



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

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***** PRESS RELEASE *****

**MAYOR LONDON BREED ANNOUNCES POLICY CHANGES
TO INCREASE USAGE OF SUBSTANCE USE TREATMENT
BEDS**

In response to initial data from DPH's new bed inventory showing relatively high vacancy rate in some areas of City's substance use treatment system, the Department will implement several changes to increase utilization of the City's substance use treatment beds.

San Francisco, CA — Mayor London N. Breed and the Department of Public Health (DPH) today announced new efforts to increase the utilization of the City's voluntary substance use treatment beds and provide more people with treatment. DPH will take both immediate and longer-term steps to increase bed usage, including converting persistently vacant beds to types that are in greater demand.

In December 2019, DPH launched an online bed tracker that allows the public, providers, and potential clients to see where substance use treatment beds are available on a daily basis. Early data from the bed tracker reflects vacancy rates ranging from 5% to as much as 40% across different types of treatment beds.

“At a time when overdoses linked to fentanyl and methamphetamine are on the rise, it is critical that the City innovate with tools like FindTreatmentSF.org to make sure the treatment we are offering is actually helping our most vulnerable residents,” said Mayor Breed. “We know there are thousands of people on our streets who are suffering from substance use disorder but are not getting connected to treatment. We have to keep working to identify ways to improve the system and reduce barriers for people who need treatment if we are going to make a difference for the people we all see every day on our streets.”

“One of the ways we are going to transform behavioral health care in San Francisco for the most vulnerable population—those experiencing homelessness, mental illness and substance use disorder—is by making our system more transparent and easy to use,” said Director of Health Dr. Grant Colfax. “By clearly displaying hundreds of beds on FindTreatmentSF.org, we show providers, clients and their advocates that treatment is available and that wellness and recovery are possible.”

“This online tool was designed to enhance the transparency of San Francisco's substance use treatment system, and to allow DPH to make data-driven decisions about improving access,” said Dr. Anton Nigusse Bland, Director of Mental Health Reform. “With the important contributions of our community-based treatment providers, the data we collect from FindTreatmentSF.org will help us pinpoint barriers and eliminate them.”



The Department of Public Health will take several immediate and longer-term steps to increase utilization of the City's existing substance use treatment beds. The immediate actions by DPH will be:

- 1) Increase referrals to residential substance use treatment by further coordinating with the Homeless Outreach Team and other outreach workers. The results of the outreach and referrals will be recorded and provided to DPH on a weekly basis for analysis and problem-solving.
- 2) Work with providers to expand intake hours so that new clients can access treatment outside of 8:00am to 5:00pm.
- 3) Immediately review declined referrals to more quickly identify potential issues in the system and understand why potential clients were not able to access treatment. DPH will then use that information to train providers to reduce future deferrals. DPH will include the link to the bed inventory on its website and on SF.gov, the main website for the City, which will further increase access and visibility to the public.

By the end of this July, DPH will take additional steps to further increase the utilization of substance use treatment beds:

- 1) Evaluate the mix of bed types and convert persistently vacant beds to types that are in greater demand. For example, some residential treatment beds could be converted to residential step-down beds.
- 2) Conduct consumer research to better understand barrier to engagement and retention in residential treatment services.
- 3) Implement several actions to remove barriers to care and make it easier for clients seeking residential treatment to navigate screening, authorization, and bed enrollment.

About FindTreatmentSF.org

San Francisco's innovative new bed availability tracker provides real-time information about where substance use treatment beds are available. It shows a daily picture of the City's voluntary substance use treatment system, which includes nearly 500 beds that provide withdrawal management (detox), residential treatment, and residential step-down care to clients with substance use disorder. These beds are a subset of the City's behavioral health system that includes approximately 2,000 beds for mental health and substance use disorder, ranging from crisis services to transitional housing.

Mayor Breed included funding in the City Budget for Fiscal Years 2019-20 and 2020-21 for 212 new behavioral health beds.

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