

Attachment A

Phoenix City Council Community Service and Education (CSE) Subcommittee Summary Minutes Wednesday, October 22, 2025

City Council Chambers
200 W. Jefferson St.
Phoenix, Arizona

Subcommittee Members Present
Chairwoman Kesha Hodge Washington
Councilwoman Anna Hernandez
Councilwoman Debra Stark

Subcommittee Members Absent
Vice Mayor Ann O'Brien

CALL TO ORDER

Chairwoman Hodge Washington called the Community Services and Education Subcommittee (CSE) to order at 10:03 a.m. with, Councilwoman Anna Hernandez, and Councilwoman Debra Stark present. Vice Mayor O'Brien was absent.

CALL TO THE PUBLIC

None.

MINUTES OF MEETINGS

1. Minutes of the Public Safety and Justice Subcommittee Meeting

Councilwoman Stark made a motion to approve the minutes of the October 2, 2025 Community Services and Education Subcommittee meeting. Councilwoman Hernandez seconded the motion which passed unanimously, 3-0.

INFORMATION AND DISCUSSION (ITEMS 2-5)

2. Phoenix Public Library Foundation – Raise the Stacks

Phoenix Public Library Deputy Director Karl Kendall and Phoenix Public Library Foundation Executive Director Kelly Bushong presented the item.

Chairwoman Hodge Washington asked if residents must be present in person at the Burton Barr Library for the silent auction event on November 14.

Director Kelly stated that residents can bid from home.

Chairwoman Hodge Washington expressed gratitude for the presentation.

3. Head Start Birth to Five Governing Board Orientation Presentation

Human Services Department Director Jacqueline Edwards and Deputy Director Patti Kirkland presented the item.

Councilwoman Stark expressed support for the Head Start program and shared concern about the potential loss of funding.

Director Edwards shared the City operates its own early childhood education program. She noted that, in addition to the Head Start program, there are other early childhood education programs available throughout the state. Director Edwards emphasized school districts may partner with nonprofit organizations, and in the case of the City's Head Start program, partnerships include school districts, nonprofits, and private childcare facilities.

Councilwoman Stark noted some areas within the City still needed Head Start services. She highlighted Paradise Valley Unified School District's partnership with a nonprofit in the Palomino area and asked whether these organizations coordinate with the City or operate independently.

Director Edwards explained Head Start was required to support families transitioning between districts. She noted state association facilitates ongoing communication among program partners operating both within the City and across the state.

Deputy Director Kirkland confirmed that the Palomino School does have a Head Start program. She noted it was operated by Southwest Human Development and includes at least two classrooms as part of their service area.

Councilwoman Stark emphasized the importance of early childhood education and noted while the City has a robust Head Start program, other providers also serve different areas. Councilwoman Stark stressed the need to raise awareness about these programs, even those not directly operated by the City.

Councilwoman Hernandez asked whether all responsibilities, including legal, fiscal, and programmatic, would be addressed within the CSE meetings or if additional meetings would be required.

Deputy Director Kirkland explained the program's decision-making process begins with the Head Start Policy Council made of parents and community members. Once the Council approves or disapproves an item, it moves to the governing board for final review. Most decisions conclude at the governing board level, with only a few, such as contracts, requiring approval from the full City Council.

Councilwoman Hernandez asked for clarification on who holds the authority to change policy within the program structure.

Director Edwards explained federal Head Start policies must be followed, while local policies were developed by Human Services staff. These were reviewed by the Head Start Policy Council and, if applicable, brought to the CSE Subcommittee for approval.

Councilwoman Hernandez confirmed her understanding that policy or program changes typically begin with staff, move to the Policy Council for review, and then come to the CSE Subcommittee for further review and possible action. She asked if there would

ever be a need to meet outside of the CSE Subcommittee to fulfill governing board responsibilities.

Director Edwards said aside from individualized briefings, no additional meetings were typically required.

Chairwoman Hodge Washington asked how the program handles address verification for families experiencing housing instability or homelessness, given that proof of address was a participation requirement.

Deputy Director Kirkland explained for families experiencing housing instability, the program accepts a utility bill or similar proof of address from the person they were staying with, along with a notarized statement confirming the family resides at that location.

Chair Hodge Washington asked for information about the status of the program's waitlist.

Deputy Director Kirkland reported the program maintains a target waitlist of 20 percent, meaning each classroom typically has two to three children waiting. She explained there were 504 children on the overall waitlist, representing 22 percent of total enrollment. Of these, 121 were for Early Head Start representing 48 percent of its enrollment, and 383 were for Head Start representing 20 percent of enrollment.

Chairwoman Hodge Washington stated the last CSE Subcommittee meeting took place on the first day of the federal government shutdown and asked for an update of its current impact.

Director Edwards reported that operations remain normal, with classrooms open and no programmatic changes. She shared reimbursements that have been received, with only minor delays typical for the current situation. Director Edwards stated she will update the subcommittee if circumstances change.

Chairwoman Hodge Washington reaffirmed her support for the Head Start program, highlighting its role in early childhood development and lifelong learning. Chairwoman Hodge Washington thanked staff for clarifying governance responsibilities and expressed commitment to continued collaboration.

4. Program Annual Evaluation and Substance Use Planning

Public Health Advisor Yanitza Soto, Special Projects Administrator Kelli Kostizak, and Management Assistant II Melanie Durden presented the item.

Councilwoman Hernandez asked whether there has been an increase in the demand for Naloxone kits distributed at City libraries, noting that current need appears to be high compared to previous levels.

Public Health Advisor Soto confirmed the continued high demand for Naloxone kits at City libraries. She explained the current inventory of kits was stable due to the ongoing donations from the Arizona Department of Health Services.

Councilwoman Hernandez proposed exploring community centers as potential distribution sites, suggesting that these locations could serve as accessible points where residents can pick up Naloxone kits to use at home.

Public Health Advisor Soto confirmed that while kits were currently available at co-located resource centers, including senior centers, there were ongoing efforts to make them accessible at recreation centers and potentially community centers as well.

Councilwoman Hernandez asked whether overdose prevention centers have been considered as part of the broader strategy to expand distribution efforts and address the crisis.

Public Health Advisor Soto clarified that while safe use sites exist elsewhere, the City has not established any official overdose prevention centers through its programs.

Councilwoman Hernandez noted that many necessary actions require funding and highlighted that Arizona's opioid settlement funds were managed through the Attorney General's Office.

Public Health Advisor Soto confirmed opioid settlement funds flow from the Attorney General's Office to county health departments, then to local cities and towns.

Councilwoman Hernandez shared her experience during her last year in the legislature, where opioid settlement funds were redirected to cover budget gaps in the corrections department. Councilwoman Hernandez asked for clarification on how diverting these funds impacts cities that depend on them for local solutions.

Public Health Advisor Soto noted at the municipal level, efforts focus on using an interdepartmental, public health-driven approach. She shared the aim was to allocate opioid settlement funds across a range of approved abatement strategies, not just enforcement or corrections, to ensure broader community impact.

Councilwoman Hernandez asked about opportunities for the City to expand access to fentanyl testing strips, noting that while legislation has made distribution legal, funding remains a key barrier.

Public Health Advisor Soto explained while the Arizona Department of Health Services does offer fentanyl test strips to local communities, current distribution was being prioritized for rural areas and regions with higher substance use impacts due to shifting federal funding. She noted the City will continue pursuing partnerships at the state and county levels. Additionally, she highlighted the value of working with local harm reduction organizations that directly support people who use drugs.

Councilwoman Hernandez emphasized the importance of a holistic strategy that includes harm reduction partners, who play a vital role in keeping people alive during the opioid crisis. Councilwoman Hernandez asked whether any studies or data collection efforts have been conducted to understand how people who use drugs perceive the distribution of overdose prevention kits.

Public Health Advisor Soto shared the county conducted a study in 2022 with people who use drugs, but the City hasn't done its own yet.

Councilwoman Hernandez inquired whether, when a 911 call is made to report an overdose, the dispatch system can identify which specific personnel or units are assigned to respond to that type of emergency.

Public Health Advisor Soto responded that Emergency Medical Services (EMS), specifically the fire department's EMS units, are currently dispatched to overdose related 911 calls.

Councilwoman Hernandez expressed the opioid crisis should be addressed as a public health issue, not through criminalization. Councilwoman Hernandez advocated for harm reduction, education, and City partnerships to prevent overdose deaths and build lasting, effective solutions.

Dr. Michelle Shiota shared her support of the City's Naloxone program, commending its impact and the Office of Public Health's efforts. She emphasized the need for continued investment in prevention, harm reduction, and treatment strategies, especially those targeting youth. Dr. Shiota also addressed Councilwoman Hernandez's concerns about opioid settlement funds being redirected to the corrections system, noting that while City and county allocations remain unchanged, the shift limits opportunities for state-local partnerships that could enhance public health initiatives.

Councilwoman Hernandez asked Dr. Shiota to briefly share one additional measure, beyond Naloxone distribution, that could help prevent overdoses from occurring in the first place.

Ms. Shiota suggested using mobile outreach units to distribute Naloxone and provide motivational interviewing, helping connect people who use drugs with resources and support for recovery.

Councilwoman Hodge Washington asked whether the City collects demographic information on individuals who received Naloxone before emergency medical personnel arrived.

Ms. Durden confirmed demographic information was collected when EMS arrives on site and available through both the public and internal dashboards used for strategic planning.

Councilwoman Hodge Washington inquired whether there was an increase or decrease in youth receiving Naloxone prior to EMS arrival and asked if any benchmarks exist to track this trend alongside the overall rise in pre-EMS Naloxone administration.

Public Health Advisor Soto shared demographic data was available for individuals who have experienced a suspected overdose, specifically those who have received Naloxone. She noted this data could be shared with the Subcommittee at a later time.

Chairwoman Hodge Washington asked if Naloxone kits were reaching the age group most likely to use substances and requested data to help assess targeting efforts. Chairwoman Hodge Washington also asked for more details on the initiatives to better explain the broader community strategy.

Public Health Advisor Soto highlighted partnerships supporting provider education and peer navigation. Arizona State University's nursing program was training more medical providers to prescribe medications for opioid use disorders, addressing a local shortage. Additionally, a grant-funded program with Phoenix Police aims to send peer navigators, people with lived experience, to overdose calls, helping connect individuals to care immediately.

Chairwoman Hodge Washington emphasized the importance of follow-up after a suspected overdose and asked whether the follow-up was a one-time contact or involves multiple check-ins. Chairwoman Hodge Washington requested more background on how the follow-up process works.

Public Health Advisor Soto shared how Tempe's fire department includes peer navigators on overdose calls. Due to Phoenix's higher call volume, a similar program would need to start as a pilot. Currently, Phoenix is piloting a peer navigation program with the Police Department and has expanded it to other roles like library security and park rangers. She also highlighted Phoenix's eight youth coalitions working on local substance use prevention. She shared these groups partner with schools and communities and can support citywide public health efforts. She also discussed using opioid settlement funds through community proposals, allowing groups like youth coalitions to apply for funding. Lastly, she emphasized strong internal collaboration across City departments, including Fire, Police, Homeless Solutions, and others, to expand harm reduction efforts.

Chairwoman Hodge Washington asked for clarification about the corresponding distribution of Naloxone kits distribution throughout each Council District, asking if the bars should be above the trend line.

Public Health Advisor Soto confirmed the bars should indeed be above the trend line.

Chairwoman Hodge Washington noted the kit distribution in Council Districts Two and Four was noticeably low. Chairwoman Hodge Washington commented this likely does not reflect a lower number of overdoses in those areas and identified it as an area needing improvement, emphasizing that distribution levels should ideally be above the trend line.

Public Health Advisor Soto explained that kit distribution was lower in Districts Two and Four due to fewer City facilities like libraries and senior centers. She shared efforts will focus on expanding distribution locations in those districts and citywide.

Chairwoman Hodge Washington thanked City staff and partners for their work expanding Naloxone access and raising awareness. Chairwoman Hodge Washington noted progress in reducing overdoses and emphasized the importance of continued efforts.

5. City of Phoenix Strategies to Address Homelessness Plan Refresh

Office of Homeless Solutions (OHS) Director Rachel Milne, Deputy Director Scott Hall, and Special Projects Administrator Margaret Adams presented the item.

Chairwoman Hodge Washington asked for confirmation that the subcommittee will receive a follow-up before the item goes to City Council in January 2026.

Director Milne clarified that a revised draft plan will be shared with the subcommittee before it goes to the January Policy session.

Councilwoman Hernandez asked further information about the community court mentioned in the presentation, specifically regarding and potential for expansion.

Director Milne shared additional details about the community court program and noted it has served over 600 individuals with misdemeanor offenses since starting in January 2024.

Deputy Director Hall shared how the community court addresses the overrepresentation of unhoused individuals in the justice system by offering supportive services instead of punishment. He noted it connects participants to housing, treatment, and employment, and has shown strong success in its first year.

Councilwoman Hernandez expressed support for Phoenix's community court and asked about the various partner groups like the Phoenix Community Alliance and the Lived Experience Work Group. Specifically, who was involved and how members were selected.

Director Milne stated the Maricopa Association of Governments (MAG) leads the regional Continuum of Care and organizes various workgroups, including the Lived Experience Work Group.

Councilwoman Hernandez inquired whether MAG would be the appropriate entity to explain how individuals were selected for the Lived Experience Work Group.

Director Milne shared MAG selects workgroup members by connecting with individuals involved in the homelessness system, including service providers and those within the Lived Experience Work Group.

Councilwoman Hernandez asked Director Milne to be connected with the appropriate contact at MAG who can provide more information about how members of the Lived Experience Work Group were identified.

Director Milne stated she would help connect Councilwoman Hernandez.

Councilwoman Hernandez asked how the City was ensuring a service-first approach to homelessness, rather than relying on policing or criminalization.

Director Milne shared how OHS was created to lead with services, not enforcement, and noted the City focuses on daily outreach to connect individuals with support and resources.

Deputy Director Hall shared the City's commitment to a service-first approach and spoke about key strategies including equipping law enforcement with access to services, responding alongside police when needed, prioritizing early outreach, and focusing on sustainable housing to prevent justice system involvement.

Director Milne added how the "no wrong door" policy was recently implemented, allowing public service agencies to bring individuals to key support sites even when at capacity.

Councilwoman Hernandez asked what type of training the Police Department receives to ensure officers understand and implement a service-first approach.

Deputy Director Hall shared a new training video that has been produced for law enforcement.

Councilwoman Hernandez asked for clarifications on police protocols when responding to homeless encampment complaints.

Deputy Director Hall explained the Phoenix Community Action Response Engagement Services (Phoenix CARES) process. He also shared how Police officers were trained to enter cases into the system, which then dispatches outreach teams. Officers also have direct contact with homelessness liaisons assigned to their precincts.

Councilwoman Hernandez shared her support of housing choice vouchers and asked what can be done to continue advocating for it.

Director Milne emphasized the need for additional housing resources, particularly housing vouchers, was a citywide issue.

Councilwoman Hernandez stated her continuous support and advocacy for this initiative. She asked how OHS was engaging with community-led mutual aid groups that support the unsheltered population in Phoenix.

Director Milne confirmed ongoing collaboration with mutual aid groups, including resource support and expanding partnerships at the Safe Outdoor Space and Phoenix Navigation Center.

Councilwoman Hernandez thanked staff for their presentation and work on this important issue.

Councilwoman Stark shared the positive engagement from the Black Mountain Precinct, highlighting the inclusion of OHS liaisons at “Coffee with a Cop” events. She also requested clarification on the improvements mentioned to the Phoenix CARES system.

Deputy Director Hall shared the current efforts aim to make the system more user-friendly and improve communication with residents and across departments.

Councilwoman Stark emphasized the importance of making housing a priority. She also asked how OHS cultivates private partnerships and what role the Council can play in supporting those efforts.

Director Milne welcomed Council support in building private partnerships, noting past success with groups like United Way and Vitalyst, which raised two million dollars to help shelter residents transition into housing. She encouraged identifying scalable projects for future philanthropic support.

Chairwoman Hodge Washington expressed appreciation for the City's efforts to address homelessness and shared personal insights from a ride along with outreach staff. She emphasized the urgent need for more housing resources like City funded subsidies and encouraged greater community involvement and actionable short-term goals.

Director Milne clarified that homelessness was already rising citywide before the dismantling of the encampment near the Human Services Campus. She emphasized that over 800 individuals were offered shelter during the closure, with 85 percent accepting services and many now housed or in safer indoor settings.

Chairwoman Hodge Washington highlighted the importance of community feedback and requested clarification on how the plan aims to improve shelter quality and measure success.

Director Milne explained after focusing on expanding shelter capacity over the past three years, the current priority was improving shelter quality. This includes ensuring all shelters provide consistent case management and individualized exit plans to help residents transition into stable housing.

Deputy Director Hall emphasized improving shelter quality means ensuring safe, welcoming environments with consistent, high-standard services and strong outcomes.

Chairwoman Hodge Washington supported improving coordination with behavioral health and employment services to better serve individuals with higher needs, such as those experiencing chronic homelessness or mental health challenges.

Deputy Director Hall added the importance of connecting individuals to appropriate services, such as behavioral health, substance use treatment, and physical healthcare, before or alongside shelter. He stated the aim was to better train staff in Medicaid eligible services and take a holistic, needs-based approach to care.

Chairwoman Hodge Washington reminded staff of her earlier challenge to develop a top five wish list and asked if they were ready to share.

Director Milne shared their top five priorities. These included expanding rapid rehousing for individuals needing minimal support, increasing permanent supportive housing for those requiring long-term assistance, reinstating youth-specific rapid rehousing programs, enhancing diversion programs to help individuals reconnect with family or secure short-term subsidies, and continuing the Phoenix Works program, which provides daily wages and job opportunities through City beautification projects.

Jeff Betman expressed his support for the homelessness plan, praising its bold vision, transparency, and improved responsiveness. However, he urged the City to include more specific strategies to address criminal activity associated with homelessness, such as drug use, prostitution, and trespassing, that continue to impact neighborhood safety.

Chairwoman Hodge Washington asked Mr. Betman if he had a specific suggestion for how the department could reduce the negative impacts of homelessness on neighborhoods

Mr. Betman advocated for separating individuals involved in crime from harmful networks first, then offering support and rehabilitation through back-end services like community courts and jail-based programs.

Deputy Director Hall highlighted the importance of collaboration between communities and City departments, noting that unsheltered homelessness was only a portion of the broader issue, and ongoing efforts like police training aim to connect individuals to services rather than defaulting to arrest.

Chairwoman Hodge Washington thanked the presenters and urged a focus on short term, actionable steps while continuing to build toward long term solutions.

DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION

6. 2026-27 Housing and Urban Development Annual Action Plan Process

Neighborhood Services Director Spencer Self, Deputy Director Kim Dickerson, Project Manager Alicia Springs, and Management Fellow Dayana Rosas presented the item.

Councilwoman Hernandez acknowledged the ongoing federal shutdown and asked for updates on potential funding risks, particularly to Community Development Block Grants.

Director Self shared there has been no specific indications of funding reductions in the current plan, but future impacts could change that.

Councilwoman Hernandez asked whether the survey questions had already been developed and what types of questions will be included in the upcoming survey.

Director Self stated the survey aims to identify community priorities and gather demographic data, with consideration given to question placement to improve response.

Councilwoman Hernandez asked what additional outreach efforts were planned to boost survey participation, beyond the in-person and virtual options.

Director Self emphasized that direct outreach, such as presenting at community meetings or working through trusted partners, was most effective in encouraging survey participation.

Councilwoman Hernandez asked which community organizations were being partnered with and how neighborhood leaders were being engaged to ensure they had the opportunity to participate in the survey.

Director Self noted outreach through neighborhood specialists, newsletters, City departments, schools, and partners to engage community leaders and organizations.

Chairwoman Hodge Washington asked how equitable outreach was being ensured for residents without internet access and whether there were alternative ways to complete the survey beyond the online option.

Director Self confirmed printed copies of the survey were made available in both English and Spanish, and staff would input the responses manually to ensure accessibility for those without internet access.

Councilwoman Stark made a motion to approve the item. Councilwoman Hernandez seconded the motion which passed unanimously, 3-0.

CALL TO THE PUBLIC

None.

FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

None.

ADJOURNMENT

Chairwoman Hodge Washington adjourned the meeting at 11:48 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Dayana Rosas
Management Fellow