



2023 Annual Report

HYGIENE KITS:
MENSTRUAL
KITS, SHAMPOO,
CONDITIONER,
SOAP, DENTAL
KITS, FIRST AID,
DIAPERS, KITS

Mission Statement

Founded in 1990, the mission of the Homeless Action Center is to provide high-quality public benefits advocacy for free to unhoused and disabled residents of Alameda County. HAC's vision is a society where everyone is treated with dignity and respect, everyone receives determined and rigorous pursuit of their legal rights, and basic needs such as housing and health care are recognized as both individual rights and community obligations.



Dear Community,

Thank you for helping HAC be there for our clients over the past year. Your generosity and caring have made a difference in the lives of our houseless neighbors. With your support, we have helped our clients out of encampments, into temporary housing, and then into permanent housing. Your commitment to our clients over the past couple of years has resulted in 90 of them moving into their own homes. For some, it's the first time since childhood that they have had their own place, with keys to the front door, a lease, and a sense of peace.

During the past year, our attorneys and advocates have assisted more than 500 clients in accessing stable monthly income to help pay rent and live with more dignity. We provided drop-in and telephone services to an additional 1,300 people. We have a robust appellate practice that has taken SSI cases from federal district courts to the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals. Our clients get their day in court and win their cases. It shouldn't take a lawyer to qualify for disability benefits, but it does.

In an upcoming election year, where our houseless clients will be used as pawns for votes and sound bites in the media, I encourage you to resist the hype. Housing solves homelessness. Period. When there is enough affordable housing in our community for very low-income people to live in, unsheltered homelessness will dissipate. Punishing people in encampments because we have a failed housing policy is cruelty masquerading as policy. In this instance, tough love is loveless.

It makes a huge difference in doing this work to know that you have our backs. Your support means that we can be present for minimizing the harms associated with being unhoused in our community. We know it's not easy, but we really appreciate it. And we appreciate each of you for resisting the hype.

In gratitude,

Pattie Wall

Executive Director

Armen Zohrabian

Chair, Board of Directors



Our Programs

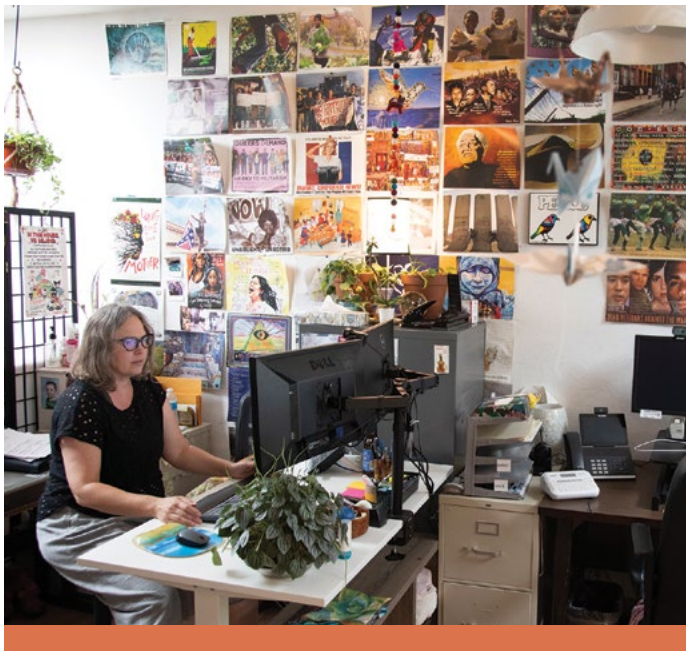
The main work of the Homeless Action Center is to provide high-quality, free public benefits advocacy to unhoused and disabled residents of Alameda County. We do this work in a number of ways, as described below.

Drop-In Services

Each week, from Monday through Thursday, 1:00 – 5:00pm, at both our South Berkeley and West Oakland offices, HAC opens its doors to anyone who may need assistance. Whether or not the person is a client with an active legal case, we welcome them to stop by for help with legal and non-legal service issues. In addition to providing brief legal assistance and referrals, we offer water and snacks, as well as mail service to more than 400 people. Our Drop-In Services are a low-barrier way for HAC to provide a helping hand.

Telephone Helpline

For those who are unable to make it to the HAC offices, our Telephone Helpline is available to anyone who calls with a question or legal matter from Monday through Thursday, 1:00 – 5:00pm. When the issue is outside of HAC's areas of expertise, we offer referrals to other local agencies.



Outreach Team

HAC meets people where they are – in vehicles, tents on the street, and encampments – so that we can provide services even when clients cannot call or come into the office. Our Outreach Team brings survival supplies with them when they hit the streets, offering practical support along with legal advocacy and housing navigation.

Direct Legal Representation

Through in-person visits at our offices, telephone calls, and digital means, our attorneys and advocates help clients move from receiving General Assistance (GA) to higher quality benefits like Supplemental Security Income (SSI). GA provides a mere \$336 per month for individuals to live on, while SSI provides \$1,133 monthly. Once we are able to help a client qualify for SSI, the three-fold increase in income often provides the stability needed to secure permanent affordable housing.

Almost Home: Temporary Supportive Housing

In January 2023, HAC opened Almost Home, a Safe Haven house that provides up to seven SSI clients at a time with temporary, supportive, transitional housing. The goal is to stabilize the lives of homeless clients as they approach the final stages of their SSI case. While residing in Almost Home, our housing navigators help each client find a permanent, affordable housing placement. (See pages 5-6 for much more on Almost Home.)

HAC Formalizes Policy Committee

The work of the Homeless Action Center is focused on providing direct services to unhoused and disabled people in Alameda County. We do not lobby and we are not publicly funded to do policy work. However, because policies affect the wellbeing of our clients and our ability to provide the highest quality services, HAC has been involved in policy change advocacy on an *ad hoc* basis for many years. For example, HAC fiercely opposed a 2012 attempt by the Berkeley City Council to pass Measure S, a "sit-lie ordinance" that would have further criminalized unhoused people by making it illegal for a person to sit on the sidewalk in the city's commercial districts. Thankfully that measure was rejected by Berkeley voters.

In January 2023, HAC created a new Policy Committee to work more formally on policy issues that impact the lives of our clients. The committee was founded after several staff members had been discussing the possibility of a more organized approach to policy involvement, but also in reaction to the California Legislature passing the 2022 CARE Act, which created a new court system to mandate treatment plans for individuals experiencing homelessness and suffering from mental health issues.

After much research, internal discussion, and consulting with sister organizations, HAC Managing Attorney Paul Kim drafted a position paper with an eye toward minimizing the negative impact that the establishment of CARE courts will have on our clients: namely,

that the Act coerces already traumatized individuals into punitive treatment plans without guaranteeing that counties provide adequate resources for mental health consumers. You can learn more about HAC's work on this issue by reading the August 2023 [blog post from Meghan Pluimer](#), HAC Managing Attorney, found in the News section of our website.

HAC's policy work on CARE Courts helped set the stage for launching our new Policy Committee, which began meeting monthly in February. The committee now has ten active members. In addition to Paul and Meghan, committee members include Staff Attorney Chris Wollitz, Staff Attorney II Sydney Selix, Senior Attorneys CJ Alegre, Preeti Bishop, and Brian Fraser, Managing Attorneys Keyvan Eliasieh and Danny Homer, and Senior Managing Attorney Ann Rubinstein. The committee operates collectively, with a different facilitator for each meeting.



Some of the work of the committee involves discussing whether HAC should sign letters of support for policy initiatives at the local, state, and federal levels led by other Bay Area community-based organizations. Recent examples include support for raising the assets limit for people receiving SSI from \$2,000 to \$10,000, opposing a federal shut-down that would severely affect the ability of HAC clients to receive crucial monthly benefits checks, and supporting passage of the 2023 Farm Bill that addresses agriculture and food policy through a variety of programs, including nutrition assistance, which impacts many HAC clients.

More intensive is the work of writing HAC's own public comments on a policy issue, such as recent letters written to the Social Security administration to oppose changes to the "Manner of Appearance" rules on how a client may appear (in-person, by phone, or by video) at an SSI hearing, and to support a proposed change that would omit food from the "In-Kind and Maintenance" calculation that is used to determine an SSI recipient's monthly benefit.

Almost Home

In the midst of the homelessness crisis, HAC's Almost Home program is a bridge for the most at-risk members of our community to permanent, affordable housing.

In January of this year, the first residents moved into Almost Home, a newly refurbished Victorian house in South Berkeley that is the site of the Homeless Action Center's seven-bed, transitional Safe Haven housing program. Almost Home provides temporary supportive housing to homeless and disabled residents who are in the process of securing Supplemental Security Income (SSI) benefits that will allow them to attain permanent housing.

"Safe Havens" are a form of supportive housing that serve hard-to-reach homeless people with severe mental health disabilities who come primarily from the streets and have not been able to participate in housing or supportive services. There are two Safe Haven sites in our community, and HAC runs one of them. Clients served by Almost Home have been ranked as the most at-risk by the county due to factors such as the acuity of their medical conditions and disabilities, and their length of time on the street.

Typically, HAC first connects with Almost Home residents through our Outreach Team, who can meet with an eligible unhoused community member where it is comfortable for the client and help them move their belongings into the house. Once they are moved in, the client is assigned a housing navigator who helps them begin the process of seeking a housing placement.

Almost Home staff help clients organize meetings with their housing navigators, lawyers working on their SSI cases, and any case managers who may be simultaneously supporting them. They help clients remember and prepare for court dates and medical appointments. They help fill out housing paperwork and gather necessary documentation so that clients do not miss out on any





housing opportunities. When clients are safely housed at Almost Home where HAC staff attorneys know how to reach them and where they are supported by program staff, clients experience fewer disruptions in their cases.

Almost Home residents are provided a private room, dinner five nights a week, bedding, laundry detergent, shower supplies, and access to the Internet. The Outreach Team arranges for carpool trips to the grocery store. Program Aide Tiana Jackson describes herself as the “house mom”, sitting down with residents if they are having issues or need support, as well as mediating conversations between residents. The Almost Home team is compassionate toward the struggles the residents face; some of the staff have experienced homelessness themselves.

Once residents finally obtain a permanent housing match, the team prepares them for the transition. On move out day, HAC's Outreach Team helps residents bring their belongings to the new residence. They also help with applying to subsidy programs for the purchase of beds and other furniture, bedding and bath linen, utensils, and cleaning supplies.

They take them to the store to help pick out what they might like and move it into their new residence.

HAC hopes to expand the program to more locations in the near future and help more people move off the streets and into permanent housing.



Almost Home Program Director Ashley Davis says, “We change lives.” One former client told her, “I know I was a hard head, but you really helped me.”



[Watch “Home” - a short film about Almost Home.](#)

Centering Diversity, Equity, Inclusion & Belonging at the Homeless Action Center

HAC has a long, rich history of efforts to build equity – especially racial justice coupled with cultural humility and harm reduction – into the fabric of our organization and our services for clients. This is especially important given the make-up of our client population: in 2022, for example, 55% of represented clients identified as Black or African-American, with the overall percentage for clients self-identifying as Black, Indigenous, or people of color (BIPOC) at 83%.

The work to hire and retain a staff that reflects the diversity of the clients and the communities HAC serves is part of an ongoing commitment that took on a more focused approach in 2017. Although there were efforts to move toward a more diverse and equitable workplace prior to 2017, that year was when HAC management realized we needed external help increasing equity agency-wide and began formalizing discussions about Diversity, Equity, and

Inclusion (DEI) among staff. At that time, DEI was a common theme for reflection among legal services organizations and continues to be so at present.

In 2018, HAC contracted with a consultant to facilitate a staff POC focus group, followed by a full day training for all staff on implicit bias resulting in the establishment of HAC-POC, an affinity group for staff of color at HAC which began meeting monthly. This was followed later that year by a more in-depth staff training on implicit bias. Then HAC managing attorney, Nyla T. Moujaes, earned a non-profit management certificate via OneJustice's executive fellowship program after writing a capstone memorandum on Infusing HAC's Culture with DEI Policies and Practices.

In 2019, HAC began work with consultants that led to the creation of four staff working groups that drafted policy recommendations and strategies to address DEI issues in various places within the organization. In 2020, HAC promoted Nyla to steward the DEI work – she continues in her position today as Director of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Social Impact. In 2021, HAC published its Equity Roadmap, informing and guiding our relationships with external stakeholders as well as internal efforts to center equity throughout all HAC spaces – including the establishment in August 2023 of HAC's Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (JEDI) Committee (see following page).

Over the past six years, HAC has made important strides on these crucial issues ... and we still have a lot of work to do! In 2021, HAC conducted an all-staff demographic and job satisfaction survey, in collaboration with consultants. (These surveys have become annual and biennial measures, respectively, to track HAC progress.) In 2022, pursuant to consultant recommendations, HAC restructured itself to create clearer pathways to advancement for all staff at the organization, with a focus on staff of color. The 2023 surveys asked 67 individual respondents to provide information on how they self-identify on a number of demographic measures. For the 89% of staff members who responded to this survey, the pie chart on page 8 depicts how staff self-identify by race.

HAC Gains Silver Seal DEI Recognition from State Bar

HAC is pleased to announce that we have been recognized as a silver-tier leader by the State Bar of California's DEI Leadership Seal Program. The State Bar program was launched in January of this year with a goal of improving access and inclusion in the state's legal system.

We are not, however, stopping there. In November, HAC submitted the paperwork necessary to document that we have met the final two criteria for recognition at the Gold Seal DEI Leadership level. In 2024 we hope to be able to inform the community that the State Bar has extended this highest level of DEI leadership acknowledgment to HAC.



HAC Launches JEDI Committee



Matthew Denney



Alli Fam



Kai Gault



Jon Marley



Nyla Moujaes



Sarah Thompson



Emma Welty



Chris Yost

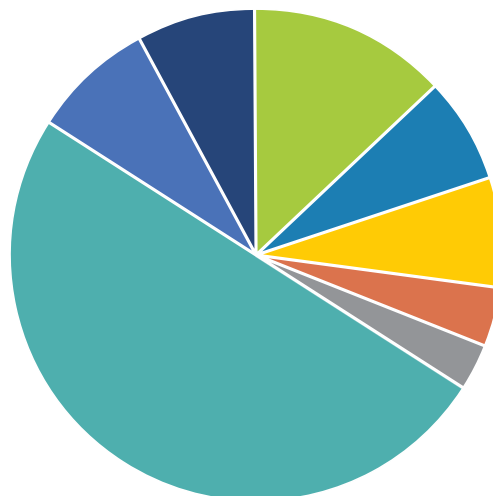
HAC's Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (JEDI) Committee began work in August. Through monthly meetings and the subcommittee projects between those meetings, the committee will be both a driving force around and a bridge to the entire staff for DEI work within HAC and in the communities we serve.

The work of the JEDI Committee is guided by two documents created during 2022-23, HAC's JEDI Strategic Plan and the JEDI Committee Description. The latter of these two states: "HAC is committed to addressing the insidious effects of systemic power and privilege, paying particular attention to how privilege has historically given, and currently gives, advantage to some groups and individuals over others. We believe that building an equitable workplace and recruiting and retaining a staff and board that is representative and inclusive of race, class, ability, language, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, and religion, and all facets of people's identity is critical to this effort."

The document goes on to say, "The purpose of the JEDI Committee is to ensure to the greatest extent possible that HAC management and staff are well-informed about JEDI initiatives, develop an annual workplan that includes recommendations for any changes in policies at the agency level, and to affirm our commitment to JEDI principles." With representation from throughout the organization – including at least five members of HAC's collective bargaining unit – we believe that we are well-positioned to make great strides in 2024 and beyond to continue making HAC a place that reflects, respects, and furthers the diversity of the East Bay.

The figures in the pie chart provide impetus to the JEDI Committee to continue concentrating on how we prioritize diversity, equity, and belonging in the recruitment, hiring, onboarding, and retention of HAC staff members.

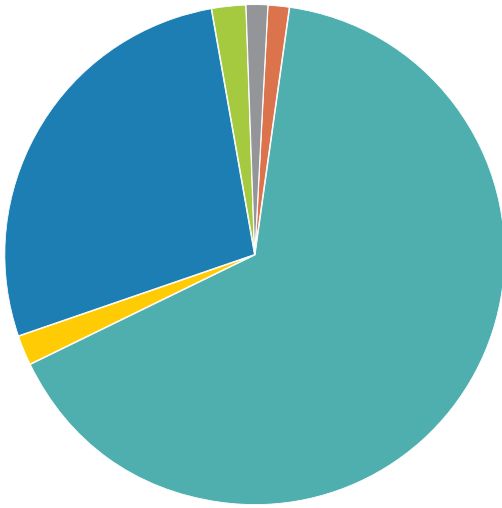
We look forward to keeping our supporters updated as we make further strides in this vital area of organizational development.



Total Responses = 75

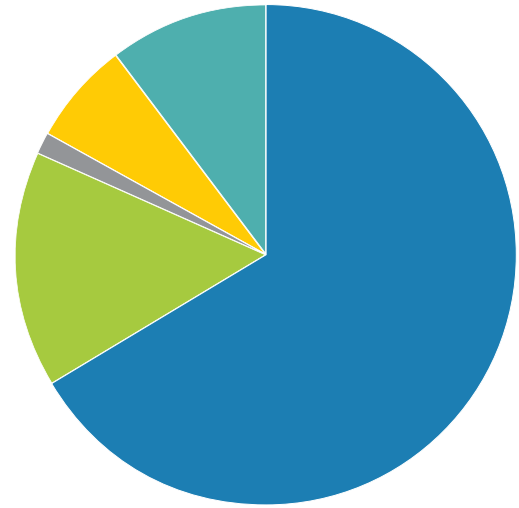
- Biracial = 8%
- Black = 13%
- East Asian/South Asian = 7%
- Latinx = 7%
- Middle Eastern/North African = 4%
- Native American/Indigenous = 3%
- White = 50%
- Other race = 8%

Statement of Activities: for the Year Ending June 30, 2023*



Revenue

| | |
|-------------------------------|---------------------|
| ■ Donations | \$179,945 |
| ■ Grants | \$135,600 |
| ■ County Contract | \$7,645,309 |
| ■ Local – City Funding | \$245,009 |
| ■ State Funding | \$3,170,012 |
| ■ Fees & Miscellaneous Income | \$253,370 |
| Total Revenue | \$11,629,245 |



Expenses

| | |
|-----------------------------|---------------------|
| ■ Salaries & Wages | \$6,961,346 |
| ■ Benefits & Payroll Taxes | \$1,615,831 |
| ■ Contract Service Expenses | \$141,794 |
| ■ Program Contractors | \$683,807 |
| ■ Non-personnel Expenses | \$1,068,620 |
| Total Expenses | \$10,471,398 |
| Net Operating | \$1,157,847 |

* Unaudited financials. Audited financial statements are available upon request.

Government Funders

- Alameda County
Social Services Agency
- Alameda County Behavioral
Health Care Services
- City of Berkeley
- City of Oakland
- Medi-Cal Administrative
Activity
- The State Bar of California

Other Institutional Funders *(partial list)*

- Ambrosini Stroshane Family Fund
- Mervyn L. Brenner Foundation
- California ChangeLawyers
- Don & Brigid Cheadle Philanthropy Fund
- CTBC Bank Corp. (USA)
- Dax Lee's Barber & Apothecary
- Doug-fir Fund
- Engstrom Fidanque Community Fund
- Sandy Koshkin and Barbara Levin Charitable Fund
- Levissa Fund
- Chris & Melody Malachowsky Family Fund
- Cory A. Roberts and Kristin O'Keefe Charitable Fund
- Rockin' Crawfish

HAC Staff

Executive Director

Patricia E. Wall

Deputy Director

Mary A. Gilg

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Amy Orgain
Ann Rubinstein
Christian Yost

Managing Attorneys

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Keyvan Eliasieh
Heather Freinkel
Jonathan Hart
Daniel Homer
Antoine James
Paul Kim
Kyle Kitson
Dorian Morello
Meghan Pluimer

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Preeti Bishop
Brian Fraser
Max Harris
Rachael Holmes
Dre McEwen

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Jacob Robert
Sydney Selix
Sarah Thompson
Drew Tillman

Staff Attorneys

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Lisa T. Bellard
Matthew Denney
Yasamin Elahi-Shirazi
Melanie Ferrier
Kathryn Fitzgerald
Anthony Gonzalez
Owen Hill
Jim Hurder
Zack Sanderson
Joshua Thayer
Chris Wollitz

Appellate Director

David Waggoner

Managing Advocate

Lan Tran

Advocates II

Dave Bay
Elliot Cavanaugh

Advocates

Alli Fam
Robert Feldman
Annie Hatton
Olivia Lipson
Natasha Mangham
María José Ospina Salcedo
Rebecca Pate
Kelsey Reid

Senior Benefits Outreach Attorney

Joseph Baskin

Outreach Supervisor

Kai Gault

Outreach Advocate

Ian Cordova Morales

Outreach Administrative Assistant

Emma Welty

Housing Navigators

Chandra Andrews
Vera Sloan

Almost Home Director

Ashley Davis

Almost Home Program Aides

Monique Blackman
Lorna Jackson
Tiana Jackson
Stan Lane
Quinlan Mosely
Rene Poche

Intern Program Manager

Alan Dunnigan

Facilities Manager

Devan Bleyle

Administrative Office Manager

Zena A. Sherman

Senior Administrator

Jen Neuber

Administrator II

Marie Ary

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Maria Lobo
Brooke Terpstra

Intake Coordinator

Chantha Tina Sar

Systems Manager

April Davis

IT Manager

Tom McPartlon

IT Support Engineer

Nate Carroll-Browne

HR Director

Classy Britton

HR Manager

Brian Kennedy

Chief Financial Officer

Emily McPartlon

Staff Accountants

Gabriel Viera
Carmen Yataco

Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Social Impact Director

Nyla Moujaes

Development Director

Jonathon Marley

Deputy Development Director

Stephanie Maurer

HAC Board of Directors

Armen Zohrabian, Chair • Megan Wachspres, Secretary

Angela Bates • Jack Jackson • Claire Markham



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HOMELESS ACTION CENTER



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2023 ANNUAL REPORT

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