



Federal budget squabbles wound homeless shelters

By: [Brendan P. Bartholomew](#) | 05/20/13 5:11 PM

Peninsula homeless shelters are feeling squeezed by federal budget cuts.

Samaritan House and the Mental Health Association of San Mateo County both recently lost federally funded \$5,000 grants from Daly City when it decided to stop providing grants of that amount or less. The organizations serve Peninsula residents and receive funding from the county and various cities.

At a recent City Council meeting, representatives from both organizations expressed dismay. Samaritan House Director Laura Bent said her organization is one of the few northern San Mateo County shelters. MHA coordinator Angela Bruno-Castro said the funding loss would hurt, adding that the association had seen 160 Daly City residents in 2012.

Councilwoman Carol Klatt urged both organizations to re-apply for grants next year.

Daly City Housing and Community Development Supervisor Betsy ZoBell said federal funding has decreased and there are tight limits on how money from the Housing and Urban Development Department's Community Development Block Grant program can be used for social services.

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And even without sequester cuts, ZoBell said, Daly City had expected to lose funding even if Congress had reached a budget agreement.

ZoBell said the city decided not to fund smaller grants because it was not cost-effective. She said money from HUD does not cover the entire cost for administrative needs and each grant's reporting requirements include on-site monitoring, financial accountability auditing, fiscal controls and income eligibility documentation.

However, Councilmen Michael Guingona and Sal Torres both said the grants weren't canceled to reduce administrative costs.



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A patient sits on her bed in a section of The Mental Health Association of San Mateo reserved for patients with schizophrenia or similar diagnoses.

homeless out of abandoned Muni buses

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A new San Francisco startup is aiming to find a use for Muni's decommissioned buses while also helping to address The City's chronic homelessness. Lava Mae, founded by entrepreneur Doniece Sandoval, proposes to transform old Muni buses into mobile showers and toilets for use by homeless residents. [Read More](#)

"We fund things based on need," Guingona said. "Unfortunately, the federal government doesn't fund us at the same rate every year, and we have to work with what they give us."

Bent said she was unsure if Samaritan House could replace the Daly City grant. MHA Executive Director Melissa Platte said although \$5,000 might seem small compared to MHA's \$425,000 annual budget, "It matters very dearly, because many of the funds we receive are restricted to certain things."

Since 1970, MHA has provided services for people with mental illnesses, including recreation and socialization activities, art projects, and training in life skills such as budgeting and cooking. MHA opened a shelter in 1986 because, according to Platte, people hospitalized for psychiatric reasons often had nowhere to go after being discharged.

MHA's Spring Street Shelter in Redwood City has 16 beds, along with seven transitional housing units.

Bent said Safe Harbor, the 90-bed Samaritan House facility in South San Francisco, is "the safety net of safety nets." She said more than half the clients have both mental illnesses and substance abuse issues, and the others are often the working poor displaced by tough economic times.

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