, Milpitas, Morgan Hill, San José and Saratoga
Payment Methods	Check to the third party, check to the individual, electronic gift card, physical gift card, or electronic funds transfer to the individual using a QR code or with the necessary account and routing information.	Check to a third party
Residence Requirement and Documentation	Resident of the participating jurisdiction.	Resident of the participating jurisdiction.
	Government issued ID or utility bill or other correspondence showing the address and the affected household member(s)	Government issued ID or utility bill or other correspondence showing the address and the affected household member(s)
Income Requirement & Household Size and Documentation	At or below 80% of Area Median Income adjusted for household size	At or below 80% of Area Median Income adjusted for household size
	Pay stubs, W-2, and/or self-attestation, government issued-ID	Pay stubs, W-2, and/or self-attestation, government-issued ID
Case or Contact Requirement and Documentation	COVID-19 Positive Test or Close Contact	COVID-19 Positive Test or Close Contact
	Confirmation in CalConnect, Referral from CICT, Referral from Medical Provider and/or Proof of positive PCR or antigen test	Confirmation in CalConnect, Referral from CICT, Referral from Medical Provider and/or Proof of positive PCR or antigen test
Identification Requirement and Documentation	Positive identification of the person requesting assistance	Positive identification of the person requesting assistance
	Government issued ID, workplace ID	Government issued ID, workplace ID
Assistance Requirement and Documentation	NA	Documentation for the requested amounts
	NA	Rental agreement/lease, utility bills or other bills in the name of the affected household or individual(s)
W-9 Requirement and Documentation	Completed W-9 for the Requesting Individual or the third party if a check will be issued.	Completed W-9 for the third party
	Confirmation in CalCONNECT, Referral from CICT, Referral from Medical Provider and/or Proof of positive PCR or antigen test	Confirmation in CalCONNECT, Referral from CICT, Referral from Medical Provider and/or Proof of positive PCR or antigen test