

PIERCE COUNTY  
FIVE-YEAR PLAN TO ADDRESS HOMELESSNESS

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.<sup>1</sup> 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<sup>2</sup>. 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.

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 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.

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<sup>1</sup> Fact Sheet: Homelessness in Pierce County (Updated 4/30/19) - <https://www.co.pierce.wa.us/3715/Homeless-Programs>

<sup>2</sup> Fact Sheet: Homelessness in Pierce County (Updated 4/30/19) - <https://www.co.pierce.wa.us/3715/Homeless-Programs>

## OUR GUIDING VISION

Tacoma/Lakewood/Pierce County Continuum of Care, acting as the Washington State Department of Commerce required homeless taskforce, set a guiding vision at the beginning of the planning process, which captures our values and aspirations for the work ahead. The Continuum of Care has a comprehensive Five-Year Strategic Plan. Pierce County Human Services is responding to the Washington State Department of Commerce Community Plan requirements with goals and objectives derived from the Continuum of Care Plan. Pierce County Human Services is the Collaborative Applicant and Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) lead in Pierce County,

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.

## 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 based on state guidelines where 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. 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.

## 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.



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OBJECTIVE 1: QUICKLY IDENTIFY AND ENGAGE ALL PEOPLE EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS



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OBJECTIVE 2: PRIORITIZE HOUSING FOR PEOPLE WITH THE GREATEST NEED



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OBJECTIVE 3: OPERATE AN EFFECTIVE AND EFFICIENT HOMELESS CRISIS RESPONSE SYSTEM



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OBJECTIVE 4: PROJECTED IMPACT ON: NUMBER OF HOUSEHOLDS HOUSED AND NUMBER OF HOUSEHOLDS UNSHELTERED



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OBJECTIVE 5: ADDRESS RACIAL DISPARITIES AMONG PEOPLE EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS

**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 Tacoma/Lakewood/Pierce County Continuum of Care Committee members who represent a variety 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 and champions
- Landscape and Policy research
- HMIS and Homeless Point-in-Time Count data reviews
- Continuum of Care strategic plan subcommittee planning sessions
- Monthly Continuum of Care meetings
- Community input sessions

## OBJECTIVE 1: QUICKLY IDENTIFY AND ENGAGE ALL PEOPLE EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS

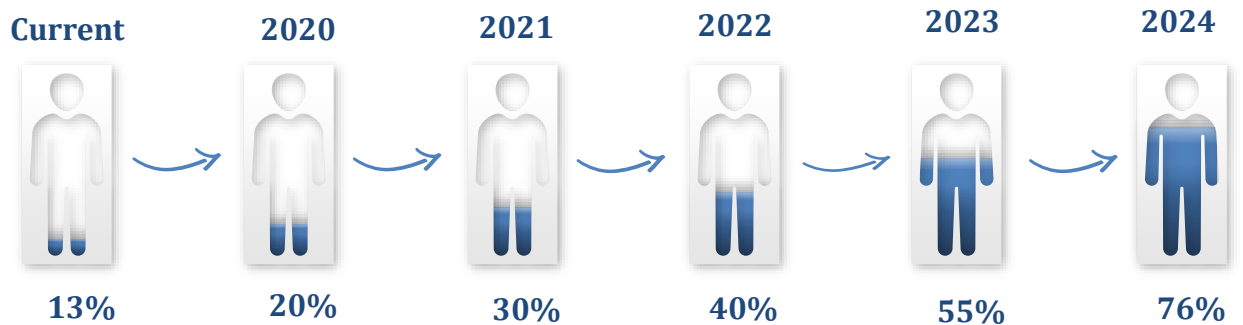
### MEASURE(S) OF SUCCESS:



- Compliance with state and federal coordinated entry requirements for all projects receiving federal, state, and local homeless funds.<sup>3</sup>
- Consider implementation of the Coordinated Entry Core Element recommendations.

GOAL 1: THE PERCENTAGE OF PEOPLE ENGAGED THROUGH STREET OUTREACH SERVICES WHO MOVE TO A SAFE AND STABLE HOUSING SOLUTION INCREASES TO 76%.

### ANNUAL BENCHMARKS



### KEY STRATEGIES

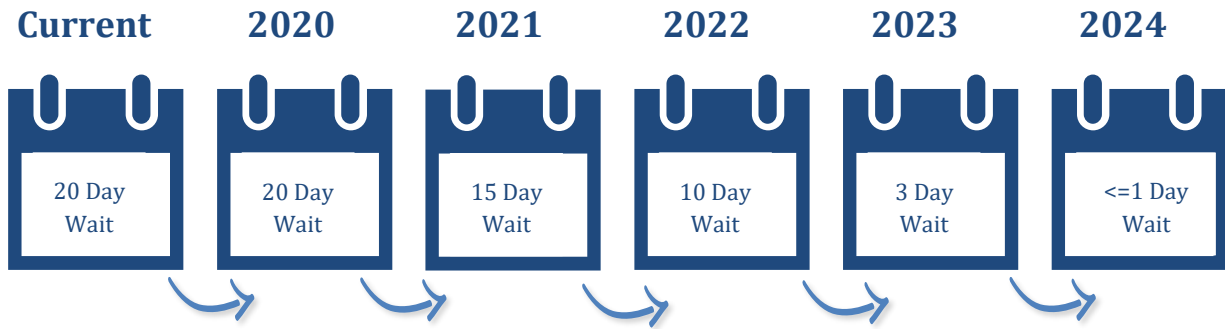
SUBCOMMITTEE LEADING IMPLEMENTATION: Racial Equity Subcommittee, Chaired by Erica Azcueta and Valorie Crout

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 and create standard operating procedures.
2. Work with partners to establish a flexible fund for use by street outreach staff to fill the gap in the current system.

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.commerce.wa.gov/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/hau-wa-ce-guidelines-1-2018.pdf>

**GOAL 2: REDUCE THE WAIT TIMES FOR A HOUSING SOLUTIONS CONVERSATION TO ONE DAY OR LESS.**

Annual Benchmarks



**KEY STRATEGIES**

SUBCOMMITTEE LEADING IMPLEMENTATION: RACIAL EQUITY SUBCOMMITTEE, CHAIRED BY ERICA AZCUETA AND VALORIE CROUT






1. Create and sustain a Homeless Crisis Response System where all people coming to coordinated entry can participate in a housing solutions conversation on demand.



**GOAL 3: BUILD AND MAINTAIN A BY-NAME LIST OF ALL PERSONS EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS IN ORDER TO TRACK STATUS, ENGAGEMENTS, AND HOUSING PLACEMENT FOR EACH HOUSEHOLD.**

**ANNUAL BENCHMARKS**

A by-name list will be established, maintained, and managed regularly for the following subpopulations:

Current	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
					
Veterans and Youth/Young Adults		Chronically Homeless	Individuals	Families	All Populations

**KEY STRATEGIES**



**SUBCOMMITTEE LEADING IMPLEMENTATION:**

- BY-NAME LIST SUBCOMMITTEE, CHAIR: CHRONIC- JAMES POGUE
  - FAMILIES: JEFF RODGERS AND KEVIN BATES
  - VETERANS: RACHEL SILIS AND PATTI SPAULDING KLEWIN
  - YOUTH AND YOUNG ADULTS: HAILI CROW CYR AND CACEY HANAUER;
  - INDIVIDUALS- NEIL ROGERS
1. Recruit service providers to develop, implement, and manage by-name lists by population.
  2. Develop and create policies and procedures to ensure by-name lists include inactive status, non-consenting clients, and tracking status, engagements, and housing placement, by subpopulation.

**GOAL 4: HOMELESSNESS FUNDING THROUGHOUT THE COUNTY IS ALIGNED TOWARDS A SHARED SET OF GOALS, MEASURES, AND OVERALL STRATEGIES AND CENTERED AROUND A COMMITMENT TO EQUITY.**

**ANNUAL BENCHMARKS**

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<b>Current</b>	<b>2020</b>	<b>2021</b>	<b>2022</b>	<b>2023</b>	<b>2024</b>
					
			First convening with funders takes place		Greater alignment among funders exists around funding priorities, measures, data collection, and definition of homelessness

**KEY STRATEGIES**

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**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.

GOAL 5: INTERSECTING SYSTEMS, COALITIONS, AND ORGANIZATIONS ARE COLLABORATING EFFECTIVELY TO PREVENT AND ADDRESS HOMELESSNESS.

KEY STRATEGIES

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SUBCOMMITTEE LEADING IMPLEMENTATION: COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP SUBCOMMITTEE, CHAIRED BY TIFFANY SPEIR AND KARI HAUGEN



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



2. Ensure that discharge planning strategies are in place to prevent people from being released into homelessness.



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

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## SPECIFIC POPULATIONS

### CHRONICALLY HOMELESS INDIVIDUALS

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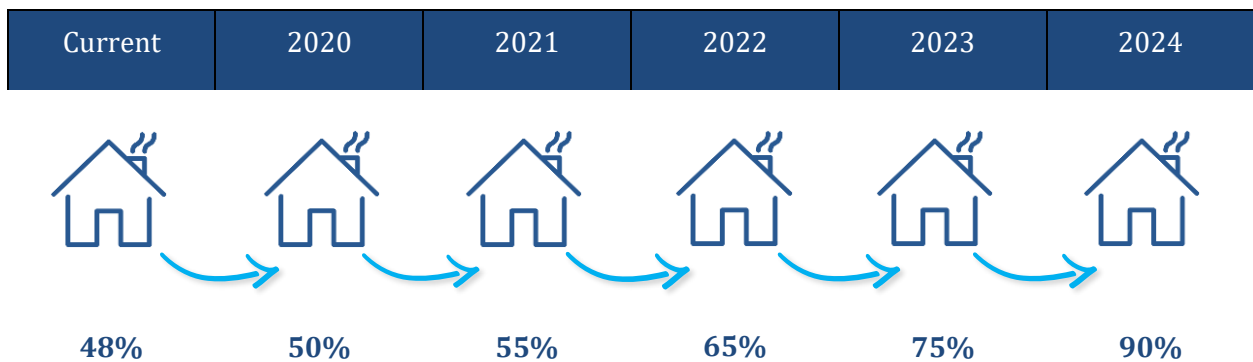
Individuals with a disabling condition who have either been continuously homeless for a year or more, or who have had at least four episodes of homelessness in the past three years

#### THE GOAL

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

#### ANNUAL BENCHMARKS

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#### KEY STRATEGIES

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##### REPRESENTATIVE LEADING IMPLEMENTATION: JAMES POGUE

1. Create easier access to economic resources that can support housing stability for chronically homeless individuals.
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.
  - b. Integrate behavioral health and Foundational Community Support resources into rapid rehousing services.

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## VETERANS

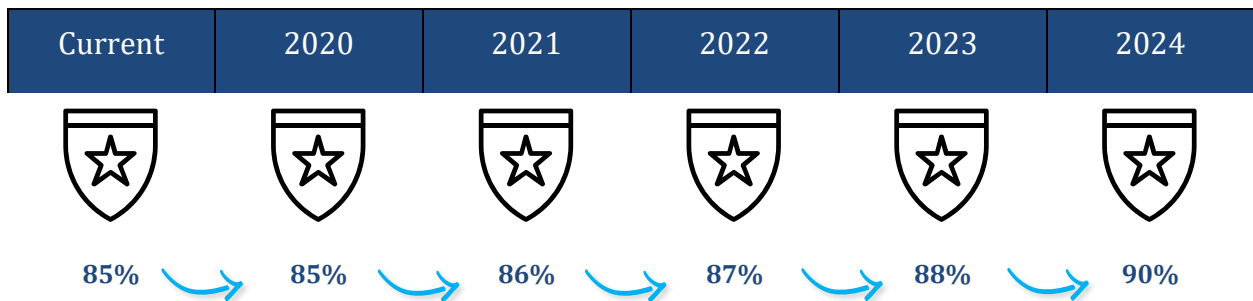
Individuals who have served in some capacity, for at least one day, in the United States Armed Forces (including Active Duty and Reserves)

### THE GOAL

90% of homeless Veterans remain housed two years after securing permanent housing.

### ANNUAL BENCHMARKS

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### KEY STRATEGIES

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REPRESENTATIVES LEADING IMPLEMENTATION: RACHEL SILIS AND PATTI SPAULDING-KLEWIN

1. Encourage the HUD-VASH program to 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. Conduct research on the feasibility of creating landlord incentives for taking Veteran renters.
3. Develop and implement a collaboration of Veteran service providers to increase landlord engagement between HUD-VASH, the Landlord Liaison Program, housing authorities or others to help with landlord engagement around Veteran renters.

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## YOUTH (AGES 12-24)

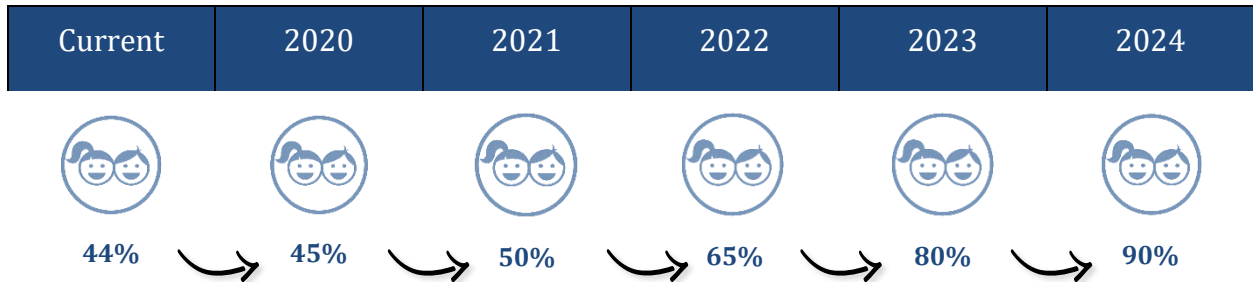
Individuals under the age of 25, who are unaccompanied by a parent or guardian adult.

### THE GOAL

90% of homeless youth remain housed two years after securing permanent housing

### ANNUAL BENCHMARKS

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### KEY STRATEGIES

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REPRESENTATIVES LEADING IMPLEMENTATION: CACEY HANAUER AND DEVON ISAKSON

1. Identify financial resources for use in supporting youth and young adults who qualify as homeless under McKinney Vento.
2. Develop and Implement safe housing options for youth under 118 who cannot sign their own leases.

## FAMILIES (HOUSEHOLDS WITH CHILDREN)

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

### THE GOAL

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

### ANNUAL BENCHMARKS

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Current	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
 71%	 71%	 75%	 80%	 85%	 90%

### KEY STRATEGIES

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#### REPRESENTATIVE LEADING IMPLEMENTATION: ANDY ROHR

1. Increase collaborate with the Tacoma-Pierce County Health Department to train homeless service providers on programs available through the health department and share referrals as appropriate.
2. Ensure all homeless service providers, regardless of funding, are fully trained in mainstream resources and services to include but not limited to childcare, employment, and education.

## DOMESTIC VIOLENCE SURVIVORS

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

### THE GOAL

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

### ANNUAL BENCHMARKS

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Current	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
 75%	 75%	 78%	 83%	 88%	 90%

### KEY STRATEGIES

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REPRESENTATIVE LEADING IMPLEMENTATION: KEITH GALBRAITH AND TONYA TUNNELL-THORNHILL

1. Research available funding streams to develop and implement DV survivors fund dedicated to helping them leave their abuser(s) and stabilize.



## OBJECTIVE 2: PRIORITIZE HOUSING FOR PEOPLE WITH THE GREATEST NEED

### MEASURE(S) OF SUCCESS:

Successful implementation of prioritization policies for all projects receiving federal, state, and local homeless funds, resulting in prioritized people consistently being housed in a timely manner.

### 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.

The Tacoma/Lakewood/Pierce County Continuum of Care, in collaboration with Pierce County Human Services are responsible for ensuring that CE and prioritization are current and in compliance with all HUD and Department of Commerce standards. There are not set milestones to complete as Pierce County is currently compliance with all CE data collection requirements as well as all prioritization requirements for both state and federal funders.

For current system performance measures, please see Appendix 3.







**OBJECTIVE 3: OPERATE AN EFFECTIVE AND EFFICIENT HOMELESS CRISIS RESPONSE SYSTEM**

MEASURE(S) OF SUCCESS: SYSTEM PERFORMANCE MEASURES

- Increase percentage of exits to permanent housing to the level of the top performing 20 percent of homeless crisis response systems nationwide
- Reduce returns to homelessness after exit to permanent housing to less than 10 percent
- Reduce average length of time homeless of those served to less than 90 days

**GOAL 1: THE PERCENTAGE OF EXITS TO PERMANENT HOUSING INCREASES TO AT LEAST 60%**

ANNUAL BENCHMARKS

Current	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
					
53%	56%	59%	60%	61%	62%

KEY STRATEGIES

SUBCOMMITTEE LEADING IMPLEMENTATION: HOUSING SUBCOMMITTEE, CHAIRED BY TONYA TUNNELL-THORNHILL AND KEVIN BATES

1. Develop and implement *a systematic approach to support clients* to come to CE with the necessary documentation for any housing scenario.
2. *Offer training to all CE providers* on the housing and economic resources outside of the formal Homeless Crisis Response System
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. *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 2: 380 ADDITIONAL PERMANENT SUPPORTIVE HOUSING (PSH) UNITS ARE MADE AVAILABLE THROUGH NEW CONSTRUCTION AND OTHER STRATEGIES.**

**ANNUAL BENCHMARKS**

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Current	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
 <b>291</b> units in pipeline to be built		 Construction		 <b>280</b> units completed or available	 Additional <b>100</b> units completed or available

**KEY STRATEGIES**

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SUBCOMMITTEE LEADING IMPLEMENTATION: HOUSING SUBCOMMITTEE, CHAIRED BY TONYA TUNNELL-THORNHILL AND KEVIN BATES

1. *Prioritize funding* for the development of PSH units.
  2. *Identify additional resources* to be committed to PSH providers for the purpose of delivering supportive services.
  3. *Collaborate with the local housing authorities* to develop and implement “move-on” vouchers for residents in PSH projects.
  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.
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**GOAL 3: REDUCE AVERAGE LENGTH OF STAY IN TEMPORARY HOUSING PROJECTS, INCLUDING EMERGENCY SHELTER, TRANSITIONAL HOUSING, AND SAFE HAVENS, TO LESS THAN 90 DAYS.**

ANNUAL BENCHMARKS

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Current	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
 106 average length of stay in temporary housing projects	 Shelter task force established	 100-day average			 Average length of stay is less than 90 days

KEY STRATEGIES

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SUBCOMMITTEE LEADING IMPLEMENTATION: STABILITY SUBCOMMITTEE, CHAIRED BY JAMES POGUE

Develop an emergency shelter task force to include current and potential shelter and transitional housing providers, experts, and local funders.

- 1) Ensure that the emergency shelter task force is determining barriers and outcomes, and system changes.
- 2) Utilize learnings from the emergency shelter task force to implement system changes to include additional resources, trainings, and funding opportunities.

GOAL 4: THE PERCENTAGE OF HOUSEHOLDS THAT MAINTAIN PERMANENT HOUSING FOR MORE THAN TWO YEARS AFTER EXITING THE HOMELESS CRISIS RESPONSE SYSTEM INCREASES TO 90%.

ANNUAL BENCHMARKS

Current	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
 70%	 70%	 75%	 80%	 85%	 90%

KEY STRATEGIES

SUBCOMMITTEE LEADING IMPLEMENTATION: STABILITY SUBCOMMITTEE, CHAIRED BY JAMES POGUE

1. Design and implement a “care coordination” model for the Homeless Crisis Response System, 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.



**OBJECTIVE 4: PROJECTED IMPACT ON NUMBER OF HOUSEHOLDS HOUSED AND NUMBER OF HOUSEHOLDS UNSHELTERED**

Measure(s) of Success:

A local plan that includes an estimate of people experiencing homelessness that will be housed during 2024 after successful implementation of the local plan using existing resources, and the count of households left unsheltered at a point in time in 2024, based on credible data and research; including the data, assumptions, calculations, and related citations necessary for outside parties to review and reproduce the estimate.

**PIERCE COUNTY PROJECTIONS**





Pierce County utilized the Washington State Department of Commerce modeling tool to determine a projection of impact with a fully implemented plan, the number of people experiencing homelessness left unsheltered assuming existing resources and state policies. Based on the outcomes from the modeling tool, Pierce County is projected to have a decrease in the number of people experiencing unsheltered homelessness from 629 to 390, or a reduction of 38%. The modeling tool also identifies a need for a net increase to spending necessary to keep pace with need and cost inflation is \$484,042. Please see the complete attached modeling tool.

Current	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
 629					 390

**OBJECTIVE 5: ADDRESS RACIAL DISPARITIES AMONG PEOPLE EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS**

**GOAL 1: ENSURE THERE IS EQUITABLE DISTRIBUTION OF AND ACCESS TO HOMELESS SERVICES THROUGHOUT PIERCE COUNTY.**

**ANNUAL BENCHMARKS**

Current	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
 Services concentrated in Tacoma		 Needs assessment and plan completed	 Implementation begins		 Services more widely and equitably distributed throughout the County, based on need

**KEY STRATEGIES**

**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 and implement a plan to expand distribution of homeless services accordingly.
- 2) Increase access to Coordinated Entry throughout the county.
- 3) Promote funding opportunities to organizations that are experts in serving populations who face the greatest racial disparities.
- 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.



## RACIAL DISPARITIES IN PIERCE COUNTY

Pierce County utilized the Washington Equity Analysis Tool provided by Washington State Department of Commerce to assess racial disparities in homelessness within Pierce County.

### **How does your county compare to other like size counties in the state? Are any groups over- or under-represented in the homeless population?**

Pierce County is very similar to the state data and other like size counties in the state. Pierce County has a higher percentage of people of color than other like size counties with the exception of King County. Pierce County has an under-representation of white people living in poverty and experiencing homelessness. Pierce County has an over-representation of Black, Native American/Alaskan, Other/Multi-Racial that are living in poverty and experiencing homelessness.

### **What does the family data look like compared to all households?**

When comparing Pierce County data to the available state data, there are very similar outcomes and very little significant differences. The data presented in the HUD tool is not an accurate depiction given that head of household does not accurately represent a household makeup. The HUD data assumes that the race of the head of household is the race of the entire household, and as showed in other data sources, that is not the case in Pierce County. Pierce County HMIS data shows that Pierce County has 44% white, 1.3% Asian, 29% black, 17% multi race in regard to the family dynamics of those experiencing homelessness.

### **In Homeless Point-in-Time Counts, are there significant differences between sheltered and unsheltered counts?**

Yes, there are significant differences between sheltered and unsheltered counts in the Homeless Point-in-Time Count. In Pierce County, whites are more likely to experience unsheltered homelessness according to the Homeless Point in Time Count data, than sheltered homelessness. The data for Black, Native, Asian/Pacific Islander, and other/multi race statistically is very close to the percentage of folks experiencing homeless for sheltered homelessness. Unsheltered homeless has a variance with Asian/Pacific Islander and other/multi as they are under-represented in that category.

	Homeless		Shelter		Unsheltered	
	All	Families	All	Families	All	Families
White	56%	40%	49%	37%	68%	83%
Black	18%	17%	19%	18%	17%	13%
Native	3%	2%	2%	2%	6%	0%
Asian/Pacific Islander	8%	12%	9%	13%	6%	0%
Other/Multi	15%	29%	21%	30%	4%	4%

**Are there specific local or state conditions that might lead to these differences?**

There are no specific local or state conditions that might lead to these differences.

Pierce County completed an initial analysis of racial disparities in 2017. Pierce County is continuing the work and will have future analysis of the homeless system.

## 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 homeless can call 211 to access CE.

### **Affordable Housing**

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

### **Anchor Community Initiative**

An initiative of A Way Home Washington with the support of the Washington State Department of Commerce Office of Homeless Youth focused 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 which 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 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 (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 & policies and ensures that housing agencies continually offer support services to program tenants and respond rapidly to landlord concerns. The program offers a 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 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 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**

Chartered 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.

### **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 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**

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

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***WE OFFER OUR APPRECIATION TO ALL THE COMMUNITY MEMBERS WHO MADE TIME TO PROVIDE PUBLIC FEEDBACK THROUGHOUT THE PROCESS.***

Appendix 1: Pierce County System Performance Measures

Appendix 2: Projection Tool

Appendix 3: Racial Equity Tool