A FIVE-YEAR PLAN TO ADDRESS HOMELESSNESS IN PIERCE COUNTY

**PRESENTED BY THE ROAD HOME,
PIERCE COUNTY'S CONTINUUM OF CARE COMMITTEE**

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OUR 5-YEAR PLAN TO ADDRESS HOMELESSNESS IN PIERCE COUNTY

Ending homelessness is one of the most challenging tasks Pierce County and counties all over the nation face. The causes of homelessness are complex and many, influenced by societal, structural, legal, personal and many other factors that are extremely difficult to transform. Despite the overwhelming challenges, Pierce County has resolutely pursued new solutions to help people experiencing homelessness become stable and rehoused as quickly as possible. Some of our accomplishments during the last five years include:

- Increasing access to the "front door" of our homeless system by moving from a centralized intake system with one entry point to a coordinated entry system with many entry points.
- Helping hundreds of people in a housing crisis avoid entering the homeless system by supporting their own identification of a solution through a Housing Solutions Conversation, which reserves valuable and limited resources for those most in need.
- Prioritizing those who are hardest to house and least likely to achieve stability without support.
- Increasing access to housing by making housing program eligibility consistent systemwide.

There are reasons to pause and take pride. We have received national and state recognition for our Diversion program and its Housing Solutions Conversations. And since 2014, the County has been invited to speak annually about our programs and progress at national conferences. While this is an indicator that we are on the right path, we humbly recognize that people are still suffering and we all have substantial work to do.

In Pierce County, homelessness exists in every city. So far this year, more than 4,700 people have experienced homelessness. Nearly half are families, some are youth unaccompanied by an adult, some are veterans. Nearly all lost their homes while living here. They are all our neighbors.

As market-rate rents continue on a startlingly rapid upward trend, making housing stability more difficult for more of us, we must act quickly and together. While the homeless system has become more efficient and effective, it is only one puzzle piece to a longer-lasting solution. We hope this plan's implementation will serve as an impetus to begin bridging divides, to increase collaboration across sectors, and to commit greater human and financial resources so that all people have access to home.

The Source of this Plan
The Continuum of Care Committee (CoC), also called The Road Home, is a body formed and convened to identify five-year goals and strategies to address homelessness across the county and which receives HUD and State funds that support the plan's implementation through the county's homeless system and beyond. CoC members are intended to represent the different kinds of organizations, sectors, and localities that play a role in developing solutions to homelessness and which are a part of implementing each five-year plan. This year's plan represents nearly a year of work that included the input of individuals from multiple sectors and around the community, including people with lived experience of homelessness.

OUR GUIDING VISION

The Continuum of Care Committee set a guiding vision at the beginning of the planning process, which captures our values and aspirations for the work ahead.

We believe everyone in Pierce County should have a home. And we believe this community can achieve it.

As a hub for the effort to end homelessness in Pierce County, we are working to transform our county's homelessness response system. Our goal is an integrated, adaptable, and responsive network of services that supports stability and self-determination for everyone — regardless of economic or social circumstance, and regardless of where in our community they live.

We value collaboration. The full engagement of all who live here — across the civic, social, philanthropic, and business sectors — is the only way to ensure a comprehensive and effective response. In partnership with the community, we will accelerate the creation of shelter and affordable housing to meet the existing need so that everyone has a home.

We prioritize compassion, both for those experiencing homelessness directly and those who struggle with its impact on their families and neighborhoods. We believe this community has the heart and the will to engage this issue and overcome it.

We prioritize equity, because we know that the human consequences of inequity affect us all. We work to identify the systemic barriers that keep people from securing and maintaining housing, and we will advocate to undo them.

Over the next five years, we will call on Pierce County to leverage its social, political, and financial resources to ensure that residents facing homelessness have access to shelter and support — whenever, wherever, and however they need it.

DEFINING HOMELESSNESS

The definition of homelessness varies. Veteran's programs, schools, and the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)-funded Continuum of Care grantees all operate under different definitions of homelessness that are often set by federal funders. One of the more common definitions of homelessness only includes people living in places not meant for human habitation, in emergency shelter or in transitional housing, or exiting an institution where they temporarily resided for 90 days or less, such as a hospital. But it leaves out individuals who are couch surfing, sleeping on and off in motels, or fleeing domestic violence or trafficking situations—people who despite the definition are homeless or feel forced to stay in abusive situations to avoid sleeping on the street.

The lack of a unified definition poses several challenges: It makes it difficult to quantify accurately the number of people experiencing and at risk of homelessness in our community. It also creates challenges with funding and outcomes. For example, federal funding allocations are determined based on how effective we are at decreasing the numbers of people experiencing homelessness as determined in our point-in-time survey and in our HMIS data, which do not capture the totality of people experiencing homelessness or at risk of homelessness throughout the County.

For the purposes of this plan, homelessness will be defined as any family or individual who lacks or is at immediate risk of losing a regular, fixed, safe, and adequate nighttime residence. The strategies in this plan are designed with this definition in mind, and therefore are intended to encompass the myriad situations people experiencing homelessness face. Here is just a small sampling:

- The youth who fled an abusive home and is crashing on a schoolmate's couch
- The young man aging out of foster care who is told he has a week to get a job and move out of his foster family's home
- The family who faces losing their residence within 14 days without the money or networks to remain housed
- The woman who decides one morning to flee a violent relationship or her trafficker
- The veteran with a disability who cannot maintain employment and afford housing
- The elder who can no longer afford an apartment and, having never faced homelessness, has no idea where to turn
- The single individual who is about to be released from prison and has no family or support network on the outside to provide a place to land and restart a life

Despite this more inclusive definition of homelessness, we will still be restricted by the varied definitions that funders apply to their grantmaking. But we hope that our community can begin to align around this broader definition and our vision and belief that everyone deserves a safe place to call home—and the support to obtain and maintain that home.

See the appendix for text of the statutory definitions of homelessness that these agencies use to quantify and determine program/funding eligibility.

ABOUT SPECIFIC POPULATIONS

In addition to strategies that can positively impact everyone experiencing homelessness, this plan also highlights strategies and benchmarks for supporting specific populations in maintaining housing for the long term. We know there are many ways to categorize and prioritize the different populations the plan intends to serve. The following populations are the most common groups of individuals and households experiencing homelessness. Many individuals will fall into more than one of these populations.

CHRONICALLY HOMELESS
Individuals with a disabling condition who have either been continuously homeless for a year or more, or, who have experienced at least four episodes of homelessness in the past three years.

VETERANS
Individuals who have served in some capacity, for at least one day, with the armed forces or reserve.

YOUTH (AGES 12–24)
Individuals under the age of 25, who are unaccompanied by a parent or guardian adult.

FAMILIES WITH CHILDREN
Households with at least one minor child and one adult, including single or partnered pregnant females.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE SURVIVORS
Individuals who are self-identified survivors of domestic violence, including those fleeing or attempting to flee violence.

HOUSEHOLDS WITHOUT CHILDREN
Households that include at least one adult and no minor children or youth (ages 12-24), and are not already listed in another population group above.

THE PATH FORWARD

This plan is organized around five strategic priority areas. In addition to addressing the two greatest needs of people experiencing homelessness—housing and the support to stabilize and maintain that housing—these priority areas focus on improving the operation of our homeless system so we can better serve people in crisis. We also know that to accelerate progress toward longer term solutions, Pierce County must focus on growing a stronger network of partnerships across sectors and communities. While less important, the Continuum of Care Committee intends to focus on transforming itself into a more equitable, effective coordinating body that can accurately represent the voices of both communities impacted by homelessness and those who are part of the solution.

STRATEGIC PRIORITY AREA #1: HOUSING
Maximize the use of existing housing while advocating for additional housing resources and more affordable housing.

STRATEGIC PRIORITY AREA #2: STABILITY
Support the stability of individuals experiencing homelessness and those recently housed.

STRATEGIC PRIORITY AREA #3: SYSTEM AND SERVICE IMPROVEMENTS
Create a more responsive, accessible crisis response system.

STRATEGIC PRIORITY AREA #4: COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS
Optimize and leverage internal and external partnerships to better prevent and address homelessness.

STRATEGIC PRIORITY AREA #5: THE CONTINUUM OF CARE
Grow awareness of the CoC's purpose and 5-year plan, and serve as a central advocacy and coordinating body for addressing homelessness in Pierce County.

This plan draws on a variety of voices, viewpoints and data sources.
To inform the strategic priority areas, goals and strategies of the plan, we turned to a variety of sources. We listened to the voices of people experiencing homelessness, engaged input from champions in other sectors, and engaged the expertise of CoC members who represent a diverse set of organizations who connect with people experiencing homelessness. Over the course of a year we carried out the following activities to inform the contents of this plan:

- Population-specific focus groups
- Interviews with funders, as well as champions in education, healthcare, and juvenile justice
- Landscape review of organizations, coalitions focused on homelessness and housing in Pierce County
- HMIS and Point in Time Count data reviews
- Policy research
- CoC planning sessions
- Monthly planning subcommittee meetings
- Community input sessions

STRATEGIC PRIORITY AREA #1: HOUSING
Maximize the use of existing housing while advocating for additional housing resources and more affordable housing.

Goal 1.1
The percentage of exits to permanent housing increases to at least 60%.

When someone comes to the front door of Pierce County's homeless system we are not always able to connect them with permanent housing. Across the nation, the percentage of exits to permanent housing among the top 20% of systems is 59%. We know we can achieve this measure by holistically addressing the barriers that prevent a greater number of people from accessing permanent housing: Sometimes the housing needed is simply not available. Sometimes the system isn't sufficiently responsive, and an individual never returns. Other factors can lead to not being housed—a person's lack of documentation for a housing program, fearful landlords, a lack of coordination among the players in our system. We intend to address all of these.

Annual Benchmarks

Key Strategies

1. Help people coming to Coordinated Entry compile the necessary documentation for any housing scenario, and strongly encourage participation in the Renters Readiness program.

2. Train Coordinated Entry providers on the housing and economic resources outside of the formal homeless system so that they can educate people who are homeless but do not qualify for a housing referral and would benefit from these resources.

3. Increase diversion resources by engaging the support of non-government funders.

4. Expand how diversion resources can be used—from eviction costs and other housing debts that can serve as a barrier to staff costs required of service providers to administer the diversion program.

5. Increase coordination between service providers and Tacoma and Pierce County Housing Authorities to ensure that people who exit the system with a housing voucher are supported in using it successfully.

6. Conduct an outreach campaign about the Landlord Liaison Project, educating landlords about the program and the resources available when they accept individuals exiting the homeless system.

7. Promote and increase the use of the Foundational Community Support program across the system for individuals with higher needs or barriers to housing.

8. Conduct an assessment to determine the resources or infrastructure needed to establish a countywide universal housing application to reduce costs for individuals applying for housing.

9. Support and expand existing shared housing models and programs across Pierce County.
    a. Create a stronger partnership between the formal homeless system and Shared Housing Services to expand housing options for homeless households who come to Coordinated Entry.
    b. Increase the number of hosted homes across the county.

10. Monitor demographics of people coming into the system compared to those leaving the system to ensure that People of Color, including Black, Indigenous, Hispanic, and Latinx individuals, and LGBTQ people are being served equitably.

Goal 1.2
380 additional permanent supportive housing (PSH) units are made available through new construction and other strategies.

Permanent supportive housing is an essential resource for those who have disabilities, health and mental health issues, and other serious barriers to maintaining permanent housing independently. For nearly all chronically homeless individuals, it is the only pathway inside. To fill today's current demand, we would need approximately 750 additional units of PSH, at a roughly estimated cost of more than $250 million over 10 years. Our 10-year goal is to meet this demand, and our five-year goal for this plan is to meet at least half of it. We know that 291 units of PSH are currently in the pipeline to be developed in Pierce County by 2025. Through new construction and other strategies for creating or opening up units, we aim to make up the balance and to ensure that 380 PSH units total are available by 2025.

Annual Benchmarks

Key Strategies

1. Advocate for the use of new and potential funding streams be put toward the development of new PSH units.

2. Advocate for resources to be committed to PSH providers for the purpose of delivering supportive services.

3. Free up PSH units by increasing the use of "move-on" vouchers for residents that are stable and ready to move to non-supportive housing.

4. Engage PSH providers based in other counties to increase their units in Pierce County through master leasing and other creative use of existing unused properties.

5. Assess the need for population-specific PSH units and share findings with both PSH developers and program providers to guide decision-making around allocating units.

Goal 1.3
450 affordable housing units for homeless households are made available through new construction and other strategies.

A lack of affordable apartments plays a critical role in homelessness, as both a cause and as a factor in the length of time homeless. There are an estimated 17,000 affordable housing units available for 61,000 low-income renter households throughout the county. And *not* all of those are at a price point for someone transitioning out of homelessness with little or no income.

Based on current HMIS data, we estimate the current demand for affordable housing units targeted at homeless households to be approximately 900 units. Our 10-year goal is to meet the current demand, and our five-year goal for this plan is to meet half of it. We know that 223 units of affordable housing targeted to homeless households are currently in the pipeline to be developed in Pierce County by 2025. Through new construction and creative strategies for making housing accessible to homeless households, we aim to make up the balance and to ensure that 450 units total are available by 2025.

Annual Benchmarks

Key Strategies

1. Advocate for the use of local funding from new and potential funding streams to be put toward development of new affordable housing units reserved for homeless households.

2. Increase the number of homeless housing set asides in existing affordable housing complexes.

3. Update zoning codes so that affordable housing units, from apartments to tiny homes, can be built within more communities.

4. Advocate for increased multi-family zoning and DADUs/ADUs throughout the county to create more rental units that could be accessed by people exiting homelessness through Section 8 Vouchers, the Landlord Liaison Program, Shared Housing Services, and the Foundational Community Support program.

5. Advocate to expand local governments' developer and landlord incentives (e.g., multifamily tax exemption, low income housing tax credit, etc.) for constructing and providing affordable housing rental and ownership units reserved specifically for homeless families.

STRATEGIC PRIORITY AREA #2: STABILITY

Support the stability of individuals experiencing homelessness and those recently housed.

Goal 2.1

All people experiencing homelessness can access emergency shelter on demand, with no wait times.

Emergency shelter can be a first step on the path toward stability, and it should be available on demand to anyone experiencing homelessness who does not want to sleep outside. Due in part to a lack of formal coordination and data sharing across shelters, some shelter beds are remaining empty even when people are seeking them out. Through greater coordination and increased shelter capacity in areas of the county where the need exists, we can ensure that anyone who wants to sleep inside can.

Annual Benchmarks

Key Strategies

1. Create a unified emergency shelter system in Pierce County that more efficiently connects people seeking shelter with an open bed and more effectively facilitates their transition to permanent housing.
   a. Leverage technology to create an online, real-time database of open beds across shelters that is accessible to the public.
   b. Develop stronger connections between emergency shelters and coordinated entry.
   c. Improve collaboration between shelters and stability services.

2. Assess the demand for emergency shelter in locations across Pierce County and increase capacity countywide by at least 100 beds in the geographic areas with the greatest need.

3. Engage additional and diverse community partners in providing shelter countywide.

4. Advocate for a portion of new and potential funding streams to be put toward increasing shelter capacity.

5. Monitor demographics of people coming to shelters compared to those actually accepted into shelters to ensure that People of Color, including Black, Indigenous, Hispanic, and Latinx individuals, and LGBTQ people are being served equitably.

Goal 2.2
The percentage of households that maintain permanent housing for more than two years after exiting the system increases to 90%.

Obtaining permanent housing is one step on the road to stability. People transitioning out of homelessness often have a variety of needs, including behavioral health and mental health care, employment, education, childcare and parenting support, legal support, and more, that, when met, can ensure their ability to maintain housing. This requires a system that provides tailored, wraparound support connecting people to employment, income and services that will help them not only regain but also maintain their stability over the long term.

Annual Benchmarks

Key Strategies

1. Implement a "care coordination" model for the homeless system, similar to the one in healthcare, that provides wraparound services starting when a household first enters the system up through the initial period following a move to permanent housing.

   a. Expand CTI systemwide and to all populations after the current pilot with homeless families ends in 2020.
   b. Establish a system to support individuals participating in diversion and who refuse CTI, following up with them at 30 and 90 days and offering connections to services that could help them maintain housing long-term.

2. Coordinate with private funders to create an emergency fund with small grants for previously homeless households facing minor crises that could lead to a return to homelessness.

3. Ensure all providers are fully informed about the variety of services and benefits available (e.g., mental health care, transportation, workforce programs, Foundational Community Supports, etc.) so that they can better support the stability of the people they serve.

4. Promote the use of protective payee services for individuals who need this kind of financial management assistance to maintain their housing.

5. Increase on-the-job training and apprenticeship opportunities, supported employment, and other strategies that offer access to employment and career pathways.

STRATEGIC PRIORITY AREA #3: SYSTEM AND SERVICE IMPROVEMENTS
Create a more responsive, accessible crisis response system.

Goal 3.1
The percent of people engaged through street outreach who move to a more positive outcome than their current situation increases to 15%.

Street outreach brings services directly to people experiencing homelessness who otherwise might not seek them out, and begins to connect them to permanent housing. Street outreach workers develop relationships with chronically homeless individuals over time, which can ensure a gradual, warm handoff to housing providers. Sometimes it takes months or even years before an individual is ready to accept help and go inside.

Annual Benchmarks

Key Strategies

1. Engage street outreach providers, including the VA, in a learning collaborative to coordinate data, improve street outreach practices, and ensure the entire county is being covered.

2. Create standard operating procedures for street outreach teams across the county.

3. Advocate for a reduction in the documentation required to access services.

4. Establish a flexible fund for use by street outreach staff to support the basic needs of the people they serve, which is often the first step to getting them to move to a more positive outcome.

Goal 3.2
Reduce the wait time for a housing solutions conversation to one day or less.

When people come to Coordinated Entry they are screened and then scheduled to participate in a housing solutions conversation, which is designed to help people identify a solution to their housing crisis and avoid entering the system. XX% of people were diverted from the system in 2018 as a result of these conversations. However the average time from initial contact with Coordinated Entry to when households have a housing solutions conversation is currently 11 days. Eliminating this wait time will ensure we serve people when they need support most and will reduce the length of time people experience homelessness.

Annual Benchmarks

Key Strategies

1. Create and sustain a system where all people coming to coordinated entry can participate in a housing solutions conversation on demand.
   a. Appropriately staff coordinated entry sites so that all people can be served the same day.

Goal 3.3

There is equitable distribution of and access to homeless services throughout Pierce County.

While homelessness exists in every city throughout Pierce County, homeless services—from Coordinated Entry sites to emergency shelters to housing providers—are largely concentrated in Tacoma, requiring people in outlying areas to travel, which can be an unaffordable expense. While anyone can call 211 to access Coordinated Entry, all onsite locations are in Tacoma. Being able to access homeless services in one's own community is a factor in getting support and maintaining stability.

Annual Benchmarks

Key Strategies

1. Conduct a needs assessment to determine where the greatest unmet needs exist in the county, and develop a plan to expand distribution of homeless services accordingly.

2. Increase access to Coordinated Entry throughout the county, including by expanding the presence of outreach teams countywide.

3. Ensure organizations expert in serving populations who face the greatest racial disparities are funded.

4. When evaluating funding proposals, consider organizations' work to address racial equity in order to ensure that providers around the county will be able to serve all populations effectively.

Goal 3.4

The homeless system reflects our communities and is responsive, equitable, and well-trained in cultural awareness and humility and in best practices.

To be effective and successful, our homeless system must work for everyone. When the system is well-informed in best practices and reflects the diverse languages and cultures of the communities it serves, all people are more willing to engage and able to access the tools they need. Together, we are committed to a system that is culturally aware and humble, and that works to remove institutional racism and other biases that serve as barriers to many people experiencing homelessness.

Key Strategies

1. Increase the cultural awareness and humility of providers and require organizations to learn about and work from an equity/antiracist framework.

2. Ensure translation services are available to people accessing Coordinated Entry.

3. Maintain resources for Provider Academy after 2020 to continue building capacity of providers.

4. Develop a "homeless system 101" training in which all new service provider staff are required to participate and make it available to prospective providers.
    a. Include training as detailed in WAC 388-61A-1080.

5. Recruit organizations operated by People of Color, including Black, Indigenous, Hispanic, and Latinx individuals, and LGBTQ people to apply for funding to be CE organizations or service providers within the homeless system.

6. Require all organizations that receive CoC funding to have an equity plan in place.

STRATEGIC PRIORITY AREA #4: COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS
Optimize and leverage internal and external partnerships to better prevent and address homelessness.

Goal 4.1
Homelessness funding throughout the county is aligned towards a shared set of goals, measures, and overall strategies and centered around a commitment to equity.

Organizations providing services and housing to those experiencing homelessness typically receive funding from multiple sources, including city and County governments and foundations. Each funder sets different measures, goals and strategies that organizations must track, meet, and implement creating an administrative burden and programmatic challenges that divert financial and human resources away from their intended outcome. Yet, most funders are working toward the same aim of reducing homelessness. Increasing alignment will lead to a more efficient and effective use of the limited resources we have.

Annual Benchmarks

Key Strategies

1. Bring together homeless-funder leadership from cities, the County, and philanthropic organizations to work toward increasing alignment and explore solutions where alignment is not possible.

    a. Focus on aligning funding priorities, measures, data collection, and definitions of homelessness (where possible)

    b. Engage funders around a shared commitment to equity.

Goal 4.2

Intersecting systems, coalitions, and organizations are collaborating effectively to prevent and address homelessness.

Preventing and ending homelessness cannot be accomplished solely by organizations and agencies that make up Pierce County's homeless system. It requires a broader response involving sectors and organizations that engage with people who are often at risk of homelessness, who can provide people with the skills to maintain stability and housing, and who can offer financial or other kinds of support. Homelessness is a community issue, not a personal one.

Annual Benchmarks

Key Strategies

1. Identify, coordinate, and align with existing efforts in other relevant sectors—e.g., healthcare, criminal justice, foster care, workforce development, transportation, education, etc.—that are focused on working with individuals experiencing homelessness or working to address homelessness.

2. Collaborate with healthcare, mental healthcare, justice, and foster care system leaders in Pierce County to develop a discharge planning strategy to prevent people from being released into homelessness.

3. Begin dialogue with local Sovereign Nations to identify their goals, points of collaboration, and opportunities to work together.

STRATEGIC PRIORITY AREA #5: THE CONTINUUM OF CARE
Grow awareness of the CoC's purpose and 5-year plan, and serve as a central advocacy and coordinating body for addressing homelessness in Pierce County.

Goal 5.1
This 5-year plan is broadly supported by those who could further its successful implementation.

The Continuum of Care Committee intends to increase understanding of homelessness in Pierce County, the current system to address it, and the role the CoC can play in coordinating efforts and in increasing collaboration and engagement across sectors. It is also committed to energizing the community in support of the goals and strategies set forth in this plan.

Annual Benchmarks

Key Strategies

1. Increase awareness of Pierce County homelessness, the CoC, and the goals and activities of the 5-year plan.

2. Maintain ongoing communication with elected leaders at local, county, and state levels about Pierce County homelessness and the 5-year plan.

Goal 5.2
CoC Committee membership reflects the sectors needed to solve homelessness and the demographics of the people served by the homeless system.

We are committed to creating a system that is equitable, culturally aware, and humble, and works to address the barriers faced by people disproportionately experiencing homelessness. To do so, the CoC Committee must reflect, demographically, those impacted by homelessness and have the sectors who are needed to solve this enduring challenge at the table.

Annual Benchmarks

Key Strategies

1. Become an accessible place informed by cultural humility and driven by racial equity and brand CoC communications to reflect this culture.

2. Develop a membership recruitment strategy that invites participation from a variety of sectors and prioritizes representation that reflects those served by the homeless system.

SPECIFIC POPULATIONS

Every year Pierce County's homeless system helps hundreds of people experiencing homeless return to housing. But not all are able to maintain it. One important aspect of reducing homelessness is providing targeted support to help people transitioning out of homelessness stay housed. Strategic Priority Area #2 (Stability) Goal 2.2 addresses common needs across populations to support their ability to maintain housing. In addition, we believe there are evident, high-impact strategies specific to each of the following populations that can help move the needle.

CHRONICALLY HOMELESS INDIVIDUALS

Individuals with a disabling condition who have either been continuously homeless for a year or more, or who have had at least four episodes of homelessness in the past three years.

The Goal

90% of formerly chronically homeless individuals remain housed two years after securing permanent housing.

Most recent data indicate that about 50% of chronically homeless individuals who secure permanent housing remain housed after two years. While the reasons for this low percentage are many and complex, ensuring these individuals have steady economic resources and are supported by staff knowledgeable in their needs, no matter what type of housing in which they are placed, is critical.

Annual Benchmarks

Key Strategies

1. Create easier access to economic resources that can support housing stability for chronically homeless individuals.

   a. Ensure that case managers are connecting chronically homeless individuals who are entering housing with all mainstream benefits available to them.
   b. Increase the number of individuals within the County who are SOAR certified and actively connecting chronically homeless individuals entering permanent supportive housing with federal benefits.
   c. Increase the use of Foundational Community Supports to pay for and maintain services that will help chronically homeless individuals stay housed.

2. Invest in rapid rehousing providers so that they are prepared to effectively support chronically homeless individuals.

   a. Encourage participation in Provider Academy trainings by rapid rehousing providers to increase their effectiveness in working with the most vulnerable and highest-need populations.

b. Integrate behavioral and mental health resources into rapid rehousing services through partnerships with mental health agencies, hiring of trained staff, and other approaches identified by service providers.

VETERANS
Individuals who have served in some capacity, for at least one day, with the armed forces or reserve.

The Goal
90% of formerly homeless veterans remain housed two years after securing permanent housing.

Most recent data indicate that 85% of homeless veterans who secure permanent housing remain housed after two years. Transportation is a critical connection to services and employment that can mean stability for veterans. For some, extra support with managing rental payments and navigating landlord relationships is all that is needed to remain housed.

Annual Benchmarks

Key Strategies

1. Have the HUD-VASH program implement graduation contact protocols, as outlined within VHA Directive 1162.05, in which Veterans who have graduated from HUD-VASH case management are contacted at least yearly for assessment as to whether or not re-enrollment in case management and/or increased service provision is indicated in order to sustain housing.

2. Strategically expand delivery of the Renters Readiness program to reach more veterans.
    a. Engage and support VA community partners in the fields of education, employment, and financial services to deliver the program.

3. Increase veterans' access to transportation services to ensure they can obtain and sustain employment and continue to access services once they are housed.
    a. Collaborate with efforts currently being undertaken by Pierce County Veterans Assistance Fund.
    b. Work with local governments and community partners to identify transportation resources, maximize veterans' access, and develop new transportation resources if needed.

4. Support a collaboration between HUD-VASH, the Landlord Liaison Program, housing authorities or others to help with landlord engagement around veteran renters.

5. Conduct research on the feasibility of creating landlord incentives for taking veteran renters.

YOUTH (Ages 12-24)
Individuals under the age of 25, who are unaccompanied by a parent or guardian adult.

The Goal
90% of formerly homeless youth remain housed two years after securing permanent housing.

Most recent data indicate that 44% of homeless youth (ages 12-24) who secure permanent housing remain housed after two years. These youth are resilient, yet face tremendous barriers to obtaining and maintaining housing due to their age and lack of life experience. Many cannot sign their own leases, nor do they have the skills or knowledge around the basics of "running" a household. In addition to focusing on the supportive strategies below to address these challenges, we will collaborate with the Anchor Community Initiative in Pierce County.

Annual Benchmarks

Key Strategies
1. Create a "housing coach" program to mentor youth and young adults in the basics of maintaining a home, from buying groceries and furniture to budgeting and paying rent and utilities on time.

2. Facilitate housing support groups to help youth and young adults maintain existing social connections and develop new ones with peers who've been recently housed.

3. Identify financial resources that can be used to support youth and young adults who qualify as homeless under McKinney Vento and are not literally homeless.

4. Identify and/or develop safe housing options for youth under 18 who cannot sign their own leases.

FAMILIES (HOUSEHOLDS WITH CHILDREN)
Households with at least one minor child and one adult, including single or partnered pregnant females.

The Goal
90% of formerly homeless families remain housed two years after securing permanent housing.

Most recent data indicate that 71% of homeless families who secure permanent housing remain housed after two years. A family's ability to maintain housing is often dependent on an intersecting set of factors that allow—or don't allow—them to maintain employment. Having affordable, dependable, nearby childcare is one of those factors parents identify as being a linchpin.

Annual Benchmarks

Key Strategies

1. Focus on helping families access and use existing childcare resources and programs.

2. Establish a committee to explore and recommend innovative approaches to creating affordable, accessible childcare that could be implemented in Pierce County.

3. Coordinate with the Tacoma-Pierce County Health Department to create a process for seamlessly connecting families who come to Coordinated Entry with the nearest Family Support Center.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE SURVIVORS
Individuals who are self-identified survivors of domestic violence, whether fleeing, attempting to flee or neither.

The Goal
90% of formerly homeless domestic violence survivors remain housed two years after securing permanent housing.

Most recent data indicate that 75% of homeless domestic violence survivors who secure permanent housing remain housed after two years. Supporting the stability and independence of these individuals is critical to ensuring they do not return to their abuser(s) or trafficker(s). Making mental health services easily available, providing ongoing social support, and breaking down financial barriers to stability are essential.

Key Strategies

1. Launch and sustain up to 10 new support groups for DV survivors across the county, as a means of helping them remain independently housed and not return to abusive partners.

      a. Engage Family Support Centers and other community partners to host the groups.

2. Educate human services and housing organizations on the urgency of mental health services for DV survivors, as well as the resources available, and encourage organization staff to connect DV survivors they engage with to these services.

3. Create a DV survivors fund dedicated to helping them leave their abuser(s) and stabilize.

HOUSEHOLDS WITHOUT CHILDREN
Households that include at least one adult and no minor children or youth (ages 12-24), and do not fall in one of the specific populations above.

The Goal
90% of formerly homeless households without children—who are not part of a specific population above—remain housed two years after securing permanent housing.

Most recent data indicate that 73% of homeless households without children who secure permanent housing remain housed after two years. This is often an overlooked but substantial population. This group includes households who lost housing as a result of crises like major health issues and the loss of a job. It includes an increasing number of seniors homeless for the first time in their lives. And it includes people who've simply been priced out of the rental market and don't have a support system to help. Homeless households without children most often need economic resources and education and employment support to maintain their stability once they are back into housing.

Annual Benchmarks

Key Strategies
1. Increase access to employment, education, and training programs by creating stronger partnerships with Valeo Vocation, Goodwill, Workforce Central, Skookum and Vadis to support successful employment.

2. Create easier access to economic resources that can support housing stability for households without children.

a. During the coordinated entry intake assessment, engage households without children in a conversation to determine what mainstream benefits they qualify for and whether they are accessing them, and connect them.
b. Continuously promote the opportunity to apply for a Section 8 voucher to households without children who are not a part of any other priority population.

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

This glossary includes terms used within this plan or terms that describe important parts of Pierce County's homeless system.

211
211 is a simple, easy-to-remember three digit phone number that offers access to all health and human services serving the Pierce County area for people who need help. Individuals and families experiencing homeless can call 211 to access Coordinated Entry.

Affordable Housing
Housing is considered affordable when the household is paying no more than 30% of their income toward rent or mortgage and utilities. In order for market rate housing to be affordable to low and extremely low-income households, a subsidy is necessary. Affordable housing can be publicly or privately owned, is permanent, with the household holding the lease. Low-income housing is a type of affordable housing that is specifically designed to be affordable to people earning less than 50% of the area median income. This is achieved by securing funding for operating subsidies rather than subsidies attached to individual tenant households.

Anchor Community Initiative
An initiative of A Way Home Washington with the support of the Washington State Office of Homeless Youth focused on ending youth homelessness in Washington state by 2022. Four counties—Spokane, Walla Walla, Yakima and Pierce—are the initial focus, with the aim to expand to more than a dozen.

Continuum of Care Program
The HUD Continuum of Care (CoC) Program is designed to assist individuals (including unaccompanied youth) and families experiencing homelessness and to provide the services needed to help such individuals move into transitional and permanent housing, with the goal of long-term stability. More broadly, the CoC Program is designed to promote community-wide planning and strategic use of resources to address homelessness; improve coordination and integration with mainstream resources and other programs targeted to people experiencing homelessness; improve data collection and performance measurement; and allow each community to tailor its programs to the particular strengths and challenges in assisting homeless individuals and families within that community. Communities can apply to receive CoC funding.

Continuum of Care Committee ("CoC" or CoC Committee)
The CoC Committee is the unincorporated entity responsible for developing a 5-year plan to address homelessness, designating and operating the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS), and designing a coordinated entry system. It also responsible for preparing and submitting the annual application to HUD for funding to support plan implementation.

Coordinated Entry System (CES or CE)
A coordinated entry system standardizes and coordinates across the community the way individuals and families at risk of homelessness or experiencing homelessness are assessed for and referred to the housing and services that they need for housing stability.

Critical Time Intervention (CTI)
CTI is an evidence-based practice that assists homeless individuals and families in obtaining and maintaining housing. An individual or family is connected with a CTI Housing Navigator who helps them navigate this transition and build a network of resources from the time they are connected with CE and for a period from three to nine months, depending on their plan for exiting homelessness and degree of need. CTI is currently operating as a small pilot program in Pierce County.

Diversion
Diversion is a strategy intending to diver households from the homeless system. It prevents a household (individuals or families) from entering shelter or an unsheltered location by helping them identify immediate alternate housing arrangements, and if necessary, connecting them with services and financial assistance to help them return to permanent housing. Diversion is implemented within the coordinated entry system (CES) and reduces the demand on shelter programs.

Emergency Shelter
Emergency shelter includes any facility, with the primary purpose of providing temporary shelter for all people experiencing homelessness or specific sub-populations. Most funding sources limit shelter stays to 90 days.

Family Support Centers
Community-based flexible, family-focused, and culturally sensitive facilities that provide programs and services based on the needs of the families. Services are many and can range from parenting skills courses and childcare to job training and mental health services. There are 7 Family Support Centers in Pierce County administered by the Tacoma-Pierce County Health Department, and each is designed to meet the needs of the community around it.

Foundational Community Supports Program (FCS)
This program offers benefits for supportive housing and supported employment for Medicaid-eligible beneficiaries with complex needs. Benefits go to housing and employment providers to help vulnerable clients find and maintain supported jobs, and acquire and maintain stable, independent yet supportive housing.

Homeless Management Information System (HMIS)
An information system designated by the Continuum of Care (CoC) to comply with requirements prescribed by HUD. This system stores client information about persons who access homeless services in a CoC and is a core source of data on the population of people experiencing homelessness who engage with Coordinated Entry.

HMIS Lead
The organization designated by the CoC Committee to administer the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS). Pierce County fills this role.

Housing Solutions Conversation
This short-term problem-solving technique, the core tactic for Diversion (see above), meets a housing crisis head on with the creativity and resources of the person experiencing the crisis. By helping them to leverage their natural resources—such as their family, friends, or faith

communities—people can find no-cost or low-cost housing solutions at a critical moment. Once the issues are identified, their own solution can sometimes be paired with short-term rental assistance, a one-time bill payment, or help finding a job or addressing health and safety needs, providing support to help them maintain their current housing.

HUD
The United States Department of Housing and Urban Development, which provides communities with resources for housing and to address homelessness.

HUD-VASH (U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development – VA Supportive Housing Program)
A collaborative program between HUD and the VA that combines HUD housing vouchers with VA supportive services to help veterans and their families experiencing homelessness find and sustain permanent housing.

Landlord Liaison Program
This is an innovative program that provides support to property managers/owners (landlords) who work with housing agencies in Pierce County. The program educates both tenants and landlords in operational etiquette and new housing-related laws & policies, and ensures that housing agencies continually offer support services to program tenants and respond rapidly to landlord concerns. The program also offers landlords incentives for working with housing agencies and the tenants they place.

McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act
A federal law that provides funding for homeless services, with a special emphasis on elderly persons, handicapped persons, and families with children.

McKinney-Vento Liaisons
McKinney Vento Liaisons are local homeless education liaisons response for ensuring the identification, school enrollment, attendance, and opportunities for academic success of students in homeless situations. By linking students and their families to school and community services, local liaisons play a critical role in stabilizing students and promoting academic achievement at the individual, school, and district level.

Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH)
PSH is long-term, community-based housing that provides supportive services for low income or homeless people with developmental disabilities, severe mental illness, substance abuse, or HIV/AIDS. This type of supportive housing enables special needs populations to live as independently as possible in a permanent setting. Supportive services may be provided by the organization managing the housing, or coordinated by the housing provider and provided by other public or private service agencies.

Point in Time Count (PIT)
The annual count of sheltered and unsheltered homeless persons on a single night, which is conducted in Pierce County in January.

Public Housing Authority

Charted under state law, a housing authority is an autonomous, not-for-profit public corporation. This organizational structure allows housing authorities to work in conjunction with local governments and agencies to develop long-term housing strategies for communities. Though independently run, housing authorities are required to follow federal regulations. In addition, housing authorities receive a subsidy from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). Pierce County Housing Authority and Tacoma Housing Authority are the two local, public housing authorities.

Rapid Re-Housing (RRH)
Services and supports designed to help persons experiencing homelessness move as quickly as possible into permanent housing with temporary financial assistance.

Renters Readiness Program
Provides renters with basic tools to be good renters, helping them learn how to build healthy relationships and trust with landlords. The program is currently implemented by Associated Ministries.

Risk Mitigation Funds
Reimbursement funds designed to incentivize and protect landlords who are willing to reduce screening criteria to rent to someone with limited income, poor rental history, or criminal history.

Section 8 Program
The common name for the Housing Choice Voucher Program, funded by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. The program allows private landlords to rent apartments and homes at fair market rates to qualified low-income tenants, with a rental subsidy administered by a local public housing authority. Eligible tenants typically pay 30% of their income and receive a "voucher" for the remainder.

Shared Housing Services
Shared Housing Services offers low-income individuals, including youth, and families innovative and affordable solutions to prevent homelessness and foster independence through home sharing and transitional housing programs that include case management services and connections to vital community resources.

SOAR (SSI/SSDI Outreach, Access, and Recovery)
A program designed to increase access to Supplemental Security Income (SS)/Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) for eligible adults who are experiencing or at risk of homelessness and have a serious mental illness, medical impairment, and/or co-occurring substance use disorder.

Street Outreach
Services that focus on reaching out to unsheltered homeless persons to connect them to emergency shelter, housing, or critical services.

Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF)
A supportive services program for administered by the VA provides rapid rehousing and prevention funding to non-profit organizations and consumer cooperatives to assist with very low-income Veterans and their families experiencing homelessness.

Transitional Housing

Housing for up to 24 months that serve as intermediary housing before a person moves into permanent housing.

VHA Directive 1162.05

This Veterans Health Administration (VHA) directive revises policy procedures for the Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Department of Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing Program (HUD-VASH) and sets forth the national authority and responsibilities for the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) portion of administration, monitoring, and oversight of these services. (Amended October 2017).

Wraparound Supports

Services designed to address basic needs and the many and diverse aspects of individual wellbeing.

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