



# General Assistance Program and SSI Advocacy



Presented to:

BOS Social Services Committee

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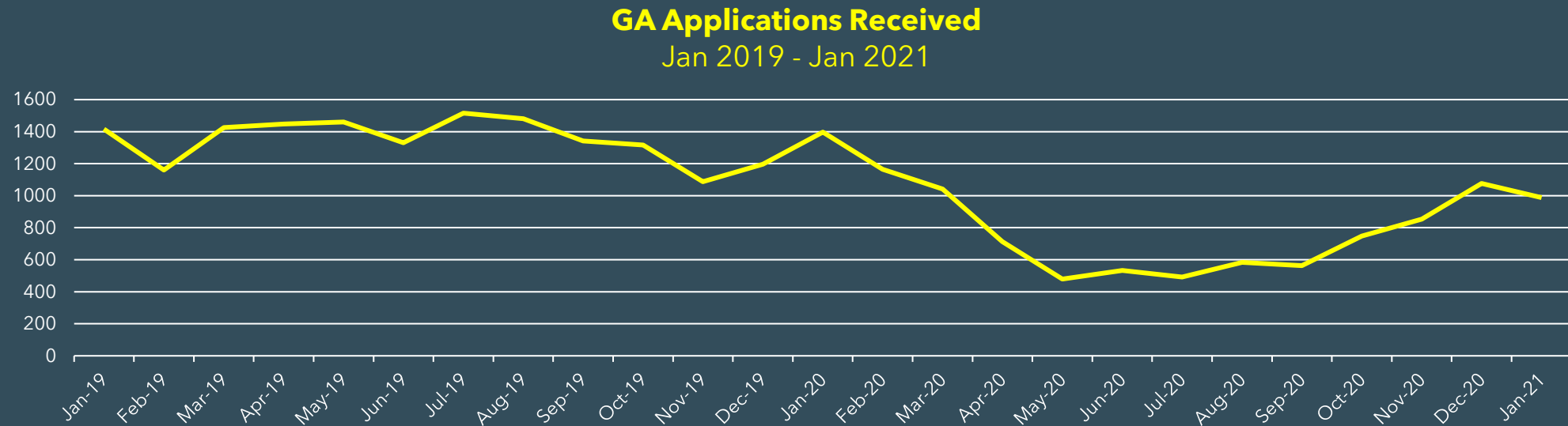
# Agenda

- General Assistance Enrollment
- COVID-19 Program Waivers
  - Renewal Waiver
  - Medical Documentation Time Extension
- Remote Services
  - Online Applications
  - Telephonic Signature
  - Telephone Interview
- Homeless Assistance
  - CalFresh E&T Housing Support Supportive Services
  - Housing and Emergency Lodging Program (HELP)
- SSI Advocacy

# General Assistance Enrollment: 2019 vs. 2020

- **General Assistance Enrollment**

- Steady decline in GA applications received since August 2019, pre COVID-19 Shelter-In-Place (SIP).
- Sharp decline in GA applications received starting May 2020, during SIP.
- Increase in GA applications received starting October 2020.
- Upward trend in applications received during the last quarter of 2020.



# General Assistance Enrollment - cont'd

- **Possible Factors for Decline in GA Applications**

- March 19, 2020 SIP Mandate
  - Communities were locked down and observing the SIP mandate.
  - Reduced in-person office visits.
  - Due to the SIP WBA lobbies were operating under a limited services model which may have caused confusion for applicants and recipients.
- Alameda County's unemployment rate (2.5-3.1% in 2019); below the State's average (3.9-4.2% in 2019)
  - Alameda County Unemployment Rate increased in April 2020 (14.1%)
- Unemployment Insurance Benefits (UIB)
  - Some clients received UIB making them income ineligible for GA.
  - Some clients were victims of UIB fraud.

**How Did WBA  
Respond?**

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**What Has WBA  
Done?**

# COVID-19 Program Waivers

- **Renewal Waiver**

- From March 2020 through June 30, 2020, all GA renewals were waived.
  - GA recipients did not have to submit renewals.
  - GA benefits were not terminated for not completing a renewal during this time period.

- **Medical Documentation Time Extension**

- Since March 19, 2020, GA clients who are deemed to be or state that they are unemployable and are unable to see a medical professional to have them complete/provide the necessary information, are given a time extension until the public health emergency ends (or until further notice).

# Remote Services: Remote Applications

- **Online Applications**

- Effective September 30, 2020, the Social Services Agency (SSA) implemented an online GA application that can be used at both intake and renewal.
- The online GA application is available to complete and submit on SSA's public website at <https://GAOnlineApplication.acgov.org>.

- **Telephonic Signature**

- Effective September 16, 2020, telephonic signature was implemented for GA applications.
- Effective November 12, 2020, telephonic signature was implemented for Form SSP 14, Authorization For Reimbursement of Interim Assistance.

# Remote Services: Telephone Interviews

- **Telephone Interviews**

- Effective March 19, 2020, Intake eligibility interviews for GA applicants are scheduled and conducted via the telephone.
- Effective June 01, 2020 until further notice, GA renewal interviews are scheduled and conducted via the telephone.

- **Telephone Assessments**

- Effective March 19, 2020, Social Worker (SW) evaluations and Mental Health assessments (conducted by County contracted Mental Health Clinicians) are conducted via the telephone.

\*Clients are given in-person appointments if they do not have access to a working telephone or face other barriers preventing them from using remote services.



# Remote Services: LaterDocs

- **LaterDocs**

- Code For America launched an online document submitting platform called LaterDocs for applicants and recipients to submit necessary documents and verifications.
  - LaterDocs can be for all programs (CalFresh, CalWORKs/RCA, General Assistance, and Medi-Cal) that an individual or family applies for or is enrolled in.
  - LaterDocs is a secure platform that is currently functioning in all 58 California counties.
  - Eligibility staff will have access to documents within 15-20 minutes after submission.
  - Clients will receive a confirmation e-mail or text message after submission of all their documents.

[GetCalFresh.org/docs](https://getcalfresh.org/docs)

# Employment Development Department (EDD) Fraud

- **EDD Fraud is an Issue**

- Effective December 18, 2020, WBA implemented a business process change when individuals report they are not receiving UIB and believe there is fraud that contradicts county information.
- Individuals who report that they are victims of UIB fraud and cannot provide a notice of fraudulent activity from EDD or a police report can submit a statement under penalty of perjury in order to continue with the application or ongoing case management process.

# General Assistance Demographics

(point-in-time as of 2/16/2021)

**46**

Average Age

**9.8%**

Employable

**348**

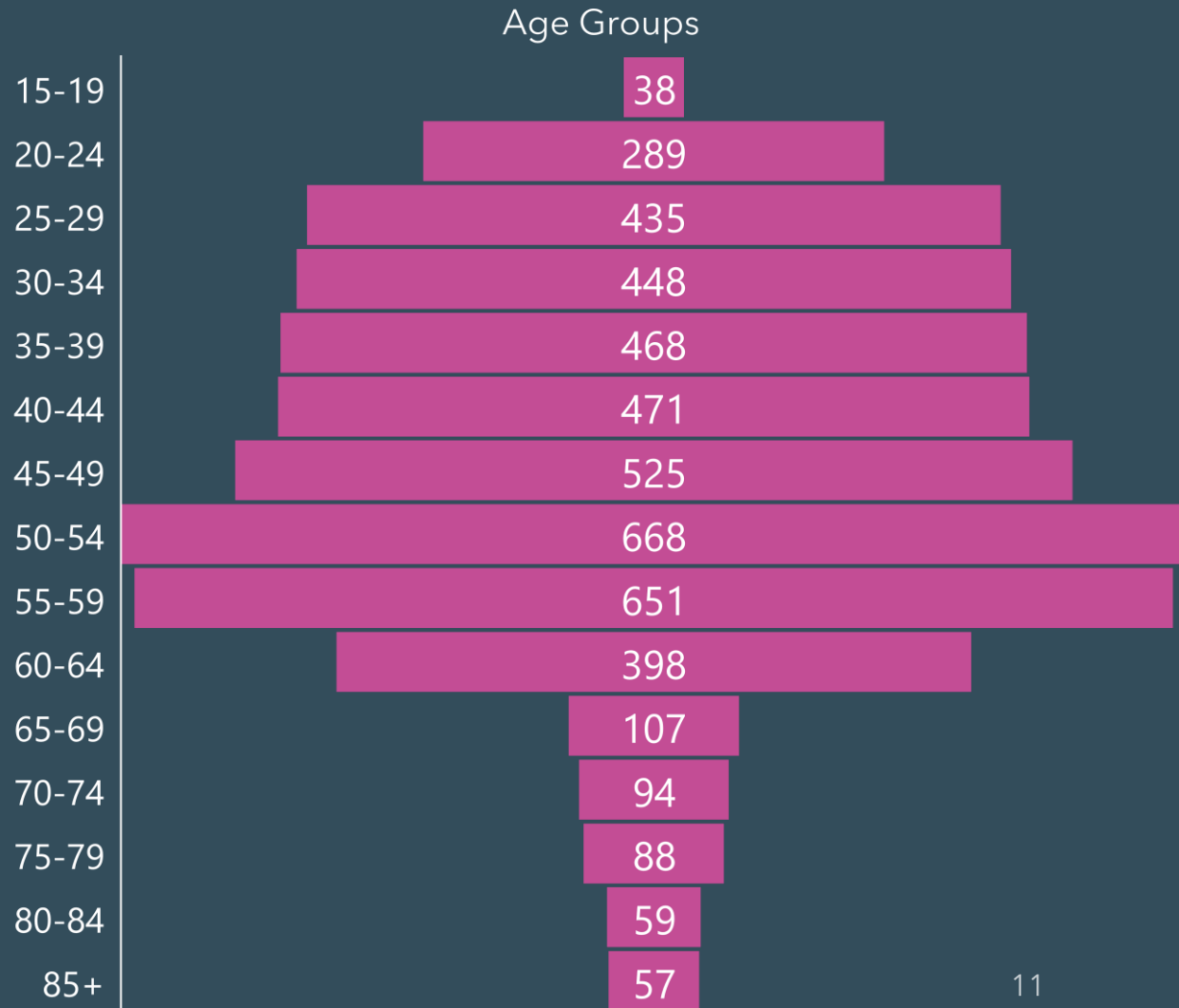
Employable  
Individuals

**90.2%**

Unemployable

**3,219**

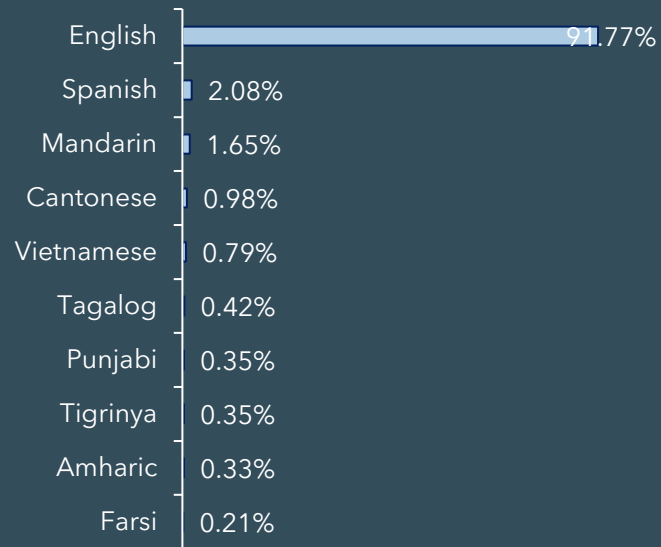
Unemployable  
Individuals



# General Assistance Demographics

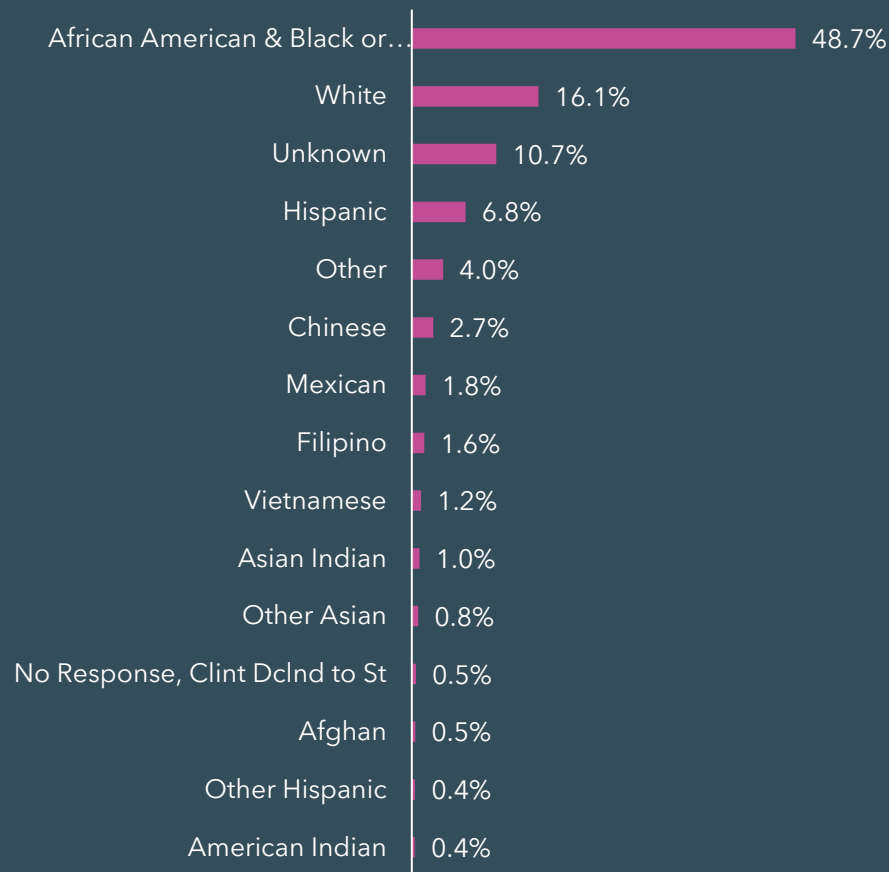
## (point-in-time as of 2/16/2021)

Languages  
(Top 10)



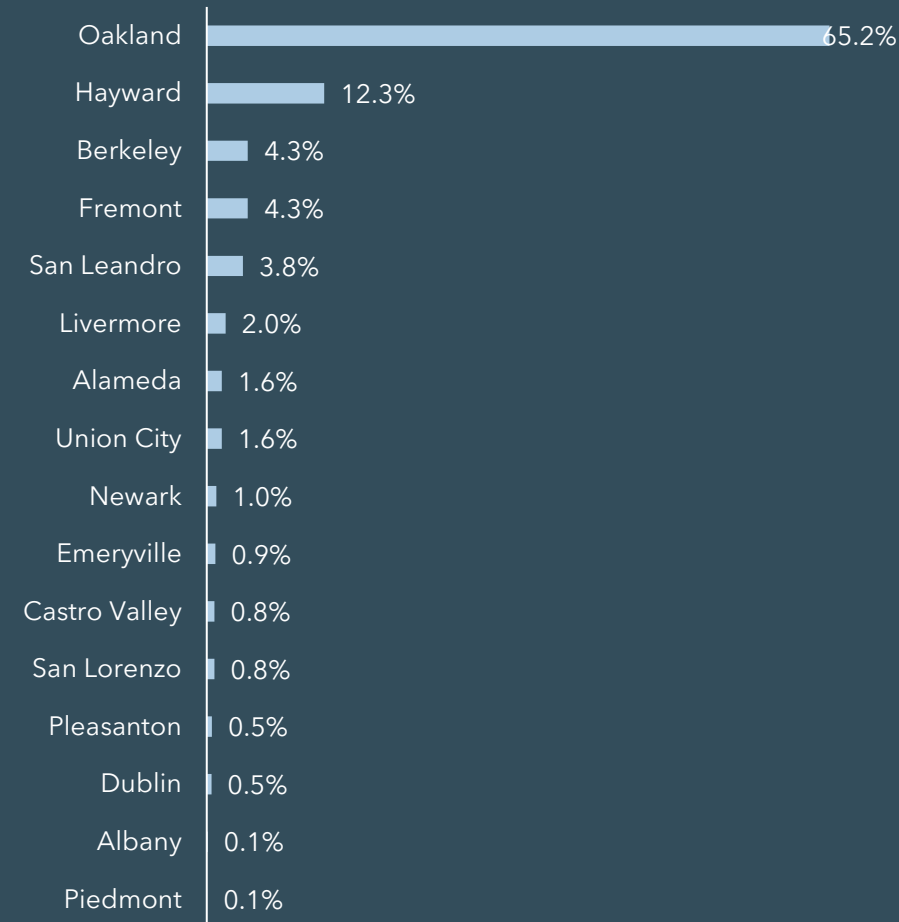
\*Top 10 languages make up 98.9% of total

Ethnicity  
(Top 15)

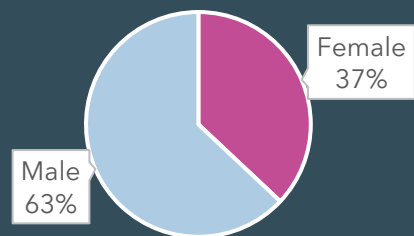


\*Top 15 ethnicities make up 97.3% of total

City



Gender



# Financial Assistance with Housing Cost

- **CalFresh Employment & Training (E&T) Housing Stabilization Supportive Services**

- GA clients that are also receiving CalFresh and are participating in the CalFresh E&T program can be referred for Housing Support supportive services, if they have been identified by Alameda County SSA staff or a CalFresh E&T 3rd party partner as being homeless or at risk of homelessness.
  - Eligible clients can receive financial assistance with delinquent rent or move in costs for up to \$5,000 within a 12-month period.

# Financial Assistance with Housing Cost

- **Housing and Emergency Lodging Program (HELP)**
  - HELP is available to any single adult individual in Alameda County who does not meet the Season of Sharing criteria.
  - HELP will provide one-time crisis-based financial assistance for critical housing needs to help homeless individuals transition to permanent housing and individuals at-risk of becoming homeless maintain their current housing.

# SSI Advocacy Update

# SSI Advocacy Program Elements

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Disability Advocacy

SSI Advocacy Behavioral Health Treatment and Case Management

GA Housing Subsidy - Revolving Loan Fund

Homeless Disability Advocacy Program (HDAP)



# SSI Advocacy Project Overview

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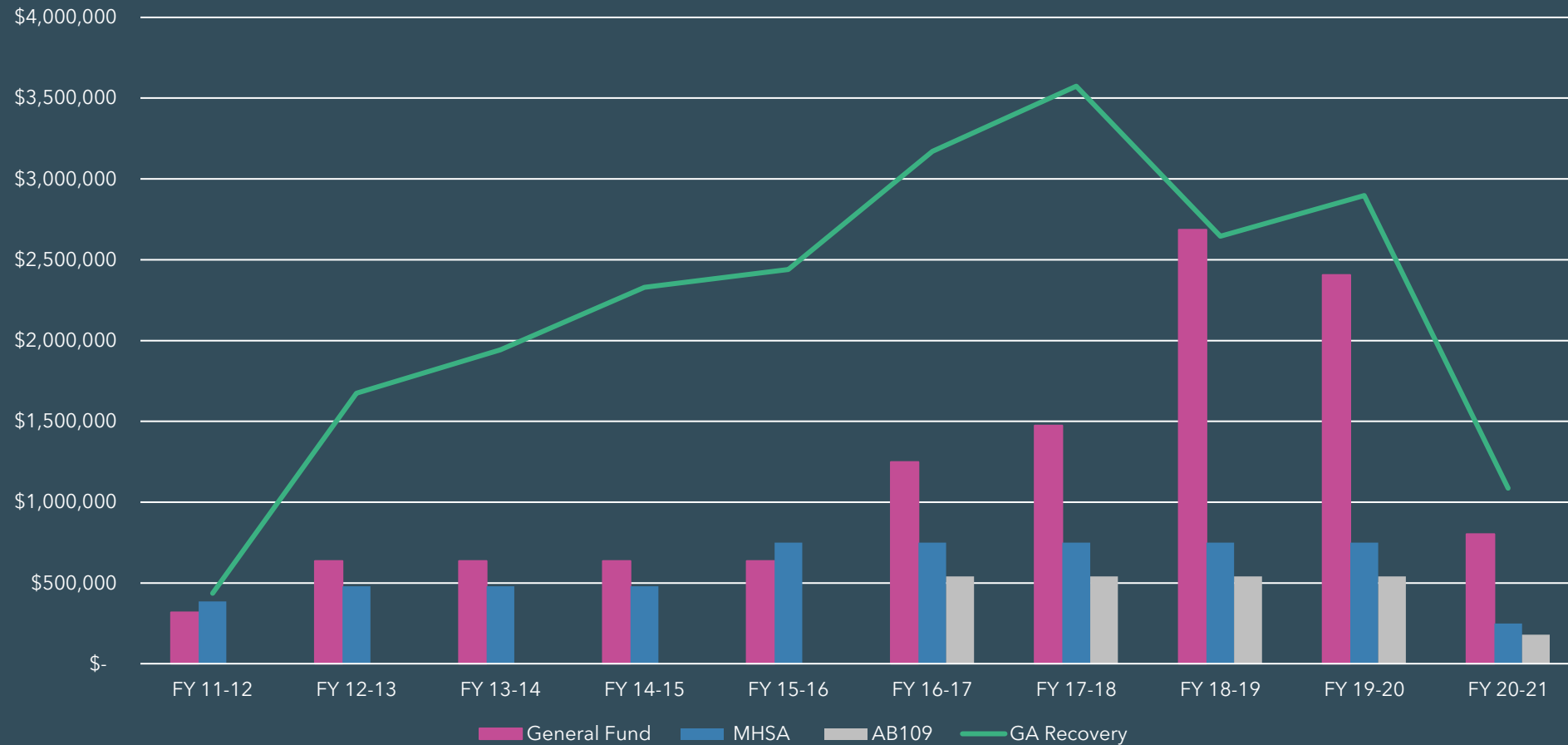
Since January 1, 2012:

- 8,720 Clients Served
  - 5,218 Approved
  - 1,852 Pending\*
  - 1,650 Denied

\*COVID - 19 has reduced current cases open

- \$241,747,889 in Disability Benefits to Clients

# SSI Advocacy Recoveries vs SSI Advocacy Cost



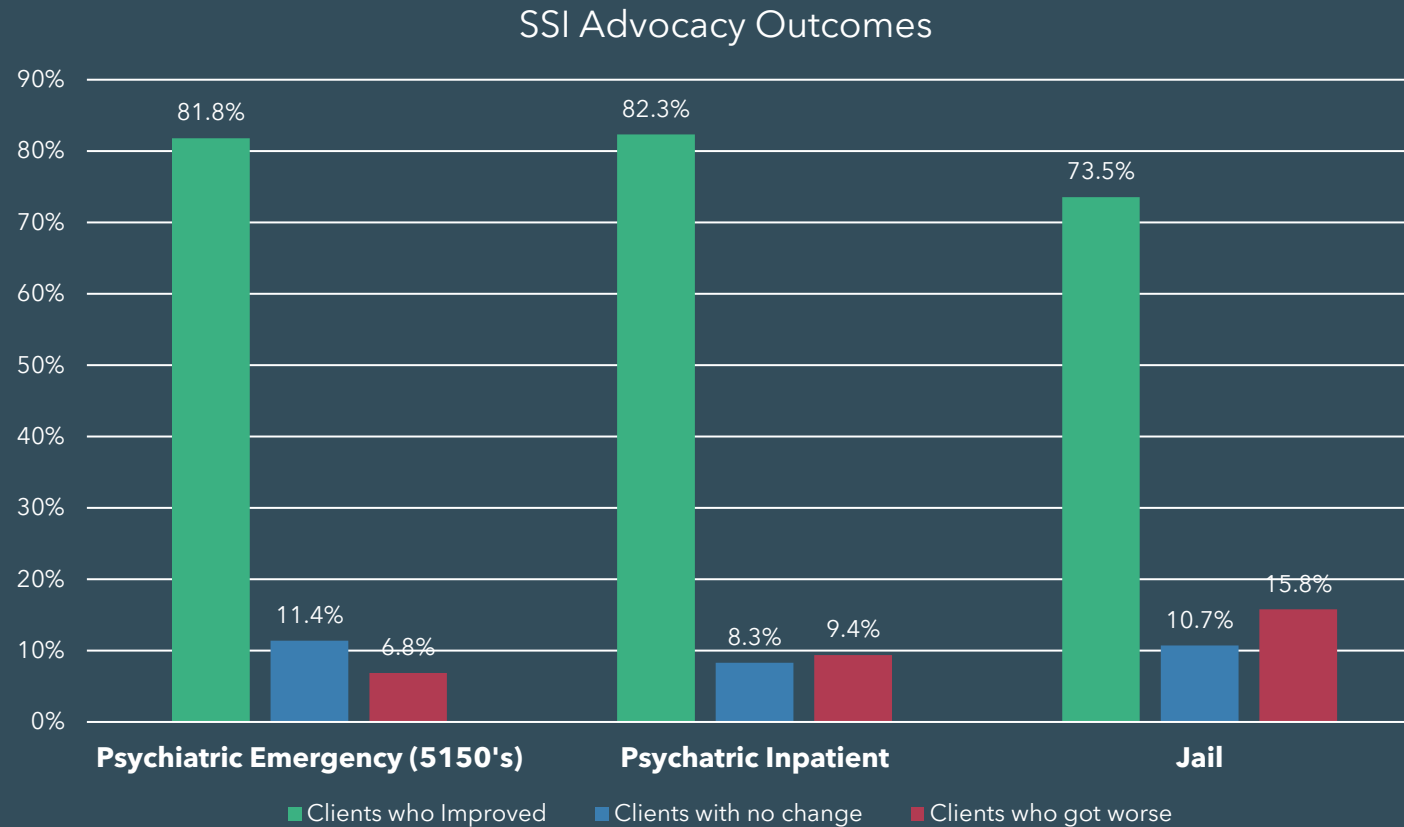
# SSI Advocacy Recovery Overview

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- Since January 1, 2012
  - General Fund Expended - \$11,481,221
  - General Fund Recovered - \$16,016,916
- Potential Recoverable General Fund in Currently Open Cases - \$ 10,686,469
- Other Funding Streams Leveraged
  - MHSA - \$5,826,667
  - AB109 - \$2,340,000
  - Federal Cost Reimbursement - \$21,234,841

# Client Outcomes

- Comparing 12 months before receiving disability benefits to 12 months after



# SSI Advocacy Behavioral Health Treatment and Case Management

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987 clients served

- Clinicians Paired with Peer Case Managers
- Mental Health Treatment, Care Coordination, & Housing Case Management
- Increased Approval Rate – Clients served by Case Management are 76% less likely to lose contact with their SSI Advocate

Funding

- Specialty mental health billing with enhanced Federal Financial Participation (FFP) due to Medicaid Coverage Expansion (MCE) population
  - **95% Federal & State Reimbursement**
  - **5% Mental Health Service Act (MHSA)**

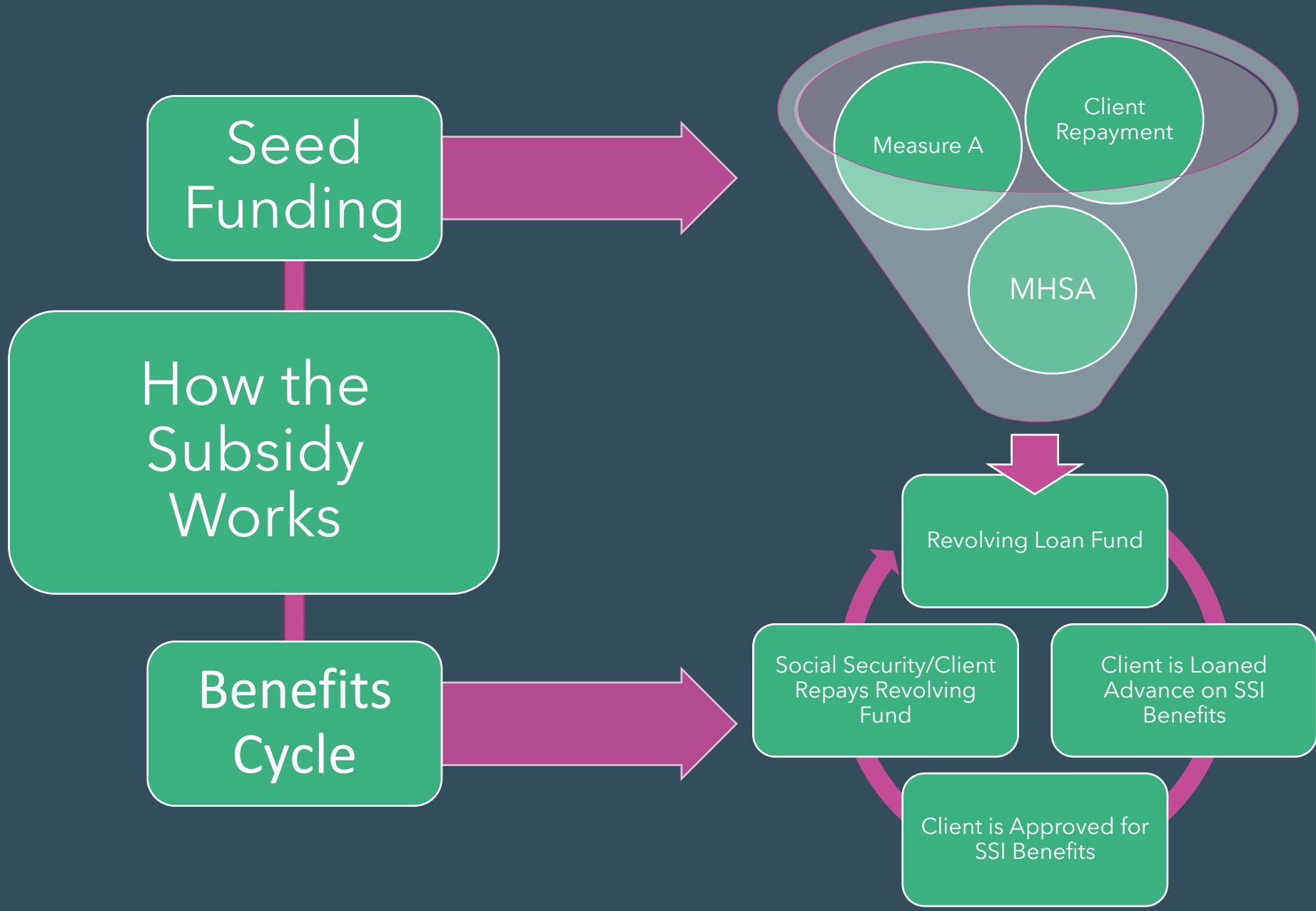
# Alameda County's GA Housing Subsidy – Revolving Loan Fund

## GA Housing Subsidy

- Advances clients additional \$403/month while awaiting benefits determination
- Clients repay loan as Interim Assistance Reimbursement (IAR)
- 2,306 clients served
- Clients who receive the GA Housing Subsidy have a 120% higher approval rate!

## Funding

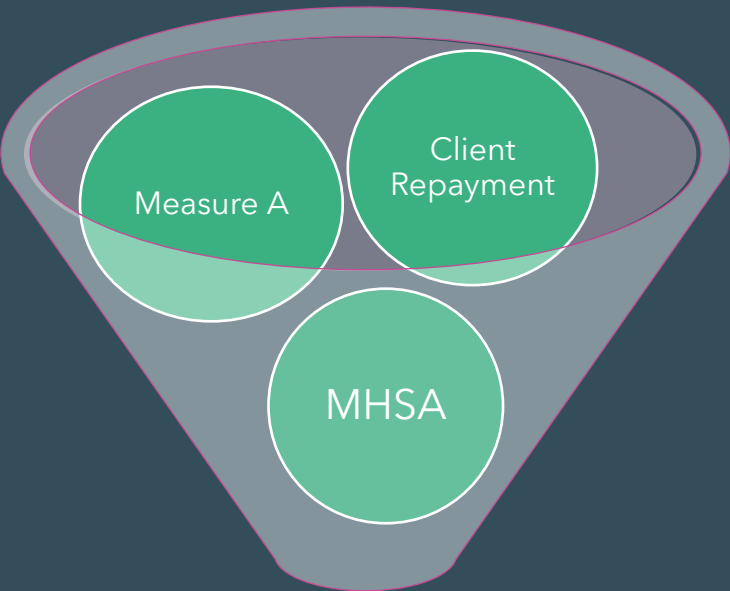
- Client Reimbursement (89% approval rate)
- Measure A (Local Health Sales Tax)
- Mental Health Service Act (MHSA)



Seed Funding

How the Subsidy Works

Benefits Cycle



Measure A

Client Repayment

MHSA

Revolving Loan Fund

Social Security/Client Repays Revolving Fund

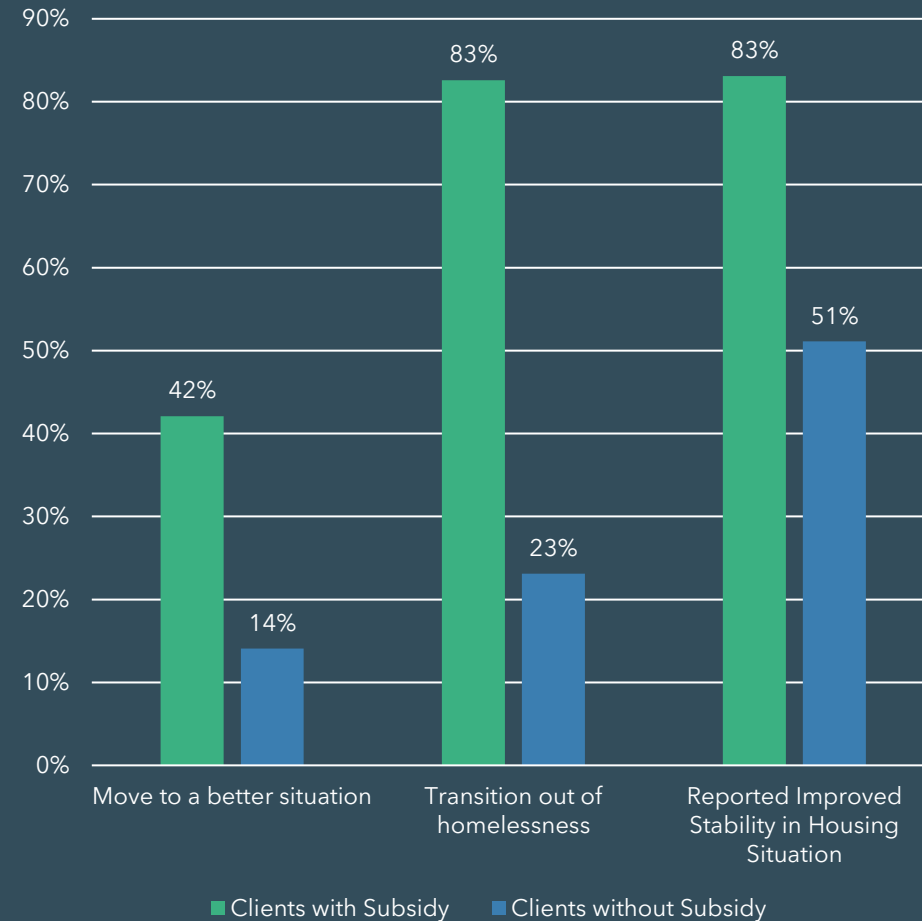
Client is Loaned Advance on SSI Benefits

Client is Approved for SSI Benefits

# Revolving Loan Fund – Improves Housing Outcomes

Housing Metric	Clients with Subsidy	Clients without Subsidy
Move to a better situation	42%	14%
Transition out of homelessness	50%	23%
Reported Improved Stability in Housing Situation	83%	51%

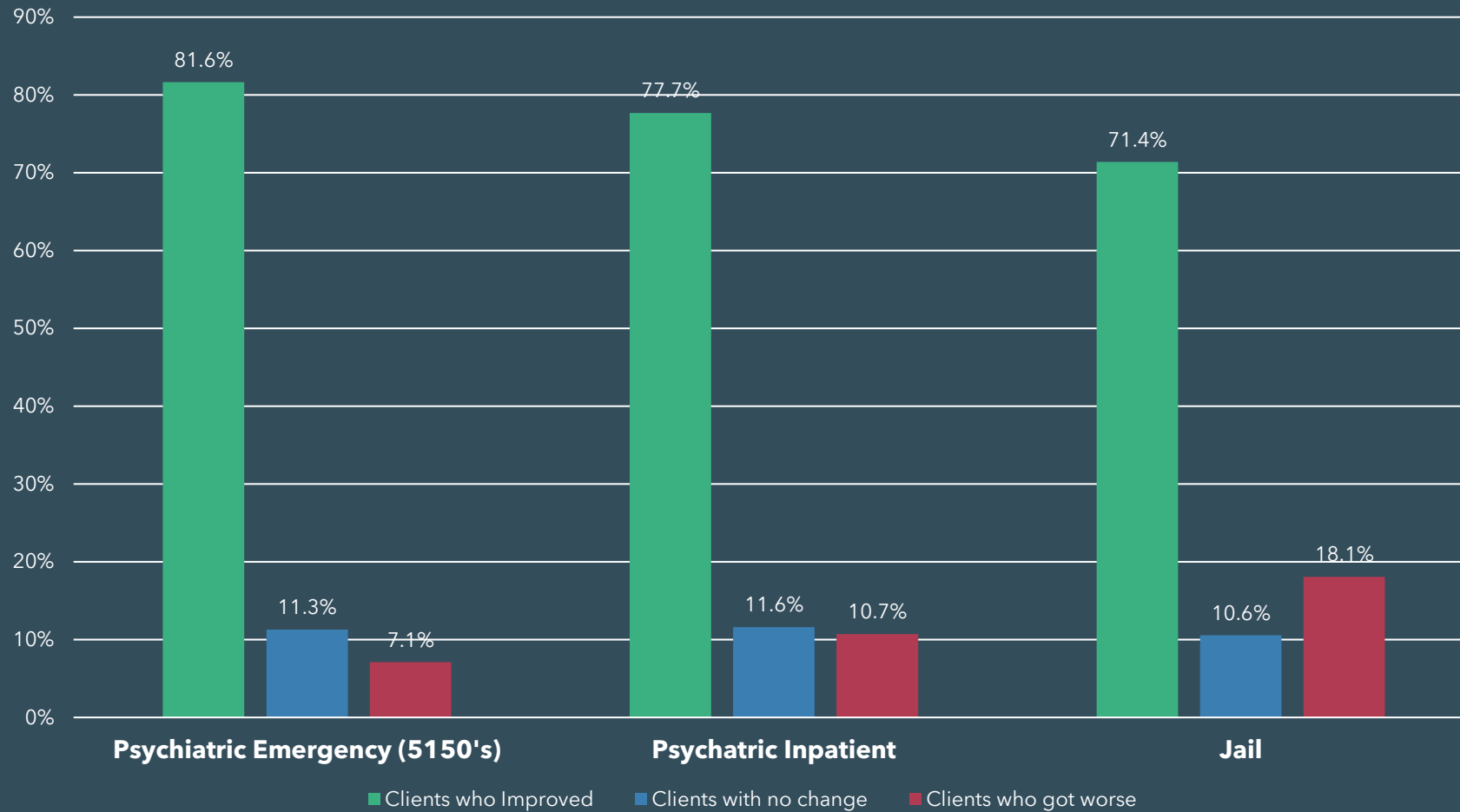
Housing Outcomes for SSI Advocacy Clients





# GA Housing Subsidy Reproduces the Effect of Being On SSI

Housing Subsidy Outcomes



# GA Housing Subsidy – Success Stories

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- A 36 year old man with depression who was living under an overpass was able to move back with his family.
- A 53 year old man with Schizophrenia had been living under a bridge near the Embarcadero for years. With the extra GA housing subsidy income, he was able to move indoors. His HAC attorney states that his appearance has dramatically changed; he is visibly happier and healthier.
- Another client, a 59 year old woman who has diabetes, depression, and anxiety, cried tears of joy when she received the housing subsidy because she owed past rent to her landlord and was on the verge of getting evicted. The subsidy prevented her from becoming homeless.
- A 53 year old woman who has bipolar disorder and PTSD used the extra income from the GA housing subsidy to escape an abusive relationship, and move into shared housing with a friend. Because she received the housing subsidy, she and her friend were able to afford a new apartment together.

# Homeless Disability Advocacy Program (HDAP)

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- State funded Housing and SSI Advocacy Program
- Targets the most disabled, high-utilizing homeless residents of Alameda County
- Collaborates with Coordinated Entry to identify clients currently waiting for Permanent Supportive Housing Subsidies
  - 17-bed Temporary Safe-Haven Housing at Casa Maria
  - Coordinates with Housing and Community Development (HCD) and the Housing Authority of the County of Alameda (HACA) to use flexible subsidy pool for securing long-term subsidies and placements for HDAP clients
- 44 clients served
- 33 clients housed
  - 16 clients placed in temporary housing
  - 17 clients placed into permanent housing

Questions?