



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

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**\*\*\* PRESS RELEASE \*\*\***

**MAYOR LONDON BREED ANNOUNCES LEASE FOR DRUG SOBERING CENTER IN SAN FRANCISCO**

*The City is moving forward to open San Francisco's first drug sobering center at 1076 Howard Street in SoMa*

**San Francisco, CA** — Mayor London N. Breed today announced the City is moving forward to open a drug sobering center for people who are experiencing the effects of fentanyl, methamphetamine, and other substances. Today, Mayor Breed will introduce a lease for the building at 1076 Howard Street at the Board of Supervisors. The drug sobering center pilot, a key component of Mental Health SF, is one of several innovative efforts underway to help people experiencing homelessness and behavioral health issues to get off the streets, into housing, and connected with services.

The goals of the drug sobering center include saving lives by preventing overdose deaths, reducing the harms of substance use in the surrounding neighborhood, and providing resources that can give people who use drugs an alternative to hospital and jail stays and an opportunity to begin their journey toward wellness and recovery when they are ready. The center will provide an additional resource and a destination for people served by the growing Street Crisis Response Team (SCRT) pilot program and other City outreach teams.

“The public drug use we see on our streets hurts those who are suffering from addiction as well as the surrounding communities,” said Mayor Breed. “This location will provide a safe place for our Street Crisis Response Team and other outreach efforts to bring people who are using drugs and should not be left to themselves. It’s a way we can intervene, address the immediate issue, and then also get them connected to the longer-term services and support they need.”

This new sobering center will be located in a brick-and-mortar facility at 1076 Howard Street. The City originally planned to pilot the center at 180 Jones Street, but, due to COVID-19, that site has since been converted to a Safe Sleeping Site. If the lease is approved by the Board of Supervisors, the City will gather community input on the program, oversee building renovations, and implement a drug sobering center pilot program in Fall 2021.

“Creating a drug sobering center will save lives,” said Dr. Grant Colfax, Director of Health. “When we welcome people who are experiencing the effects of substance use into a supportive place, off the street, we can create safety for them and for our neighborhoods.”

The Department of Public Health (DPH) is proposing to contract with HealthRIGHT 360, which manages many successful healthcare and substance use treatment programs throughout the city and across the state, to operate the drug sobering center. Healthcare and safety workers, many



with lived experience of substance use, will staff the program. It will be a 20-bed pilot project where clients may stay an average of eight to ten hours, though some may stay longer. The facility will initially be able to serve up to 20 individuals at a time, but over the course of a 24-hour period, may serve up to three times that amount. Findings from this effort will inform near-term future investments to save lives and promote safety in SoMa and throughout the city. DPH will evaluate the pilot program and refine the model for replication in other locations in San Francisco.

At the center, the City will offer harm reduction services in a safe, welcoming setting with peer counselors and health services. People under the influence of methamphetamine, fentanyl, and other substances can move safely through intoxication, then have an opportunity to engage in conversation about wellness and recovery options available to them, and be connected to housing resources.

Specifically, services will include one-on-one peer support; access to clothing, showers, and hygiene supplies; on-site security for safety monitoring; access to harm-reduction supplies and education; and health assessments and first aid. Additionally, the center will connect clients to other services including referrals to primary medical care and psychiatric services; social services including housing; and vocational services for job training and future employment.

“Mental Health SF is an opportunity to transform behavioral health care in San Francisco, and it’s already well under way with efforts like the Street Crisis Response Team pilot,” said Dr. Hillary Kunins, DPH’s new Director of Behavioral Health Services and Mental Health SF. “The drug sobering center will be an important part of our expanding continuum of care for people experiencing homelessness, substance use disorders and mental illness.”

“HealthRIGHT 360 is pleased to be partnering with the Mayor’s office, the Department of Public Health and our community to offer a humane, compassionate, and non-coercive space for people under the influence of drugs,” said Vitka Eisen, MSW, Ed.D, President and Chief Executive Officer of HealthRIGHT 360. “We see this program as an opportunity to prevent drug overdoses, and to connect people to care. Operating 24 hours per day, 7 days a week, this program is an integral part of a public health response to drug use and community health for San Franciscans.”

Under Mayor Breed’s leadership, the City is focused on addressing homelessness, mental health, and substance use disorders, with a focus on three main areas: creating more places for people to go; expanding outreach and coordination among services and placement; and strengthening data and transparency tracking tools. The drug sobering center will make progress on all three areas by offering a new place for people to go and get connected with existing City services. The drug sobering center pilot will be evaluated and use of the facility will be tracked by DPH, furthering the City’s efforts to ensure programs are working and make adjustments to programs as needed.

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