



# County of San Mateo

## Inter-Departmental Correspondence

**Department:** BOARD OF SUPERVISORS  
DISTRICT 5  
**File #:** 20-878

Board Meeting Date: 11/17/2020

**Special Notice / Hearing:** None  
**Vote Required:** Majority

**To:** Honorable Board of Supervisors  
**From:** Supervisor David J. Canepa, District 5  
Supervisor Don Horsley, District 3  
**Subject:** Rent Assistance Program for Residents of RCFEs in the County Experiencing Housing Insecurity During the COVID-19 Pandemic

### **RECOMMENDATION:**

Adopt a resolution:

- A) Authorizing the contribution of \$500,000 in federal Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security (CARES) Act Funds, or other funds as determined by the County Manager, to a program administered by the Institute on Aging San Francisco for the provision of rent assistance grants to residents of Residential Care Facilities for Elderly in San Mateo County who are unable to pay back rent or current or future rent due through December 30, 2020 in order to prevent eviction and resulting homelessness and minimize the risk of infection and death due to COVID-19 (RCFE Rent Assistance Program); and
- B) Authorizing the County Manager, or designee, to negotiate and execute an agreement with Institute on Aging San Francisco for the administration and disbursement of \$457,604 in grants from the RCFE Rent Assistance Program and an administrative fee of \$42,396 for a total amount not to exceed \$500,000 for a term of November 17, 2020 through December 30, 2020.

### **BACKGROUND:**

#### Housing Insecurity for Residents of RCFEs in County During Pandemic

Residential Care Facilities for Elderly (“RCFEs”) are board and care homes for individuals age 60 and older that are licensed by State of California Department of Social Services, Community Care Licensing Division. In addition to providing accommodations, RCFEs also provide care to elderly residents, such as by accompanying them to medical appointments and assisting with dressing and

other daily living activities.

The Ombudsman Services of San Mateo County Inc. (the “Ombudsman”) works to ensure the protection of residents of long-term care facilities, including RCFEs, in the County through advocacy, direct intervention and education in collaboration with service providers. According to the Ombudsman, there are 248 RCFEs in the County, with their individual capacity ranging from 6 beds to 50 beds per facility, and a collective capacity of 5,346 beds.

Rents at RCFEs can be costly, especially given that Medi-Cal does not cover these expenses. The cost of rent depends on a variety of factors, such as the type of accommodations (e.g., apartment, private room, shared room), the range of services needed, and the geographic area. According to California Advocates for Nursing Home Reform, the average monthly rental cost for RCFEs in California is over \$3,000, with costs ranging from a low of around \$900 per month for a resident on Supplemental Security Income to over \$5,000 per month for private pay residents.

RCFE costs in San Mateo County are even higher than the State averages. According to data from the Ombudsman, RCFE monthly rents in the County range from \$4,000 to as high as \$8,000. Though many RCFE residents receive monthly Social Security Income, such benefits, which can range from \$1,500 to \$2,500, often fall far short of covering the total cost of rent.

According to the Ombudsman, potential eviction of residents of RCFEs due to an inability to pay rent has become a growing concern in the County, particularly now that there is dearth of alternative housing arrangements for these residents and the COVID-19 public health emergency continues. Indeed, the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (the “CDC”) has determined that older adults are at the highest risk for being infected by or dying from COVID-19. The CDC has found that there are also other factors that increase the risk for developing severe illness from COVID-19, including having underlying medical conditions, and that people experiencing unsheltered homelessness may be at greater risk for infection when there is community spread of COVID-19.

#### Institute on Aging San Francisco

Institute on Aging San Francisco (“IOA”) is a non-profit organization that works to enhance the quality of life for adults as they age by enabling them to maintain their health, well-being, independence and participation in the community. IOA not only serves and provides programs for seniors and aging adults but also serves those with disabilities, veterans, psychology students, mental health professionals, and social service workers. IOA provides various free and paid services for those living in San Mateo County, as well as those residing in Alameda County, Contra Costa County, Marin County, San Francisco County, and Santa Clara County.

IOA continues to provide seniors and adults living with disabilities much needed support during this time of COVID-19. IOA programs have been adjusted to meet the recommendations from the CDC and the State Department of Public Health, focusing on the health and safety of its clients and staff.

#### **DISCUSSION:**

Creation of the RCFE Rent Assistance Program to support residents of RCFEs in the County who are experiencing housing insecurity during the COVID-19 pandemic is critical. Upon eviction, these residents either face the specter of homelessness and a heightened risk of infection and death due to COVID-19 based on their advanced age, having underlying health conditions and being

unsheltered, or acute care hospitalization, which would then reduce hospital capacity for admitting patients infected with COVID-19 or suffering from COVID-19 related complications.

Upon the request of the sponsoring Supervisors, staff identified several potential partners to establish and administer the RCFE Rent Assistance Program for RCFE residents in the County substantially impacted by housing insecurity during the COVID-19 pandemic. IOA was chosen based on its experience providing support to seniors and adults with disabilities and its existing relationships with service providers and community partners and local agencies engaged in similar work, including the Ombudsman, Health Plan of San Mateo, County Behavioral and Health Recovery Services, and County Aging and Adult Services.

With the Board's approval, the County will make an upfront contribution of \$500,000 in CARES Act funds, or other funds as determined by the County Manager, to IOA to fund the RCFE Rent Assistance Program, \$457,604 of which will be allocated to grants for qualifying residents of RCFEs and \$42,396 for payment of administrative fees incurred by IOA in its administration of the Program and disbursement of grant funds.

To qualify under the RCFE Rent Assistance Program, an applicant must (1) be a resident of an RCFE in San Mateo County; (2) be unable pay outstanding rent or be unable to pay current or future rent due through December 30, 2020 such that the applicant is at risk of eviction; and (3) upon eviction, the applicant would be homeless and consequently, at heightened risk of infection or death due to COVID-19.

IOA will develop an application form for the RCFE Rent Assistance Program based on the above eligibility requirements, and review and approve the eligibility of each applicant. IOA will maintain records that establish eligibility for each applicant served, including required documentation and forms to verify residency, inability to pay rent such that applicant is at risk of eviction, COVID-19-related impact upon eviction, and the vendor to whom payment is made on behalf of the eligible applicant.

Through the application form, IOA will also gather demographic information on potential rent assistance grant recipients, including their age, the name and address of their RCFE, their preferred language, and whether the recipient is able to apply on his or her own or has a legal decision-maker (such as a power of attorney or conservator).

IOA will also conduct outreach to identify current residents who may be falling behind or are currently delinquent on rent payments to their RCFE operators and who would be at heightened risk from COVID-19 if they were to be evicted. Specifically, IOA will contact RCFEs in San Mateo County, as well as community partners and local agencies, to collaboratively identify potentially-eligible RCFE residents. Following identification of RCFE residents falling behind or currently delinquent on rent payments, IOA will work with the RCFE resident and/or their legal decision-maker to complete the intake application form. IOA will utilize its own translation services for limited English speaking or non-English speaking RCFE residents, as necessary, for translation of communications and documents in Spanish, Mandarin, and Cantonese.

For applicants who meet the eligibility criteria and documentation requirements, IOA will, subject to availability of RCFE Rent Assistance Program grant funds, issue payment in full, or in part, for delinquent rent or rent due to RCFE operators through December 30, 2020. IOA will maintain records for all issued payments and provide final report to the County for all funding expended after the conclusion of the RCFE Rent Assistance Program on December 30, 2020.

The County Manager will work in coordination with the County Counsel to prepare and execute, on behalf of the County, an agreement with IOA that implements the intent of this resolution.

County Counsel has reviewed and approved the resolution as to form.

**FISCAL IMPACT:**

Funding for the RCFE Rent Assistance Program will come from CARES Act funds to the maximum extent possible. Should the County be unable to use CARES Act funds for all aspects of this Program, supplemental funding will come from other County funds as determined by the County Manager.