



Building Housing Resources

Grays Harbor County

10 Year Plan to End Homelessness

2016



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Introduction

Grays Harbor County is committed to ending homelessness and providing access to safe, decent and affordable housing to all residents of our community. The County envisions a community where homelessness is rare, brief, and one-time. The vision includes a multitude of safe, affordable housing choices, where residents can select the option that is the best fit for their individual needs. There is no wrong door to obtain assistance. No matter the potential barriers, there are options to provide the right level of services to all clients. In this vision those experiencing homelessness will swiftly be provided permanent housing solutions, and those who are at-risk of becoming homeless will have access to assistance to allow them to stabilize. Whether clients live in Elma, Taholah, Ocean Shores, or Aberdeen, housing support will be provided to them in a way that meets their needs. In this vision there are no obstacles to obtain and sustain permanent housing that cannot be overcome quickly, and with support of client-focused staff. This vision exists because Grays Harbor County believes that housing is a basic human right and understands the impact will be exponentially negative if housing needs are not met in our community

Plan Requirements

Homeless Housing and Assistance Act

In the spring of 2005 the Washington State Legislature passed the Homeless Housing and Assistance Act (ESSHB 2163) aimed at eliminating homelessness with a minimum goal of fifty percent by July 1, 2015. This legislation provided a new source of funding to address homelessness through a portion of document recording fees.

Each time someone files a document that is not exempt from surcharge (marriage certificates, deeds of trust, etc.) a fee is collected that can only be applied to programs that help people in need of housing resources. The collected document filing fees are then divided; approximately 66% stays at the County level, 34% goes to the State to be redistributed based on need through the Consolidated Homeless Grant.

Due to infrastructure growth in early years of the process Grays Harbor has accumulated a modest reserve that can be used as seed money for priority projects or to help fill funding gaps. Until recently Counties were required to match a portion of the funding that they receive from the State. In Grays Harbor the amount of money collected annually from the document recording fees was nearly equal to the match requirement. State and associated match funding can only be spent within published guidelines. State and match funding provide rent assistance, emergency shelter, and case management to help folks back on their feet.

The Act also outlines requirements for both County and the State governments, with the Department of Commerce having primary responsibility for planning and support to implement the plan. This process requires communities to develop local plans and conduct updates to the plan every five (5) years.

The Act requires County governments to:

- Develop a 10 year plan to reduce homelessness by 50%
- Conduct an annual point-in-time count of persons who are homeless and/or seeking affordable housing
- Report progress implementing plans to the Washington State Department of Commerce annually
- Use the local portion of the document recording fees to reduce homelessness

The Act requires the State of Washington to:

- Work with the Interagency Council for the Homeless and the Affordable Housing Advisory Board to develop a 10 year plan to reduce homelessness by 50%
- Coordinate the annual point-in-time count
- Produce an annual report on the performance measures used to measure state and local plan implementation
- Provide technical assistance to counties
- Pass 85.5% of the state portion of the document recording fees to local governments to reduce homelessness
- Implement the Homeless Management Information System to collect client data used to measure program, county, and state performance

HEARTH Act

The Homeless Emergency and Rapid Transition to Housing (HEARTH) Act passed by Congress in 2009 amended and re-authorized the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act to improve community capacity for preventing and ending homelessness. Substantial *changes made by the HEARTH Act* include the following:

- A consolidation of HUD's competitive grant programs into the Consolidated Housing Grant
- The creation of a Rural Housing Stability Assistance Program
- A change in HUD's definition of homelessness and chronic homelessness
- A simplified match requirement
- An increase in prevention resources
- An increase in emphasis on performance
- In 2012 Congress passed the Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century Act (MAP-21), which made some technical corrections to the HEARTH Act.

The HEARTH Act includes the following *action steps*:

- Sustaining and increasing homeless prevention and shelter diversion programs
- Streamlining the screening process for each type of assistance so households are referred to the most appropriate program type
- Rapidly re-housing households into private sector housing
- Having a housing first focus
- Shifting resources to programs that are meeting outcomes and operating efficiently

- Updating the county Ten Year Plan to end homelessness.

Planning Process:

An executive committee was formed of local housing providers to guide the planning process.

Name	Organization
Craig Dublanko	Coastal Community Action Program
Nora LeBlanc	Coastal Community Action Program
Jenny Cushing	Catholic Community Services
Gloria Callaghan	Domestic Violence Center
Jerry Raines	Housing Authority of Grays Harbor
Lisa Boone	Housing Authority of Grays Harbor
Dave Murnen	Neighborworks Grays Harbor
Gary Rowell	Union Gospel Mission
Kathy Wahto	Cornerstone Strategies Inc. (Consultant)
Vera Kalkwarf	Grays Harbor County Public Health and Social Services
Cassie Lentz	Grays Harbor County Public Health and Social Services

To achieve the unified vision of ending homelessness a comprehensive planning process was designed to understand the needs of Grays Harbor using a transparent, community-driven process using data and input from individuals experiencing homelessness, housing providers, landlords, local government, law enforcement, faith communities, schools, behavioral health, and social service providers. A dedicated committee of local housing providers endeavored to *gather and analyze* data, *identify* areas of strength and where barriers exist within our current systems, *learn* about best practices that are effective in communities like ours, and *recommend* to the County Commissioners funding priorities for the next ten years.

The result of the 10 Year Plan to End Homelessness process is a set of community-informed priorities with clear action steps and timelines connected to the vision. The committee is committed to the pathway laid out in this plan, and reporting to the community on the progress towards addressing the needs and barriers and incorporating their feedback will be critical.

The current 10 Year Plan to End Homelessness planning process began in January 2015 and was conducted over several months. The process emphasized research, intensive outreach to the community, public stakeholder meetings with a discussion about priorities and best practices. The final plan was submitted to the Board of Commissioners for final adoption in January 2016.

To describe the needs face-to-face interviews were held across the county. They helped to supplement and provide context for the local and state data sources and to describe what homelessness looks and feels like on the Harbor. The participants who gave generously of their time to help inform this work included representatives from the faith-based community, local government executives and planners, social service agency leaders and staff, outreach workers, school districts, United Way, law enforcement, Veteran organizations, DSHS, WorkSource, local

businesses, and property management companies.

Following careful data gathering and analysis the committee discussed best practices that have been proven effective in addressing the needs that were identified. The group held a series of workshops and site visits to learn more about the following successful programs and organizations:

- **Daniel Malone, Director of Downtown Emergency Services Center**

Permanent Supportive Housing, Housing First, Prioritization, Vulnerability Assessment, Outreach and Case Management

- **Melodie Pazolt, Director of Supportive Housing and Supported Employment at the Department of Behavioral Health and Recovery**

Fidelity of Permanent Supportive Housing and Supported Employment, Financing support services, models of program set up and service delivery, trends in Medicaid billable services

- **Martha Myers, Program Director at Helping Hand House**

Programs to prevent and end family homelessness, coordination with school districts to support stability, Permanent Supportive Housing for families

- **Joe Marrone, Consultant with Institute for Community Inclusion**

Long-term health impacts of unemployment, Supported Employment for individuals who are chronically homeless and may have behavioral health issues

The committee focused on learning about Evidence Based Practices, or program models that have demonstrated positive outcomes in multiple research studies and are used in communities similar to Grays Harbor in considering potential solutions to local homelessness and housing needs. After learning more about Evidence Based Practices and successful programs the committee began to identify potential alignment of what they had learned about and the gaps in the housing system in Grays Harbor. The Housing Executive Committee cultivated five priorities as a result of the assessment of need and education around evidence based practices. To build a comprehensive and successful plan the group hosted a series of community meetings with careful attention to geographic and population diversity to provide information and elicit feedback.

Three audiences were identified as vital contributors to the plan. The first were key community stakeholders and the general public was invited to attend a “Listening Post” style forum where the information gathered was disseminated and participants provided feedback. Homeless and formerly homeless individuals were also given an opportunity to receive the information the committee put together and respond based on their experience. Lastly, smaller, informal discussions were held in outlying areas of the county to include all perspectives of feedback with specific geographic barriers.

This feedback was incorporated and refined into the final version of the 2015 Ten Year Plan to End Homelessness. The plan was presented to the Health and Human Services Advisory Board in January 2016 and if deemed satisfactory will be recommended for adoption to the Board of County Commissioners.

Following adoption and publication of the plan, regular review and discussion of all aspects of the document will be facilitated. The 10 Year Plan will be seen as a working document, and can

be responsive to community needs as they present themselves in addition to work on identified strategic priorities. The framework of this document will help governing bodies evaluate and make recommendations about Housing funding levels and outcomes. A formal update will be executed in five years (2020) where progress will be reflected on, and any changes in focus or strategy can be addressed.

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How is Homelessness Defined?

Grays Harbor County uses the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) definitions of homelessness when subcontracting services to local housing and shelter agencies. Grays Harbor County is an eligible entity to receive funding from Federal and State sources to address homelessness, the County subcontracts with direct service agencies to carry out identified deliverables and achieve the desired outcomes of the various funding sources. The County contracts with these provider agencies and helps advocate for local community needs while helping agencies uphold requirements of the contracts such as reporting and documentation. Federally and state funded assistance programs work within the framework of these definitions.

- 1. Literally homeless** – An individual or family who lacks a fixed, regular and adequate nighttime residence, meaning the individual or family has a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not meant for human habitation or is living in a publicly or privately operated shelter designed to provide only temporary living arrangements, often in a congregate or a time-limited setting.
- 2. Imminent risk of homelessness** – An individual or family who will imminently lose (within 14 days) their primary nighttime residence provided that no subsequent residence has been identified and the individual or family lacks the resources or support networks needed to obtain other permanent housing.
- 3. Homeless under other federal statutes** – Unaccompanied youth (under 25) or families with children and youth who do not otherwise qualify as homeless under this definition and are defined as homeless under another federal statute, have not had permanent housing during the past 60 days, have experienced persistent instability, and can be expected to continue in such status for an extended period of time.
- 4. Fleeing/attempting to flee domestic violence** – Any individual or family fleeing, or attempting to flee, domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, or stalking.

Federal and Washington State funding requires assessing individuals for vulnerability to

prioritize resources. Those who are literally homeless and are diagnosed with a disabling condition are considered the highest priority for immediate access to more intense interventions such as case management and long-term rental assistance. Under these funding sources those who are at imminent risk of homelessness or in an unstable housing situation are not priority populations.

The Department of Housing and Urban Development definition of Homelessness is narrow and does not encompass the broader picture of homelessness and housing instability experienced in our community. Interviews with key community stakeholders and data from sources outside of HUD-funded projects reveal that there is a large group of individuals and families who are not stably housed and face consistent chaos and uncertainty seeking a safe, decent, affordable housing situation. There is a constant challenge in balancing resources and creating opportunities for individuals experiencing housing instability across the spectrum of definitions given the various funding source priorities.

Scope of Issue

Homelessness in Grays Harbor

The number of individuals experiencing homelessness at any point in time is fluid. The committee used several data sources to measure the scope of the issue in our community. These sources are not comprehensive but do provide a helpful benchmark and starting point that can be used to start community conversations around homelessness.

Point in Time Count

The Department of Commerce released finalized and complete data for the 2015 Point in Time Count, which occurred on Friday, January 30th, 2015 at the Aberdeen Eagles.

The Point in Time count is a snapshot of Homelessness in Grays Harbor. The Department of Commerce has created a standardized tool for all counties to use to gather specific data points. Grays Harbor County coordinates their Point in Time Count with a resource fair called “Project Connect” to assist individuals to apply for benefits, and receive free health and dental care, haircuts, clothing, food and referrals to other social service agencies. Although the count is done with careful intent to capture the true picture of homelessness it would be impossible to count every single homeless person in the County, and even that fluctuates over time.

The count looks at “sheltered” and “unsheltered” persons. Sheltered indicates they are homeless with no other resources, living in a shelter. Unsheltered indicates they are living in a place not meant for human habitation i.e. cars, streets, encampments etc. The intake survey also offers an opportunity to count individuals who do not meet the Housing and Urban Development (HUD) definition of “homeless” but are in an unstable housing situation such as couch surfing or staying in a temporary location such as hospital or detox facility.

**Department of Commerce
2015 Point in Time Count: Grays Harbor County:**

	Sheltered	Unsheltered	Total
People in Households with Adults and Children	9	0	9
Unaccompanied Youth (under 18)	5	0	5
People in Households without Children	91	47	138
Total People	105	47	152

	Temporarily Living with Family or Friends
People in Households with Adults and Children	5
People in Households with only Children	0
People in Households without Children	59
Total People	64

Subpopulations

	Sheltered	Unsheltered	Living with FF	Total
Veterans	5	4	1	10
Unaccompanied Youth under 18	5	0	0	5
Unaccompanied youth 18-24	7	6	6	19
Chronically Homeless	12	29	0	41
Adults with Serious Mental Illness	21	18	26	65
Adults with Substance Use Disorder	33	11	22	66
Adult Victims of Domestic Violence	14	17	16	47

Although the Point in Time Count offers a snapshot of need in our area, it is by no means comprehensive. The numbers represented in these charts represent only a small portion of the true count of individuals experiencing homelessness and their specific characteristics. Some of the limitations of past Point in Time Count models include client concern about negative interactions with Child Protective Services, law enforcement, or other entities in connection with their housing status. Geographical barriers also exist for individuals residing in outlying areas of the County without means of transport to Project Connect or shelter services on the day of the Count.

For 2016 the Executive Committee discussed and supported funding additional proven practices of conducting the count, as well as broadening partnership to count individuals throughout the County.

The count indicates at least 41 individuals in our community are chronically homeless. These are individuals who have been continuously homeless for more than one year, or have experienced three episodes of literal homelessness in the past four years that cumulate to 12 months of homelessness, and have also been diagnosed with a behavioral or physical health disability. This population is a priority of the Department of Commerce and the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to serve. This particular population requires more intensive, individualized services to remove barriers to housing and provide an opportunity for stability.

Individuals struggling with mental illness, substance abuse, or co-occurring disorders may have additional barriers in finding and sustaining housing that meets their needs. In the 2015 PIT count 39 individuals listed serious mental illness as a barrier (26%) and 44 identified having a substance use disorder (29%).

18 individuals under age 25 were considered homeless, and six were at-risk of homelessness, temporarily staying with family or friends. Most of them were age 18 or older. All five of the youth under age 18 were staying at the Grays Harbor Youth Shelter at the time of the count. Meeting needs of youth requires a unique set of services in order to be successful in permanent housing stability.

HMIS and Other Data for Grays Harbor

All activities funded through Consolidated Homeless Grant and local Document Recording Fee dollars are captured in the State required database known as the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS). In Grays Harbor that means shelter services provided through the Domestic Violence Center, Grays Harbor Youth Center, and CCAP D Street Shelter are tracked through the system. Rental assistance and case management supports are also tracked and allocated to the three available funding sources.

Coastal Community Action Program provides a two-unit family shelter and rental assistance in three separate programs. Domestic Violence Center provides shelter to individuals and families who are survivors of domestic violence. Catholic Community Services operates a 24/7 youth shelter.

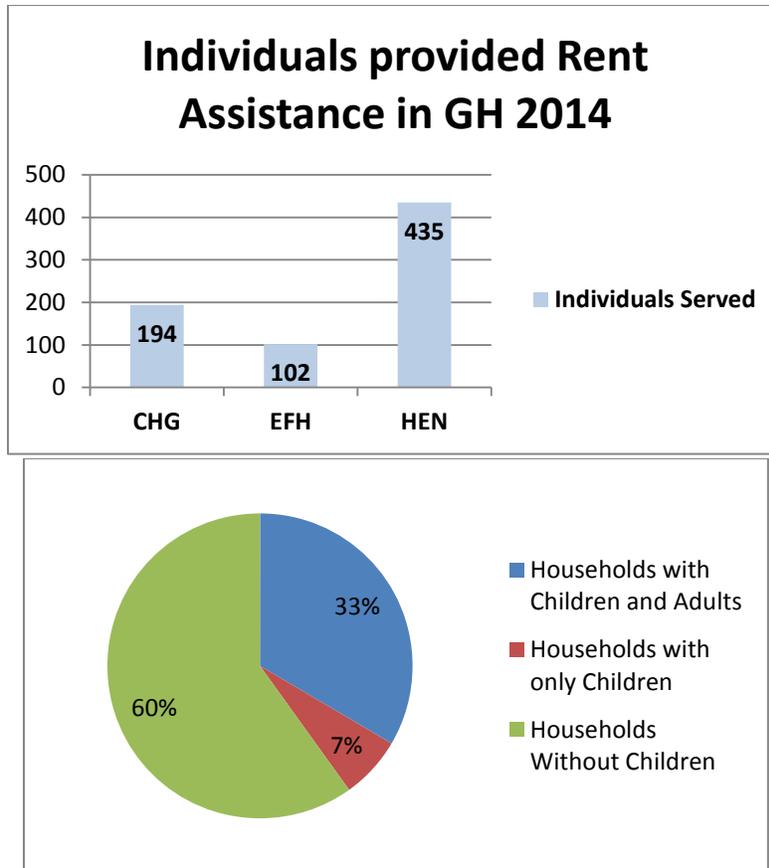
2014 Services Provided

235 people were served through Consolidated Homeless Grant funded Shelters (CCAP D Street, Domestic Violence Shelter, and CCS Youth Shelter)

- 67 at Domestic Violence Center Shelter
- 69 at CCAP D Street Shelter
- 104 at CCS Youth Shelter

Rental Assistance Program	Individuals Served in 2014	Funding
Consolidated Homeless Grant (CHG) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rental Assistance • Security Deposits • Utility Assistance Low income individuals or families who are homeless or at-risk of homelessness	194 unduplicated individuals served	\$78,817.09
Ending Family Homelessness (EFH) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rental Assistance • Security Deposits Families who are enrolled in Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) who are literally homeless or at-risk of homelessness	102 unduplicated individuals served	\$61,926.88
Housing and Essential Needs (HEN) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rental Assistance • Security Deposits • Utility Assistance Individuals qualified as temporarily disabled by DSHS who are homeless or at-risk of homelessness	435 unduplicated individuals	\$927,636.24
Total:	731 Unduplicated Individuals	\$1,113,380.21

Due to the large volume of Housing and Essential Needs clients 60% of households receiving Rent Assistance were single individuals, compared to households with children.



Other Resources

Bednights at Union Gospel Mission and Friendship House shelters are not recorded in the HMIS system as UGM is a private entity not funded by the government, but are captured by an internal database. Union Gospel Mission manages a faith-based emergency shelter with the capacity to serve 40 men. UGM provided 10,641 bed nights and 41,832 meals in 2014.

Union Gospel Mission also manages Friendship House, a faith-based emergency shelter for women and children. The shelter has a capacity to serve 40 women and children at any given time. Friendship House provided 6,667 bed nights (4,472 women, 2,195 children) and 14,717 meals in 2014.

The Housing Authority of Grays Harbor offers low-rent public housing in the form of affordable apartments for low-income families, the elderly, and persons with disabilities. They also offer Section 8 or Housing Choice Vouchers where tenants find their own place and use the voucher to pay for all or part of the rent.

As of March 2015 the Housing Authority of Grays Harbor is managing 518 units of Public Housing all over Grays Harbor. 223 Housing Choice Vouchers are in use by low income clients.

As of March 2015 600 are on the waiting list for vouchers and 300-400 are on the wait list for public housing.

Housing Authority of Grays Harbor is not the sole provider of subsidized housing in the County. A small number of private landlords hold contracts with the Department of Housing and Urban Development to operate subsidized housing projects where qualified residents have the ability to pay 30% of their income towards rent in a privately owned apartment complex. Information about private landlords that may offer subsidized housing opportunities can be found by contacting the Housing Authority of Grays Harbor at 602 East First Street in Aberdeen, or at 360-538-6615.

Salvation Army also provides rent, utility, and other housing assistance. They intake and assess clients in need of services to determine need and resources. They are unable to give assistance to those with no source of income. Salvation Army utilizes the HUD guidelines to prioritize assistance to those literally homeless and at imminent risk of homelessness. They provide limited case management that is client driven. Salvation Army works closely with CCAP and other social service agencies to coordinate efforts and maximize impact. They are unable to assist with late fees, accruals or security deposits.

- In Grays Harbor County the Salvation Army provided approximately \$15,181 in rent and utility assistance in 2014. \$9,504 was provided in food for the homeless, and \$2,843 in hygiene items.
- Clothing, bedding, furniture, medical prescriptions, kitchen items, diapers, baby food and formula, bus tokens, and food were provided for housed and non-housed clients.
- 22,964 total individuals were served in 2014 with a focus to prevent homelessness and hunger.

NeighborWorks of Grays Harbor County is dedicated to developing partnerships in the community between residents, businesses and government to create safe and affordable housing opportunities for all residents of Grays Harbor County. They offer no-cost HUD housing counseling county-wide; internet homebuyer education and certification; down payment assistance for first-time home buyers; owner-occupied home rehabilitation loans; and Fee for Service construction management oversight for any project in Grays Harbor. They also own and maintain a 16 unit project-based multiplex in Aberdeen and affordable single family rental homes in both Aberdeen and Hoquiam.

Grays Harbor County has a Veteran's Relief Fund administered by an advisory board. The fund can provide one-time rent, utility, or other housing assistance. Maximum assistance is \$700 at one time and recipients must be at or below 150% of Poverty Level as defined by Department of Health and Human Services. However, the fund can only be accessed by veterans once every other year without extenuating circumstances so it does not provide a sustainable revenue stream for housing. In 2014 \$25,103.59 was spent on Housing Assistance to serve 45 veterans or widows of veterans. The total amount of assistance provided in 2014 was \$39,737.29 and 67 total people served.

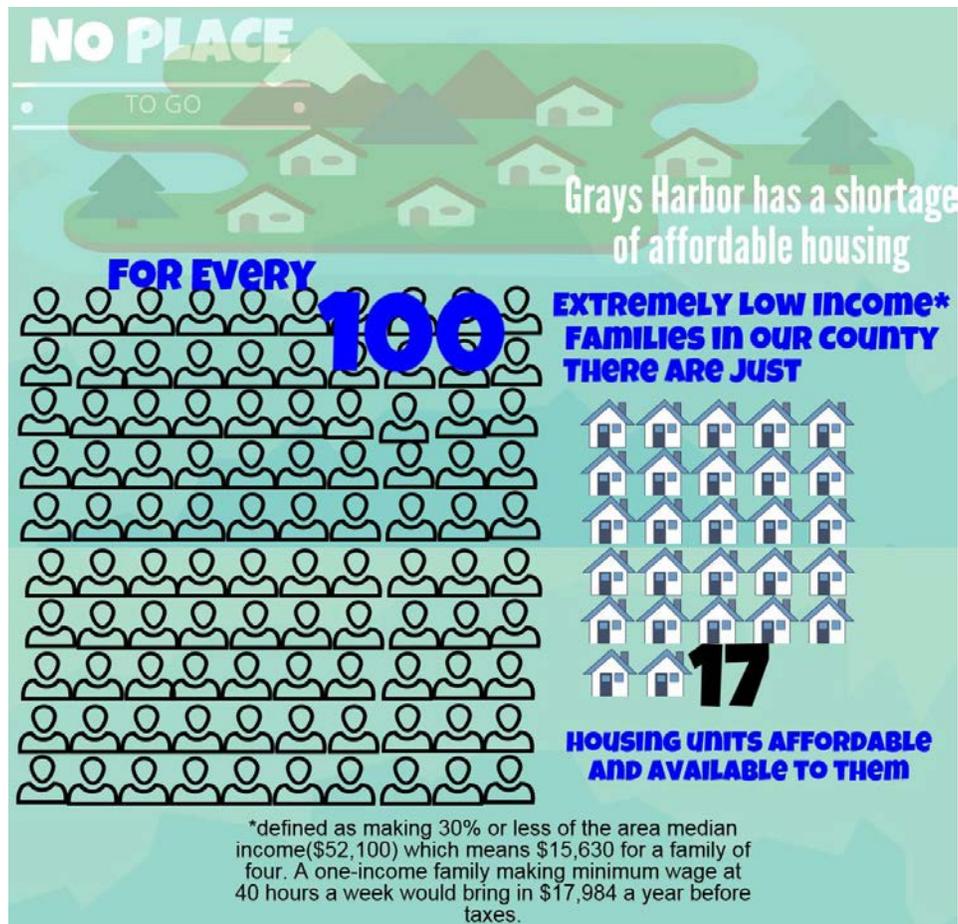
Pacific Mountain Workforce Development Council has funds available for long-term unemployed workers who have become recently employed and need rent or utility assistance to stay in housing until their first paycheck arrives. The program can assist with one full or partial rental assistance per year and/or one PUD bill per year along with other essential needs like groceries, transportation, daycare and car repair. 88% of support services delivered between July 1, 2014 and March 31, 2015 were rent and utility assistance.

Transient Accommodations and Substandard Housing

In June of 2015 a local motel was shut down in response to a Washington State Department of Health investigation into the conditions. This motel had been a local hot spot for unhealthy activities and the community had been working to make changes for many years. A consequence of the motel closure was the displacement of approximately 20 residents who had been staying in the motel as a form of temporary housing. Many motels in the community are utilized as long-term housing for individuals who have complex barriers to other, more stable forms of permanent housing.

The City of Hoquiam passed an ordinance in November, 2014 to address the misuse of hotels and motels, which are licensed as transient accommodations intended for stays of 30 days or less. With the City of Hoquiam ordinance and the recent closure of the Thunderbird Motel, the utilization of motels as long-term housing was brought to light as an issue the community needs to address in a way that provides pathways to healthier and more secure housing for individuals who have resorted to long-term stays in motels as their primary housing. Similar issues have been discussed in regards to substandard rental housing, where individuals who have limited options for permanent housing due to various barriers continue to live in substandard housing due to lack of alternatives.

Much of the housing stock in Grays Harbor is aging and in need of repairs yet homeowners and landlords are not able to make needed investments. Many landlords do not receive adequate income from their properties to warrant substantial maintenance or rehabilitation needed to maintain the necessary housing quality standards. Many restrictions come in to play when considering this investment, the most common being a requirement to bring the property up to code if the improvement costs more than 50% of the market value of the home. This can often mean the owner would be required to raise the elevation of the home, replace the electrical, plumbing, and/or heating systems, or install all new smoke and carbon monoxide detectors, an expense not feasible for small-scale landlords. The result is that individuals and families are forced to choose between housing they can afford and/or have access to but is unsafe due to mold, structural issues, plumbing/electrical concerns, and lack of security and remaining homeless.



River City Tent Encampment

In March of 2015 the City of Aberdeen served residents of an informal tent community of approximately 30 residents on private property along the Chehalis River with notices to vacate, citing garbage and public safety concerns. This encampment was formed as a response to a lack of resources that met the residents’ needs, real and perceived. The community response to the eviction of the campers was passionate and mixed. Some believed the campers should utilize available shelter and resources rather than trespass private property, others argued the camp offered structure, socialization, and was a survival mechanism for disenfranchised citizens.

The result of many community discussions, formal and informal, was the formation of a sanctioned tent encampment in the parking lot of Amazing Grace Lutheran church in June. Catholic Community Services offered organizational support and a mechanism to accept community donations. Of the displaced individuals by the river only three moved into the sanctioned camp, yet they soon reached capacity of 20 residents as other homeless residents sought out the camp for safety, security, and companionship.

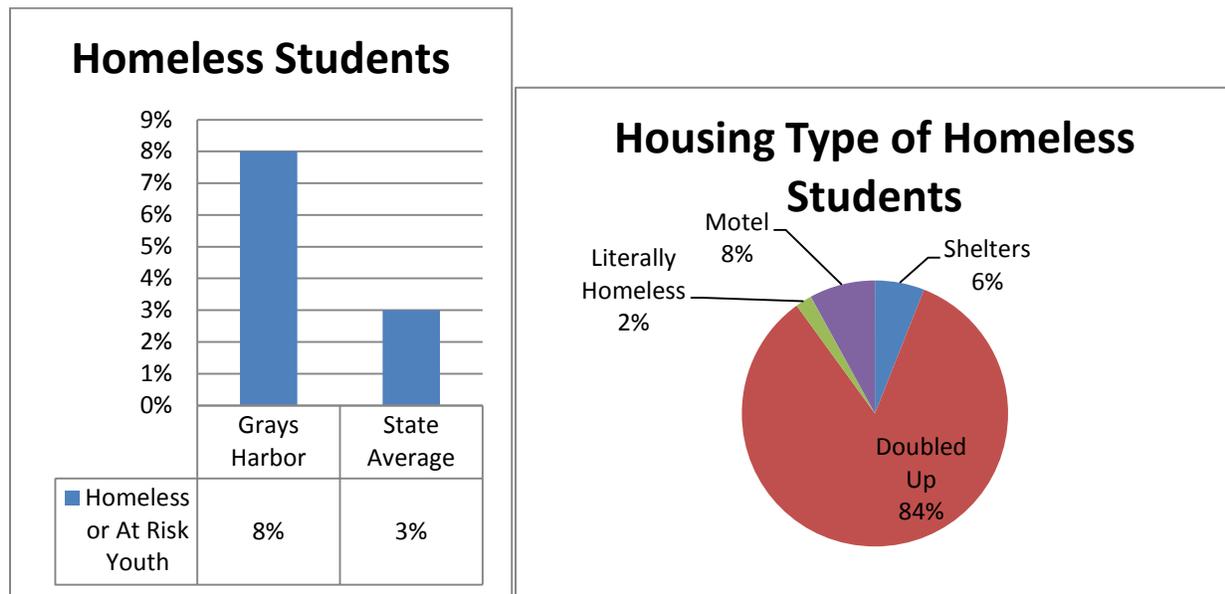
Since June 2015 two other churches have voted to accept the camp on their property, as city ordinances allow the camp to stay on a religious organization’s property for up to 90 days. Despite the formation of the sanctioned camp, the original location by the Chehalis River has been repopulated with informal encampments. Other encampments of varying size and formality

exist around the County near Aberdeen and more outlying areas. There exists a gap in services and resources to serve these individuals who may have high needs associated with their chronic homeless status.

OSPI Data

The most current data published by the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) data indicates that of 12,604 students enrolled in the County’s 16 School Districts in the 2013-14 School Year 991 or 8% were identified as homeless or at-risk of homelessness.

Of the 991 identified students 6% (59) were staying in shelters, 84% (832) were doubled up with family or friends, 2% (20) were unsheltered and 8% (79) were living in a motel.



DSHS Data

The Department of Social and Health Services records and tracks self-reported housing status of all clients they serve. This information is able to visualize the distribution and scope of homelessness around Grays Harbor County. Although homelessness might be most visible in the more populated areas, many rural communities experience unique barriers to housing such as lack of employment, transportation, and social supports. The following table illustrates the number of people who self-identified as homeless on a given day, per DSHS databases. This definition may vary from the focused HUD definition to include those who are couch surfing, in overcrowded or inadequate housing, or temporarily living with family or friends.

DSHS NO. Participants Homeless or At-Risk	
Aberdeen	703
Hoquiam	281
Elma	95
Westport	78
Montesano	71
Ocean Shores	66
Cosmopolis	30
McCleary	27
Grayland	19
Taholah	22
Copalis Beach	15
Humtulpis	9
Moclips	8
Ocean Beach	6
Quinault	4
All others	23
Total DSHS 3/23/15**	1457

This data was collected at a single point in time. DSHS provided self-reported housing status data for all active clients by zip code in Grays Harbor. This data was collected as a snapshot by DSHS staff and does not distinguish between clients living within City limits or in unincorporated areas of the County.

All data sources are only able to capture individuals and families who have been identified, which means inevitably there are more people who are experiencing homelessness or housing instability, who are not captured by these number.

Contributing Factors to Homelessness

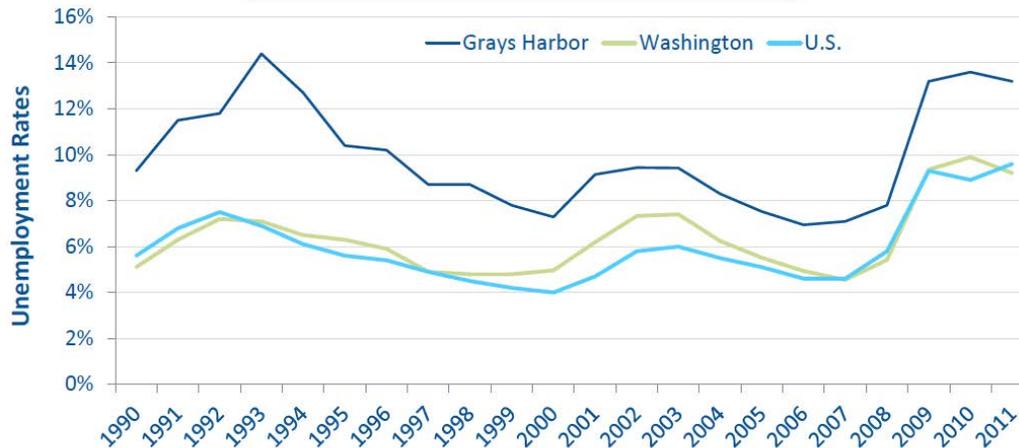
Causes of homelessness vary greatly and have many nuances. Following data review and interviews with many key community stakeholders, including homeless or formerly homeless individuals, several themes emerged to describe some of the contributing factors to local homelessness and housing instability.

High and long-term Unemployment and Poverty

Grays Harbor is an extremely underserved community which has scraped by with limited resources through much of its history. The county as a whole has a population of just over 72,000 people, 46% of whom access social services through the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) in 2014. On January 1st, 2015 Grays Harbor had an 11.1% unemployment rate vs. the Washington state average of 7.0%. Grays Harbor has experienced high rates of unemployment prior to the great recession and continues to exceed the State average.

Unemployment, 1990-2011

Unemployment in Grays Harbor mirrors state and national trends, but at a much higher rate.



Sources: Washington Employment Security Department, Grays Harbor County Profile and the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics Retrieved March 2013 from <http://www.workforceexplorer.com> and from <http://www.bls.gov>

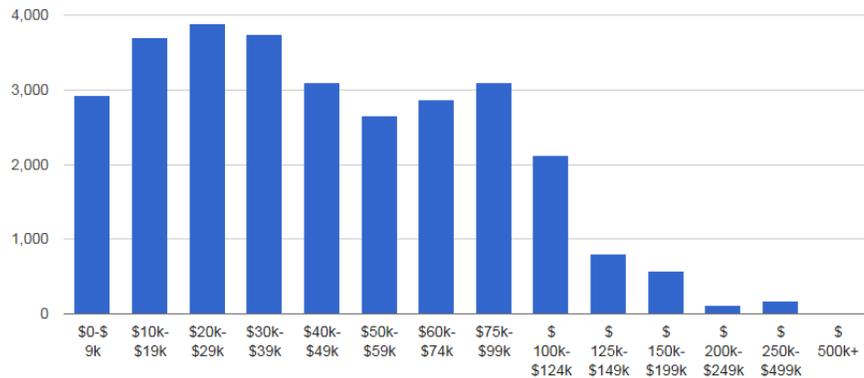
The economic impact of long-term unemployment and poverty on individuals, families, business and our community safety net has been devastating. Many individuals have exhausted their State-funded benefits with no real promise of work. Many families who qualified and accessed the “Temporary Assistance for Needy Assistance” program through DSHS have received the maximum amount of assistance with no sign of employment or stability in sight. In recent years legislative reform has tightened program guidelines and permanently disqualified households in need due to noncompliance. These families typically have little access to other resources that could help secure housing and other essentials.

According to recent Census Data, 19% of Grays Harbor residents live in poverty. The Federal Poverty level is set at a national level to describe households with incomes under \$11,770 for individuals, \$15,930 for a family of two, and \$24,250 for a family of four. In the outer reaches of the county there are towns like Taholah, where 39% of the population of 840 lives in poverty, or Westport, where 20.2% of the 2,099 residents are considered impoverished. The 2015 Area Median Income (AMI) in Grays Harbor is \$42,405, and many individuals and families earn far less. The County has struggled with persistent poverty for generations.

Charts on Page 20, from Realtor.com, show that income is disproportionately distributed, with a high proportion of Grays Harbor residents living with lower incomes and just a few households at the high end of the income spectrum, using census data. Area Median Income includes Social Security and other state and federal benefits.

Household Income for Grays Harbor County

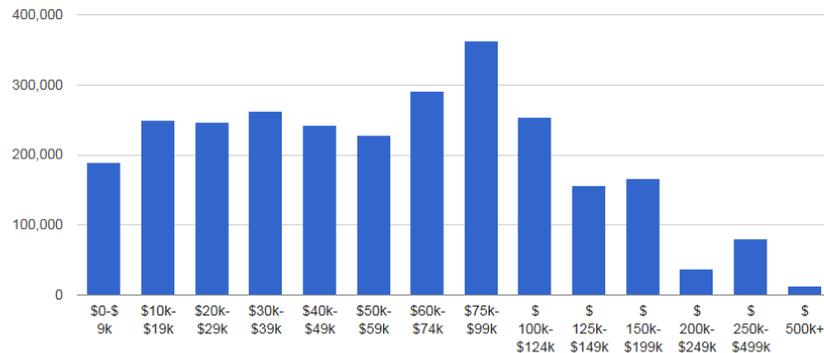
[Show Data](#)



1

Household Income for Washington

[Show Data](#)



2

In more rural outlying areas of the County like Westport seasonal work in industries like fishing creates a unique challenge when individuals are gainfully employed for a few months and can manage to pay the bills, but are unable to ration funding in a way that covers the months they may go without any work, causing cyclical housing instability.

29,988 individuals (41% of all Grays Harbor residents) accessed DSHS Economic Services between July 2012 and June 2013. This includes the Aged, Blind, and Disabled Assistance, Basic Food Program, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), Working Connections Child Care, Supplemental Security Income, and other state-funded assistance. This data represents a long-term, even generational trend in Grays Harbor.

After the loss of natural resource jobs in the late 1980s and early 1990s, Grays Harbor has struggled with uncertainty around the next steps towards stability and prosperity. In 2011 24% of Grays Harbor residents held a college or technical degree, vs. the Washington state average of 42%, according to the American Community Survey. The Washington Indicators Community

¹ http://www.realtor.com/local/Grays-Harbor-County_WA/lifestyle

² <http://www.realtor.com/local/Washington/lifestyle?v7=1>

Profile indicates Grays Harbor's lost 1,180, or 3.8% of jobs between 2010-2012; ranking 39 of 39 counties in that category. The same report showed that there were 29,931 jobs available in 2013, and 43,136 people between the ages of 18 and 64 living in Grays Harbor, indicating there were employment opportunities for less than 70% of working-age residents.

The 2014 Point in Time Count revealed that 24% of homeless individuals cited economic factors such as job loss as a contributing factor to their homelessness. Many landlords require tenants to demonstrate they have sustainable income that is at least three times the amount of monthly rent to access housing, which can help landlords protect their investments and ensure tenants are planning and able to stay long-term. This is a major hurdle for individuals and families who have low incomes or no income and need housing.

High unemployment, poverty, and lack of affordable housing challenge many families on the Harbor. One young Grays Harbor College student tells the heartbreaking story of her family as they struggle to find housing stability. Her husband was an employee of a local mill for 16 years before losing his job and throwing the family into chaos. To provide for their family he looked for work for several years before securing a part-time job at a local thrift store. His wife, the GHC student, went back to school studying business management in the hope of opening her own bakery. They have three young sons and have received the maximum assistance through the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program. The family of five survives on under \$1,000 a month. They lost their home and were thankful to be able to stay with a relative, but moving into a household of eight with three young boys was a constant struggle and source of stress. The family was able to get assistance through a local agency to get into their own place, a two bedroom apartment, paying deposit and first month's rent. Recently the father's hours were cut and they can no longer afford the apartment on their own. The stress of the instability has taken a toll on the family and the woman describes the situation as "treading water, but barely keeping from drowning. It's exhausting" she admitted.

Barriers to Housing

Many individuals who are currently or formerly homeless described their situation as a full-time job to survive and meet their needs in whatever way they can. Constant worry about where they will sleep, finding ways to remain dry and warm, finding food, and protecting themselves from those who wish to do them harm requires incredible energy, resourcefulness, and drive.

Oftentimes this daily effort directly conflicts with what is required to find and obtain housing or other resources that would better their situation. Many have tried to access resources in the past, only to be discouraged time and time again. For those who are lucky enough to be connected with housing or other community services, the process is many times cyclical - a burst of hope and stability, only to find out it is unsustainable after the rental assistance or case management ends, and they must start all over again, sometimes with less than what they started with.

There are many types of challenges individuals seeking housing may face which makes it difficult to locate and secure a safe, decent, and affordable place to rent. Some examples include:

- History of eviction
- Lack of Rental History
- Poor credit history
- Criminal History: For the many community members who struggle with mental illness and substance use disorders, criminal histories are a common consequence of the lifestyle they lead. Without the stability of housing recovery can be difficult, causing a vicious

cycle of stress and trauma. Fines and warrants associated with criminal charges also can be a barrier to housing for many homeless individuals.

- Presence of a pet
- Stigma associated with being homeless
- Geography: For those individuals living in more rural, outlying areas of the County access to any support services located in the larger towns is a barrier. Reliable, available, affordable transportation is scarce and can make it difficult to get to where the services are.

Domestic Violence can play a role in homelessness and provide an ongoing barrier to stable housing. For many Domestic Violence survivors, the abuser is often the sole breadwinner of the family, leaving them to make a difficult choice between an unsafe situation or poverty and housing instability. If the survivor is evicted due to a Domestic Violence episode, the eviction can provide yet another challenge to locating and securing safe, affordable, housing away from the abuser.

Grays Harbor is fortunate to have a variety of available shelter options for various populations. However, for some of the most vulnerable clients who may not be a fit for the structure of the shelters that do currently exist, they have few options. Individuals who are actively struggling with addiction, have severe and disruptive mental health issues, or severely physically disabled clients are not able to readily access emergency shelter that is offered. Couples, families, or women not in Domestic Violence situations with male children above the age of eight who desire to stay together in a shelter are limited to a two-unit duplex that is most often full.

Some landlords or property management firms are able to mitigate taking these risks for a client who has previously been evicted, struggled to keep up with payments, or who has a criminal history by asking for a damage deposit double that of the standard rate. This poses a challenge to people in our community with very few resources, and many are unable to provide the necessary funds to move in without assistance. In Grays Harbor high rent and low availability are barriers to people who have less than desirable histories that are searching for housing that meets their needs.

Behavioral and Physical Health Issues

Grays Harbor's Housing and Essential Needs (HEN) program serving temporarily disabled and homeless or at-risk of homelessness adults is among the largest in the state, serving 374 unique individuals in state fiscal year 2014 with rent and utility assistance. A report on HEN clients in 2014 states 97% have no income, making a move to self-sufficiency nearly impossible. Statewide the average length of program participation is 215 days (7.2 months); in Grays Harbor the average length of program participation was nearly double at 396 days (13.2 months). Grays Harbor was the fourth largest in terms of Rent Assistance Direct Recipients in the state at 374. Grays Harbor was behind only King County (2,929), Kitsap (444), and Clark (426) in number of recipients despite a population of 72,000 compared to King County (2.08 million residents),

Kitsap County (254,183 residents), and Clark County (451,008 residents). (Homelessness in Washington, 2014, Washington State Department of Commerce)

The 2014 Point in Time Count showed that 44% of individuals who were literally homeless (living on the street or a place not meant for human habitation) were disabled due to mental illness, addiction, or a combination of both.

Between July 2012 and June 2013 the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) in Grays Harbor provided Chemical Dependency services to 1,000 unique clients, 1.4% of the population and Mental Health services to 2,213 unique clients, 3% of Grays Harbor's residents. 35 of these clients were served by State Hospitals, for a cost of \$2,270,300, or \$64,866 per person.

Clients who struggle with behavioral and physical health issues and are homeless or at-risk of homelessness need a higher intensity level of case management than what is currently available. Many housing opportunities explicitly disqualify individuals due to past or present substance use. There are currently community-based support services available for individuals struggling with mental illness and addiction, but coordination with housing resources is needed to increase stability. Additional resources to advocate for vulnerable residents are also needed.

People experiencing health issues in more rural areas of the County like Lake Quinault have little immediate access to care outside of Tribal facilities and must rely on public transportation to central areas like Aberdeen and Hoquiam to receive services.

Individuals with the highest level of behavioral or physical health needs oftentimes cycle through hospitalization, treatment, or jail which makes sustaining housing difficult. Without pre-arrangements or outside advocacy private market rental units are unable to allow lapses in payment or contact during these times and many times clients are released from institutions only to find they are once again homeless.

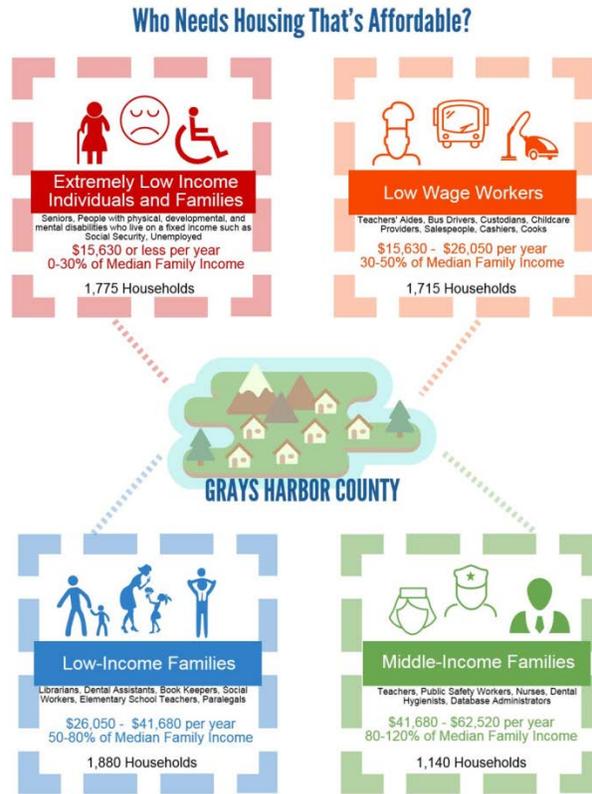
Homeless individuals who need access to immediate and continued medical support have few options in our community. Once discharged from a medical facility they face challenges in keeping wounds or infection sites clean and sterile enough to support recovery.

A client served by the Parents as Teachers Home Visitation program experienced an unforeseen housing challenge when she became sober and began working on reunification with her children. She was living with her grandmother, but other family members were also allowed to stay in the home who were using drugs. In order for this young woman to progress towards stability and make positive changes she needed to find an alternate living situation. She sought housing assistance through community providers, only to be told she did not qualify for available programs because she currently had a place to stay with her grandmother. In order for our community to encourage positive choices and incentivize healthy lifestyles, safe and sober housing needs to be available and affordable to the individuals who would benefit.

Lack of Affordable Housing

There is a wide gap in supply and demand for affordable and subsidized units. To end homelessness it will be critical to develop and maintain affordable housing opportunities throughout the county, including the more rural, outlying areas where many low-income residents live.

In Grays Harbor the 2016 Fair Market Rent is \$622 for a one-bedroom unit. The Department of Housing and Urban Development sets annual “Fair Market Rents” to determine how much of the rent is allowed to be covered by government funded rental assistance. Fair Market Rent is a gross rent estimate and includes rent and the cost of all tenant-paid utilities excluding telephones, cable, and internet services. FMR is calculated by the “40th percentile rent” or the dollar amount below which 40 percent of the standard-quality rental housing units are rented.³



**Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)
Grays Harbor FY 2016 FMRs By Unit Bedrooms**

<u>Efficiency/Studio</u>	<u>One-Bedroom</u>	<u>Two-Bedroom</u>	<u>Three-Bedroom</u>	<u>Four-Bedroom</u>
\$543	\$622	\$821	\$1,169	\$1,312

Grays Harbor has some of the lowest cost housing in the state of Washington, but to extremely low-income households it is still not attainable. With a lack of family wage jobs, and a severe cost burden for individuals and families who are unemployed or underemployed, finding affordable, safe, and decent housing is a challenge. Residents often struggle to afford rent and fixed utilities like water, sewer, and garbage as well as electricity.

³ Fair Market Rents for the Section 8 Housing Assistance Payment Program, U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development Office of Policy Development and Research, July 2007

Households who access subsidized housing assistance are often faced with difficult decisions in finding housing that is affordable using public assistance and that is also high quality. There are far fewer rental units available than households seeking housing which can translate to higher rents and more rigorous screening processes that do not meet the needs of low-income clients. Much of the rental housing stock available in Grays Harbor is older and in need of investment to maintain quality. There are many challenges for landlords wishing to invest in these properties including rehabilitation thresholds that if exceeded require bringing the entire house up to code. This improvement process could lead to the need to purchase flood insurance, raise the foundation of the property, update antiquated electrical and plumbing systems, and many more expensive interventions that are not feasible for small-scale landlords.

In Grays Harbor nearly 30% of all county households are cost-burdened, paying 50% or more of their household income for housing. Affordable Housing is defined as paying 30% or less of household income towards all housing costs. (Washington State Housing Needs Assessment, 2015). Nearly 90% of Housing Authority clients make 30% or less of Area Median Income (\$42,405), or less than \$12,721.50 per year (2014 Census.gov Quick Facts).

This same report shows that Grays Harbor County has 5,370 low-income renter households and only 900 subsidized housing units.

For those who earn just 0-30% of the Median Family Income there are only 17 units available and affordable for every 100 Households in need.

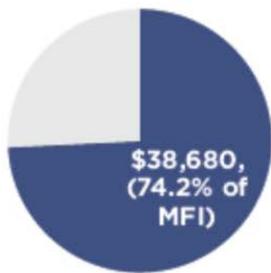
The forecasted number of units grows only to 19 units in 2019. Many more existing units of housing will need to be refocused and developed to alleviate the cost-burden of families earning less than 50% of the median income. The Washington State Housing Needs Assessment, 2015 captures affordable housing information in the charts below and in the following page.

Housing Market

How Much of the Median Family Income (MFI) Must a Household Earn to Afford Rent?

4 people / 3 bedrooms

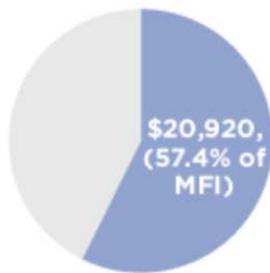
Fair Market Rent: \$967



■ required income

1 person / 1 bedroom

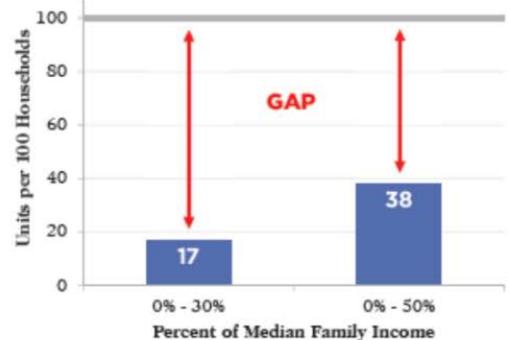
Fair Market Rent: \$523



■ required income

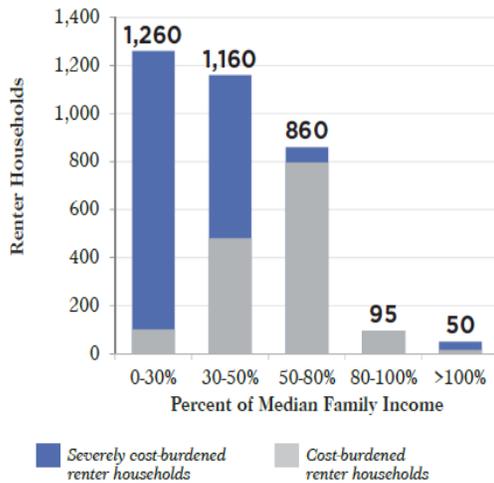
Affordable Housing Gap

Affordable and Available Housing Units for Every 100 Households

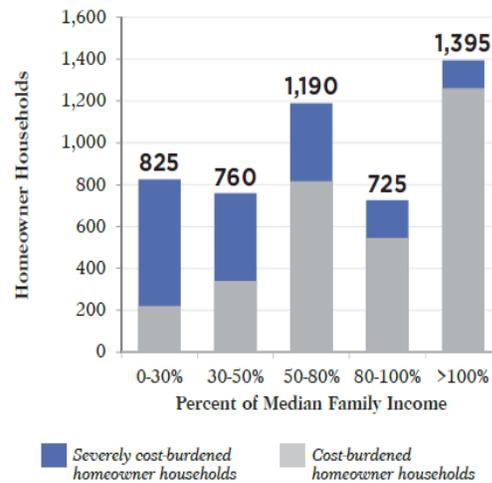


Cost Burden

Cost-Burdened *Renter* Households



Cost-Burdened *Homeowner* Households



Funding from the County’s largest provider of rental assistance, the Consolidated Homeless Grant (CHG) is structured to require that at least 38% of funds are used to pay rent assistance to private, for-profit landlords. Developing the other 62% of nonprofit or other forms of affordable housing is much more complex due to funding source time-lines and multiple requirements for potential code and land-use development.

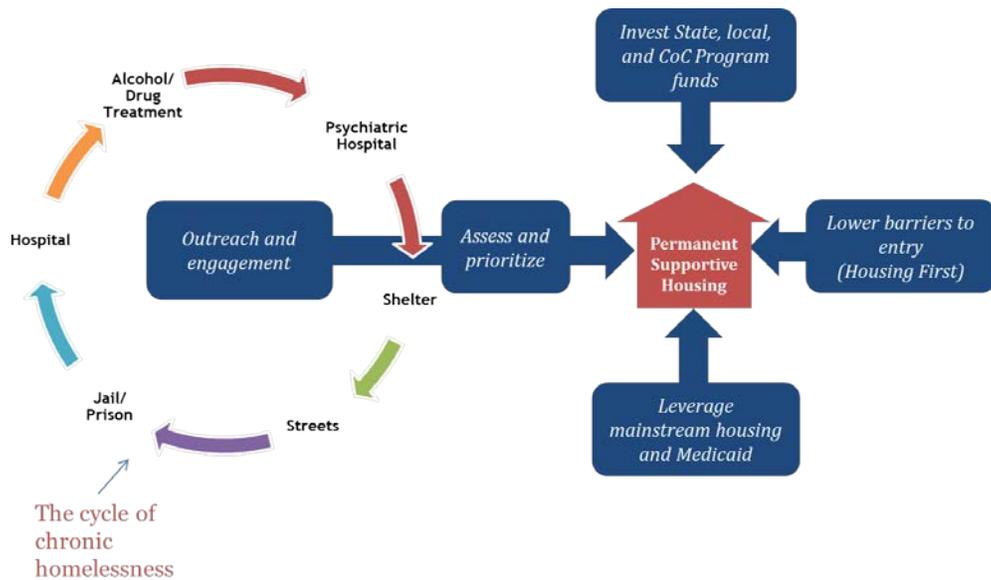
Many landlords require clients to demonstrate that their household income is at least three times the amount of the monthly rent to approve move-in. Households earning less than 30% of the area median income may be able to receive assistance with rent, utilities, and move-in costs but since they are not able to sustain that over time landlords are less willing to enter into an agreement.

In more rural areas of the County where affordable, decent, and available housing is scarce, low-income individuals and families resort to living in long-term trailer or RV parks where for a few hundred dollars per month they can afford water and electricity in small camping trailers.

These challenged circumstances fall far short of our goals. The vision of Grays Harbor County and its partners encompasses building a continuum of housing options for all the varying levels of need in our community, so that homelessness is rare, brief, and one-time for all residents, no matter their struggles. Federal, state, and County funding sources structure funding requirements to focus on specific populations and activities, which can be helpful and also restrictive. In consideration of the level of need, contributing factors to homelessness, and current available resources, it is apparent that additional funding and efforts are going to be needed to address gaps between funding priorities and accomplishing a complete continuum of services.

High Cost of Status Quo

Homelessness and Affordable Housing are not just low-income issues. The continued high cost of judicial, medical and crisis services as interventions related to housing greatly impacts the entire community through the high cost to tax payers and temporary benefit to the people experiencing homelessness. Individuals experiencing homelessness often cycle through expensive interventions such as shelter, jail, hospitals, and treatment without addressing core housing issues. The goal of moving towards a coordinated system that is able to assess the household’s specific needs and connect them to helpful resources in an organized way is to provide the right intervention at the right time, stopping the cyclical nature of chronic homelessness.



4

The much lower cost and ultimate benefits of providing housing and offering support services that actually address long term needs are substantial and well documented.

Financial Impacts

Those who are literally homeless or at extreme risk of homelessness often utilize the highest cost publicly-funded systems available (i.e. ER, jails, and emergency services) out of necessity. Without the stability of a safe, dry place to live self-managing behavioral and medical health issues is difficult. Individuals who suffer from mental illness and addiction often cycle through an unproductive series of systems like law enforcement, court system, emergency services, crisis response, and homelessness. The result is the use of expensive interventions that do not produce a positive outcome for the individual and become a financial burden to the community. The cost of providing permanent housing and support is far less expensive than the current institutional circuit.

⁴ <http://usich.gov/population/chronic>

AVERAGE MONTHLY COST OF HOUSING SOMEONE WHILE HOMELESS



This graphic from “The Homeless Hub” illustrates the average monthly cost of various systems individuals experiencing homelessness likely interact with. Social Housing refers to Supportive Housing, where rental assistance and community-based supports are provided in a coordinated way to help move clients towards stability and recovery. More information can be found at <http://homelesshub.ca/about-homelessness/homelessness-101/cost-analysis-homelessness>.

Community Impacts

Stable housing serves as the cornerstone of a person’s health and creates less demand on community emergency systems. Washington’s behavioral health system is moving towards integration and outcome-based services with an emphasis on evidence based practices. In April 2016 Mental Health and Chemical Dependency services will become one system that provides oversight to both sectors. This change reflects data showing many clients who are diagnosed with mental health issues also are in need of chemical dependency supports. In the document “*Adult Behavioral Health System-Making the Case for Change*” (DBHR, 2012) the concept that behavioral health problems and homelessness are intertwined is discussed and that homelessness is traumatic, cyclical, increases risk for behavioral health disorders; interferes with one’s ability to receive services, and jeopardizes successful recovery. The same document also describes the importance of employment and presents research that unemployment actually increases the risk for behavioral health disorders. Grays Harbor County and its providers are seeking to align with the direction and goals of the Behavioral Health and Homeless Housing systems by incorporating outcome-based and evidence-based practices to address the variety of issues in a systemic, coordinated service delivery. The 2014 Point in Time Count indicated that 44% of individuals who were literally homeless (living on the street or place not meant for human habitation) were disabled due to mental illness, addiction, or a combination of both. Providing stability to those struggling with behavioral health challenges is imperative to supporting recovery, healthy lifestyle choices, and decreased reliance on expensive crisis services.

Veteran Homelessness is a large issue in Grays Harbor. The Point in Time Count indicates a high proportion of Veteran homelessness yet few veteran-specific housing and support resources exist locally. Without sustainable support that helps meet veterans in need where they are little progress can be made in providing those who served our county with permanent housing.

The impacts of children experiencing housing instability are enormous. With 8% of Grays Harbor school-age children identified as homeless or at-risk of homelessness the broad and deep impact in our area is clear. The long-term effect of this housing instability may be felt for many years to come, both for homeless students and their peers.

- Homeless children are more likely to suffer academically and are more likely to drop out of school when compared to their housed peers. They also are much more likely to have a high number of absences per month and are suspended and expelled in much higher proportions than their housed peers. (OSPI Homeless Student Report).
- 39% of sheltered homeless children **missed more than one week of school** per quarter and **changed schools from two to five times** in 12 months
- Students who switch schools frequently **score lower on standardized tests**;(US Department of Education, Student Mobility, Academic Performance, and School Accountability) study found mobile students, students that do not stay enrolled at the same District the length of the school year, scored 20 points lower than non-mobile students. Mobility also hurts non-mobile students; the same study found average **test scores for non-mobile students were significantly lower** in high schools with high student mobility rates.
- It takes children an average of **4-6 months** to recover academically after changing schools. Students suffer psychologically, socially, and academically from mobility; mobile students are **less likely to participate in extracurricular activities and more likely to act out or get into trouble**.
- Mobility during high school greatly diminishes the likelihood of graduation; study found **students who changed high schools even once were less than half as likely as stable students to graduate**, even controlling for other factors.
- Homeless students in Grays Harbor have a high mobility rate as families move frequently due to housing instability. Grays Harbor’s average mobility rate is 10% of students changing schools at least once per school year. Washington State’s average mobility rate is less than 6%. ⁵

A story shared by the Housing Authority reports circumstances where a family made the incredibly difficult decision to leave their current unit suddenly due to their inability to pay rent, mounting stress, and a belief of their inevitable eviction. In their impulsive decision to find alternative arrangements, remnants of their family life remained behind. Most heartbreaking was a single paper certificate left behind tacked to the wall of a child’s bedroom, naming him “Computer Whiz of the Month” and signed by a trusted teacher. The long-term effects of this traumatic and jarring change in environment will be compounded for this child as he may struggle to make social connections, perform well academically, and ultimately become a self-sufficient and contributing member of a community

⁵ Ratings and Benchmarks for Outcomes and Indicators, OSPI

Strategies for Change

To achieve the unified vision of ending homelessness a dedicated committee of local housing providers endeavored to *gather and analyze* data, *identify* areas of strength and where barriers exist within our current systems, *learn* about best practices that are effective in communities like ours, and *recommend* to the County Commissioners strategies for change for the next ten years.

The result of the 10 Year Plan to End Homelessness process is a set of community-informed strategies with action steps and timelines connected to the vision. The committee focused on identifying Evidence Based Practices, or program models that have demonstrated positive outcomes in multiple research studies and are used in communities similar to Grays Harbor in considering potential solutions to local homelessness and housing needs. The committee is committed to the pathway laid out in this plan. Reporting to the community on the progress towards addressing the needs and barriers and incorporating their feedback will be critical.

To end homelessness we must provide meaningful resources, address the contributing factors to homelessness, and consider the scope of the issue. The committee has identified five strategies that will work to address the contributing factors to homelessness and remove barriers to housing for those experiencing homelessness. Short, mid, and long-term action items in the work plan align with these strategies to describe the work needed over the next ten years.

Coordinated Entry

To better serve residents who are experiencing homelessness or who are at-risk of homelessness Grays Harbor will establish a County-wide Coordinated Entry system for people experiencing homelessness, creating a clear and accessible central point of entry for everyone seeking housing resources. By coordinating homeless client intake and assessment, a Coordinated Entry process makes it more likely that households will receive the appropriate services more quickly. Strategic coordinated intake and assessment for homeless people is being strengthened and formalized in Grays Harbor. Coastal Community Action Program, The Department of Commerce and Building Changes, a consulting firm focused on ending homelessness, are working with Grays Harbor County to develop

What is an Evidence Based Practice?

An Evidence Based Practice is a program model that has been objectively proven effective.

EBPs integrate three key principles to replicate success:

1. The best available research evidence around whether and why a practice works
2. Providing staff capacity to assess client needs
3. Client preferences, values,

Why are Evidence Based Practices Important?

Seeking models that have been proven effective and replicable helps to utilize resources efficiently and achieve improved outcomes.

Relationship of Evidence Based Practices and Strategies for Change

The five strategies for change outlined in this document align with models that have been proven successful in other communities like Grays Harbor, or Evidence Based Practices.

Challenges of Evidence Based Practices

Evidence Based Practices are many times in opposition to “the way it has always been done” and can be challenging for experienced staff and stakeholders to consider and apply.

the Coordinated Entry system.

Uncoordinated intake systems cause problems for providers and consumers. Families with housing crises may end up going to multiple agencies that cannot serve them before they get to the one most appropriate for their needs. Each agency may have separate and duplicative intake forms or requirements, slowing down families' receipt of assistance, and each interaction with an agency opens up a need for data entry into a Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) or a similar system. Extra staff, time, and money are spent doing intake and assessment, taking time away from other, more housing-focused tasks such as case management, housing location, and landlord negotiation.

Social Services and Behavioral Health staff members would benefit from a clear and coordinated system that could help provide their clients with housing assistance in a clear, consistent way. For example, Veterans Service Officers who work with veterans who may have housing needs could refer clients to a single point of entry and feel confident they would receive the maximum amount of housing assistance available, based on their qualifications. Clients would also benefit from a streamlined approach to services that can still provide individualized service. With a variety of programs and agencies clients and agency staff sometimes feel as if they are assessed to find a program they qualify for, rather than identifying the specific assistance that would make a difference.

Research suggests that, in many systems, resources are being focused on a small subset of families whose needs may primarily be economic, while those with more significant challenges (co-occurring disorders, complete lack of a social support system, etc.) go unaddressed. Coordinated Entry makes it easier for communities to match families to the services they need, no matter how difficult their barriers are to address.

In a coordinated system, a "one-stop shop" for housing resources uses a common assessment tool that enables intake staff to determine which program best meets the housing needs for a particular individual or family, based on an understanding of conditions and circumstances as well as knowledge of each program's specific requirements and capacity.

Coordinated Entry presents the opportunity to coordinate resources to address all of the barriers and needs of a client, including employment, medical care, behavioral health supports, housing, and basic needs.

Affordable Housing

Grays Harbor will work to maintain existing affordable housing stock and develop additional inventory for the residents of our community. There is a wide gap in supply and demand for affordable and subsidized units. To end homelessness it will be critical to develop and maintain affordable housing throughout the county, including the more rural, outlying areas where many low-income residents live.

Working with landlords and property managers will be important as we work towards maintaining and developing affordable housing options. Many low-income clients experience

barriers that make it difficult to secure housing. These barriers could be mitigated by building relationships between landlords and service providers, exploring the possibility of a damage pool that could help mitigate landlord risk in renting to high needs clients, and providing landlord/tenant education, counseling, and discussion opportunities.

The Department of Housing and Urban Development defines affordable housing as parameters where families pay less than 30 percent of their income for housing costs – including utilities, and amenities like water, sewer, and garbage. Families who pay more than 30 percent of their income for housing are considered cost burdened and may have difficulty affording necessities such as food, clothing, transportation, and medical care.

Exploring policies, ordinances, and practices that either hinder or encourage the development of affordable housing opportunities will be helpful in maximizing the resources and capacity that is available.

Those who struggled with finding housing that is affordable, safe, and available identified that having a roommate could help alleviate some of the burden of rent and other housing costs; however there is no current way to approach this in an organized fashion.

Affordable Housing must be available that meets the needs of residents. Accommodations that help provide access to affordable housing to individuals who may have physical, behavioral, or cognitive health disabilities must be developed. These could include housing that incorporates wheelchair ramps, first floor access, ADA compliance, connection to health supports, and other accommodations.

There are currently few Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) compliant rental properties available and scarce resources to help with rehabilitating units to meet the ADA standards. Grays Harbor County is very rural and spread out and affordable housing options may not be available that meet residents' ADA needs where they live or wish to live.

Housing Resources for Vulnerable Populations

Grays Harbor will explore resources and strategies to support vulnerable populations to prevent and end homelessness. To end homelessness we must acknowledge and serve all the populations of people who live in our community along with their unique identities and challenges. Many times the individuals who are in the most need may be screened out of available programs due to their vulnerabilities. This plan means to address all Grays Harbor citizens and create inclusive assistance that will encourage housing stability. We will present information and gaps in services by subpopulation to better describe the challenges that have been described in our community, and the resources necessary to address these gaps.

Chronically Homeless

Individuals who have been continuously homeless for more than one year, or have experienced three episodes of literal homelessness in the past four years that cumulate to 12 months of homelessness often have very intense needs and high barriers to housing. Many have extensive criminal histories, mental health and substance abuse issues, physical or cognitive disabilities,

and/or little assets to draw upon. In traditional housing assistance systems they may be screened out from services due to their high needs and inability to sustain assistance. Many chronically homeless individuals cannot access traditional emergency shelters due to the intensity of their barriers.

Domestic Violence Survivors

Many individuals are homeless due to a domestic violence situation. People who flee abusive partners may have no income or marketable skill sets, and the abuser is often the sole provider. Unfortunately many return to an unhealthy relationship to avoid being homeless for themselves and their children.

Individuals who may be fleeing domestic violence or transitioning out of shelter have a unique set of needs. They may have additional barriers that take time to navigate and remove such as association with eviction or credit record of the abuser, finding a job, childcare, and healthcare for themselves and their family. All of these pieces are necessary to move to self-sufficiency and beyond homelessness.

Youth

Youth homelessness is an emerging issue in our community. Shocking local data from the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) reveals widespread unstable living situations for families. OSPI's definition of homelessness is broader than the Housing and Urban Development (HUD) definition used in conjunction with state and federal homelessness funding. OSPI data includes families who are "doubled up" or living with family or friends out of economic necessity. Additional resources are required to help families whose need falls outside of HUD priority areas.

Young Adults

The average age of individuals staying at the Union Gospel Mission has seemingly decreased over time. Many young people are the victims of intergenerational poverty and lack a model on building a successful life. 18-25 year olds are an underserved population in Grays Harbor and they represent a distinct set of needs. Many young people have not established a rental or work history making it difficult for them to begin self-sufficiency. Opportunities to overcome rental barriers tied to being first time renters, not having a cosigner, credit or rental history, and lack of assets to pay fees and high rents would strengthen stability at a younger age. Potential solutions include offering first-time renter education and certification and access to a damage pool for participating landlords meeting Housing Quality Standards.

In 2013 Grays Harbor had the second highest rate of foster children per capita in the state of Washington at 15.4 per 1,000 children placed in alternate care.⁶ When children age out of foster care a multitude of housing challenges can arise. Once a youth has aged out of the foster care system they are no longer eligible for home placement, and often have few resources or tools of their own. A positive connection to their foster family may be their only asset.

LGBT

The Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender (LGBT) community represents a deeper set of challenges. Some local youth who "come out" are no longer welcome in their own home. If the

⁶ Washington KIDS COUNT, 2013 data

LGBT youth are staying with a parent, or if the parent is a member of the LGBT community they may not believe they are welcome at faith-based shelters. Local emergency shelters and housing programs have described an uptick in challenges with serving Transgender clients.

Inclusive shelter and assistance options will help to end homelessness for some of our most vulnerable residents.

Non Native Speaker Population:

Community residents for whom English is not their first language experience challenges associated with the language and cultural barriers. Most community resources are advertised or have information available in English, and have few employees who can help navigate the language barrier.

Immigrants who may be undocumented, or have members of their household who may be undocumented may feel that they cannot pursue complaints regarding housing affordability, safety, or maintenance. Many do not seek assistance resources for fear of investigation into specific household circumstances.

Veterans

Of the 81 people counted as literally homeless in the 2014 Point in Time Count (PIT):

- 13.5% were Veterans
- 55% of the Veterans were disabled and chronically homeless

Grays Harbor County has a Veteran's Relief Fund administered by a County entity and guided by an advisory board. The fund can provide one-time rent, utility, or other basic needs assistance. Recipients must be at or below 150% of Poverty Level as defined by Department of Health and Human Services. However, the fund can only be accessed by veterans once every other year without extenuating circumstances so it does not provide a sustainable revenue stream for housing.

Coastal Community Action Program has recently received funding for the Supportive Services to Veteran Families (SSVF) program and began administering assistance in August 2015. This program will help to support veteran families However; Veterans lack a county-wide coordinated entry system that helps them align their needs with available opportunities.

Individuals with disabilities

The 2014 Point in Time Count indicated:

- **44% of literally homeless individuals that completed Point in Time Count surveys were disabled due to mental illness, addiction or a combination of both factors**

Additional low barrier and ADA compliant housing options need to be developed for residents who experience mental health, substance use disorder, cognitive impairments, and/or physical disabilities. The most vulnerable in our community need to be connected to the services and assistance they need in order to move towards stability and recovery.

Funding is needed for paid street outreach staff and case management to reach out and connect with those hardest to serve. Additional case management staff is needed to help adequately

address the complex stability plans of disabled clients over long periods of time.

Permanent Supportive Housing is needed for individuals who may not be able to successfully live independently. Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH) is defined as decent, safe and affordable community-based housing that provides residents with the rights of tenancy and is linked to flexible supports and services designed to meet the resident's needs and preferences. PSH is an effective model of housing for individuals who may otherwise not be able to live independently. There is no one single model of PSH. It can be implemented in a variety of ways depending on consumer need and preference. The general characteristics of PSH include:

Housing units that are:

- Permanent: Not time-limited; the tenant decides when they are ready to leave
- Affordable: Individuals contribute 30 percent or less of their income
- Independent: The tenant holds the lease with normal rights and responsibilities

Support services that are:

- Voluntary: Participation is not a condition of tenancy
- Flexible: Designed to be responsive to tenants' needs
- Tenancy-focused: Focus of services is on maintaining housing stability

Low Barrier Housing is Housing where a minimum number of expectations are placed on people who wish to live there. The aim is to have as few barriers as possible to allow more people access to housing and optional services. In housing this often means that tenants are not expected to abstain from using alcohol or other drugs, or from carrying on with street activities while living on-site, so long as they do not engage in these activities in common areas of the house and are respectful of other tenants, neighbors, and staff. Low-barrier facilities follow a harm reduction philosophy. See below for more about harm reduction⁷. -

Housing First is also an Evidence Based Practice that has proven effective for individuals with mental illness, drug and alcohol problems, and/or other high needs clients. The National Alliance to End Homelessness describes Housing First as an approach to ending homelessness that centers on providing people experiencing homelessness with housing as quickly as possible – and then providing services as needed. This approach is consistent with what most people experiencing homelessness want and seek help to achieve.

Housing First programs share critical elements:

- A focus on helping individuals and families access and sustain permanent rental housing as quickly as possible without time limits;
- A variety of services delivered to promote housing stability and individual well-being on an as-needed basis; and
- A standard lease agreement to housing – as opposed to mandated therapy or services compliance.

⁷ <http://www.heretohelp.bc.ca/visions/housing-and-homelessness-vol4/housing-glossary#sthash.6Sy83g7P.dpuf>

Dovetailing with Supportive Services

To provide adequate supports to individuals struggling with substance use disorders more local detox and treatment options are needed.

Grays Harbor is exploring the potential of a Social Security Advocacy program (SOAR). SOAR seeks to end homelessness through increased access to SSI/SSDI income supports, directly addressing SAMHSA's assertion: "To recover, people need a safe stable place to live." This is essential, and for many persons in recovery accessing benefits is a first step. But SOAR extends beyond and also encourages employment as a means to increase individual income and promote recovery in line with the SAMHSA assertion that: "to recover, people need meaningful work and the ability to enhance their skills through education."

SOAR is a national program designed to increase access to the disability income benefit programs administered by the [Social Security Administration \(SSA\)](#) for eligible adults who are experiencing or at risk of homelessness and have a mental illness, medical impairment, and/or a co-occurring substance use disorder

The Housing and Recovery through Peer Services (HARPS) is a new program in Grays Harbor, with housing assistance and services for people exiting psychiatric or substance abuse treatment and facing homelessness. Potentially this program can assist up to 50 homeless people annually.

Expand Emergency Housing Options

Families

Family shelter is a gap that must be addressed in our community. There are currently very limited options for families in crisis who wish to stay together as a family. Coastal Community Action Program has a two-unit duplex available for shelter and can offer limited hotel vouchers for families when the units are full.

The Union Gospel Mission allows male guests over the age of 18. The Friendship House allows women and their children to stay if male children are under the age of 9. The Domestic Violence Shelter allows women and their children to stay together if the male children are under the age of 18, but is only available for Domestic Violence Survivors fleeing an abusive situation. These restrictions remove emergency housing options for single fathers with children, women with male children over the age of 9, and couples with or without children.

Pregnant women also have limited shelter options for before and after the birth of their child. Many other communities have created housing options specifically for pregnant and/or parenting teens or young adults. This specific housing option involves program options designed to serve a particularly vulnerable clientele.

A school homeless liaison works with homeless families who have school-aged children that are enrolled in the district. The staff member noted "These families struggle, often moving in and out of the district while trying to find sustainable and decent housing. Family shelter units just are not available or have rules against housing families with boys of a certain age. I can end up referring them to campsites."

High Needs Residents

Low barrier shelter was vocalized as a need to explore in the 10 Year Plan to End Homelessness. Local faith-based shelters provide a resource to many in the community. Rules and requirements can become a barrier to the most vulnerable individuals. There are opportunities to expand emergency housing options. Many individuals are screened out of these services and are left literally homeless when they are not able to comply with sobriety, curfew, chore, or religious requirements.

There have been changes in Union Gospel Mission operation practices such as a move to case management, staffing changes, connection to other community services, and a move to case-by-case basis for exceptions to rules and requirements. There is an opportunity to strengthen the referral network and communication between providers.

Physically disabled clients have limited shelter options. The Union Gospel Mission, the shelter provider for single men over 18 years old has several flights of stairs from the main entrance to the sleeping quarters that is difficult to navigate for disabled clients.

Build and Strengthen the Housing System

Exploring the opportunity to bring staff, resource guides, and information about what is available is crucial in more remote areas to end homelessness. Grays Harbor must invest in opportunities for training and technical assistance to utilize available resources for maximum impact.

The resources currently available are not able to meet the vast need in our area. Additional resources must be sought through grant and other funding opportunities.

Bringing resources to more rural areas of the County requires additional capacity beyond what is available to deliver meaningful services and connecting people in outlying areas to services.

The goal of this work is to create and strengthen a continuum of housing options. The continuum would provide a clear and supported pathway for residents on all areas of the housing spectrum, making it possible to move from homeless to homeownership.

Increase Community Awareness and Engagement

Education and information sharing was identified as a key resource in the fight against homelessness in all areas, particularly rural areas of the County.

A plan with a goal as ambitious as reducing homelessness will not be successful without broad-based support across a variety of sectors. Strong leadership and shared vision is needed to break down silos and organize resources to achieve our intended results. We must develop an inclusive vision that includes people who have experienced homelessness along with elected officials, businesses, nonprofits, faith-based organizations, and citizens. Assisting the most vulnerable will help to improve the health and vitality of our community.

The social service clients interviewed as part of the planning process repeatedly emphasized the

feeling that they were underestimated or that their skills and abilities were dismissed due to their housing status. For programs to be successful it is critical to consult with the individuals who will be assisted through the services. Client input can maximize efficiency and effectiveness of program and service design and help make progress towards the goal of ending homelessness.

With limited internet, phone, and transportation access information about what services are available, eligibility requirements, and where to go to receive assistance is scarce, scattered, and not accessible in an organized way. The opportunity was identified to coordinate with school district and faith-based assistance organization staff to bring information and access to services to where the need is in the communities throughout the County.

Work Plan

Goal 1 – Fully Develop Coordinated Entry System

Short Term (1-3 Years)

- Establish and Promote a community-known point of entry
 - Coastal Community Action Program will launch the first version of Coordinated Entry in Grays Harbor January 1, 2016
- Create an efficient process to move people from homelessness to housing
- Develop and refine Coordinated Entry framework including policies, procedures, and tools
- Develop and establish a Vulnerability Assessment Tool to prioritize services based on vulnerability
- Formalize partner agency referral system including housing and support service providers
- Work towards utilizing Coordinated Entry for everyone seeking housing resources, close side-doors to programs
- Develop system to communicate about available resources and challenges with community partners
- Create thoughtful messaging to educate community partners and clients about Coordinated Entry
- Strengthen partnerships and relationships with community stakeholders

Mid-Term (5 Years)

- As Coordinated Entry system is refined gaps in the system will be identified and defined with data
 - Housing: shelter, permanent housing, connection to the system (i.e. outreach)
 - Support services: i.e. after-hour childcare, expanded substance use treatment
- As Coordinated Entry system is refined successes can be articulated with data i.e. what is working well? Who is successful? What themes exist that can be replicated or expanded?
- Develop larger referral and partner networks to include employment, education, health, law enforcement, etc.
- Address geographical barriers of accessing the housing system in outlying areas of the county by partnering with local communities

Long-Term (10 + years)

- Use data and relationships to develop a system with adequate resources to provide same-day, safe shelter for anyone who is homeless and move them forward on the pathway towards permanent housing

Goal 2 – Maintain and Expand Affordable Housing Options

Short Term (1-3 Years)

- Coastal Community Action Program will have staff dedicated to landlord outreach and relationship building
- Develop and foster partner relationships amongst peers via monthly brown bag lunch meetings to discuss client successes and challenges
- Research and develop a master leasing model
- Explore Damage Pool for Participating Landlords
- Research business models for master leasing outdated transient accommodations (motels) and other units into small scale permanent housing with services for priority populations, including chronically homeless
- Complete/Update Housing Needs Assessment. Identify specific populations/type of housing need remaining
- Explore city and county ordinances that may encourage or inhibit development or operation of affordable housing by private developers
- Build relationships with Greater Grays Harbor Inc. to explore connection between economic development and affordable housing
- Build relationships with elected officials to coordinate state and federal grant opportunities
- Develop affordable housing inventory and recommendations for acquisition, rehabilitation, and development
- Develop relationships with local communities in outlying areas of the County to continue discussion about local needs and inventory
- Build relationships with development consultants and organizations to learn about pathways to development, financing, and managing of homeless housing and affordable housing projects
- Pursue funding to maintain existing capital projects and affordable housing options
- Explore inventory County owned properties for opportunities to develop affordable housing opportunities

Mid-Term (5 Years)

- Explore options to integrate affordable and/or subsidized housing into the community via scattered-site models
- Discuss recommendations from housing inventory and analysis to determine next steps in developing affordable housing opportunities that meet local needs
- Develop collaborative development projects to increase inventory of affordable housing
- Maintain and strengthen relationships with internal and external community partners to provide continued education on Grays Harbor affordable housing needs

Long-Term (10 + years)

- Significantly increase the availability of affordable housing that meets the needs of residents and is safe and decent
- Explore Community Land Trust and Real Estate Investment Trust (REIT) opportunities for large scale investment into sustainable affordable housing
- Design, construct, and support additional inventory of affordable housing through public-private partnerships

Goal 3 – Invest in Housing Resources for Vulnerable Populations

Short Term (1-3 Years)

- Compete for Balance of State Continuum of Care McKinney Vento funds to provide Permanent Supportive Housing resources for up to 20 chronically homeless individuals
- Incorporate “Housing First” i.e. low barrier housing options into both private and nonprofit housing stock
- Research options and begin development of PSH small scale permanent housing via acquisition/rehab or new construction, using 24/7 services and security on site
- Domestic Violence Center will begin a Supportive Housing pilot in 2016 for Domestic Violence Survivors to serve up to eight (8) families per year with rental assistance and supports to move them from homelessness to self-sustained permanent housing
- Coastal Community Action Program began administering the Supportive Services for Veteran Families program in 2015 which provides rental assistance and connection to supports for at least six (6) families per year
- In 2016 Grays Harbor County Public Health and Social Services will take over administration of the Veteran’s Advisory Fund in an effort to connect those in need to a broader set of resources and information
- Expand community partners for the Housing and Recovery through Peer Supports (HARPS) program which serves individuals discharging from inpatient treatment who are homeless or at-risk to expand referrals
- Develop relationships with Community Service Officers from local Veteran organizations who connect clients to available resources
- Explore expanding emergency shelter options for families and high needs individuals
- Explore options for reaching and assisting non-native speakers
- Explore opportunities to create a SSI/SSDI Outreach, Access, and Recovery Technical Assistance (SOAR) program in Grays Harbor to streamline the pathway to Social Security for disabled individuals

- Grays Harbor County staff is on a task force of community partners to explore the potential for creating and providing life skills curriculum for residents to learn about financial literacy, employment readiness, and landlord/tenant relationship skills
- Explore more information about the 1115 Medicaid Waiver, which if approved could provide a pathway for Medicaid to finance necessary housing supports for highly vulnerable clients
- Explore ways to receive, analyze, and discuss data from a variety of community sources

Mid-Term (5 Years)

- Expand resources to provide emergency housing assistance to families
- Explore low-barrier shelter options with existing partnerships or build new capacity
- Examine local ordinances that may have a negative effect of criminalizing homelessness when alternatives such as connection to services could be developed
- Develop a collaborative list of “high utilizers” of emergency and crisis services and create a provider task force to break down barriers to housing for these clients

Long-Term (10 + years)

- Develop a variety of housing options and inventory that meets the needs of residents despite their vulnerability

Goal 4- Build Capacity of Homeless System

Short Term (1-3 Years)

- Develop and provide support within the Steering Committee to provide a guiding vision, advisory capacity, and evaluation to plan implementation
- In 2015 Grays Harbor County submitted an application for USDA capacity building funding, to develop affordable housing renewal plan and provide EBP training opportunities
- Improve data quality, in county training in HMIS. Use quarterly reports to improve accountability
- Establish clear performance objectives around housing status, retention of permanent housing, changes in household income, length of time homeless, etc.
- Develop and/or distribute quarterly and annual reports or use state reports that track activities and outcomes
- Identify line staff from key housing/support service providers to meet, at a minimum, every other month to update and identify current available services and gaps in services
- Explore alternative revenue streams such as Housing levies and sales tax programs
- Develop relationships with private funders to determine alignment of priorities and goals

Mid-Term (5 Years)

- Develop strategies to bring access to services to people in outlying areas by hosting providers in satellite offices, hotlines, or rotation schedule of services

Long-Term (10 + years)

- Diversify funding streams to ensure stability and flexibility to respond to changing community needs

Goal 5 – Increase Community Awareness and Education

Short Term (1-3 Years)

- Produce annual report to BOCC and community that includes HMIS performance data, integrated data reports from DSHS and Commerce and detailed update on Work plan
- Expand representation on the steering committee through re-establishing a local Continuum of Care to provide a more diverse set of perspectives and increase opportunity for collaboration across sectors
- Work with county school districts and school boards around needs of families struggling with homelessness and how assistance can be coordinated and children stabilized and ready to learn. Ask McKinney liaisons to attend Executive Committee meetings and report on needs, etc.
- Draft and publish a resource guide that could be available in more remote areas of the County in accessible places such as libraries, post offices, and food banks
- Create and manage a website dedicated to Housing Resources where the plan, action steps and updates could be hosted. Links to providers and other resources and information around funding sources would also be available

Mid-Term (5 Years)

- Every second or third year, update work plan for priorities and changes based on performance and gaps data through a public process, with approval and adoption by BOCC
- Hold quarterly provider meetings to discuss issues of mutual concern such as barriers of rural areas and high needs populations and strategies to work collaboratively

Long-Term (10 + years)

- Hold annual or bi-annual forum on housing and homelessness to discuss local needs and hear models, best practices, and discussions from external experts



Grays Harbor 10 Year Plan to End Homelessness Work Plan Priorities

Fully develop Coordinated Entry system

- **System Goals:** Maximum efficiency of available resources
- **Client Goals:** The right assistance at the right time

Maintain and Expand Affordable Housing Resources

Invest in Housing for Vulnerable Populations

- Domestic Violence Survivors
- Youth and Young Adults (18-25)
- Veterans and their families
- Expand Emergency Housing options
- Individuals with Behavioral Health challenges

Build Capacity of Housing System

- Training and Technical Assistance in Evidence Based Practices
- Create and utilize mechanisms to evaluate system performance

Increase Community Awareness and Discussion

- Report progress towards goals and incorporate community feedback
- Share and incorporate information from all areas of the County