

Benioff Homelessness and Housing Initiative



University of California
San Francisco

Aging, Health, and Homelessness: Findings from CASPEH and HOPE HOME

Margot Kushel, MD

Susan DeMarois

DeForrest Hancock

Marisa Espinoza, MPA



Agenda

- Opening Remarks and Framing
- Research Findings
- Policy Recommendations
- Panelist Q&A

Panelists



Margot Kushel, MD
BHHI Director



Susan DeMarois
*Director, California
Department of Aging*



DeForrest Hancock
*Lived Expertise Advisory
Board Representative*



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BHHI Policy Analyst

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The homeless population is aging

Proportion of single homeless adults who are ≥ 50



(The California Statewide Study of People Experiencing Homelessness, 2023; The Aging of the Homeless Population: Fourteen-year trends in San Francisco, 2006)

Toward a New Understanding

The California Statewide Study of
People Experiencing Homelessness

June 2023

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HOPE HOME Study

Health Outcomes of People Experiencing Homelessness in Older Middle age

- Aged 50 and older
- Homeless at time of enrollment
- Started 2013 and ongoing
- Followed every six months, regardless of housing
- NIA



Photo: Barbara Ries

Median Age: 47

(range 18-89)

48% of single adults
were 50+

41% of those 50+
first became homeless
at 50 or older



Older Adults Who Were Homeless Before Age 50

- More adverse life experiences
- Low-income attainment in early adulthood
- No spouse partner
- Mental health problems
- Alcohol use problems
- Traumatic brain injury
- Imprisonment



Photo: Barbara Ries

Brown RT, Hemati K, Riley ED, Lee CT, Ponath C, Tieu L, Guzman D, Kushel MB. Geriatric Conditions in a Population-Based Sample of Older Homeless Adults. *Gerontologist*. 2016 Feb 26. pii: gnw011.

Older Adults First Homeless After Age 50

- Low wage work throughout life
- Crisis
 - Job loss
 - Marital breakdown
 - Illness (participant, spouse)
 - Death (spouse, parent)
- Lack of advocacy and social support



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Brown RT, Hemati K, Riley ED, Lee CT, Ponath C, Tieu L, Guzman D, Kushel MB. Geriatric Conditions in a Population-Based Sample of Older Homeless Adults. *Gerontologist*. 2016 Feb 26. pii: gnw011.



*“It was a lot of different things but basically the **new owners took over, we were being evicted.***

My wife, she had just got out of the hospital, had the stroke and was blind....so, the daughter came up and said, ‘Don’t fight it, y’all can come stay with me for a couple months and save your money.’ So we said, ‘Okay’ ...[and didn’t fight the eviction].

After we moved out of the place, turned in the keys and everything we went over to her house and she said, ‘Y’all can’t stay here.’ And I said, ‘I got \$9 in my pocket,’

*I said, ‘At least let your mother spend the night because we don’t have enough money to get a motel room.’ She said, ‘No.’ **So that was the beginning.**”*

- HOPE HOME Participant

Pathways to Homelessness



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- Institutional settings: **19%**
- Non-leaseholding arrangements: **46%**
- Leaseholding arrangements: **35%**



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- Among participants 50+
 - Median monthly household income: **\$920**
- Non-Leaseholders
- Median monthly household income: **\$996**
 - Proportion who didn't pay rent **42%**
 - Median rent of those who pay rent: **\$412**
- Leaseholders
 - Median monthly household income: **\$1100**
 - Median monthly rent: **\$659**



*“So, **I've given my whole check up many times just to pay my rent.** Yeah. I would prefer to go broke paying my rent than to go broke and not have nothing at all. Even if it costs me my whole SSI check, I don't care. **As long as my rent gets paid, that's all I care.** My bills, my lights, I don't care.”*

- CASPEH Participant (54-year-old woman)

Experiences During Homelessness

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Places slept most in past 6 months

79% Unsheltered

- 21% Vehicle
- 58% Non-vehicle

21% Sheltered

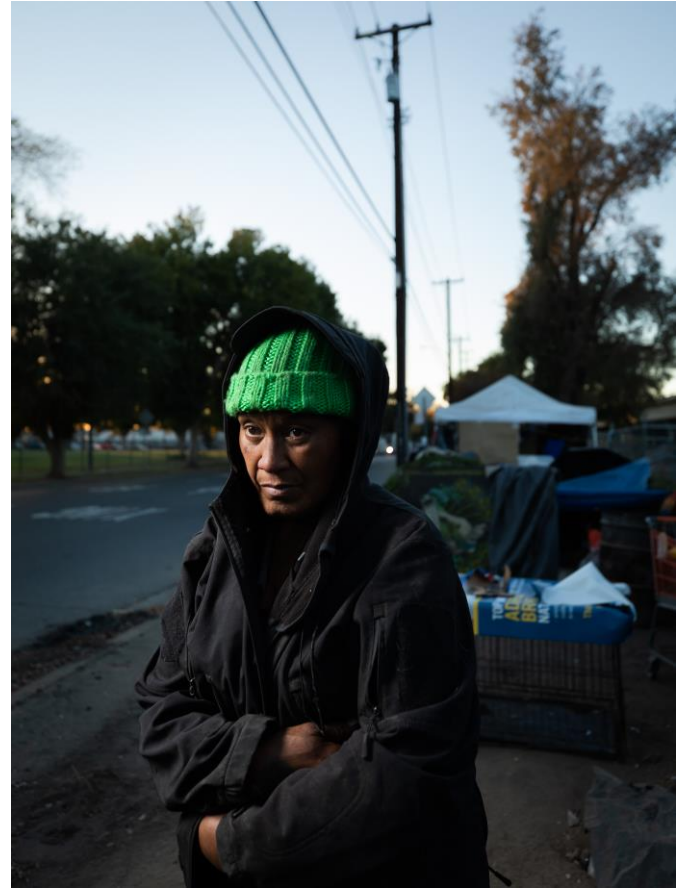


*“I tried many times on the streets to go to work, but it is **almost impossible because you have to have the address, the mailing address** to get your documentation. I just got my birth certificate and my social security, my ID. Um, all that stuff, you know, my income tax, my – all those records. I had just finally started getting back what I lost through my storage and being homeless, because those are important documentations that you need to get to work and get a loan and prove your history and that, yeah, that main thing. So, um, homelessness, **you are just kind of lost** and, um, you’re just lost, that’s what I say a lot, lost, right.”*

- CASPEH Participant

Health

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Among those 50 and older

- **53%** reported having fair/poor health
- **68%** reported at least one chronic health condition

43% reported difficulty with one or more activities of daily living

California Statewide Study of People Experiencing Homelessness | homelessness.ucsf.edu/CASPEH

23% 3 or more limitations

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32% reported difficulty with mobility



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Where participants slept most in past 6 months

Sheltered

39% had one or more ADL limitation

Unsheltered Outdoors

44% had one or more ADL limitation

Unsheltered Vehicle

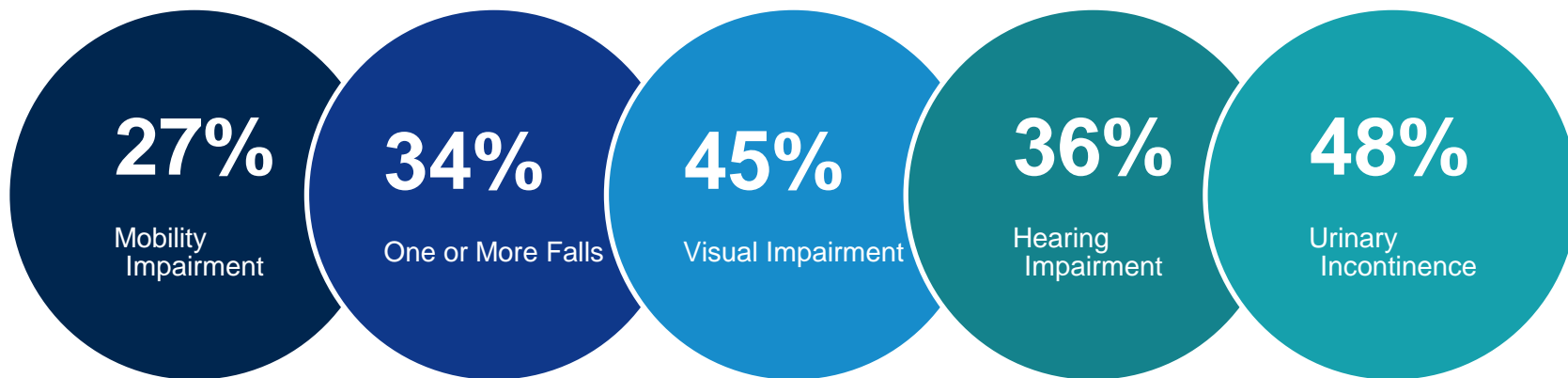
43% had one or more ADL limitation

26% had moderate-severe impairment on a screening test for global cognitive impairment

Hurstak E, Johnson JK, Tieu L, Guzman D, Ponath C, Lee CT, Jamora CW, Kushel M. Factors associated with cognitive impairment in a cohort of older homeless adults: Results from the HOPE HOME study. *Drug Alcohol Depend.* 2017 Sep 1;178:562-570. doi: 10.1016/j.drugalcdep.2017.06.002. PMID: 28738314; PMCID: PMC5568464.

35% had moderate-severe impairment on a screening test for executive function

Hurstak E, Johnson JK, Tieu L, Guzman D, Ponath C, Lee CT, Jamora CW, Kushel M. Factors associated with cognitive impairment in a cohort of older homeless adults: Results from the HOPE HOME study. *Drug Alcohol Depend.* 2017 Sep 1;178:562-570. doi: 10.1016/j.drugalcdep.2017.06.002. PMID: 28738314; PMCID: PMC5568464.



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50 is the new 75

38% wanted shelter but were unable to access it

Among those with 3 or more ADL limitations,

53% wanted shelter but were unable to access it

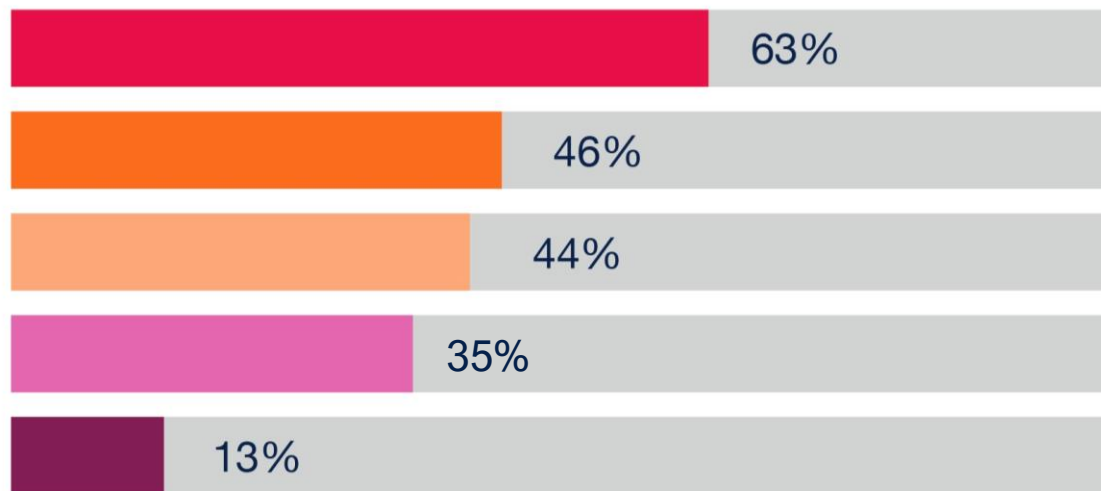


*“A lot of shelters, they don't have – **they're not equipped for disabilities, for handicapped, disabled.** You know? They don't have handrails in the showers. They don't have a ramp, you know... the disability can be a problem. **They don't accept us in a lot of shelters.**”*

- CASPEH Participant

Mental health symptoms experienced in the past 30 days for those 50+

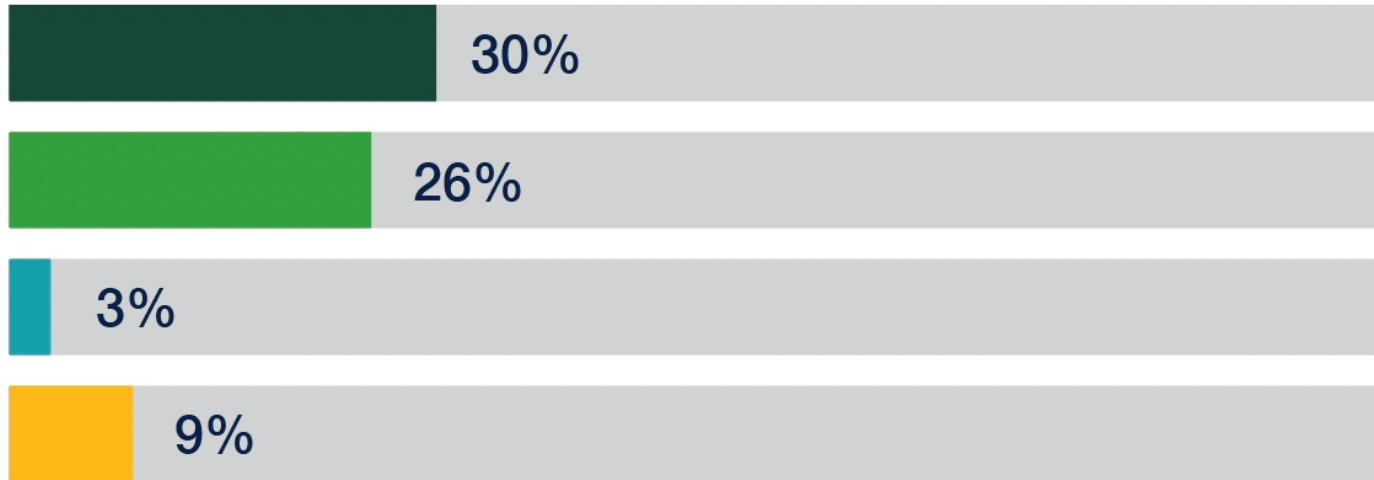
- Any mental health condition
- Anxiety
- Depression
- Trouble remembering, concentrating, or understanding
- Hallucinations



California Statewide Study of People Experiencing Homelessness | homelessness.ucsf.edu/CASPEH

Adults Ages 50 and Older

- Any substance 3+ a week
- Amphetamines 3+ times a week
- Cocaine 3+ times a week
- Opioids 3+ times a week



California Statewide Study of People Experiencing Homelessness | homelessness.ucsf.edu/CASPEH

- **8%** reported current heavy episodic alcohol use weekly

42% reported a complex behavioral need **EITHER**

- Current regular illicit drug use (30%)
- Heavy episodic alcohol use (weekly) (8%)
- Current hallucinations (13%) OR
- Recent mental health hospitalization (5%)

22% reported a complex behavioral health need

AND one or more ADL limitation

In the prior **six** months,

37% reported an ED visit

25% reported a physical health care hospitalization

5% reported a mental health hospitalization

Among HOPE HOME participants

148 confirmed deaths

Mortality Rates are

3.1x greater

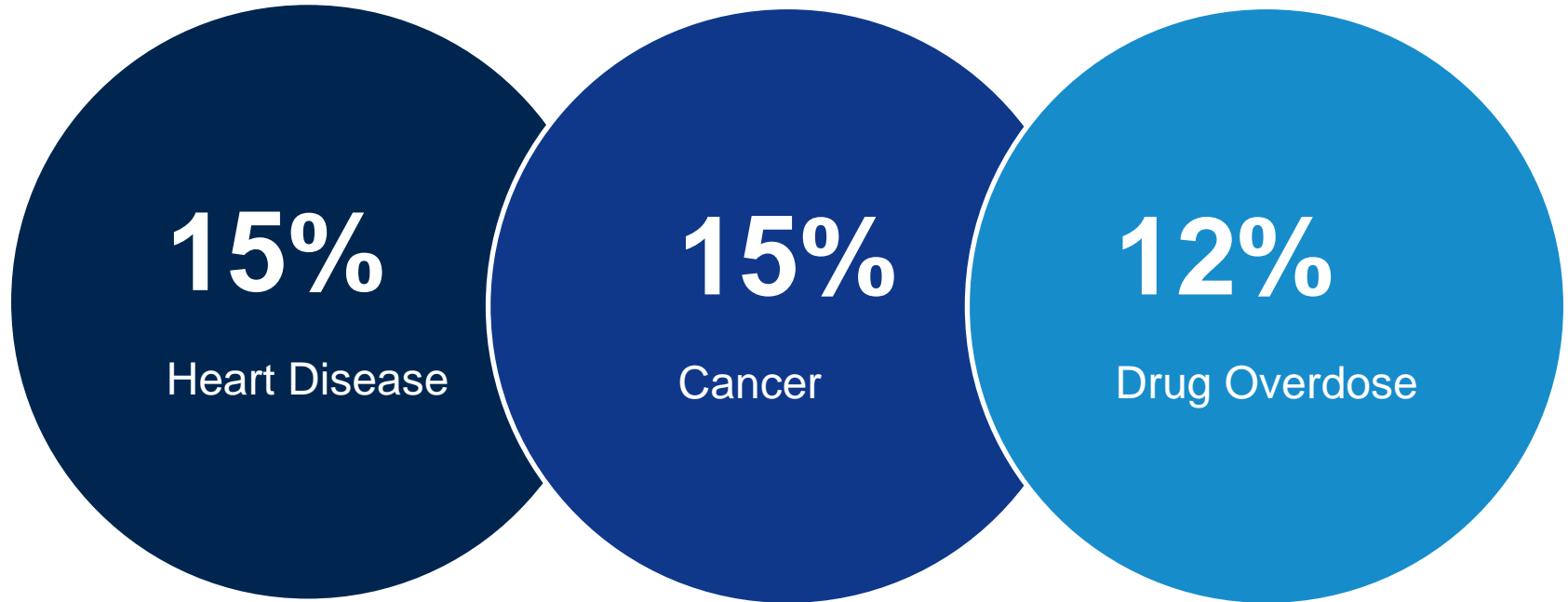
than general population for men

5.2x greater

than general population for women

Brown RT, Evans JL, Valle K, Guzman D, Chen YH, Kushel MB. Factors Associated With Mortality Among Homeless Older Adults in California: The HOPE HOME Study. *JAMA Intern Med.* 2022; doi: 10.1001/jamainternmed.2022.3697

Top causes of death among HOPE HOME participants



*Based on 117 deaths.

Brown RT, Evans JL, Valle K, Guzman D, Chen YH, Kushel MB. Factors Associated With Mortality Among Homeless Older Adults in California: The HOPE HOME Study. JAMA Intern Med. 2022; doi: 10.1001/jamainternmed.2022.3697

Barriers and Facilitators of Returns to Housing

I can't afford housing



Impacts ability to obtain housing

● A little ● A lot

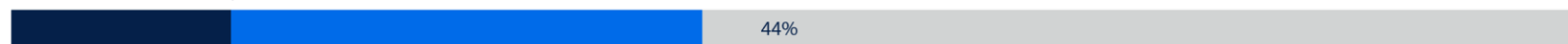
Barriers in Housing Among those 50 and Older

Impacts ability to obtain housing ● A little ● A lot

I experience discrimination when I try to rent a place



I do not have the necessary documents



I have a record with the criminal justice system



I have problems with my credit history or past evictions



I can't find a place that meets my needs due to physical disability





*“Most buildings that I have been in or been to have stairs – a lot of stairs. A lot of these **apartment buildings don't have accessibility for a wheelchair or for a left leg amputee.** So that's one of the major – and the money. [laughs] I don't receive enough money each month to live on my own in an apartment. Mm-hmm. **I don't have enough income.**”*

- CASPEH Participant

Conclusions

- The population experiencing homelessness is aging
- Many entering homelessness in late middle age
- Early onset of geriatric conditions including cognitive, functional, and mobility impairment
- Experience of homelessness is harrowing and filled with despair
- Homelessness systems need to be responsive to needs of aging population
- Ending homelessness will require sustained efforts to address root causes, particularly the severe shortage of deeply affordable housing

Policy Recommendation Areas

- **Responding to Homelessness**
- **Housing Connection**
- **Prevention**
- **Equity**
- **Housing Supports**

Responding to Homelessness

**Reduce
barriers to
shelter access**

**Create rapid
access to
physical and
behavioral
health services**

**Expand and
enhance street
outreach**

**Shift away
from criminal
justice system
responses to
homelessness**

Housing Connection

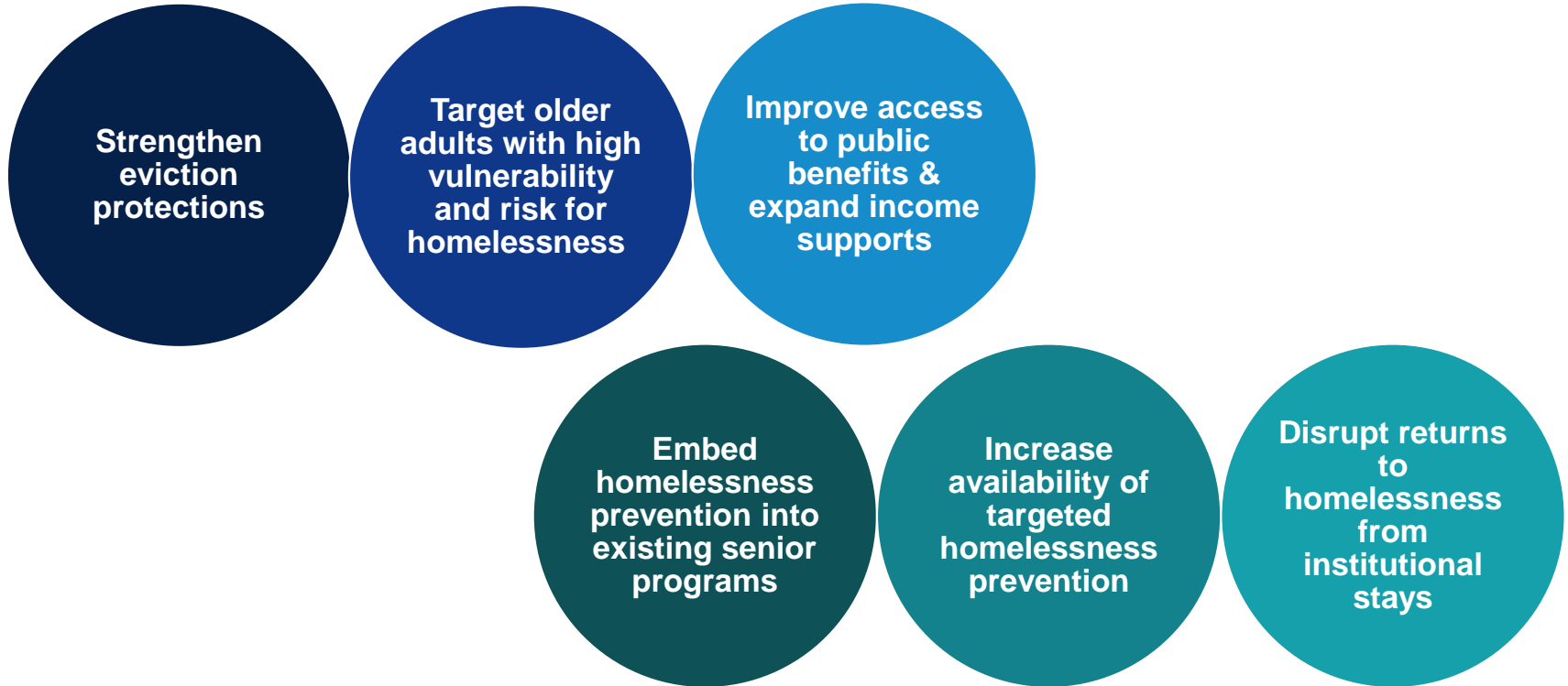
**Expand supply
of deeply
affordable
housing**

**Eliminate
barriers to
access
available
housing**

**Enhance
homeless
services
capacity to
meet needs of
older adults**

**Improve
implementation
of Cal AIM**

Prevention



Equity

Remove systemic housing barriers that perpetuate racial disparities

Combat ongoing discrimination in housing systems

Address racial disparities in homelessness systems

Prioritize equity in Coordinated Entry systems

Housing Supports

**Prioritize high
quality support
services in
permanent
housing**

**Implement
coordinated
service
strategies to
promote health
and stability in
housing**

**Support
ongoing
functional,
mobility, and
cognitive
needs of older
adults**