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AB-249 Housing: Homeless Housing, Assistance, and Prevention program: youth-specific processes and coordinated entry systems. (2025-2026)

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Date Published: 03/27/2025 09:00 PM

AMENDED IN ASSEMBLY MARCH 27, 2025

CALIFORNIA LEGISLATURE— 2025–2026 REGULAR SESSION

ASSEMBLY BILL

NO. 249

Introduced by Assembly Member Ramos
(Coauthors: *Assembly Members Caloza and Haney*)

January 15, 2025

An act to add Section 50245 to the Health and Safety Code, relating to housing.

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

AB 249, as amended, Ramos. Housing: Homeless Housing, Assistance, and Prevention program: youth-specific processes and coordinated entry systems.

Existing law requires the Governor to create the Homeless Coordinating and Financing Council, renamed the California Interagency Council on Homelessness, to, among other things, identify mainstream resources, benefits, and services that can be accessed to prevent and end homelessness in California and to serve as a statewide facilitator, coordinator, and policy development resource on ending homelessness in California. Existing law establishes the Homeless Housing, Assistance, and Prevention program, administered by the Interagency Council on Homelessness, with respect to rounds 1 through 5, inclusive, of the program, and Department of Housing and Community Development (department), with respect to round 6 of the program, for the purpose of providing jurisdictions, as defined, with one-time grant funds to support regional coordination and expand or develop local capacity to address their immediate homelessness challenges, as specified. Existing law requires the department, upon appropriation, to distribute certain amounts, as specified, for purposes of round 6 of the program. Existing law requires an applicant to submit an application containing specified information in order to apply for a program allocation. Existing law requires an applicant to use at least 10% of specified funds allocated for services for homeless youth populations.

This bill would require a continuum of care, upon appropriation and beginning with the 2026–27 fiscal year, to annually certify that they create or maintain a youth-specific process with their respective coordinated entry system, as specified, implement a youth-specific assessment tool, create a body or identify an existing body composed of youth with lived experience of homelessness that the continuum of care and other Homeless Housing, Assistance, and Prevention ~~Program~~ *program* grantees must consult with regularly, and ~~create~~ *identify* an array of youth-specific housing inventory. The bill would require the continuum of care to

document in their application how the housing assessment is youth-specific and their prioritization policy if the continuum of care states they already maintain a youth-specific coordinated entry system.

The bill would also make findings and declarations related to youth-specific programs and the Homeless Housing, Assistance, and Prevention program.

Vote: majority Appropriation: no Fiscal Committee: yes Local Program: no

THE PEOPLE OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA DO ENACT AS FOLLOWS:

SECTION 1. The Legislature finds and declares all of the following:

(a) The Homeless Housing, Assistance, and Prevention program (Chapter 6 (commencing with Section 50216) and Chapter 6.5 (commencing with Section 50230) of Part 1 of Division 31 of the Health and Safety Code) is a ~~multi-round~~ **multiround** grant program administered by the Department of Housing and Community Development. Commencing with Round 3 of the Homeless Housing, Assistance, and Prevention program, applicants have been asked to prioritize their funding to make homelessness response systems improvements. Specifically, existing law indicates that applicants could use their funding to create a youth-specific coordinated entry system.

(b) Youth-specific coordinated entry systems allow youth to be assessed against other youth, rather than against adults, including chronically homeless adults, whose time on the street will always place them above youth if vulnerability is measured by time spent on the street and overall health. Further, youth need housing options that meet their developmentally appropriate needs, which would include a mix of rapid rehousing, time-limited or interim housing, and permanent supportive housing.

(c) In the 2023 Annual Homelessness Assessment Report to Congress from the federal Department of Housing and Urban Development, California reported the largest number of unaccompanied youth (10,173 people), accounting for more than a fourth of all unaccompanied youth nationally (29 percent), with 68.2 percent of these youth being unsheltered.

SEC. 2. Section 50245 is added to the Health and Safety Code, to read:

50245. (a) Upon appropriation, and beginning with the 2026–27 fiscal year, the department shall require a continuum of care to annually certify that they do all of the following:

(1) Create or maintain a documented, youth-specific process with their respective coordinated entry system. This process shall specify all of the following:

(A) How youth are matched to youth-specific resources.

(B) The means by which youth can access the coordinated entry system, which shall include factors in addition to length of time experiencing homelessness.

(C) How youth accessing the coordinated entry system through adult or family programs can access youth-specific supports.

(2) Implement a youth-specific assessment tool that considers the unique needs of youth experiencing homelessness and the unique presentation of homelessness among youth.

(3) Create a body or identify an existing body composed of youth with lived experience of homelessness that the continuum of care and other Homeless Housing, Assistance, and Prevention ~~Program~~ **program** grantees shall consult with regularly to receive input on policies, program design, and implementation of interventions for youth.

(4) ~~Create~~ **Identify** an array of youth-specific housing inventory to align with the needs of youth in their region.

(b) If a continuum of care states that they already maintain a youth-specific coordinated entry system, the continuum of care shall document all of the following in their application:

(1) How the continuum of care's housing assessment is youth-specific, including how the assessment is trauma-informed.

(2) The continuum of care's prioritization policy.

(c) For purposes of this section, "youth-specific" means for a homeless youth as defined in Section 8260 of the Welfare and Institutions Code.