

February 11, 2022

MEMORANDUM

To: Public Assets and Housing Committee
From: Jeff Simms, Analyst
Subject: HOPE Team Data: July to December 2021

On December 20, 2021, and January 31, 2022, the Human Services Department (HSD) submitted quarterly reports (see Clerk Files [322084](#) and [322200](#)) discussing the Homelessness Outreach and Provider Ecosystem (HOPE Team). These reports are requested by Council Budget Actions [HOM-020-A-001](#) from the 2021 Adopted Budget and [HOM-018-A-001](#) in the 2022 Adopted Budget. In total, the data provided covers activities from July to December 2021.

This memo consolidates the data and findings in these two reports, at times noting trends that differ from or were omitted in HSD's analysis. The submissions from HSD also discuss activities related to encampments affected by construction or maintenance projects and HOPE Team activities during the winter storm response in the last week of December 2021. This memo does not discuss that information, which was unique to the most recent submission by HSD. The key findings in this memo are:

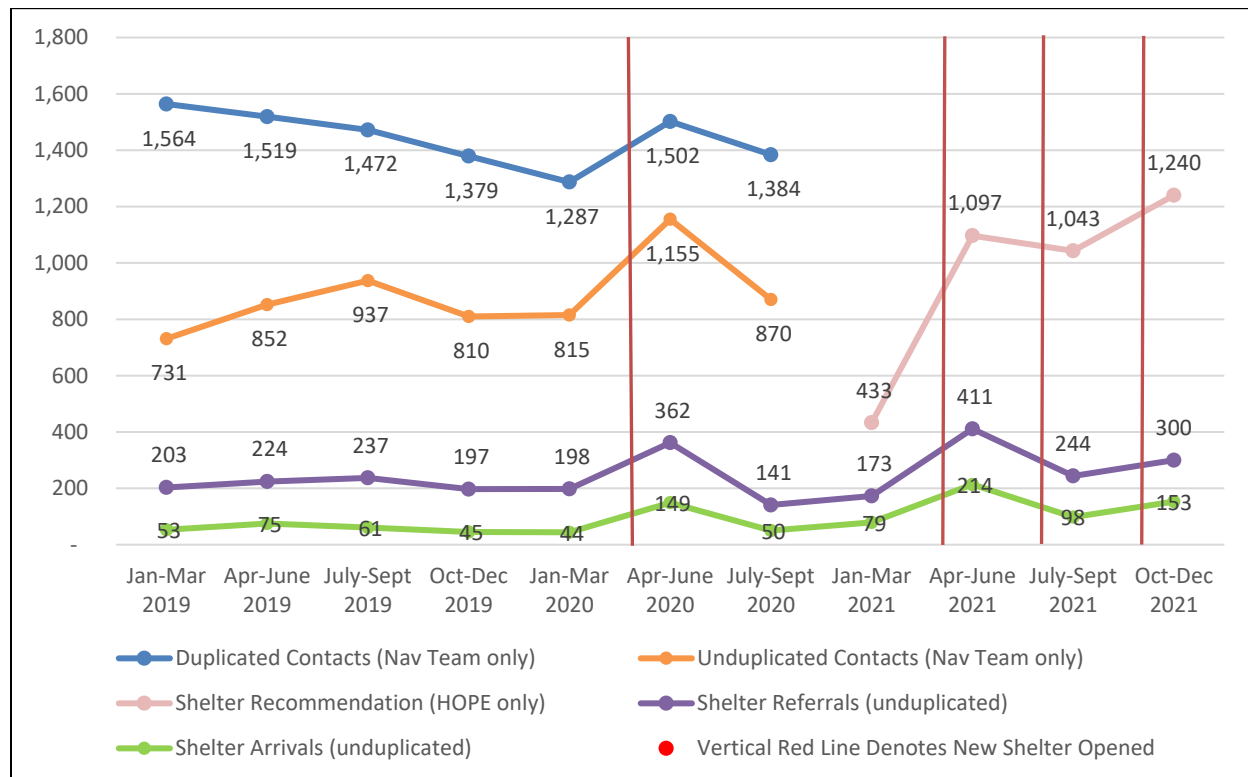
1. The overall number of shelter referrals (see purple line in Chart 1) decreased in the third quarter compared to the second quarter and then rebounded some in the last quarter of 2021. This pattern was not surprising as the number of new shelter openings decreased in the third quarter and then rose at the end of 2021, and previous analysis indicated shelter openings are likely a significant driver in the effectiveness of outreach activities.
2. During the last six months of 2021, the number of individuals recommended for shelter were four times higher than the number of people referred to a shelter (see pink line in Chart 1).
3. As was the case throughout 2021, approximately half of the people referred to a shelter in the second half of 2021 stayed overnight at that shelter within 48 hours.
4. Although HSD's most recent report highlights the proportion of shelter referrals made to people who identify as black, indigenous, or people of color (BIPOC), the proportion of people referred to shelter who identify as BIPOC notably declined in the last two quarters of 2021 (see Chart 2).

Referrals to Shelter

The overall number of referrals to shelter decreased in the third quarter of 2021 by 40 percent and then rebounded by 23 percent in the last quarter (see Chart 1). As noted in HSD’s report, the decrease in shelter referrals in the third quarter of 2021 corresponded to a time when fewer new shelter beds were opening. During that period, 89 temporary shelter spaces came online through a contract with JustCARE. In the fourth quarter, over 200 new shelter spaces opened, including Friendship Heights Tiny House Village and Benu Community Home in the former Keiro Rehabilitation and Care Center. If prior hypotheses are correct and shelter referrals and arrivals are most significantly tied to the availability of suitable shelter options, then the rates that the HOPE Team referred people to shelter each quarter would be expected.

HSD’s submission notes that the total number of referrals made in 2021 was 30 percent higher than the number of referrals made in 2020. This most likely also reflects the larger number of shelter units created in 2021 compared to the prior year. However, it is possible other factors contributed to this improvement, including shifting referral options toward more desirable program types, changes in how the HOPE Team manages outreach and referrals, or reduced activity in 2020 due to the pandemic and funding changes.

Chart 1: Trends in Outreach and Service Connections by the Navigation Team and HOPE Team



Demand for Shelter

One of the significant metrics provided on the HOPE Team is “shelter recommendations”, which are requests from a contracted homelessness outreach agency to make a shelter bed available after the outreach agency determined there is an appropriate match between the individual experiencing homelessness and the type of shelter vacancy. The number of shelter recommendations decreased only slightly in the third quarter (five percent) and then increased by nineteen percent in the last three months of the year (see Chart 1). In both quarters, there were more than four times as many people recommended for shelter as there were referrals made to a shelter.

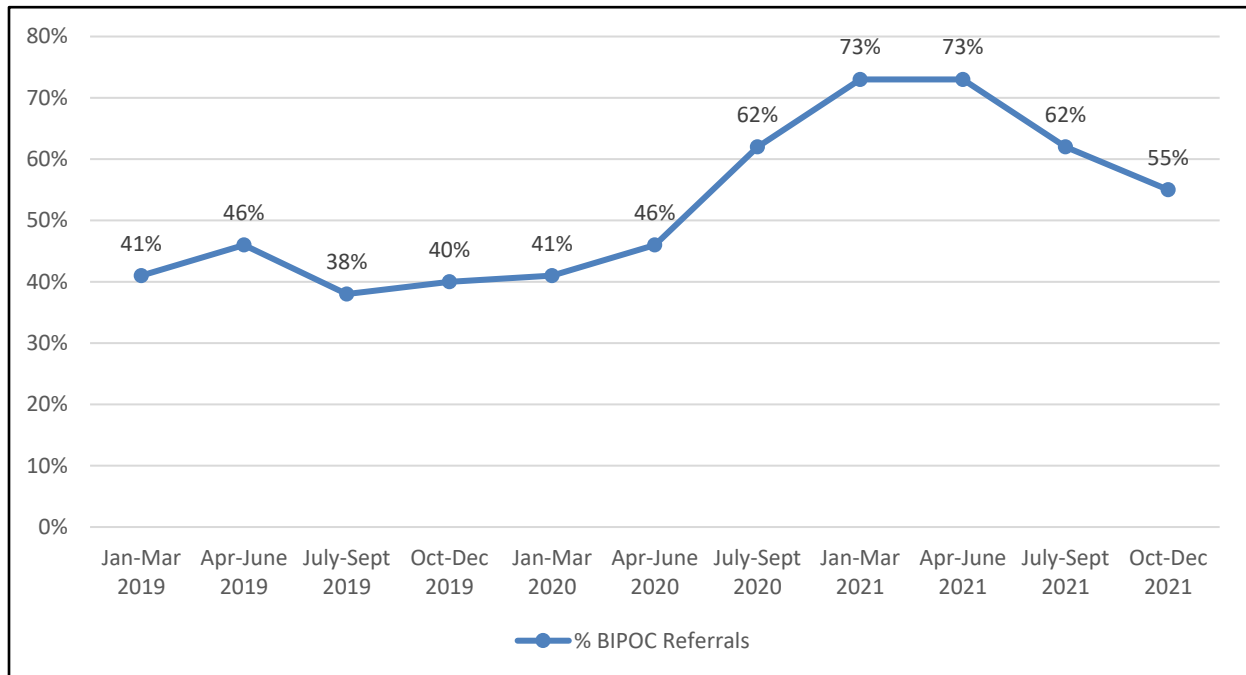
Arrivals at Shelter

Over the course of the year and in the fourth quarter of 2021, approximately half of the people referred to a shelter stay overnight at that shelter within 48 hours. That number is likely depressed due to the number of people referred to a shelter who opt out of sharing their data in HMIS. As noted by HSD, the HOPE Team generally had a higher rate of individuals arriving at shelter (after being referred) in 2021 than did the Navigation Team in 2020 (see Chart 1). It is not clear whether this improvement reflects different practices that better match clients to shelter vacancies or simply that more of the available shelter capacity was enhanced shelter and tiny home villages, rather than basic shelter. Future data may help to clarify this trend.

Race and Ethnicity of Referrals

The effectiveness of the HOPE Team at reaching populations that disproportionately experience homelessness is unclear. The data highlighted in HSD’s reports would indicate the HOPE Team is especially effective at reaching people who experience homelessness and identify as BIPOC. HSD reports that 66 percent of the shelter referrals made in 2021 were for people experiencing homelessness who are BIPOC. Comparatively, the [2020 Point in Time Count](#) estimated that 52 percent of people experiencing homelessness identified as BIPOC, and approximately 62 percent of the people served by the homelessness response system in each month of 2021, as reported in the [Homelessness Management Information System](#) (HMIS), identify as BIPOC. Notably, the proportion of people referred to shelter who identify as BIPOC increased with the creation of the HOPE Team in January 2021 (see Chart 2). However, the proportion of people who identify as BIPOC who were referred to shelter declined in the second half of 2021. Future data will provide more insight on the effectiveness of the HOPE Team at serving people who experience homelessness who identify as BIPOC.

Chart 2: Proportion of Referrals to Shelter Who Identify as Black, Indigenous, or People of Color



Next Steps

The Public Assets and Homelessness Committee is likely to discuss the findings discussed in this memo at a committee meeting in the spring of 2022, which will provide Councilmembers the opportunity to ask HSD about the data provided on the HOPE Team. The next report responding to Council Budget Action [HOM-018-A-001](#) is expected to arrive on April 30, 2022.

cc: Aly Pennucci, Central Staff Deputy Director
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