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2020 Point in Time Count Identifies Continued Challenges, Progress towards Addressing Homelessness

1,580 Homeless Persons Identified, 19-Percent Increase from 2019

BAKERSFIELD, CA – The Bakersfield-Kern Regional Homeless Collaborative (BKRHC) today released its 2020 Point in Time (PIT) Count Report, identifying 1,580 homeless persons living in Kern County. The 2020 PIT Count was conducted during a 12-hour period on January 23-24, 2020.

The 2020 PIT Count represents a 19-percent increase from the 1,330 homeless persons identified during the 2019 PIT Count. Increased numbers of PIT Count volunteers in 2019 and 2020 have contributed to PIT Counts that more accurately reflect the true number of persons experiencing homelessness in our community.

Countywide, 36.5-percent of homeless persons (576 individuals) had shelter, while 63.5-percent (1,004 individuals) were unsheltered, sleeping in parks, empty buildings, cars and other places not meant for human habitation.

Families with children accounted for 14-percent of Kern County's homeless population, with children constituting almost 9-percent of the homeless population. Among families with children, 85-percent had shelter. The 2020 PIT Count observed a decrease in the number of veterans experiencing homelessness.

"The 2020 PIT Count shows addressing homelessness remains one of the most pressing issues facing our community," said Anna Laven, Ed.D., executive director of the Bakersfield-Kern Regional Homeless Collaborative. "We must continue our collective efforts to provide wrap around services and find permanent housing for individuals and families experiencing homelessness, until everyone living in Kern County has a place to call home."

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Access to Shelter Remains a Top Challenge

Increased numbers of unsheltered homeless persons continue to drive the increase in Kern County's homeless population. The change in the homeless population has mirrored changes in the number of unsheltered homeless persons since the first Kern County PIT Count in 2007.

Low-barrier, housing navigation centers currently under construction or supported by the City of Bakersfield and County of Kern and expansions at existing shelters should help significantly reduce the number of unsheltered homeless persons in the Metro Bakersfield area.

"Shelter provides stability," said Deborah Johnson, President and CEO of the California Veterans Assistance Foundation and Chair of the BKRHC Governing Board. "Stability is key to improving the effectiveness of additional services like mental health, recovery services, access to benefits and workforce development. It is critical that we increase access to shelter and affordable housing in order to put an end to homelessness in our communities," she continued.

Across BKRHC membership, 562 additional beds are projected to be available by the end of 2020. These are strong efforts, and the BKRHC is committed to continuing to work with the community to develop additional affordable housing and find permanent solutions for both unsheltered and sheltered homeless persons.

Comparative 2020 PIT Count data is unavailable until the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development compiles and releases national, state and local data.

The full 2020 Point in Time Count Report is available on the BKRHC website at www.endkernhomeless.org/reports.

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ABOUT THE BAKERSFIELD-KERN REGIONAL HOMELESS COLLABORATIVE

The Bakersfield-Kern Regional Homeless Collaborative (BKRHC) is an independent nonprofit organization whose mission is to end homelessness in Kern County. BKRHC seeks to do this through serving as the regional Continuum of Care, developing a regional strategy to address homelessness and improving the coordination of homelessness services across Kern County.

ABOUT THE POINT IN TIME COUNT

The PIT Count is a one-night count and survey of unduplicated homeless persons conducted in communities receiving funding from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). The PIT Count takes place annually nationwide during the last ten days of January. It is used to track national, state and local homeless population trends and inform the public about progress towards ending homelessness. The 2020 PIT Count was the eleventh count conducted in Kern County since January 2007.