

## METRO

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# County: Shelter instead of cash

By Mari McQueen  
Bee Staff Writer

After March 1, homeless people who file new applications for general assistance welfare in Sacramento County will receive their aid in food and shelter instead of cash grants.

The Sacramento County Board of Supervisors, with Sandy Smoley and Toby Johnson absent, voted Tuesday to approve the proposal by the Department of Social Services.

The action came after a six-hour hearing during which about 150 people filled the board chambers.

The revised plan relies heavily on the input and assistance of the Sacramento Housing and Redevelopment Agency for finding shelter for the homeless and helping them find transitional housing. It includes plans to offer counseling, job referral and other services in the shelters.

The supervisors also increased the basic grant level for general assistance from \$257 to \$263 effective Jan. 1. But after March 1, new homeless welfare applicants will receive only \$15 of their grant assistance in cash.

The roughly 1,500 homeless people who are currently receiving general assistance will continue to receive cash payments, as will those who apply after the available welfare shelter beds are full, according to Social Services Director Dennis Hart. Mentally ill, handicapped and non-English speakers also will be exempt from the new regulations.

Initially, 62 beds will be available at the county-financed Bannon Street shelter, and another 30 beds will be made available by the Salvation Army at its 1200 North B Street facility. The SHRA plans to add another 40 shelter beds in the spring, and construct a 100-bed shelter by mid-1990, Hart said.

The plan adds \$925,878 to the county's current \$13.4 million general assistance budget.

Curt Child, attorney for Legal Services of Northern California, and Kevin Aslanian, of the Coalition of California Welfare Rights Inc., ar-

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gued that forcing homeless general assistance recipients to live in shelters would result in the failure of the program because some recipients would be disruptive and uncooperative.

Child said a previous attempt by the Social Services Department to require general assistance applicants to live in the Bannon Street shelter was struck down by the state Supreme Court as unconstitutional because it deprived welfare recipients of their right to privacy. He said

the court might similarly strike down the new plan.

But County Counsel Lee Elam said he was confident the new plan differed enough from the 1985 program to withstand a court challenge.

City Councilman David Shore and Nancy Johnston, vice president of the Richards Boulevard Trade Association, said they favored the aid-in-kind proposal.

In the end, the supervisors gave the green light to the controversial plan.