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# Social Service Outreach & Ambassador Services: How to Effectively Address Homelessness with Existing Ambassador Services

Thursday, March 21<sup>st</sup> | 10:30am – 12:00pm

Speakers:

**Steve Hillard**, President & Principal, Streetplus Company, LLC

**Alex Stettinski**, Executive Director, Downtown Reno Partnership

**John Caner**, Chief Executive Officer, Downtown Berkeley Association

**Davin Cole**, Sergeant San Francisco Police Department, Healthy Streets Operations Center



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# OBJECTIVES



1. Background – The State of Homelessness in the United States
2. Model – Leveraging Existing Ambassador Services to Address Homelessness
3. Program Review – How Districts are using existing Ambassador services to work with public and private sector agencies and organizations
  - Downtown Reno Partnership
  - Downtown Berkeley Association
  - San Francisco Police Department

# BACKGROUND



- On a single night in 2018, roughly 553,000 people were experiencing homelessness in the United States
- Homeless increased (though modestly) for the second year in a row
- Over half of all unsheltered homeless people are in Continuums of Care that encompass the nation's 50 largest cities
- An increase in the number of individuals experiencing unsheltered homelessness was the sole cause for the national increase in all people experiencing unsheltered homelessness
- The number of people experiencing homelessness in families with children continued to decline (by 2% between 2017 and 2018 and by 23% between 2007 and 2018)
- The number of veterans experiencing homelessness declined by five percent between 2017 and 2018 and dropped by 48% since 2009

# BACKGROUND



## ON A SINGLE NIGHT IN JANUARY 2018:

- Of the 553,000, 65% (358,363) stayed in sheltered locations while 35% (194,467) stayed in unsheltered locations
- Two in three people experiencing homelessness (67%) were adults in households without children. The remaining 33% of people experiencing homelessness did so as part of a family
- Of every 10,000 people in the United States, 17 experienced homelessness on a single night in 2018.

# BACKGROUND

## DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS

- One-fifth of people experiencing homelessness on a single night in 2018 were children, 71% were over the age of 24 and 9% were between the ages of 18-24.
- Six in 10 people experiencing homelessness (332,025) were men or boys, and 39% were women or girls. Less than one percent were either transgender or gender non-conforming
- Men were more likely to be unsheltered than women. Nearly 7 in 10 people experiencing unsheltered homelessness were men or boys.
- Nearly half (270,568) of all people experiencing homelessness identified their race as white

# MODEL



## 1. PERSPECTIVE

- Streetplus has provided clean, safe and friendly services to the improvement district industry since 1991
- Streetplus started researching the depth of the problem with the goal of leveraging existing Ambassador services to assist with outreach, engagement, and referral
- Determined the need to involve agencies and organizations that provide services to those in need, both private and public sector.
- Jointly develop job qualifications with providers to gain support
- Hold Summit to share the goals and objectives and to listen to any concerns

# MODEL



## 2. CHICAGO LOOP ALLIANCE

- First program using Ambassadors was the Chicago Loop Alliance
- Started providing services October 2013
- Implementation consisted of three Phases
- Results during the first twelve months included 57 homeless persons off the street into housing or employment and nearly 6,000 referrals to food, shelter, medical, clothing, and counselling (average of 3 referrals per day for each ambassador)
- Today, the program continues to achieve outstanding results



# MODEL



## 3. OTHERS FOLLOWING SIMILAR MODEL

- Downtown Alliance Salt Lake City
- Historic Core Business Improvement District
- Downtown Reno Partnership
- Downtown Berkeley Association
- Yerba Buena Community Benefit District
- Mid Market Community Benefit District
- Civic Center Community Benefit District
- Downtown Burbank Partnership

## 4. PROGRAM REVIEW



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# Downtown Reno Partnership



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# HISTORY OF RENO HOMELESSNESS



- Volunteers of America Community Assistance Center built in downtown Reno in 2006
- Homelessness relatively flat over the years at ~100 chronically homeless, ~500 sheltered homeless, ~3,000 underhoused in motels but with growing youth homelessness reaching ~2,000 youth in transition
- 1960s-era Motels (SROs) became de facto low-income housing but they are obsolete, delapidated structures

# HISTORY OF RENO HOMELESSNESS



- Now, motels are being demolished to make space for development projects
- Shelter is over capacity. City is planning a second shelter. County is building new campus for women/children
- Sage Street Project (affordable housing)
- Several groups started tiny house projects in 2018

# ROLE OF AMBASSADORS



- Assist in finding proper services for people when the shelter isn't enough or they qualify for more help
- Look for missing pieces in order to fill in the blanks, such as connecting services to each other
- Refer people to local shelter

# PARTNERSHIPS



- Reno Police Department
- Reno-Sparks Gospel Mission
- Volunteers of America at the Community Assistance Center and Resource Center
- Community Health Alliance
- Reno-Sparks Visitor and Convention Authority
- Veterans Resource Center
- City of Reno Code Enforcement Department
- Reno Police Department and Mobile Outreach Safety Team
- Reno Behavioral Health Hospital
- The Life Change Center trained the ambassadors how to use Narcan
- Northern Nevada HOPES trained ambassadors on needle pick-up and disposal
- Downtown Reno history training
- Sex trafficking awareness training by Safe Embrace

# OUTCOMES AND FUTURE



- Social outreach ambassador has placed 12 people in assistive services appropriate for their situation
- Over 500 shelter referrals in three-month period
- Support the City and County in Community Court program
- Plan to hire more ambassadors in FY2020
- Focus on bus station and new student housing in the district

# ROAD BLOCKS



- Police were initially suspicious of ambassadors but now love them. We overcame that bias through ongoing conversation
- Naysayers and misinformation in the community. Overcome through constant education and marketing
- Property owners who don't care about their vacancies. Soon to create townhalls to create peer voice and community

## Contact Information:

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[DowntownReno.org](http://DowntownReno.org)

Facebook and Instagram: Search for “Downtown Reno Partnership”



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# What is H.S.O.C?

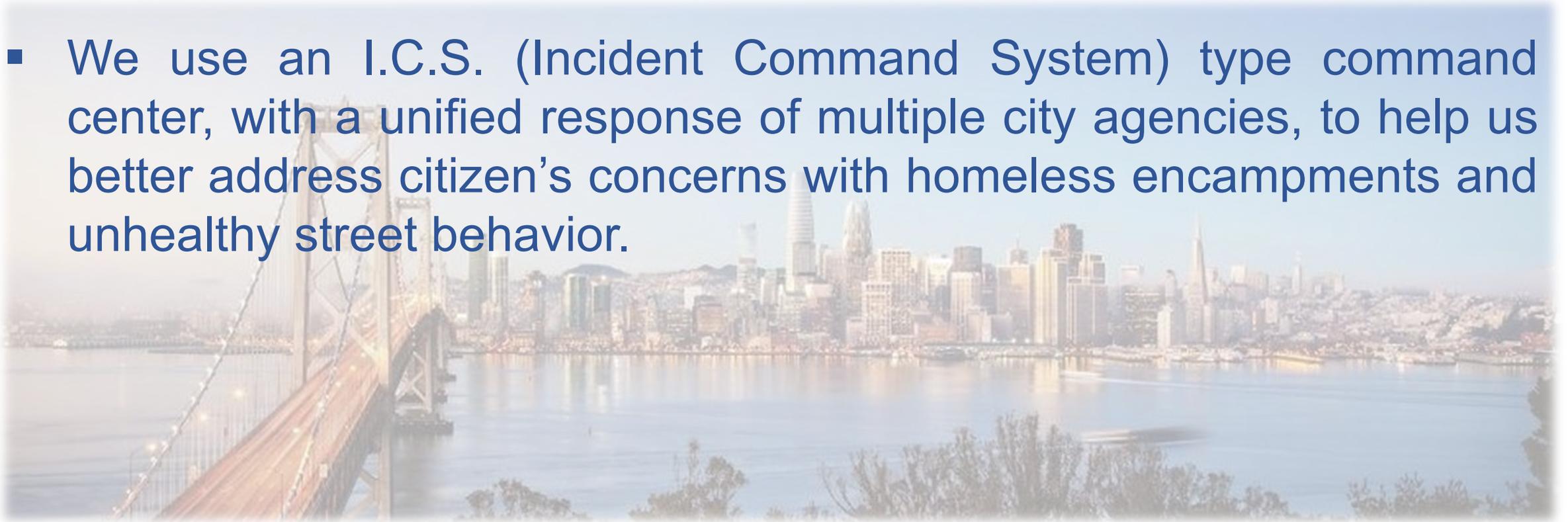




## WHAT IS HSOC?

- **HSOC** is a city wide, collaborative effort, to address homelessness and unhealthy street behaviors, through a coordinated effort by multiple city agencies.

- We use an I.C.S. (Incident Command System) type command center, with a unified response of multiple city agencies, to help us better address citizen's concerns with homeless encampments and unhealthy street behavior.



- **HSOC** is a compassion and service first operation, with a mission to provide city services to those who are experiencing homelessness.

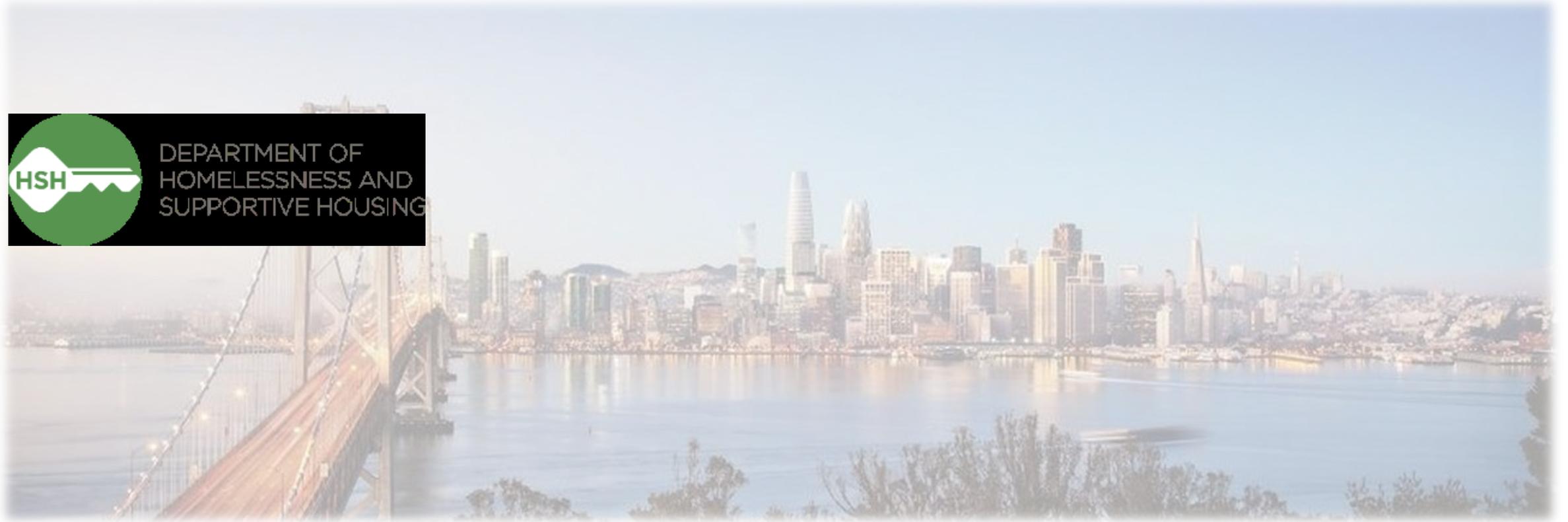


To achieve this mission **HSOC** incorporates several city agencies,  
including:





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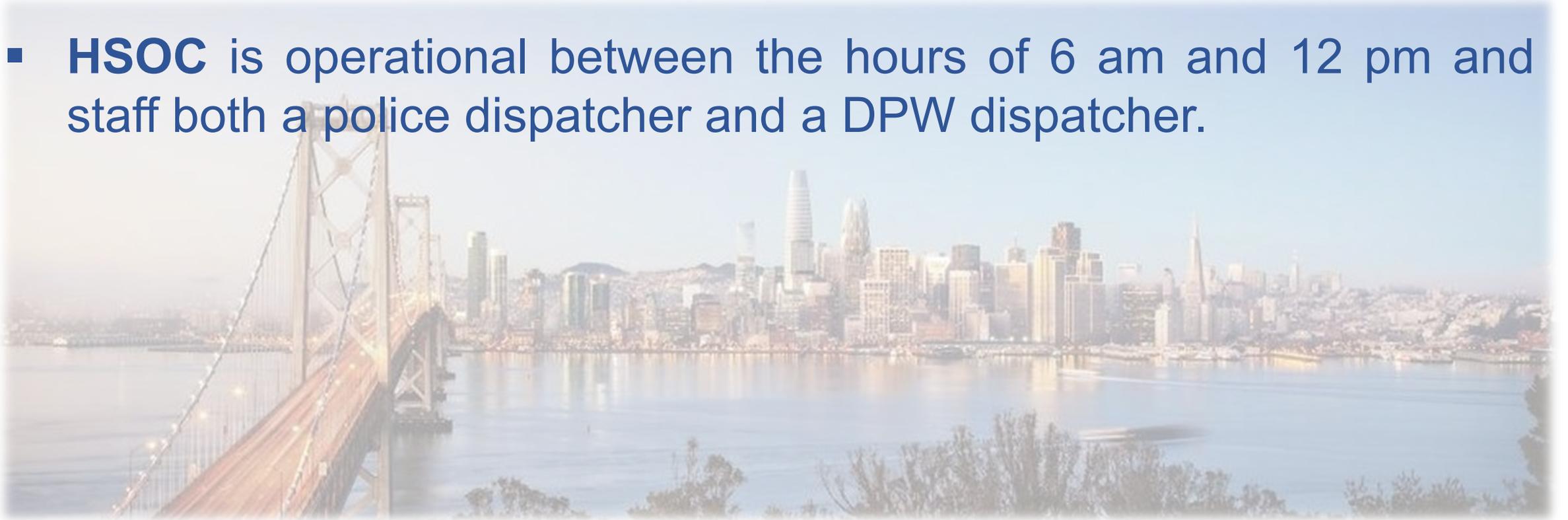
San Francisco  
Department of Public Health



There are also several other agencies that assist HSOC with our efforts:

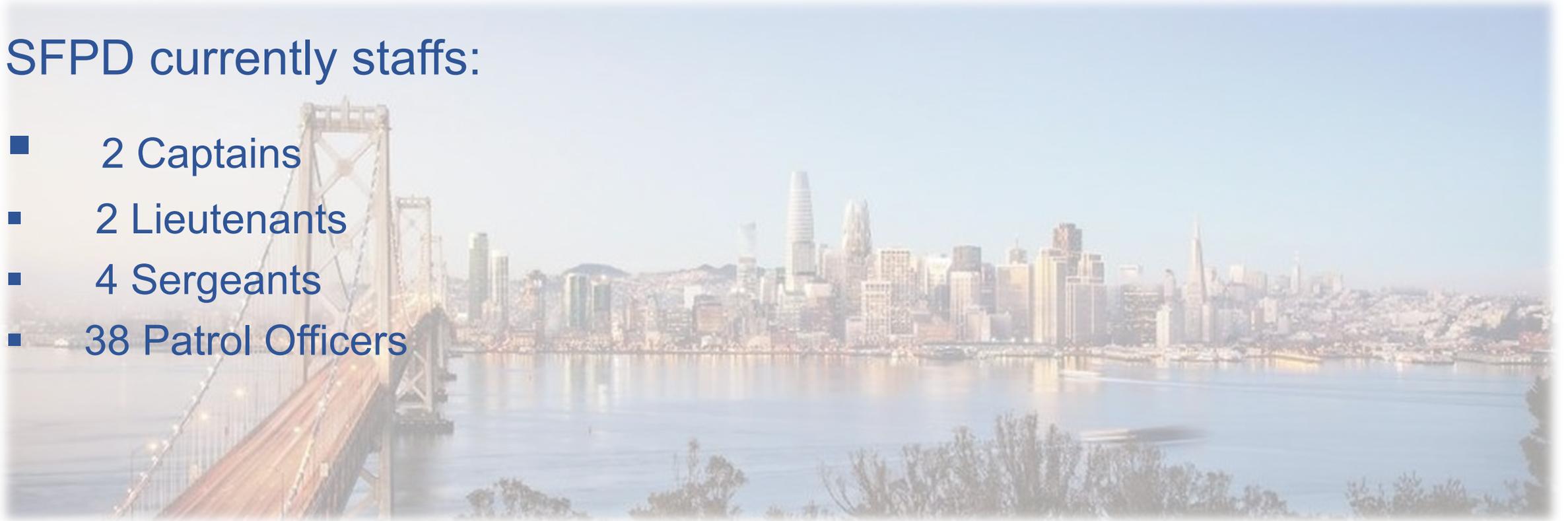


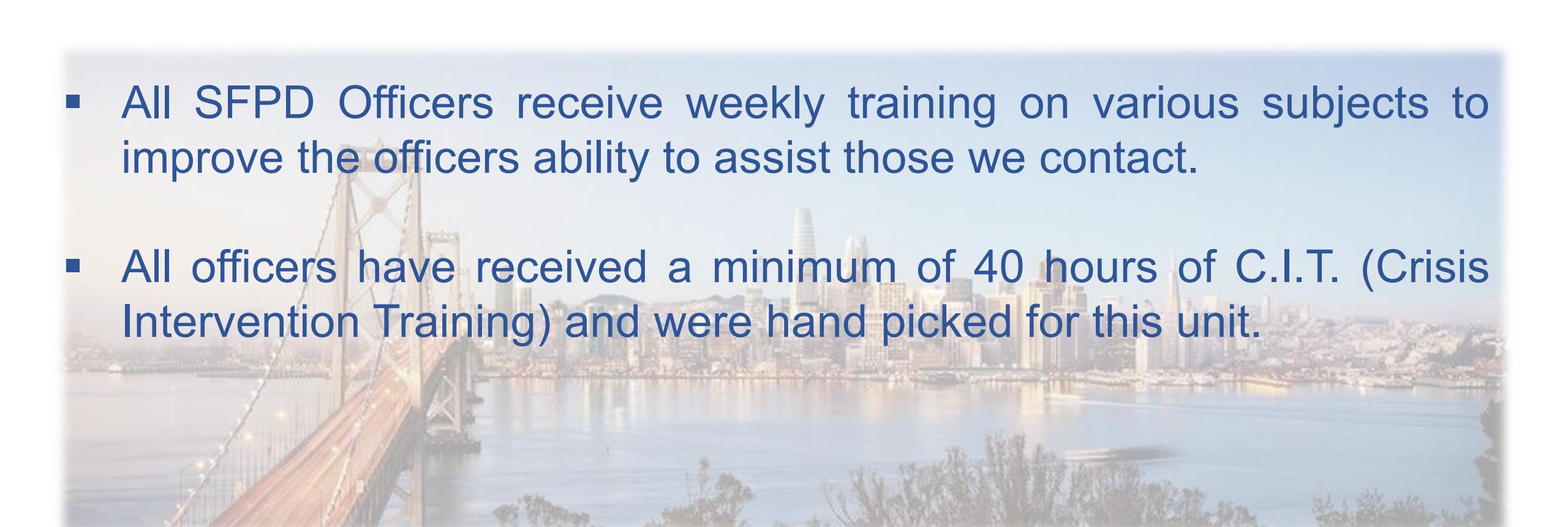
- **HSOC** is operational between the hours of 6 am and 12 pm and staff both a police dispatcher and a DPW dispatcher.



## SFPD currently staffs:

- 2 Captains
- 2 Lieutenants
- 4 Sergeants
- 38 Patrol Officers



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- All SFPD Officers receive weekly training on various subjects to improve the officers ability to assist those we contact.
  - All officers have received a minimum of 40 hours of C.I.T. (Crisis Intervention Training) and were hand picked for this unit.

- On a daily basis our Officers spend 2 hours or more conducting outreach specifically to those who appear to be suffering from substance abuse and/or mental health issues.



- SFPD's role is to assist our partner agencies in connecting those who are suffering housing, substance abuse and mental health issues, with the appropriate city agency, using enforcement of local and state laws as a last resort.



- This coordinated response via **HSOC** has greatly improved the city's response to homelessness and has resulted in getting hundreds of people connected to the services they needed.



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