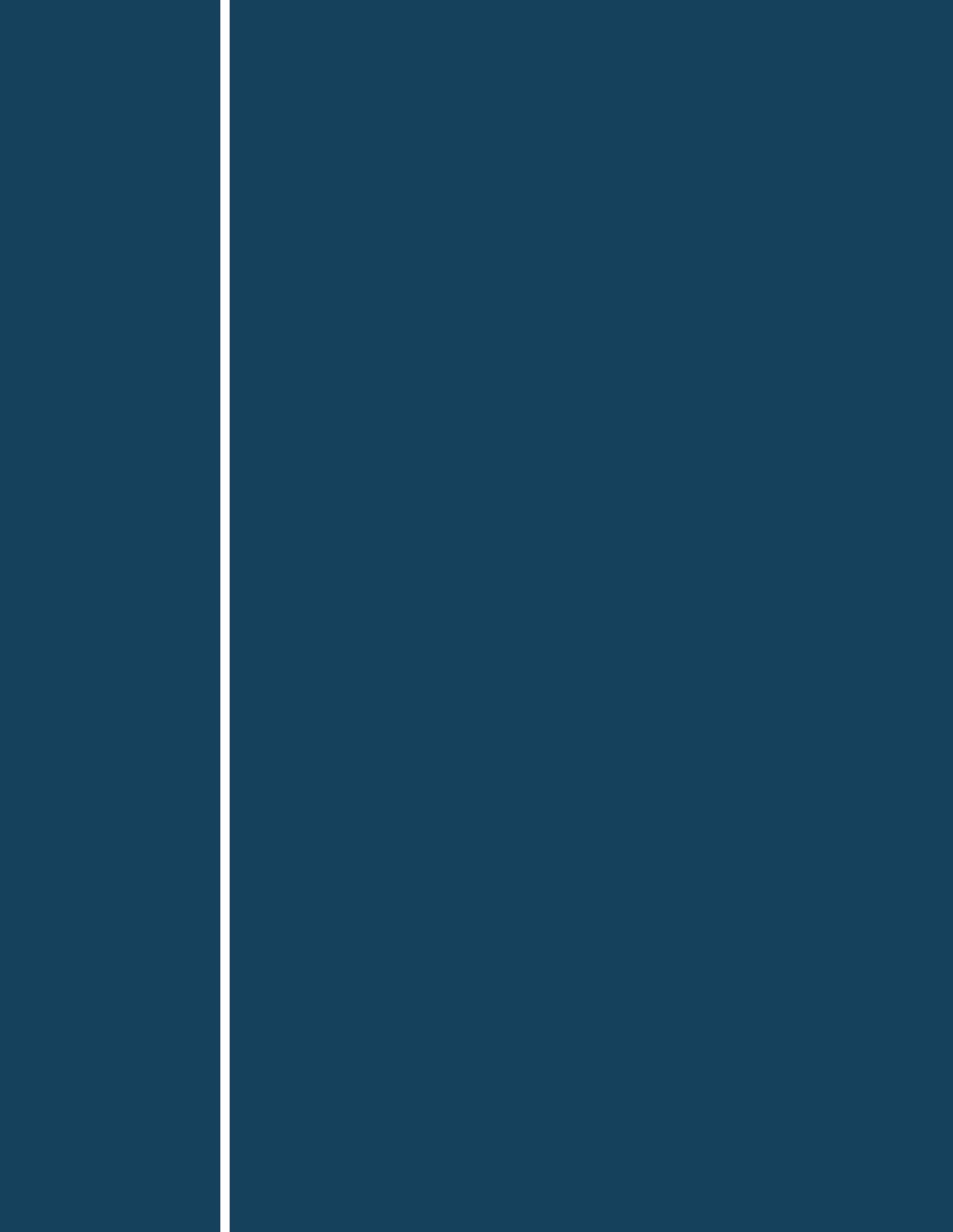TACOMA | LAKEWOOD | PIERCE COUNTY

Five-Year Plan to Address Homelessness

Presented by **The Road Home**, Pierce County's Continuum of Care Committee

DECEMBER 2019

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Our Plan to Address Homelessness

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 Crisis Response 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 Crisis Response System by supporting their own identification of a solution through a Housing Solutions Conversation.
- Prioritizing permanent housing interventions for those who are hardest to house and least likely to achieve stability without support.
- Increasing access to housing by making housing program eligibility consistent system wide.

There are reasons to pause and take pride. We have received national and state recognition for our Diversion program and its Housing Solutions Conversations.[1] 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.[2] Nearly half are families, some are youth unaccompanied by an adult, some are veterans, and some are domestic violence survivors. Nearly all lost their homes while living here. They are all our neighbors.

[1,2] Fact Sheet: Homelessness In Pierce County (Updated 4/30/19) https://www.co.pierce.wa.us/3715/Homeless-Programs

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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 Crisis Response System has become more efficient and effective, it is only one puzzle piece to a longer-lasting solution. We hope the implementation of Tacoma/Lakewood/Pierce County's Five-Year Plan to Address Homelessness (the plan) 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 a 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 U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), State Department of Commerce, and local funds to support the plan's implementation through the county's Homeless Crisis Response 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 plan. This 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 Homeless Crisis 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 circumstances, 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.

The Homeless Crisis Response System

OUR SYSTEM FIVE YEARS AGO

No system is perfect and becomes more effective through ongoing evaluation and improvement. Five years ago, Pierce County's homeless crisis response system was accessed via a single access point: Access Point 4 Housing. At that time, Pierce County Human Services engaged Focus Strategies—a consultant providing data-driven systems planning to address homelessness—to evaluate and provide recommendations for improving this Centralized Intake process for conducting an assessment and making referrals to housing programs.

Following are key results of that analysis:
- The Centralized Intake assessment tool was inefficient and often duplicative of the intake processes used by housing program providers.
- Centralized Intake did not utilize objective criteria to prioritize access to housing programs.
- Housing providers defined the criteria by which people experiencing homelessness were accepted into vacancies, resulting in providers getting the clients they wanted, rather than ensuring that every household that went on the waitlist was appropriately placed in housing.
- Provider-imposed eligibility criteria created barriers to housing for higher-need households.
- Centralized Intake data was not integrated with HMIS, making it very difficult to track what happened with clients from the time they accessed Centralized Intake until they entered housing.
- There were side doors and a parallel system not right sized to meet the need that relied too heavily on temporary housing and not enough on permanent housing options.

A MORE EFFICIENT AND EFFECTIVE SYSTEM TODAY

In Pierce County today, the "front door" to our homeless crisis response system is referred to as Coordinated Entry. People experiencing homelessness can call 211, set an appointment at a specific location, drop in to a "same day" site, or engage with an outreach worker to access Coordinated Entry. During an intake conversation, their situation is assessed, and they may get support resolving their housing crisis through a Diversion Conversation and are prioritized for a housing program referral. Each organization involved enters data and coordinates referrals using one centralized data system: the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS).

We took Focus Strategies' recommendations to heart. In addition to expanding access to the system through multiple points of entry—moving from Centralized Intake to Coordinated Entry—Pierce County implemented a new Prioritization Tool to provide a streamlined and transparent method for identifying and prioritizing households for housing and mainstream services based on vulnerabilities and the severity of their barriers to securing housing. This tool was informed by a community work group, and designed to be flexible while ensuring those with the highest need for assistance from the homeless system are prioritized. The scoring rubric and results are not known to the staff administering the assessment interview, and the result is generated within HMIS and ordered highest to lowest priority.

The Homeless Crisis Response System Prioritization policies were established with assistance from our consultant, Focus Strategies, and through various community meetings and provider input. The policies are maintained by Pierce County Human Services staff and the Tacoma/Lakewood/Pierce County Continuum of Care Committee.

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.

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 Homeless Point-in-Time survey and in our Homeless Management Information System (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 household who lacks, or is at immediate risk of losing, a regular, fixed, safe, and adequate nighttime residence; those actively fleeing or attempting to flee domestic violence; as well as unaccompanied youth under any federal definition of homelessness. 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 grant making. 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 Appendix 2 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 United States Armed Forces (including Active and Reserves).

YOUTH (AGES 12–24)

All youth and young adults under age 25 who are unaccompanied by a parent, legal guardian, or caretaker and who meet any federal definition of homelessness.

FAMILIES WITH CHILDREN

Households with at least one minor child and one adult, including single or pregnant persons.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE SURVIVORS

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

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 Crisis Response 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. 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.

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 variety of organizations that 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, health care, and juvenile justice
- Landscape review of organizations, coalitions focused on homelessness and housing in Pierce County
- HMIS and Homeless Point-in-Time Count data reviews
- Policy research
- CoC planning sessions
- Monthly CoC Planning Subcommittee meetings
- Community input sessions
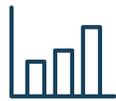
Strategic Priority Area #1:

HOUSING

Maximize the use of existing housing while advocating for additional housing resources and more affordable housing.

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 Homeless 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 plan, and serve as a central advocacy and coordinating body for addressing homelessness in Pierce County.
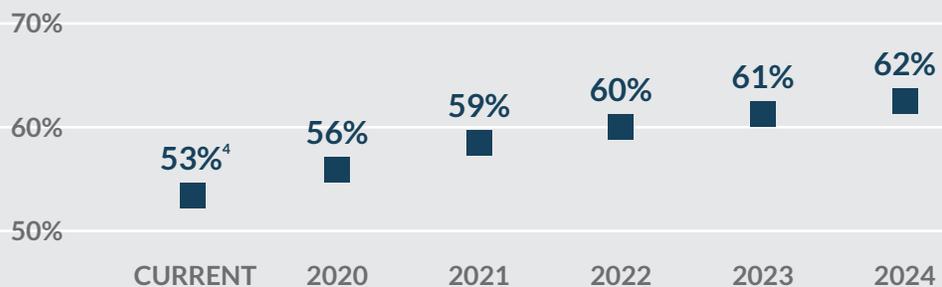
Housing

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 percent for the overall population, including, but not limited to, African American/Black, Hispanic/Latinx, and American Indian/Alaska Native populations.

When someone comes to the front door of Pierce County's Homeless Crisis Response 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 percent of systems is 59 percent.[3] 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 Homeless Crisis Response 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

53%[4]	56%	59%	60%	61%	62%
CURRENT	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024

(Chart axis: 50%, 60%, 70%)

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 Crisis Response System so that they can educate people who are homeless and would benefit from these resources but do not qualify for a housing referral.

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[3]Local Plan Guidelines – Department of Commerce (December 2018) http://www.commerce.wa.gov/wp-content/uploads/2013/01/hau-ofah-local-plan-guidance-12-10-2018.pdf
[4]Homeless Management Information System

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

4. Expand how diversion resources can be used—for eviction costs and other housing debts 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 are homeless and have 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 Crisis Response System.

7. 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.

8. Support and expand existing shared housing models and programs across Pierce County.
   a. Create a stronger partnership between the formal Homeless Crisis Response System and shared housing, and host home providers to expand housing options for homeless households who come to Coordinated Entry.
   b. Increase the number of hosted homes across the county.

9. Monitor demographics of people coming into the system compared to those leaving the system to ensure that People of Color, including African American/Black, American Indian/Alaska Native, and Hispanic/Latinx households, and people who identify as LGBTQ, are being served equitably and achieving positive outcomes.

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.[5] 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.[6] 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

CURRENT **291** units are in the pipeline to be built.

2023 **280** units completed or available.

2024 An additional **100** units completed or available.

KEY STRATEGIES

COC SUBCOMMITTEE LEADING IMPLEMENTATION:

Housing Subcommittee

CHAIRED BY:

Tonya Tunnell-Thornhill and Kevin Bates

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.

[5] "Pierce County and Tacoma Unit Projections and Financial Model," The Corporation for Supportive Housing, 2019.
[6] "Tacoma/Pierce County Affordable Housing Development and Preservation Pipeline," Pierce County Human Services, April 24, 2019.

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[7] affordable housing units available for 72,240[8] 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.[9] 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

CURRENT **223** affordable housing units are in the pipeline to be built.

2023 **220** units completed or available.

2024 An additional **230** units completed or available.

KEY STRATEGIES

COC SUBCOMMITTEE LEADING IMPLEMENTATION:

Housing Subcommittee

CHAIRED BY:

Tonya Tunnell-Thornhill and Kevin Bates

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

[7]Number of deed restricted affordable housing units plus the number of housing choice vouchers administered by Pierce County Housing Authority and Tacoma Housing Authority.
[8]Office of Policy Development and Research. Consolidated Planning / CHAS Data. https://www.huduser.gov/portal/datasets/cp.html.
[9]"Tacoma/Pierce County Affordable Housing Development and Preservation Pipeline," Pierce County Human Services, April 24, 2019.

4. Advocate for increased multi-family zoning and Detached Accessory Dwelling Units/Accessory Dwelling Units (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, host home/shared housing providers, and the Foundational Community Supports program.

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

6. Ensure that Pierce County occupancy standards do not have disparate impacts on homeless households.

STRATEGIC PRIORITY AREA #2:

Stability

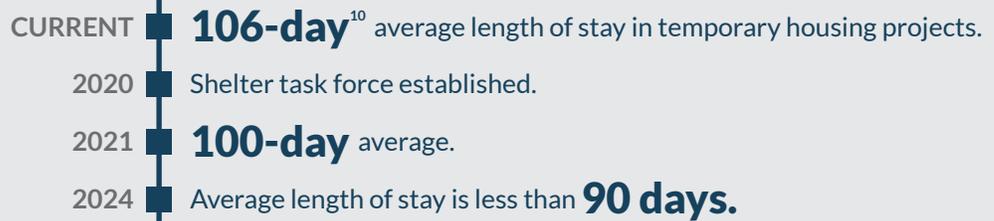Support the stability of individuals currently experiencing and at-risk of homelessness.

GOAL 2.1

Reduce average length of stay in temporary housing projects, including emergency shelter, transitional housing, and safe havens, to less than 90 days.

Emergency shelter, transitional housing, and safe havens are an essential part of an effective, housing-focused homelessness crisis response system. And yet, while providing temporary shelter is important, it is not the solution to ending homelessness or stopping someone's housing crisis. Emergency shelter, transitional housing, and safe havens should first and foremost focus on supporting individuals in accessing permanent housing and exiting the homelessness crisis response system as quickly as possible. They should also adopt a Housing First approach, creating low-barrier access to temporary shelter, and promote dignity and respect for everyone seeking or needing shelter.

ANNUAL BENCHMARKS

CURRENT	**106-day**[10] average length of stay in temporary housing projects.
2020	Shelter task force established.
2021	**100-day** average.
2024	Average length of stay is less than **90 days.**

KEY STRATEGIES

COC SUBCOMMITTEE LEADING IMPLEMENTATION:

Stability Subcommittee

CHAIRED BY:

James Pogue

1. Create a task force to include current and potential shelter and transitional housing providers, experts, local funders, and Pierce County Coalition to End Homelessness.

2. Ensure that the shelter task force is determining barriers and outcomes, and system changes to reach the goal of 90 days or less; with the knowledge of Goal 1.1 being 60 percent exits to permanent housing.

3. Use information from task force to implement system changes to include additional resources, trainings, and funding opportunities.

[10]Homeless Management Information System

GOAL 2.2

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

CURRENT	**576**[11] shelter beds available, with wait times.
2020	Shelter task force established.
2021	Assessment completed.
2022	**30** additional beds available.
2023	**60** additional beds available. Real time database goes live.
2024	**10** additional beds available. No wait times.

KEY STRATEGIES

COC SUBCOMMITTEE LEADING IMPLEMENTATION:

Stability Subcommittee

CHAIRED BY:

James Pogue

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 service providers.
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 African American/Black, American Indian/Alaska Native, and Hispanic/Latinx individuals, and LGBTQ people, are being served equitably.
6. Promote and increase the use of the Foundational Community Supports program across the system for households with higher needs or barriers to housing.

[11]Homeless Management Information System

GOAL 2.3

The percentage of households that maintain permanent housing for more than two years after exiting the Homeless Crisis Response System increases to 90 percent for the overall population, including, but not limited to, African American/Black, Hispanic/Latinx, and American Indian/Alaska Native populations.

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, child care and parenting support, legal support, and more, that, when met, can ensure their ability to maintain housing. This requires a Homeless Crisis Response 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
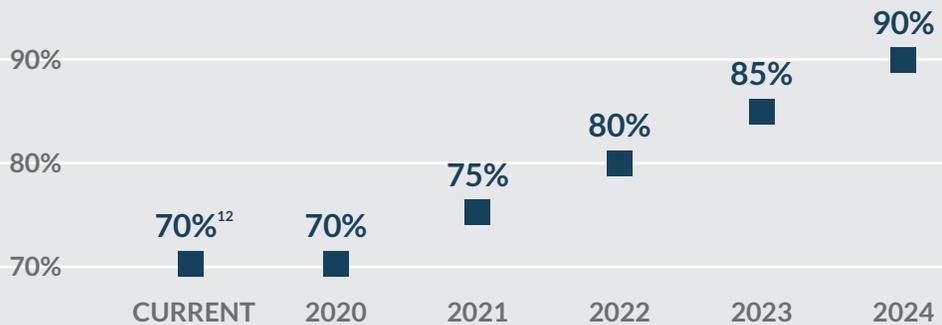
90%				85%	90%
80%			80%		
70%	70%[12]	70%	75%		
	CURRENT	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024

KEY STRATEGIES

COC SUBCOMMITTEE LEADING IMPLEMENTATION:

Stability Subcommittee

CHAIRED BY:

James Pogue

1. Implement a "care coordination" model for the Homeless Crisis Response System, similar to the one in health care, that provides wraparound services starting when a household first enters the system through the initial period following a move to permanent housing.
   a. Expand Critical Time Intervention (CTI) systemwide and to all populations after the current pilot with homeless families ends in 2020.
   b. Establish a Homeless Crisis Response System to support individuals participating in diversion, 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.

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[12]Homeless Management Information System

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) 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 access to employment, education, and training programs by creating stronger partnerships with organizations that can support stability.
   a. Increase on-the-job training and apprenticeship opportunities, supported employment, and other strategies that offer access to employment and career pathways.

6. Create easier access to economic resources that can support housing stability.
   a. During the coordinated entry intake assessment, determine what mainstream benefits households qualify for and whether they are accessing them, and connect them if needed.
   b. Continuously promote the opportunity to apply for a Section 8 voucher.

8. Engage community organizations to educate homeless households on fair housing and landlord tenant laws and regulations that will support them in maintaining their housing in the long term and empower them to advocate for themselves.

GOAL
2.4

Reduce the number of individuals entering the Homeless Crisis Response System.

Homelessness prevention is not the responsibility of the homeless crisis response system alone. Prevention requires multiple sectors collaborating to create an active focus on housing needs, housing stability, and risks of homelessness across many different public systems. The focus will be to reduce the prevalence of risk of housing crises; reduce the risk of homelessness while households are engaged with or are transitioning from systems and to target assistance to prevent housing crises that do occur from escalating further and resulting in homelessness.

ANNUAL BENCHMARKS

CURRENT **10,810**[13] people touched the Homeless Crisis Response System in 2019.

2020 Cross-sector group convened to initiate planning.

2021 Plan completed.

2022 Implementation begins.

2024 **5%** reduction in the number of people entering the Homeless Crisis Response Stystem since 2019.

## KEY STRATEGIES

COC SUBCOMMITTEE LEADING IMPLEMENTATION:

Stability Subcommittee

CHAIRED BY:

James Pogue

1. Develop and begin implementation of a comprehensive prevention plan that addresses known systemic causes of homelessness and that can be implemented by the community at large with the engagement of multiple sectors.
   a. Set a quantitative goal for number of individuals entering the Homeless Crisis Response System and associated benchmarks for achieving it.
   b. Identify funding streams to support prevention strategies in the region.
   c. Identify targeted eviction interventions through new and existing programs.

[13]Homeless Management Information System
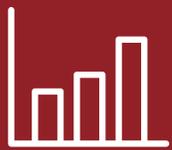
# System & Service Improvements

Create a more responsive, accessible Homeless Crisis Response System.

GOAL 3.1

The percentage of people engaged through street outreach who move to a safe and stable housing solution increases to 76 percent for the overall population, including, but not limited to, African American/Black, Hispanic/Latinx, and American Indian/Alaska Native populations.

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
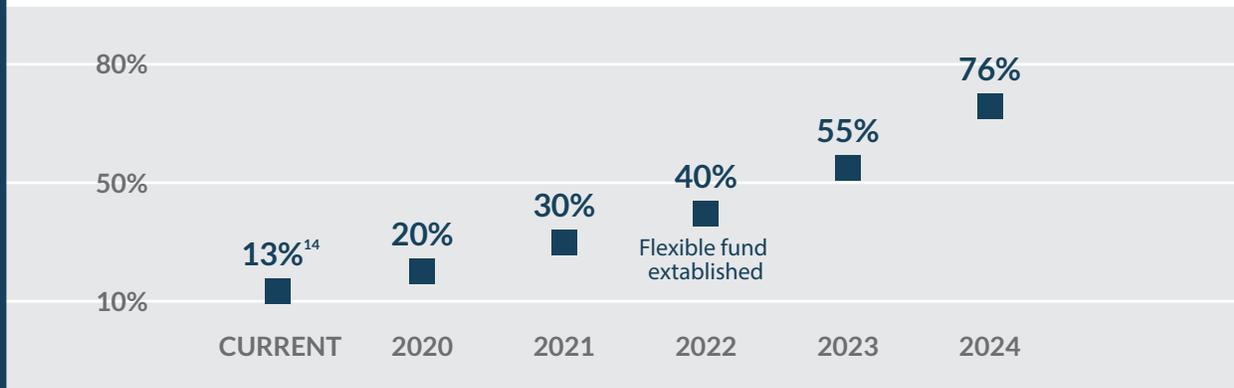
	CURRENT	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
	13%[14]	20%	30%	40% Flexible fund extablished	55%	76%

KEY STRATEGIES

COC SUBCOMMITTEE LEADING IMPLEMENTATION:

Racial Equity Subcommittee

CHAIRED BY:

Erica Azcueta and Valorie Crout

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.

[14]Homeless Management Information System

GOAL 3.2

Reduce the wait time for a housing solutions conversation to one day or less for the overall population, including, but not limited to, African American/Black, Hispanic/Latinx, and American Indian/Alaska Native populations.

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 Homeless Crisis Response System. Forty-nine percent of people were diverted from the Homeless Crisis Response 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 20 days.[15] 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

CURRENT	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
20 day wait	**20** day wait	**15** day wait	**10** day wait	**3** day wait	**1** day wait, or less

KEY STRATEGIES

COC SUBCOMMITTEE LEADING IMPLEMENTATION:

Stability Subcommittee

CHAIRED BY:

James Pogue

1. Create and sustain a Homeless Crisis Response System where all people, including, but not limited to, African American/Black, Hispanic/Latinx, and American Indian/Alaska Native individuals, coming to coordinated entry can participate in a housing solutions conversation on demand.
   a. Staff coordinated entry sites so that all people can be served the same day.

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[15]Homeless Management Information System

GOAL 3.3

Ensure 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, and outreach services do target specific populations outside of Tacoma, all onsite locations are within Tacoma. Being able to access homeless services in one's own community is a factor in getting support and maintaining stability.

ANNUAL BENCHMARKS

CURRENT	Services concentrated in Tacoma.
2021	Needs assessment and plan completed.
2022	Implementation begins.
2024	Services more widely and equitably distributed throughout the County, based on need.

KEY STRATEGIES

COC SUBCOMMITTEE LEADING IMPLEMENTATION:

Racial Equity Subcommittee

CHAIRED BY:

Erica Azcueta and Valorie Crout

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 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 all providers around the county will be able to serve all populations effectively.

5. Create an equity map for Pierce County and use this to identify and address gaps in resources for underserved populations.

GOAL
3.4

The Homeless Crisis Response 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 Crisis Response System must work for everyone. When the Homeless Crisis Response 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 Homeless Crisis Response 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.

ANNUAL BENCHMARKS

2021 Provider Academy maintained through identified funding.

2022 First round of providers participates in Homeless 101 training.
An increased number of organizations operated by People of Color/LGBTQ+ community members are applying for CoC funding.

2023 Translation and interpretation services are available to all people coming to coordinated entry.

2024 All CoC-funded organizations have an equity plan in place.

KEY STRATEGIES

COC SUBCOMMITTEE LEADING IMPLEMENTATION:

Stability Subcommittee

CHAIRED BY:

James Pogue

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 and interpretation services are available to people accessing the Homeless Crisis Response System including Coordinated Entry and all housing interventions.

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

4. Develop a "Homeless Crisis Response 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 African American/Black, American Indian/Alaska Native, and Hispanic/Latinx individuals and LGBTQ people, to apply for funding to be CE organizations or service providers within the Homeless Crisis Response System.

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

GOAL 3.5

Build and maintain a by-name list for all persons experiencing homelessness in order to track status, engagements, and housing placement for each household.

Developing and maintaining a by-name list of individuals entering the homeless crisis response system enables greater coordination across service organizations in supporting individuals on their path to exiting homelessness and obtaining permanent housing. A by-name list is a real time, up-to-date list of people experiencing homelessness that can be filtered and searched easily. The Pierce County by-name list will be pulled from HMIS and will include collaboration with community providers agencies that do not utilize HMIS.

ANNUAL BENCHMARKS

CURRENT	A by-name list is current and maintained for veterans and youth/young adults.
2021	By-name lists for chronically homeless people are established and being managed regularly.
2022	By-name lists for individual functioning are established and being managed regularly.
2023	By-name lists for families are established and being managed regularly.
2024	By-name lists for all populations are complete and managed regularly.

KEY STRATEGIES

1. Recruit service providers to develop, implement, and manage by-name lists by population.

2. Create policies and procedures to ensure by-name lists include inactive status, non-consenting clients, and tracking status, engagements, and housing placement, by subpopulation.

COC SUBCOMMITTEE LEADING IMPLEMENTATION, CHAIRED BY:

Chronic
James Pogue
Families
Jeff Rodgers,Kevin Bates
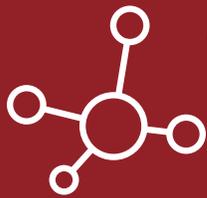**Veterans**
Rachel Silis, Patti Spaulding Klewin
Youth and Young Adults
Haili Crow Cyr, Cacey Hanauer
Individuals
Neil Rogers

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 toward a shared set of goals, measures, and overall strategies and centered on 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

2022 First convening with funders takes place.

2024 Greater alignment among funders exists around funding priorities, measures, data collection, and definition of homelessness.

KEY STRATEGIES

COC SUBCOMMITTEE LEADING IMPLEMENTATION:

Community Partnership Subcommittee

CHAIRED BY:

Tiffany Speir and Kari Haugen

1. Bring together homeless-funder leadership from cities, the county, and philanthropic organizations to work toward increasing alignment and exploring 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 Crisis Response 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.

KEY STRATEGIES

COC SUBCOMMITTEE LEADING IMPLEMENTATION:

Stability Subcommittee

CHAIRED BY:

James Pogue

1. Identify, coordinate, and align with existing efforts to address homelessness in all relevant sectors (e.g., health care, criminal justice, foster care, workforce development, transportation, education, business).

2. Ensure that discharge planning strategies are in place to prevent people from being released into homelessness by working specifically with relevant sectors, including foster care, criminal justice, and health care.

3. Begin a dialogue with local tribes 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 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 community understanding and awareness of the homeless crisis in Pierce County, the current Homeless Crisis Response System to address it, and the role the CoC can play 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

2021 — Baseline awareness survey conducted.

2023 — Second survey conducted shows substantial increase in awareness and support.

KEY STRATEGIES

COC SUBCOMMITTEE LEADING IMPLEMENTATION:

Executive Subcommittee

CHAIRED BY:

Amanda DeShazo

1. Develop and implement a communications strategy to increase awareness of Pierce County homelessness, the CoC, and the goals and activities of the plan.

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

GOAL
5.2

CoC Committee membership reflects the sectors needed to solve homelessness and the demographics of the people served by the Homeless Crisis Response System.

We are committed to creating a Homeless Crisis Response 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.

1. Become an accessible place informed by cultural humility and driven by racial equity to all people, 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 Crisis Response System.

KEY STRATEGIES

COC SUBCOMMITTEE LEADING IMPLEMENTATION:

Community Partnership Subcommittee

CHAIRED BY:

Tiffany Speir and Kari Haugen

Specific Populations

Every year, Pierce County's Homeless Crisis Response System helps hundreds of people experiencing homelessness 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 increase success rates.
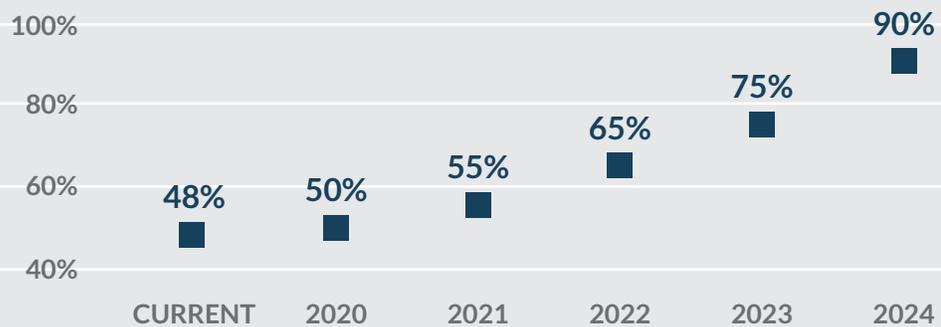
CHRONICALLY HOMELESS INDIVIDUALS

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 percent of chronically homeless individuals remain housed two years after securing permanent housing.

Recent data indicate that about 50 percent of chronically homeless individuals who secure permanent housing remain housed after two years.[16] 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

	CURRENT	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
	48%	50%	55%	65%	75%	90%

KEY STRATEGIES

COC REPRESENTATIVE LEADING IMPLEMENTATION

James Pogue

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 are actively connecting chronically homeless individuals entering permanent supportive housing and rapid rehousing with their federal benefits.
   c. Increase the use of Foundational Community Supports to help chronically homeless individuals stay housed.

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[16]HMIS Data. Returns – 2 years after exit (Permanent exits between 7/1/2016 to 6/30/2017 as of 7/16/2019)

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

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

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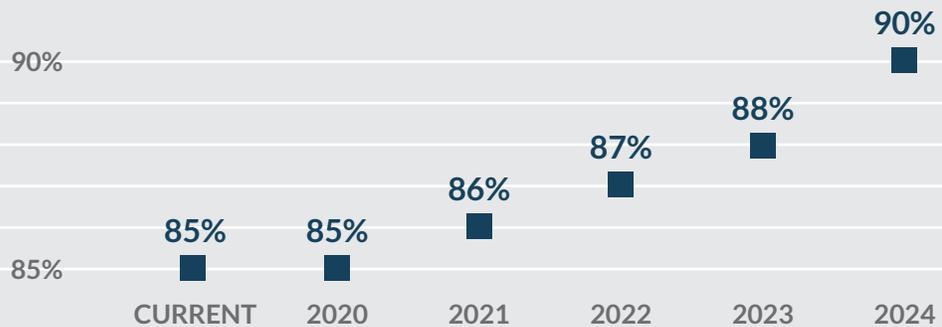
VETERANS

Individuals who have served in some capacity, for at least one day, in the United States Armed Forces (including Active Duty and Reserves).

THE GOAL

90 percent of homeless veterans remain housed two years after securing permanent housing.

ANNUAL BENCHMARKS

Most recent data indicate that 85 percent of homeless veterans who secure permanent housing remain housed after two years.[17] 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.

	CURRENT	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
	85%	85%	86%	87%	88%	90%

KEY STRATEGIES

COC REPRESENTATIVES LEADING IMPLEMENTATION

Rachel Silis and Patti Spaulding-Klewin

1. Encourage the HUD-VASH program contact graduated veterans at the time of voucher recertification and inspection to offer assistance with the process for graduation or continuing services; assess case management needs; and determine if increased services are needed to sustain permanent housing (as outlined in the VHA Directive 1162.05).

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.

[17]HMIS Data. Returns – 2 years after exit (Permanent exits between 7/1/2016 to 6/30/2017 as of 7/16/2019)

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 percent of homeless youth remain housed two years after securing permanent housing.

Most recent data indicate that 44 percent of homeless youth (ages 12-24) who secure permanent housing remain housed after two years.[18] 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

	CURRENT	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
	44%	45%	50%	65%	80%	90%
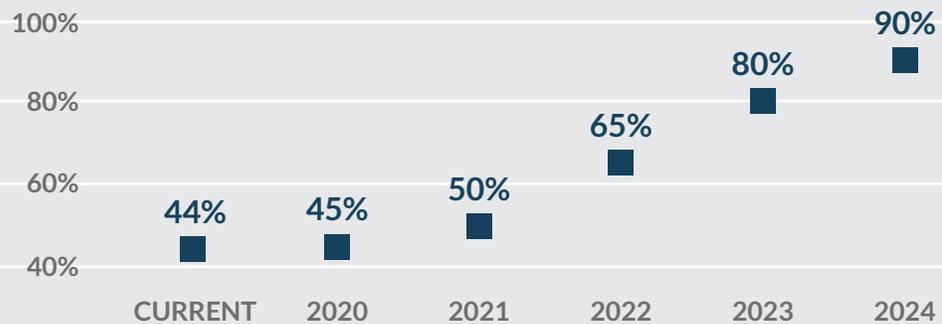
KEY STRATEGIES

COC REPRESENTATIVES LEADING IMPLEMENTATION

Cacey Hanauer and Devon Isakson

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 that are community centered and culturally appropriate 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 for use in supporting youth and young adults who qualify as homeless under McKinney Vento and are not literally homeless.

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

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[18]HMIS Data. Returns – 2 years after exit (Permanent exits between 7/1/2016 to 6/30/2017 as of 7/16/2019)


FAMILIES (HOUSEHOLDS WITH CHILDREN)

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

THE GOAL

90 percent of homeless families remain housed two years after securing permanent housing.

Most recent data indicate that 71 percent of homeless families who secure permanent housing remain housed after two years.[19] 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. For example, having affordable, dependable, nearby child care is one of those factors parents identify as being critical to their stability.

ANNUAL BENCHMARKS

90%				85%	90%
80%			80%		
70% 71%	71%	75%			
CURRENT	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
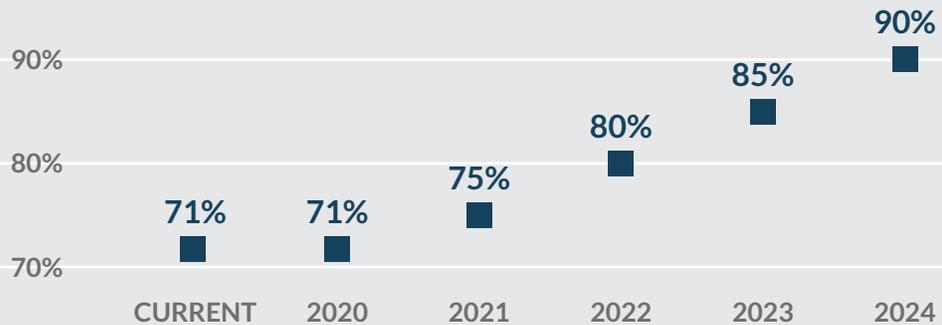
KEY STRATEGIES

COC REPRESENTATIVE LEADING IMPLEMENTATION

Andy Rohr

1. Help families access and use existing child care resources and programs that are community-centered, effective, and culturally responsive.

2. Identify and pilot innovative approaches to creating affordable, accessible child care that are being used in other communities nationwide.

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.

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[19]HMIS Data. Returns – 2 years after exit (Permanent exits between 7/1/2016 to 6/30/2017 as of 7/16/2019)


DOMESTIC VIOLENCE SURVIVORS

Individuals who are self-identified survivors of domestic violence, whether fleeing, or attempting to flee.

THE GOAL

90 percent of homeless domestic violence survivors remain housed two years after securing permanent housing.

Most recent data indicate that 75 percent of homeless domestic violence survivors who secure permanent housing remain housed after two years.[20] 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 also essential.

ANNUAL BENCHMARKS

	CURRENT	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
90%					88%	90%
80%	75%	75%	78%	83%		
70%						
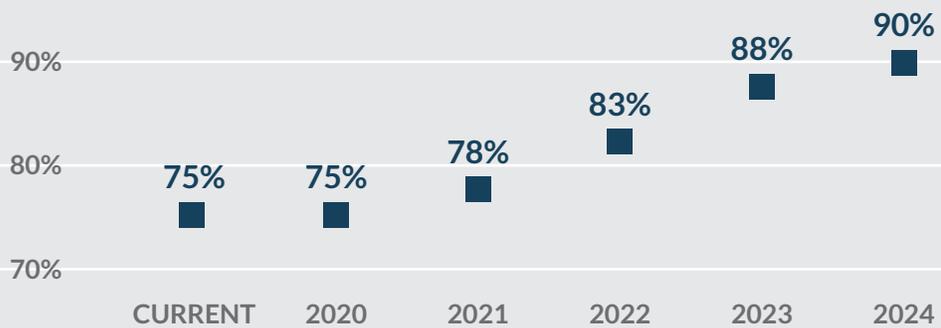
KEY STRATEGIES

COC REPRESENTATIVES LEADING IMPLEMENTATION

Keith Galbraith and Tonya Tunnell-Thornhill

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

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[20]HMIS Data. Returns – 2 years after exit (Permanent exits between 7/1/2016 to 6/30/2017 as of 7/16/2019)

Glossary of Terms

This glossary includes terms used within this plan or terms that describe important parts of Pierce County's Homeless Crisis Response System.

211

211 is a simple, easy-to-remember 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 homelessness can call 211 to access Coordinated Entry.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Housing is affordable if the household pays no more than 30 percent of gross income for housing expenses (rent/mortgage plus utilities). According to HUD, a household is cost burdened if they pay more than 30 percent of income for housing expenses and severely cost burdened if they pay more than 50 percent of gross income for housing expenses.

ANCHOR COMMUNITY INITIATIVE

An initiative, A Way Home Washington, with the support of the Washington State Department of Commerce Office of Homeless Youth, focuses on ending youth and young adult 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.

BY-NAME LIST

A by-name list is a real time, up-to-date list of all people experiencing homelessness in your community that can be filtered by categories and shared across appropriate agencies. This list is generated with data from outreach, HMIS, federal partners, and any other community shelter and providers working within the homeless subpopulation.

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 plan to address homelessness, designating a Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) lead, and designing a coordinated entry system as part of its Homeless Crisis Response System. It also is responsible for preparing and submitting the annual application to HUD for funding to support plan implementation.

COORDINATED ENTRY SYSTEM (CE)

A coordinated entry system standardizes and coordinates the way households experiencing homelessness across the community are assessed for and referred to the housing and services that they need for housing stability.

CRITICAL TIME INTERVENTION (CTI)

CTI is a time-limited evidence-based practice that mobilizes support for society's most vulnerable individuals during periods of transition. It facilitates community integration and continuity of care by ensuring that a person has enduring ties to their community and support systems during these critical periods. In Pierce County, an individual or family will be connected with a CTI Navigator who will help them navigate their transition to housing and build a network of resources from the time they are connected with CE and for a period of 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 divert households from the Homeless Crisis Response System. It does so by helping them, through a Housing Solutions Conversation (see below), identify immediate alternate housing arrangements, and if necessary, connect with services and financial assistance to help them return to permanent housing. Diversion is implemented within the coordinated entry system (CES).

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 shelters 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 child care to job training and mental health services. There are seven 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 (FCS)

FCS 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 CoC Committee 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 Human Services fills this role.

HOST HOME PROGRAM

A program that recruits and trains host homes/families to provide temporary, and in some cases long-term, homes to youth and young adults. Host home programs match participants with a host, provide services such as case management, and support and training to the host.

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 requires communities to have a Continuum of Care Committee, a Collaborative Applicant, and to designate a HMIS Lead. HUD requires the CoC to implement and follow its policy guidance and to align with HUD's plan. HUD also requires communities to have Coordinated Entry, Prioritization, and to meet system-wide performance measures.

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 and policies, and ensures that housing agencies continually offer support services to program tenants and respond rapidly to landlord concerns. The program offers Risk Mitigation Funds to landlords.

MCKINNEY-VENTO HOMELESS ASSISTANCE ACT

The federal McKinney-Vento Act more broadly defines homelessness in an effort to provide protections and supports for students living in a variety of unstable housing situations: Homeless students are defined as those who lack "a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence," and includes those that who are living in doubled up situations.

MCKINNEY-VENTO LIAISONS

McKinney Vento Liaisons are local homeless education liaisons responsible 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 housing that provides supportive services for low income or homeless people with disabling conditions. 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 time-limited 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 percent of their income and receive a "voucher" for the remainder.

SHARED HOUSING

Shared housing is a long-term living arrangement between two unrelated people who choose to live together to take advantage of the mutual benefit it offers, such as dividing rental and utility costs.

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 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

Temporary housing and supportive services for up to 24 months that serves households before transitioning 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.

Contributors to the Plan

PLANNING SUBCOMMITTEE MEMBERS

- Amanda DeShazo, Affordable Housing Consortium
- Erica Azcueta, City of Tacoma
- James Pogue, Comprehensive Life Resources
- Jeff Rodgers, Pierce County Human Services
- Rachel Silis, Veterans Health Administration–American Lake
- Tiffany Speir, City of Lakewood
- Tonya Tunnell-Thornhill, Exodus Housing

CONTINUUM OF CARE COMMITTEE MEMBERS

- Amanda DeShazo, Affordable Housing Consortium
- Andy Rohr, Tacoma-Pierce County Health Department
- Autumn Hughes, Workforce Central
- Cacey Hanauer, Tacoma Housing Authority
- Dana Orr, Pierce County AIDS Foundation
- Diane Powers, City of Tacoma
- Ellie Ottey, Pierce County Housing Authority
- Erica Azcueta, City of Tacoma
- Dr. Eric Jackson, Bethlehem Baptist Church
- Haili Cyr Crow, Community Representative
- James Pogue, Comprehensive Life Resources
- Jeff Rodgers, Pierce County Human Services
- Keith Galbraith, Renewal Family Shelter
- Marilee Hill-Anderson, Sumner Public Schools
- Martha Shepard, Salvation Army
- Neal Rogers, Community Representative
- Nick Bayard, The Reach Center
- Patti Spaulding-Klewin, Catholic Community Services
- Rachel Silis, Veterans Health Administration–American Lake
- Sami Iverson, Tacoma Public Schools
- Sean Raybell, Department of Corrections
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- Sydney Screws, Department of Children Youth & Families
- Tiffany Speir, City of Lakewood
- Tonya Tunnell-Thornhill, Exodus Housing
- Valorie Crout, Associated Ministries

PIERCE COUNTY STAFF WHO MADE THIS PLAN POSSIBLE

- Clayton Aldern, Pierce County Human Services (former employee)
- Valeri Knight, Pierce County Human Services
- Vy Yun, Pierce County Human Services

ADDITIONAL CONTRIBUTORS

Funders and other community members dedicated to addressing homelessness who provided insight and input during our landscape assessment:

- Brian Boyd, Sequoia Foundation and Forest Foundation
- Bryan Jeeter, Chief of Bonney Lake Police
- Dave Bugher, City of Lakewood
- Dr. Brianne Rowan, Multicare/Tacoma Family Medicine
- Gina Anstey, Greater Tacoma Community Foundation
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- Holly Bamford Hunt, Bamford Foundation
- Jacquelyn Crowley, Bethel School District
- Jay Brower, Bethel School District
- Jeff Bennett, Puyallup Police Department: Problem-Oriented Policing Unit
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- Karen White, YWCA
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- Ken Ristine, Ben B. Cheney Foundation
- Kristin Smith, Multicare
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- Lindsay Morgan Tracy, United Way of Pierce County
- Robert Welch, Clover Park Technical College in Lakewood
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- Stacie Vierra, KWA
- Susan Dobkins, Russell Family Foundation
- TJ Bohl, Pierce County Juvenile Court
- Tonisha Jumper, City of Tacoma
- Troy Christensen, Metropolitan Development Council

We offer our appreciation to all the community members who made time to provide public feedback throughout the process.

Appendices

APPENDIX 1

Racial Disparities in Pierce County

Pierce County has completed an initial analysis of racial disparities through the Supporting Partnerships for Anti-Racist Communities (SPARC) report in 2017. Pierce County is continuing the work with the SPARC Initiative and will have future analysis of the homeless system.

Please see the SPARC report for additional information: https://www.co.pierce.wa.us/DocumentCenter/View/67289/SPARC-Tacoma---Pierce-County-Report-February-2018?bidId=

APPENDIX 2

Statutory Definitions of Homelessness

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT (HUD)

https://www.hudexchange.info/resource/1974/criteria-and-recordkeeping-requirements-for-definition-of-homeless/

WASHINGTON STATE DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

https://deptofcommerce.app.box.com/s/sddzidhjln9zvb2zao5fes3rpwbc399o

MCKINNEY-VENTO

Homelessness for children and youth is defined in Subtitle VII-B of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act (per Title IX, Part A of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, as amended by the Every Student Succeeds Act). This definition is largely used by the education system and guides eligibility for federal funding.

https://nche.ed.gov/mckinney-vento-definition/