



City of Arts & Innovation

News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Nov. 15, 2019

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Veteran Social Worker to Direct Office of Homeless Solutions in City of Riverside

Hafsa Kaka, most recently Santa Ana's Homeless Services Manager, starts today

RIVERSIDE, Calif. – Hafsa Kaka, a social worker who has 15 years of experience around Southern California coordinating efforts to help people out of homelessness, most recently in Santa Ana, has been hired to direct the City of Riverside's Office of Homeless Solutions. She started today (11/15).

As Santa Ana's first Homeless Services Manager, Kaka spearheaded efforts in Orange County's second-largest city to work with local, state and federal officials to reduce homelessness. Her efforts included advocating for Santa Ana in legal proceedings that addressed homelessness in the Santa Ana River area; partnering with Orange County to provide services for 200 encampments in the Plaza of the Flags in downtown Santa Ana; and doubling the size of the Quality of Life Team, which reaches out to homeless individuals in an effort to get them off the streets.

Under her leadership, Santa Ana created a 200-bed shelter in 28 days, from which more than 100 people have been able to find permanent housing through partnerships with private, non-profit and government entities. Among the resources she helped create are Santa Ana's Homeless Data Dashboard, Homeless Strategic Plan, and Homeless Hotline.

"Hafsa Kaka has a proven track record of approaching the issue of homelessness in a comprehensive way that yields results," City Manager Al Zelinka said. "Her work in Santa Ana, both in offering services to homeless individuals trying to change their lives, and in ensuring the quality of life in the city is maintained, illustrates why she is a good fit for Riverside."

In Riverside, Kaka will help lead the Office of Homeless Solutions in a variety of efforts designed to help homeless individuals transition from the streets into a shelter, then into permanent supportive housing with built-in wrap-around services, and eventually into their own residence. Riverside identified 439 unsheltered individuals, according to the most recent Point in Time Count, and employs a variety of approaches to pro-actively reduce the incidence of homelessness.

Those efforts include a Homeless Outreach Team that connects homeless individuals with services that can help them regain control of their lives, including housing, job training and substance abuse/mental

health counseling; a Public Safety and Engagement Team (PSET) to maintain order in public places while also providing individuals with a pathway out of homelessness; and other dedicated staff members who have effectively eliminated homelessness among veterans and who are committed to reducing homelessness in Riverside.

More information about the Office of Homeless Solutions can be found at:

<https://www.riversideca.gov/homelessolutions/>

“Riverside has significantly ramped up its efforts to address homelessness, and I am excited to be part of such a pro-active response,” Kaka said. “Wherever you go in Southern California, residents and the business community are concerned about homelessness, and it is incumbent on all of us to work together to help people find their path forward.”

Kaka joined Santa Ana from the Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority, where she served as the Coordinated Entry System (CES) Coordinator, providing oversight and guidance to agencies in identifying areas for improvement in the delivery of homeless services. She also coordinated community coalitions and helped plan and oversee permanent supportive housing projects throughout Los Angeles County.

She previously served as Associate Director of Homeless Services for Lamp Community, Inc. located on “Skid Row” in Los Angeles.

“Hafsa Kaka has an impressive array of experiences bringing people together to create solutions to the most pressing issue of our time,” Mayor Rusty Bailey said. “We look forward to adding her expertise to our efforts to help our neighbors without homes to make the transition to self-sufficiency.”

Kaka has a Master’s Degree in Social Work from the University of Minnesota Twin Cities and a B.A in Psychology and Social Behavior and Criminology Law and Society from the University of California, Irvine. She has worked as a contracted Adjunct Professor with the USC School of Social Work. She also is trained and has experience in mediation and anger and conflict de-escalation.

Her salary will be \$135,000.