



DONALD P.
WAGNER
Supervisor, Third District
P R E S S R E L E A S E
333 W. SANTA ANA BLVD. SANTA ANA, CA 92701 WWW.OCGOV.COM



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Contact: Rachel Lurya
(714) 334-5368
Rachel.Lurya@ocgov.com

County of Orange 2019 Point in Time Count Methods Improve

SANTA ANA, Calif. (April 24, 2019) — The new Point in Time Count results show the homeless population in Irvine decreased from 199 in 2017 to 130 in 2019. Third District Supervisor Donald P. Wagner served the City of Irvine as Mayor from late 2016 to 2019.

Supervisor Donald P. Wagner, a longtime advocate for comprehensive, Countywide solutions to the homeless problem, issued the following statement upon the release of the County's updated Point in Time Count:

"I appreciate the work of County staff, our nonprofit partners, and the volunteers whose diligence provided us with an accurate count. This information serves as a baseline for the County as we all work together to provide help for our homeless population."

The January 2019 Count demonstrates a commitment by Orange County to improving the accuracy of its method of counting the homeless to better understand the scope of the problem and better to serve those in need. Specifically, 1,167 volunteers broke into teams and ventured into homeless encampments, scouring the streets of Orange County to personally engage the homeless. Using detailed questionnaires and real-time data, the information portrays a more accurate portrait than previous counts.

"Orange County can be proud," said Supervisor Wagner, "of the 121 percent increase in the number of Emergency Shelter Beds: 1,149 in 2017 to 2,539 in 2019. Over 600 of those beds are in the 3rd District, thanks to the County of Orange's local churches, nonprofits, elected officials, and other organizations."

However, the new counting method also suggests a need to fully utilize current resources. "While more beds were full," Wagner added, "the 2019 occupancy rate of 79 percent is not satisfactory; our objective is to boost this to 100 percent occupancy."

Under consideration is "a live bed management system", one that matches persons in need with an available shelter bed. This system can also be applied to raise the bed occupancy rate.

Supervisor Wagner continues, "The data demonstrates that homelessness is a regional issue well beyond the ability of any one city to tackle alone. I especially admire the collaborative spirit of North Orange County, chipping in to build shelter beds where they are most desperately needed."

These new numbers convey how the County can further enhance its approach to safe keeping our most vulnerable groups, pointing to where services can be most effectively employed.

Overall, 52 percent of the homeless population is classified as "chronic homelessness". Of this unsheltered group, approximately:

- Thirty-three percent have substance abuse disorders.
- Thirty-one percent have a physical disability.
- Twenty-six percent have mental health issues.
- Thirteen percent have a developmental disability.

Additionally, the County's Anita facility, located in the City of Orange, will lead the nation as a model in transparent healthcare, robust policies, and ultimately, hope.

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