EMPOWER SANTA MONICA

PRESS BRIEF · OCTOBER 2026



# A bed first. Then the law.

A volunteer resident plan to get people too sick to help themselves off Santa Monica's streets and into treatment, and to publish what the City's homelessness dollars deliver.

Photo: Wikimedia Commons, CC BY-SA

## WHAT IT IS

Empower Santa Monica is a resident movement, **not the City**. Nobody is paid. It takes no donations, runs no ads and backs no party, candidate or company. Every number carries a source, and every proposal is a resident draft brought to whoever holds the seats.

## THE THREE BIG ASKS

1. **A clinician who can write a hold on every outreach team,** and a guaranteed bed at the end of every hold.
2. **A 24/7, no-refusal crisis drop-off on the Westside,** where police and outreach hand someone off in minutes.
3. **Open books every month:** every contract, dollar and result, in totals, never names.

**718**

counted homeless on one night, Jan. 22, 2026. The daily reality is bigger.

City of Santa Monica (LAHSA count), Jul. 24, 2026

**389**

outdoors, plus 222 in shelter and 107 in vehicles and tents: 389 + 222 + 107 = 718

City of Santa Monica, Jul. 24, 2026

**1,641–1,758**

subacute beds LA County needs, against 1,343 in place

LA County DMH bed roadmap, Feb. 15, 2024

**81%**

of people SaMo Bridge connected in year one placed in housing or treatment immediately

SMDP, May 22, 2026

### 1 Treatment, not tents.

A clinician who can write a hold on every outreach team, and a bed at the end of every hold.

### 2 Offer first. Then enforce.

A real bed offered the same day. Turned down, the rules already on the books apply.

### 3 A place to go, and a way up.

A 24/7 crisis drop-off on the Westside, connected to recovery and work.

### 4 Open books.

Every homelessness dollar, contract and result, public every month. Totals, never names.

### 5 Safe blocks.

Priority response around every school and park, and parks full of life after dark.

### 6 Bring them home.

One City desk for families, and real tickets home with family waiting.

See the plan, the three-minute film and every source

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**988**

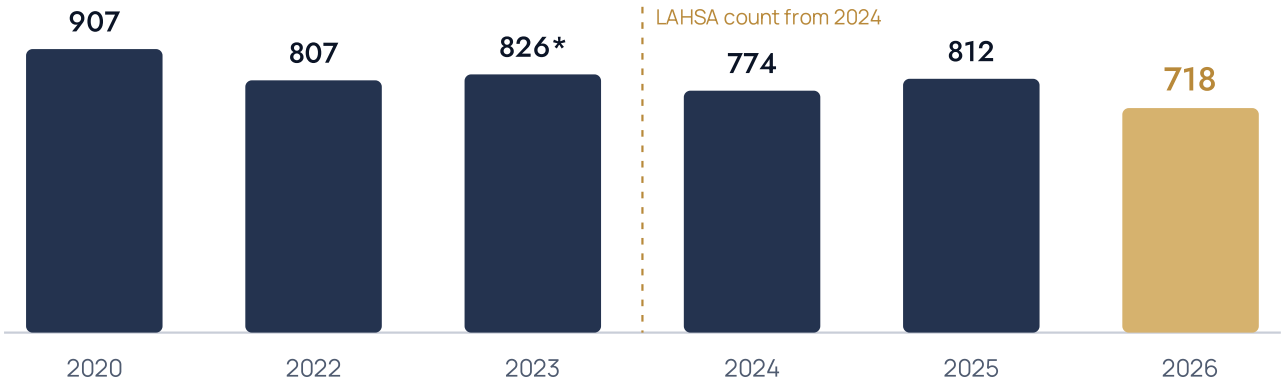
In a mental health or substance use crisis, call or text 988. If someone is in danger, call 911.

01 · THE PROBLEM IN NUMBERS

# Fewer people outside. Still nowhere to take the sickest.

The count is falling. The treatment beds behind every hold are not keeping up, and Santa Monica still has no 24/7 place to hand off a person in crisis who does not need an emergency room.

### People counted homeless in Santa Monica, by year




There was no 2021 count. *2023 is the LAHSA figure; the City's own 2023 count was 926. LAHSA took over the count in 2024, so earlier years are not directly comparable. Sources: City of Santa Monica press releases, Jun. 28, 2024 and Jul. 24, 2026; SMDP, Jul. 24, 2026.

### Jan. 22, 2026: where the 718 were that night




389 + 222 + 59 + 48 = 718. Source: City of Santa Monica, Jul. 24, 2026.

### The bed gap behind every hold




Subacute psychiatric beds, LA County. A shortfall of 298 to 415 beds. Source: LA County DMH bed roadmap to the Board of Supervisors, Feb. 15, 2024.

### What changed in 2026

Since **Jan. 1, 2026**, LA County applies **SB 43**: a severe substance use disorder alone can now meet the legal standard for a hold when it leaves a person unable to meet basic needs.

The law moved. The beds, the clinicians and the public numbers have to move with it.

Source: LA County DMH, SB 43 implementation release, Dec. 17, 2025.

02 · THE SIX INITIATIVES

# Six steps, each with a first move the City can make now.

## 01 Treatment, not tents.

THE ASK

A clinician authorized to write a 72-hour hold on every City-funded outreach team, every shift, and a guaranteed bed at the end of every hold. LA County publishes monthly data on holds written under SB 43.

ALREADY IN PLACE

The Fire Department's Advanced Provider Unit, a nurse practitioner paired with a paramedic, has handled behavioral health calls since November 2025.

WHY

Outreach that cannot offer a bed and cannot write a hold can only offer a water bottle. A hold with no bed ends back on the same corner.

FIRST STEP

Request hold authority (LPS designation) for those nurse practitioners and contracted outreach clinicians. Publish a map of every reachable bed within 60 days and buy bed-nights where it has gaps.

> *Every door has a time limit, a lawyer or advocate, and a judge. The person keeps their rights.*

## 02 Offer first. Then enforce.

THE ASK

One written standard for every street contact: a same-day offer of a bed and treatment first. Where a bed is offered and turned down, police enforce the camping, sidewalk and doorway rules already in the Municipal Code, with a warning first.

ALREADY IN PLACE

On July 28, 2026, Council funded 35 beds at The Salvation Army's Bell Shelter so City outreach and first responders always have a shelter referral.

WHY

Sleeping in public is not itself illegal in Santa Monica. Camping, blocking the public right-of-way and some doorway rules are, and only police enforce them. A resident who reports someone sees a check-in, but no record of whether a bed was open or offered.

FIRST STEP

The City Manager and City Attorney return within 60 days with an offer-first protocol under existing code and a monthly public report: contacts, beds offered, offers accepted, beds open, warnings and citations.

## 03 A place to go, and a way up.

THE ASK

A 24/7, no-refusal receiving center on the Westside where police, fire and outreach hand off a person in crisis in under ten minutes: 23-hour observation, a sobering unit, medical clearance, psychiatric urgent care and a warm handoff to detox or a bed. Then a recovery path with paid work.

ALREADY IN PLACE

In 2023 the City secured $1.5M in federal and $1.5M in state funding toward a Santa Monica Behavioral Health Center as a 24/7 first-responder destination. The Westside Cities Council of Governments is planning a campus model.

WHY

Santa Monica has no 24/7 place to hand off a person in crisis who does not need an emergency room. Without one, a call can end with the person left where they were.

FIRST STEP

Staff report within 60 days on the 2023 funds, a site, an operator, an opening date and a "no refusal, under ten minutes" standard.

02 · THE SIX INITIATIVES, CONTINUED

## 04 Open books.

THE ASK

One public page for every homelessness contract: who, how much, what it promised and what it delivered each quarter. Every person with a caseworker and a plan, with only monthly totals made public. Never names.

ALREADY IN PLACE

Santa Monica's FY26-27 Measure A Local Solutions Fund allocation is public: $1,296,779. How it is being spent is not.

WHY

A court-ordered audit of Los Angeles homelessness spending (Alvarez & Marsal, March 2025) found invoices approved without verifying services. Santa Monica publishes no single page tying its dollars to results.

FIRST STEP

Five public records requests, with what comes back, and what does not, posted on the site.

## 05 Safe blocks for kids and families.

THE ASK

The blocks within 250 meters of the city's 20 school campuses and 34 parks get a published response-time target, ambassador coverage at arrival and dismissal, and lighting fixes first. Programmed evenings, year-round, in the five parks with the most street-related calls.

ALREADY IN PLACE

Tongva Twilight ran free Saturday concerts and films from Aug. 8 to Sept. 12, 2026. Reed Park received $200K for reactivation in 2024.

WHY

Parks that people use at night stay safer. Parents should not have to explain a crisis on the sidewalk on the walk to school.

FIRST STEP

Police publish the median time to clear calls near schools and parks each month. A winter evening calendar for Reed, Tongva, Palisades, Virginia Avenue and Memorial Parks.

## 06 Bring them home.

THE ASK

One City desk for families: a navigator who explains the five lawful paths and walks families through them, a lawful way to learn a loved one is safe, and one intake for every ticket home with safeguards and a public outcome log.

ALREADY IN PLACE

The City's Project Homecoming has reunited more than 3,200 people with family since 2006.

WHY

Families are told there is nothing they can do. There are five lawful paths, each with different rules, and almost nobody knows them.

FIRST STEP

Housing and Human Services names one staff navigator for families and links a Family Path from the City homelessness page.

Each initiative is a resident draft. It goes to City Council only when a councilmember sponsors it. Nothing has been submitted to Council. Detail and sources for every ask: empowersantamonica.com/plan.html

03 · WHAT ALREADY WORKS

# The plan builds on what is working here, and on what works elsewhere.

**81%**

### SaMo Bridge

The City's diversion hub placed 81 percent of the people it connected in its first year into housing or treatment immediately: 462 referrals, 363 care plans, 233 people connected.

SMDP, May 22, 2026

**35**

### Beds at the Bell Shelter

On July 28, 2026, Council approved a Housing Focused System of Care funding 35 beds at The Salvation Army's Bell Shelter, so outreach and first responders always have a referral.

Santa Monica Next, Aug. 2026

**3,200+**

### Project Homecoming

Since 2006 the City's reunification program has connected more than 3,200 people with family willing to take them in.

City of Santa Monica, Jul. 2025

## PROVEN ELSEWHERE: THE CRISIS DROP-OFF

### Phoenix and Tucson

Connections Health Solutions crisis centers run a no-wrong-door policy: officers are back on patrol in under ten minutes, and 60 to 70 percent of people are stabilized and moved to community care within 24 hours.

Company-reported, 2021 and 2024

### San Antonio

The Restoration Center, open since 2008, lets police drop off without notice to a sobering unit, a medical clinic and crisis care under one roof.

Center for Health Care Services

### Los Angeles County

The Murphy Sobering Center on Skid Row runs 50 beds with stays under 24 hours. The model exists in this county. The Westside does not have one.

LA County DHS

> "When a bed is offered the same day and turned down, the rules already on the books should apply, every time, and the numbers should be public every month. No bed, no enforcement. A bed first, then the law."
>
> A FOUNDING MEMBER OF EMPOWER SANTA MONICA

04 · FOR FAMILIES

# Families are told there is nothing they can do. There are five lawful paths.

Almost nobody knows all five, and no City page explains them in one place. The plan asks for one City desk that does. Until then, here they are side by side.

| PATH | WHAT IT IS | WHO CAN START IT | HOW |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 **5150 hold, as changed by SB 43** | A 72-hour hold for evaluation when a person is a danger to self or others, or gravely disabled. Since Jan. 1, 2026 in LA County, a severe substance use disorder alone can qualify. | Only police or County-designated clinicians can start one. Family cannot, but family can call. | If someone is in danger, 911. Otherwise the LA County DMH 24/7 Help Line, (800) 854-7771, which dispatches mobile crisis clinicians. |
| 2 **CARE Court** | A civil court process that sets a treatment plan for an adult with a schizophrenia-spectrum disorder or bipolar I with psychotic features. Not for addiction alone. | Family can file. Filing is free. | Forms CARE-100 and CARE-101 at any of 12 LA Superior Court courthouses, including Stanley Mosk, 111 N. Hill St. lacourt.org/care · CARECourt@lacourt.org |
| 3 **Laura's Law (AOT)** | Court-ordered outpatient treatment for an adult with serious mental illness who keeps refusing care. | Family members can refer. | AOT-LA, 213-738-2440 · AOTLAOE@dmh.lacounty.gov |
| 4 **LPS conservatorship** | Longer-term court conservatorship for a person who is gravely disabled. | Only designated treatment facilities, agencies or the courts can refer to the Public Guardian. Family cannot file directly. | Ask the treating hospital or facility about a referral. |
| 5 **Bring them home** | Reunification with family who are ready to take a loved one in, with safeguards at both ends. | The person, with family on the other end. | The City's Project Homecoming, (310) 458-8953. |

### Family support

NAMI Westside LA family navigation: English **424-293-0645**, Spanish **424-293-0646**.

Crisis: call or text **988**, or text **LA** to **741741**.

> "Families are told there is nothing they can do. There are five lawful ways to act, and almost nobody knows them. One desk should explain all five."
>
> A FOUNDING MEMBER OF EMPOWER SANTA MONICA

General information, not legal advice. Sources: LA County DMH SB 43 FAQ and implementation release (Dec. 17, 2025); LA Superior Court, lacourt.org/care; LA County DMH AOT-LA; LA County DMH Public Guardian FAQ; City of Santa Monica, connect-with-homelessness-services.

05 · WHO WE ARE AND HOW WE WORK

# Neighbors, not the City. No money, no candidate, every number sourced.

## Who

Empower Santa Monica is a resident movement in Santa Monica. It began with one resident who got tired of watching. Everyone involved is a volunteer.

## How we work

- Nobody is paid. No donations, no ads.
- No party, candidate or company is endorsed or backed.
- Every number on the site links to its source.
- The plan, the Santa Monica Street Blueprint, is published under a Creative Commons license. Anyone can use it.
- We publish totals, never names, and never show the faces of people on the street.
- This is an early version. We keep refining and streamlining it as new numbers come out.

## Where it stands

Every proposal is a resident draft. Nothing has been submitted to the City Council, and no councilmember has sponsored any of it. Members speak during general public input at Council meetings and plan to ask for a sponsor after the Nov. 3 election. We post every step on the site.

## How residents get involved

1. **Take the two-minute survey**
   empowersantamonica.com/survey
2. **Add your name**
   behind the six initiatives
3. **Share a story**
   what you see on your block
4. **Watch the three-minute film**
   “3 Steps to a Safer Santa Monica”
5. **Print a flyer**
   for a café, library or bulletin board

## Boilerplate for reporters

**About Empower Santa Monica.** Empower Santa Monica is a resident movement in Santa Monica, not the City. It began with one resident who got tired of watching. Nobody is paid, it takes no donations, runs no ads and endorses no party, candidate or company. Its plan, the Santa Monica Street Blueprint, is published with every source at empowersantamonica.com under a Creative Commons license, and it is brought to whoever holds the seats.



**empowersantamonica.com**

The plan, the film, a who-to-call guide, the family path, and every source.

hello@empowersantamonica.com · X @EmpowerSMonica · Instagram @empower.santamonica

## 06 · PRESS FAQ

### Who is behind this?

Santa Monica residents, all volunteers. Members speak as "a founding member" to keep the focus on the plan. Questions go to hello@empowersantamonica.com, and we answer.

### What about people's rights?

Every lawful path has a time limit, a lawyer or advocate, and a judge. The person keeps their rights. The plan publishes totals, never names.

### Why now?

SB 43 took effect in LA County on Jan. 1, 2026, CARE Court is open, and the count fell from 812 to 718. The tools exist. The plan asks the City to use them and show the results every month.

### Is this a call for sweeps?

No. No bed, no enforcement. Every contact starts with a same-day offer of a real bed and treatment. Rules already on the books apply only after a bed is offered and turned down, with a warning first.

### What will it cost?

Much of the plan is direction and transparency: publishing contracts, a bed map and monthly totals. The drop-off builds on the $3M the City secured in 2023 plus county crisis dollars and Medi-Cal. The plan asks staff to report the costs publicly.

### Are you with a party or a candidate?

No. Empower Santa Monica takes no money and endorses no one. The plan goes to whoever holds the seats.

## 07 · SOURCES


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