

**THINK
DIGNITY**

Hands-on Advocacy & Activism with
People Experiencing Homelessness



RTFH

SAN DIEGO'S
REGIONAL LEADER
ON HOMELESSNESS

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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NONPROFITS LAUNCH INAUGURAL “ID BANK” PROGRAM FOR PEOPLE EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS

SAN DIEGO (August 5, 2024)----Local nonprofits officially launched a new document acquisition and storage service on Tuesday for San Diegans experiencing homelessness.

The “ID Bank”—a collaborative initiative between [Think Dignity](#) and the [Regional Task Force on Homelessness](#) – held its inaugural event Tuesday at the [Third Avenue Charitable Organization](#) in downtown San Diego. During this event, the ID Bank assisted 16 people experiencing homelessness with acquiring and storing IDs and related vital documents.

“We recognized that not having these documents is one of the greatest barriers preventing people experiencing homelessness from receiving much needed services that can help them to transition off of the streets,” said Mitchelle Woodson, Executive Director of Think Dignity. “In response to this issue, we are thrilled to launch the ID Bank, a program that provides a pathway to storing and retrieving these vital documents that, in turn, allows access to the very resources that can get people into a home, access to treatment, and connected to necessary services. Our ultimate goal is to offer a meaningful opportunity for people to positively transform their lives.”

“Most of us take our IDs for granted. We’re able to acquire IDs, store them, and access them with minimal effort. Unfortunately, that is rarely the case for our homeless friends and neighbors. Too often, their IDs are lost, stolen, or disposed of during cleanups. Did you know you need one form of ID to get another form of ID? Without an ID, it’s extremely difficult, if not impossible, to apply for a job, rent an apartment, or get vaccinated,” said Tamera Kohler, CEO of the Regional Task Force on Homelessness (RTFH). “RTFH was eager to partner with Think Dignity to launch the ID Bank to serve our local homeless population. This needed service will make a difference. I’m really pleased it’s now available.”

RTFH and Iain De Jong, a renowned international consultant on homelessness solutions, partnered with Think Dignity, a local homeless advocacy agency who operates San Diego's first free storage center and numerous social and legal services, to develop the first free countywide document acquisition and storage program after hearing countless stories from unhoused San Diegans about losing housing and job opportunities simply due to a lack of documentation. In San Diego, people living unsheltered often lose their documents during inclement weather or law enforcement's encampment sweeps.

The ID Bank's launch event offered people experiencing homelessness free assistance with obtaining and replacing essential documents, as well as secure physical and electronic storage.



One of the ID Bank's new clients, Richard, said: "It's been hard to get the documents I need to support my everyday life, like my ID and birth certificate, but this service will help me get them quickly. It takes the burden of recovering those things by myself off me. Now I can move forward in my life."

Another client, named Anthony, said: "You go to a lot of places where they need ID to get services, and being able to go to this service will help me very much to get the services I need. Thank you!"

The program will be rolling out outreach locations in multiple communities across all regions of San Diego County over the next few weeks, starting with downtown San Diego, Kearny Mesa, and National City.

For more information about the ID Bank and Think Dignity, contact Merlynn Watanabe at (619) 928-4159 or idbank.thinkdignity@gmail.com.

Photo outline/credit: Programs Coordinator Jordan Leavitt-McGee meets with a new client Tuesday at the ID Bank's launch event in downtown San Diego. Photo by Merlynn Watanabe.

About Think Dignity

Think Dignity (TD) advances basic dignity for people experiencing homelessness through advocacy and innovation. TD's efforts result in meaningful change in San Diego County through innovative social services and legal advocacy, such as managing San Diego's first Transitional Storage Center, developing Mobile Operations of Dignity (MOD) programs that provide access to hygiene and nutrition security, establishing Legal Clinics to educate and empower individuals

on their basic rights, launching a Homeless Youth Legal & Advocacy Project (HYLAP) to provide pro bono legal representation and support for homeless youth, and spearheading advocacy campaigns to directly address the injustices that homeless individuals experience. For more information, visit www.thinkdignity.org

About the Regional Task Force on Homelessness/RTFH

As the Continuum of Care (CoC) lead agency in San Diego County, RTFH administers many of the core federal requirements from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), such as serving as the collaborative applicant to HUD, administering the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS), and conducting an annual Point In Time Count. RTFH also serves as a strategic planning body, funder, regional convener, promoter of best practices, trainer, and policy leader in San Diego's collective efforts to end homelessness. Learn more at: www.rtfhsd.org

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