

Honolulu

# Honolulu Invests \$500,000 To Reach Hardest-To-Serve Homeless People

The mayor is hoping state and federal agencies will help fund the effort to help homeless people, whether they want it or not.



By Christina Jedra   / August 26, 2019

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Chronically homeless people who have resisted receiving social services are the focus of a new city program that aims to help them whether they want it or not.

The city is investing \$500,000 to connect people without housing to treatments that fit their needs, even if they resist it, Mayor Kirk Caldwell announced on Monday.

“It’s not compassion to allow homeless folks, particularly with challenges of a mental health nature or addiction nature, to allow them to stay on the streets, to somehow feel it’s their right to live on the street,” he said. “We’re watching them die at [an average age of 53](#).”



Marc Alexander, executive director of the Honolulu Office of Housing, said the city wants to treat chronically homeless individuals with compassion.

The Institute for Human Services won the contract for a one-year pilot of the Outreach Navigation Program. The contract includes \$276,000 for psychiatric, medical and legal services and \$20,000 for petitioning the courts through the [Assisted Community Treatment Act](#), said Connie Mitchell, executive director of IHS. Remaining funds will cover personnel costs for managing, tracking, coordinating and evaluating the program.

As of April, fewer than 10 people have received outpatient treatment through the program since 2013, when the law was passed, and a large part of that, experts say, has been a lack of resources. The petitions, often filed by mental health advocates, are [time-consuming and onerous](#).

Through ACT, petitioners can obtain a court order to force a person to undergo treatment for mental illness including intensive case management and an injection to counter symptoms of psychosis.

“We will be triaging chronically mentally ill homeless persons into treatment through assertive outreach, through the use of guardianship – and someone else consenting for them to get medication – or through assisted community treatment, which is court-ordered treatment,” Mitchell said.

The city’s department of community services will be tracking the progress of the program on a monthly basis.

Caldwell said he hopes state and federal agencies will contribute funds to support the “partnership.”

“It is incumbent on government and on the community to work together to address this part of our community that is struggling,” he said.

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