

Pacific County

10 Year Plan to Reduce Homelessness



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Additional Community Members

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BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Planning to End Homelessness: 10 Year Plan Background

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. The Act outlines requirements for both county and the State governments, with the Department of Commerce having primary responsibility for planning and support of state implementation of the plan.

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
- 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 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

To fund local and state implementation of the Homelessness Housing and Assistance Act, the state created a \$10 document recording fee, with 60% of the funds staying with the counties and 40% going to the Department of Commerce. In spring 2007, the Washington State Legislature passed the Engrossed Second Substitute House Bill (ESSHB1359), which added an additional \$8 document recording fee, with 90% of the revenues staying with the counties and 10% going to the Department of Commerce. The Legislature added another \$10 fee for most standard recording documents when they passed House Bill 2048 in 2012. These document recording fee funds must be used toward the goal of reducing homelessness by 50% by 2015, with the county portion supporting its 10 year plan to reduce homelessness and the state portion supporting homeless housing programs.

HEARTH Act

The Homeless Emergency and Rapid Transition to Housing (HEARTH) Act passed by Congress in 2009 amends and re-authorizes 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:

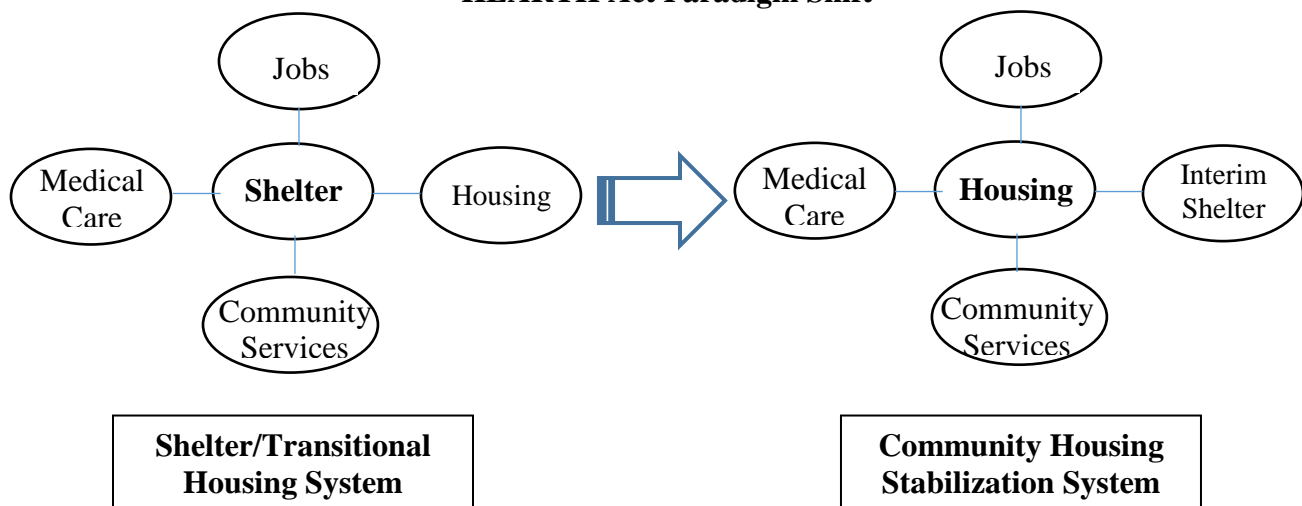
- A consolidation of HUD's competitive grant programs
- The creation of a Rural Housing Stability Assistance Program
- A change in HUD's definition of homelessness and chronic homelessness
- A simplified match requirement
- An increase in prevention resources
- An increase in emphasis on performance

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

Figure 1
HEARTH Act Paradigm Shift



As shown in the figure above, the HEARTH Act introduces and supports a paradigm shift from shelter/transitional housing focused homeless systems to housing focused homeless systems. This housing focused homeless system paradigm proposes *new system level performance goals*, which include the following:

- Average length of a homeless episode is less than 20 days
- Less than 5% of those who were homeless within the last 2 years become homeless again
- Number of those who are newly homeless is 10% lower than the previous year
- Length of shelter stay is less than 14 days or 10% less than the previous year
- Job and income growth for people who are homeless

Continuum of Care (CoC)

Communities that effectively meet the performance goals outlined above are identified as “High Performing Communities” and will be eligible to receive bonus funds through the Continuum of Care program. The Continuum of Care (CoC) Program is required by the HEARTH Act in order to promote community-wide commitment to ending homelessness, provide funding to minimize trauma and dislocation by rapidly rehousing those who are homeless, promote access to and utilization of programs, and to optimize self-sufficiency among those experiencing homelessness.¹ In 2012, HUD published the CoC Interim Rule, which establishes eligibility requirements and regulations for CoC Programs of non-profit organizations or state or local governments. The rule provides that CoC Program *funds may be used for the following program categories*:

- permanent housing
- transitional housing
- supportive services only
- Homeless Management Information Systems (HMIS)
- homelessness prevention (in some cases)²

Pacific County falls under the jurisdiction of the Balance of Washington State Continuum of Care (CoC), which oversees the planning and implementation of activities to reduce homelessness in 33 counties in Washington State. This governing body does not include the larger counties of Clark, King, Pierce, Spokane, Snohomish, and Yakima, which each have their own CoC that coordinates with the Balance of State Continuum occasionally.³ The *Balance of State Continuum has representation* from the following entities:

- local continuums
- nonprofit organizations
- faith-based organizations
- people who are homeless
- major statewide advisory groups (i.e. the Governor’s Advisory Council on Homelessness, Washington State Advisory Board on Affordable Housing, Washington Low Income Housing Alliance, and Washington State Association of Housing Authorities)
- major state agencies working on homeless issues (i.e. the Department of Commerce, Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Public Instruction)
- Veterans Affairs⁴

The CoC is responsible for effectively coordinating and managing federal resources provided through the HUD McKinney-Vento Program.⁵ When funds are available, an RFP goes out to the Balance of State CoC and housing providers from the various counties represented can apply for the funds.

Person-Centered Approach

HEARTH Act regulations, action steps and performance goals detailed above require the adoption of a person-centered approach to case management within homeless systems. Nationally, a person-centered approach to health care is regarded as a best practice, particularly when serving people who are homeless or at-risk of becoming homeless.⁶ This population is often uninsured or underinsured and

¹ The McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act as amended by The Homeless Emergency Assistance and Rapid Transition to Housing (HEARTH) Act of 2009

² OneCPD Resource Exchange, <https://www.onecpd.info/coc/coc-program-eligibility-requirements/>

³ Washington State Department of Commerce, Balance of Washington State CoC DRAFT Governance Charter, July 2013, <http://www.commerce.wa.gov/Programs/housing/Homeless/Pages/ContinuumofCareHomelessAssistanceProgram>.

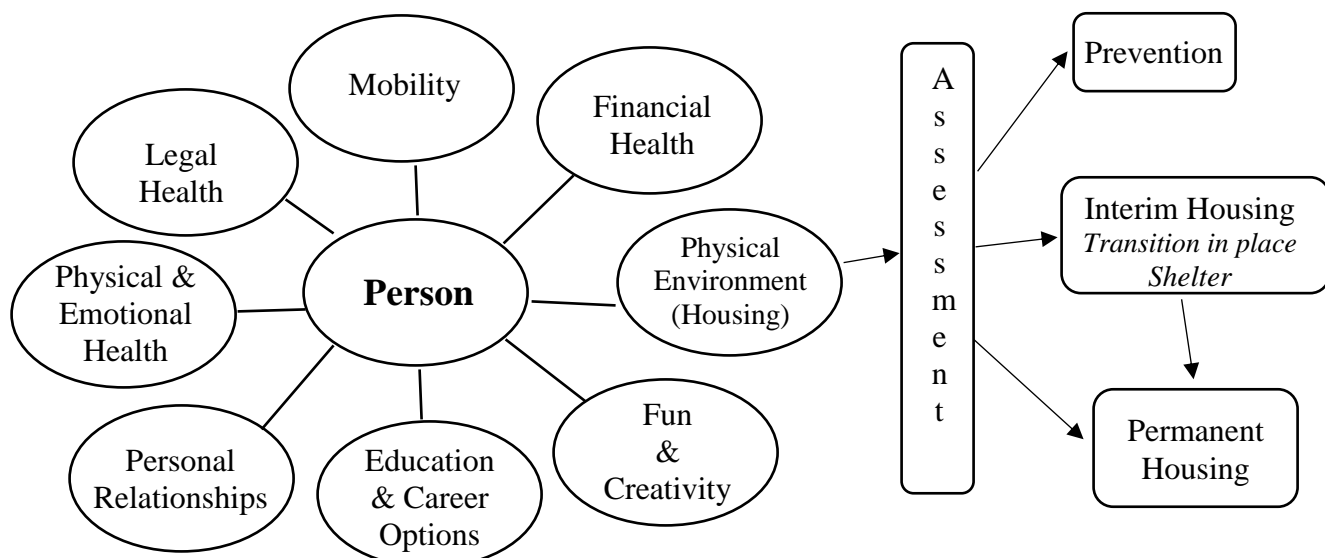
⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ The National Association of community Health Centers, Inc., The Impact of Community Health Centers and Community-Affiliated Health Plans on Emergency Department Use, Choudry, Lina, Douglass, Mackenzie, et al, April 2007

dealing with multiple, co-occurring disorders, such as untreated chronic diseases, mental illness, and substance abuse disorders.⁷ A person-centered approach to case management provides the individualized assistance and intensive support needed to allow people to effectively utilize available resources. This approach also encourages collaboration and service integration between behavioral health, physical health, dental health and social service providers. Such individualized support and coordination of resources avoids requiring people to navigate, on their own, a fragmented system to meet their complex needs. It allows the interventions to fit the person, based on their identified strengths and areas of needed support, rather than requiring the person to fit the interventions. As displayed in the figure below, a person-centered approach to case management connects a person with resources in a variety of categories, including the area of housing. With such thorough assessment, a person can more effectively and rapidly move into permanent housing and self-sufficiency, with continued support as needed.

Figure 2
Person-Centered Approach to Case Management



Consistent with the emphasis on a person-centered approach, this plan attempts to and encourages the use of “people first language” when referring to individual persons or groups of people. Society often lumps people into categories so that the primary identifier of the person or group is their condition or category rather than their own individuality. For example, a person who is experiencing homelessness becomes a “homeless person,” as if being homeless is the most important aspect of who she or he is rather than a circumstance she or he is experiencing. Subconsciously, this language encourages people to see someone who is homeless as one in need with little or nothing to offer and not as one having a voice regarding what is needed or desired. On the other hand, naming a person’s humanity first (i.e. “person who is homeless” or “person who is experiencing homelessness”), is a recognition that this individual has a voice and opinions and has assets to offer in addition to challenges to overcome. This approach strengthens the confidence and capacity of individuals and communities, as we walk alongside each other to navigate resources together.

Description/Faces of Homelessness

The Final Rule on the Definition of Homelessness

⁷ Ibid.

In 2011, the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) published the final rule on the definition of homelessness in the Federal Register. The final rule provided four possible categories under which individuals and families may qualify as homeless. Within each category there are subpopulations of people with different needs, which must be taken into consideration, as each group requires different housing strategies.

Category 1 – Literally Homeless

Individuals and families who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence and includes a subset for an individual who resides in an emergency shelter, a place not meant for human habitation, or who is exiting an institution where he or she temporarily resided.

Chronically Homeless - HUD defines a person who is chronically homeless as “an unaccompanied individual with a disabling condition who has either been continuously homeless for a year or more, or has had at least four episodes of homelessness in the past three years.”⁸ Despite the small percentage (10% of the national count of people who were homeless in 2010), people who are chronically homeless use over 50% of available services due to the complex medical problems they experience. This population often requires long-term subsidies for housing and others services, even when receiving some income from wages and/or public benefits.⁹

Veterans - According to Point-in-Time counts, 76,329 veterans were living in emergency shelter, transitional housing, or an unsheltered place in 2010. Veterans who are homeless often face some of the same challenges as people experiencing chronic homelessness: mental illness, substance abuse, and physical disabilities. The first step to successfully ending homelessness among veterans is to assess housing status and address vulnerability factors when soldiers are discharged from active service.¹⁰

Aging Populations - Those who are elderly represent a small percentage of the population of people who are homeless (2.8% of sheltered adults according to HUD’s 2008 Annual Homelessness Assessment Report (AHAR)). This number is projected to double between 2010 and 2050, given the consistent rate of homelessness among this population combined with the U.S. Census Bureau projection that the population will more than double during that time period.¹¹ This population often requires many of the following supportive services as they age: medical care, self-care assistance, treatment of depression, and companionship.

Homeless for the First Time - Beginning in 2008, a new face of homelessness began to appear. Individuals and families who may have had stable employment but are now facing unemployment or underemployment are entering the homeless system. These households are often unfamiliar with the resources available and how to access them. Research has shown the

⁸ Notice of Funding Availability for the Collaborative Initiative to Help End Chronic Homelessness/Federal Register, Vol. 68, No. 17 ; Monday, January 27, 2003, 4019. This definition is shared by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, and the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs.

⁹ National Alliance to End Homelessness, *Homelessness Policy Focus Areas*, February 2007.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid.

majority of these households need assistance for short periods of time and do not require the costly intensive services people who are chronically homeless may need.¹²

Category 2 – Imminent Risk of Homelessness

Individuals and families who will imminently lose their primary nighttime residence.

At-Risk of Homelessness - According to HUD, households are considered at-risk of homelessness if they are paying 50% or more of their income for housing and/or are living in substandard or overcrowded housing. Substandard housing is defined as housing that does not meet local housing codes. Housing is considered overcrowded if there are more than 1.01 persons per room (including living room, dining room, etc.). These households are commonly dealing with other overarching factors, such as unemployment, underemployment, high or unexpected expenses, lack of transportation, being new to an area, language barriers, high medical costs, or living on a fixed income. In many of these households, one additional factor could trigger homelessness within days without some type of prevention assistance. The most effective focus of prevention assistance entails providing the minimal amount of assistance required to stabilize a household and providing information about available resources in the community.

Category 3 – Homeless Under Other Federal Statutes

Unaccompanied youth, families with children, and youth who are defined as homeless under other federal statutes who do not otherwise qualify as homeless under this definition.

Youth - HUD defines youth who are homeless and families with children who are homeless as those who experience persistent housing instability as evidenced by frequent moves over an extended period of time. This insecure state of living often persists due to chronic disabilities, physical or mental health conditions, substance abuse, post-traumatic stress disorder, or multiple barriers to employment. Approximately 12,000 youth were counted as homeless during the January 2007 point-in-time counts.¹³ Youth become homeless for a variety of reasons, including running away from home, being abandoned by their parents or guardians, being emancipated, or being discharged from foster care. Unaccompanied youth living in shelters or on the streets are at a higher risk for physical and sexual assault, physical illness, anxiety disorders, depression, posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and suicide. Despite the many difficulties they face, a 2005 survey indicated 79% of these youth were attending school on a regular basis.¹⁴ Housing support as well as effective intervention strategies are necessary to prevent and respond to homelessness among this population.

Category 4 – Fleeing or Attempting to Flee Domestic Violence

Individuals and families who are fleeing, or are attempting to flee, domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, stalking, or other dangerous or life-threatening conditions that relate to violence against the individual or a family member.

Domestic Violence - Domestic violence is any emotional, physical, or sexual abuse by a household member, often by a partner. One in four women experience domestic violence throughout their lifetime, with an average of three women a day killed at the hands of a current or former intimate partner. Those who are victims of domestic violence often must wrestle

¹² Abt Associates, et al, Costs Associated With First-Time Homelessness For Families and Individuals, U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, March 23, 2010, ES-I5.

¹³ National Alliance to End Homelessness, Fact Sheet: Youth Homelessness, January 2010, <http://www.endhomelessness.org/library/entry/fact-sheet-youth-homelessness>.

¹⁴ Ibid.

with feelings of fear, loyalty, guilt and shame. Their children often live in fear and are at high risk of becoming abusive adults and/or victims themselves. The following types of interventions are often necessary to help people escape the violence: a domestic violence shelter, vocational programs teaching necessary skills, and concerned persons providing emotional support and guidance.¹⁵

PACIFIC COUNTY BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Description/Faces of Pacific County Homelessness

Pacific County Faces

In accordance with the Washington State Homeless Housing and Assistance Act, counties throughout the state began implementing the annual point-in-time count of people who are homeless in 2006. Implementation of the count occurs each year on a single day in January and includes those who are staying in shelters, unsheltered, or temporarily living with family and friends. Over the years, new strategies have been implemented statewide to improve the accuracy of the counts. For the Pacific County 2013 count, Crisis Support Network went to the streets and knocked on doors to seek out and talk to people who are homeless, resulting in double the numbers of previous years. This increase seems to reflect an increase in the accuracy of the count rather than an increase in the number of people who are homeless in Pacific County; therefore, the 2013 count of 167 people serves as a good baseline for future counts. As reflected in the table below, the statewide count of those sheltered and unsheltered has dropped over the eight years since the Point-in-Time counts and County Homeless Plans were instituted. While the statewide number of people sheltered is much higher than those who remain unsheltered, in Pacific County relatively few people are sheltered due to a lack of emergency housing.

Table 1
Point-in-Time Count of People Who Are Homeless

	Washington State			Pacific County		
Year	Sheltered	Unsheltered	Total	Sheltered	Unsheltered	Total
2006	16,058	5,904	21,962	35	46	81
2007	15,951	6,094	22,045	*	*	*
2008	15,449	6,498	21,947	6	24	30
2009	16,282	6,545	22,827	13	20	33
2010	16,230	6,389	22,619	2	3	5
2011	14,905	5,441	20,346	*	14	14
2012	14,852	5,484	20,336	5	68	73
2013	12,712	5,043	17,755	5	162	167

**Point-in-Time count was not conducted in Pacific County in 2007.*

Many of the Pacific County residents falling under HUD's definition of homeless are living in substandard or overcrowded housing or are imminently at risk of homelessness. In addition to these people, Pacific County also has a segment of people who are literally homeless. According to the 2013 Point-in-Time counts, the county's rate of individuals who are chronically homeless (8.4%) is slightly less than the Washington State average of 10.8% and the 2010 nationwide average of 10%. On the other hand, in a county where 167 people have been identified as homeless, the 2013 Point-in-Time

¹⁵ Crisis Support Network, What is Domestic Violence, <http://crisis-support.org>.

count of 80 families with children considered homeless seems relatively high. This number is confirmed by the one-day school count taken in the fall of 2012, which showed the following numbers of children who are homeless in the various school districts:

- Ilwaco School District – 39
- South Bend School District – 41
- Willapa Valley School District – 3
- Naselle School District - 2
- Raymond School District – data not available

Causes of Homelessness in Pacific County

Poverty in Pacific County

A major contributing factor to behavioral health needs and homelessness in Pacific County is the relatively high rate of people living at or below the poverty line. (See Table 2 below)

Table 2
Rate of People Living at or Below the Poverty Line from 2007-2011

Category	Pacific County	Washington State	National
General	18%	12.5%	14.3%
People over 65	9.9%	7.8%	9.4%
Children under 18	26.3%	16.0%	19.2%

**Data taken from the 2011 American Community Survey presenting an average of data collected from 2007-2011.¹⁶*

Pacific County residents living at or below the poverty line often live in substandard housing, including the following:

- old houses in need of major repair (20% of the housing stock was constructed before 1939)
- housing units without plumbing (80 of the 15,434 occupied units from 2007-2011)
- trailers lacking running water or electricity
- structures with holes in the floor, walls covered in black mold, and full septic tanks that people cannot afford to empty or replace

With a median age of 50 years compared to the statewide median of 37 years, many of the people living in substandard housing are older and unable to do their own home repairs. Additionally, most are living on fixed incomes which leave little funds available for things such as home repair.¹⁷

In addition to living in substandard housing, many of these residents struggle with meeting daily needs and find themselves in the following situations:

- 15.06% (1,414) of households received SNAP benefits (compared to 11.0% statewide and 10.25% nationally)¹⁸
- 20.5% (3,194) of persons under 65 eligible for insurance remain uninsured (compared to 16.1% statewide and 17.7% nationally)¹⁹

Due to the lack of medical insurance, many people accrue unmanageable medical debt and rely on the emergency room, the most expensive form of healthcare, to meet their healthcare needs. Healthcare

¹⁶ U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2011 Data Release, December 2012. The 2011 American Community Survey 5-year data is an average of data collected from 2007 through 2011.

¹⁷ U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2011 Data Release, December 2012. The 2011 American Community Survey 5-year data is an average of data collected from 2007 through 2011.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ U.S. Census Bureau, Small Area Health Insurance Estimates, 2010 (October 2012 release).

Reform taking effect January 2014 will alleviate some of the difficulties accessing insurance; however, those who are homeless traditionally face more barriers to accessing services.

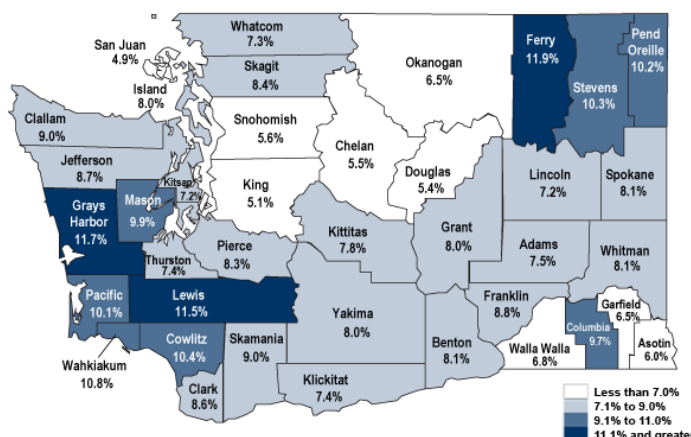
In Pacific County, 47.95% (1,405) of the students received free or reduced school lunches during the 2009-2010 school year, which was more than the state and national averages of 41.33% and 46.62% respectively.²⁰ Some school districts in Pacific County have over 60% of their students currently receiving free or reduced school lunches. According to teachers and others who work with the county's children, many are living with a relative, such as a grandparent, rather than a parent. This is often due to drug and alcohol abuse, mental illness, or incarceration of one or both parents. An average of 20-25 children in Pacific County are in foster care. Currently, there are 14 licensed homes in the county. While 11 of these homes are active and available, only one of these homes is in the south part of the county. Children not placed with relatives often end up in the north part of the county or are placed in a foster home outside of Pacific County.

While many people in Pacific County experience one of the above-mentioned situations, there are a significant number of households dealing with several of these circumstances. For people experiencing these situations, one unexpected major expense could quickly move the household into imminent risk of homelessness.

Increased Unemployment

Located in the southwest corner of Washington State, Pacific County is a rural, isolated community of 20,498 permanent residences spread over 975 square miles. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, the median household income between 2008-2012 was \$40,873, compared to the statewide median of \$59,374.²¹ Pacific County has historically consisted of a resource-based economy focused on timber, seafood, and cranberries, but over the last 30 years it has transitioned to include tourism, retirement, and development sectors. Many of these jobs are seasonal, indicating there may be a need for farm worker assistance or seasonal housing to help people during the off-season. As reported in Figure 3 below, the unemployment rate in Pacific County (10.1%) is much higher than the state (6.8%) and national (7.4%) averages.

Figure 3
Unemployment Rates by County
Not seasonally adjusted, July 2013



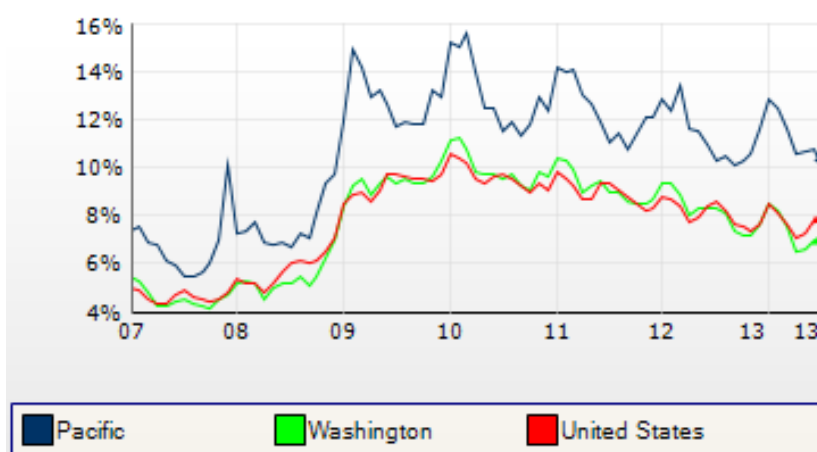
Source: Washington State Employment Security Department

²⁰ National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES), Common Core of Data (CCD), 2009-10 School Universe data.

²¹ U.S. Census Bureau, Pacific County Quickfacts, <http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/53/53049.html>.

Economic trends in Pacific County are different than in most of Washington State. In particular, changes in the economy experienced in the state or the nation generally are not experienced in Pacific County for about two years. As opposed to the trends in much of the state, in Pacific county there are not as many significant gains or losses in jobs. The rate of unemployment remains fairly steady and has always been higher than the state average. It is generally not a question of whether the county's unemployment rate is higher than the state, but rather how much higher is the county's rate. With an economy heavily reliant on tourism, the nationwide recession had a significant impact with fewer people able to afford to travel to the area. Chart 1 below compares Pacific County's rate of unemployment to state and national rates over the course of the last 6 years.

Chart 1
Unemployment Rate Comparison 2007-2013
 Not Seasonally Adjusted



Lack of Affordable Housing

In Washington State, the Fair Market Rent (FMR) for a two-bedroom apartment in 2013 was \$966, which means that a household working 40 hours per week for 52 weeks per year would need to earn \$18.58 per hour in order to avoid paying more than 30% of income on housing. A minimum wage worker, however, earned an hourly wage of \$9.19 per hour. In order to afford that FMR for a two-bedroom apartment, a minimum wage earner must work 81 hours per week for 52 weeks per year or a household must include 2 minimum wage earners working 40 hours per week. The estimated mean wage for a renter in Washington State in 2013 was \$14.91, which means the average renter must work 50 hours per week for 52 weeks per year or a household must include 1.2 workers to make the two bedroom FMR affordable.²²

The FMR for a two-bedroom apartment in Pacific County in 2013 was \$748, which means the hourly wage necessary to afford the FMR was \$14.38. At this FMR, a household earning the minimum wage of \$9.19 per hour must include 1.6 full-time workers to afford a two-bedroom apartment. From 2007-2011, 26% of total households in Pacific County were renter households. The estimated mean renter hourly wage in 2013 was \$6.81; a wage that could afford a rent of \$354 per month. At this wage, a household must include 2.1 full-time workers in order to afford a two-bedroom apartment at the

²² US Department of Housing and Urban Development, FY 2014 Fair Market Rent Documentation System, September 2013, http://www.huduser.org/portal/datasets/fmr/fmrs/FY2014_code/2014summary.odn.

county's FMR.²³ In October 2013, HUD decreased the FMR for a two bedroom unit in Pacific County to \$695, which will influence the amount of assistance people can receive through housing vouchers in 2014 but may or may not result in reduced local rental rates that are largely driven by market demand.

With a higher than average percent of the population being low income, the need for affordable rental housing is great. Unfortunately, the inventory of affordable rental property that is in livable condition is extremely limited. Funding to develop new affordable housing has been dramatically reduced over the past several years. Accessing these funds is extremely competitive and often requires matching funds that simply are not available. In addition to the overall lack of affordable housing, there are also challenges related to financial assistance to those who may qualify. Pacific County has some housing assistance available to people; however, it is not sufficient to meet the substantial need. As with many other programs, the number of housing vouchers available to assist people in need has decreased over the years due to budget cuts and sequestration. The county is also lacking any emergency shelter, which would assist people that find themselves literally homeless and in need of time to arrange for a more permanent solution. Many people who are struggling in other areas of the state come to Pacific County with the impression that rent is lower and therefore more affordable; however, given the circumstances described above, this is a false perception that people realize quickly.

Cost of Homelessness in Pacific County

Potential to Reduce Costs by Providing Housing and Services

Some people who are homeless are also frequent users of correctional and psychiatric facilities because they do not get the services they need to prevent incarceration or hospitalization. In 2010, the nightly cost to house a person in the State Correctional Facility was \$97.20 (\$35,478 annually)²⁴ and in the Washington State Inpatient Mental Hospital it was \$596.00 (\$217,540 annually).²⁵ In 2013, 5% of the people in jail in Pacific County were homeless and the nightly cost per person was \$65.00 (\$23,725 annually), with an average stay of 10-15 days.

In comparison to the costs noted above, the State estimates annual costs for providing supportive housing ranges from a low of \$3,000 for less intensive services to \$11,000 for people who have been homeless for long periods of time and need intensive, long-term support. The Federal Plan to End Homelessness includes national studies that have shown providing supportive housing to people who are chronically homeless results in an average public cost reduction of \$5,731 per month, or 71%.²⁶ In addition, supportive housing has proven to be successful in reducing the number of days people who are homeless are incarcerated in jail by 38%, incarcerated in state correctional facilities by 85%, and reduced the cost of inpatient psychiatric care by 49%. Supportive services can include an array of services, including the following: health care, mental health treatment, alcohol and other substance abuse services, child care services, case management services, counseling, supervision, education, job training, and other services essential for achieving and maintaining independent living.

Given these numbers, public institutions are recognizing the benefit of developing protocols so that people who are homeless are not released onto the street, where they often repeat the cycle for lack of

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Department of Corrections, DOC Institutional Costs, Average Daily Population (ADP), and Cost per Offender per Day, October 2012, <http://www.doc.wa.gov/search/results.asp?search=Costs>.

²⁵ Information about Eastern State Hospital, August 2010, <http://www.dshs.wa.gov/mhsystems/eshinformation.shtml>.

²⁶ Tools for Identifying High-Cost, High-Need Homeless Persons, June 2010, Daniel Flaming, Michael Matsunaga, Patrick Burns, Gerald Sumner, Manuel H. Moreno, Halil Toros, pg. 3.

care. Investing in supportive housing services that would prevent people from becoming homeless and reduce the use of these expensive institutional services would be a more efficient use of financial resources.

Current Pacific County Homeless System

Needs

A recent survey conducted on the south end of the county revealed that some of the concerns faced by those living in low income situations include: choosing between necessary bills, sharing housing with another household, moving often or experiencing homelessness, affording rent and electric bills, and finding living wage jobs. Given this information and concern for the growing issue of homelessness and its impact on the community's residents, a coalition of agencies, service groups, churches, community coalitions, and community representatives throughout Pacific County came together to identify the primary needs of those who are homeless or at-risk of homelessness and possible strategies to begin to more effectively address these needs. The needs and potential strategies identified can be categorized as follows:

Funding: Resources are scarce. With reductions or cuts in state and federal funding for housing and homeless programs, there is great need for increased revenue through grants and new funding sources.

Housing: A lack of living wage jobs, a high incidence of mental illness and drug abuse, and a lack of low-income housing makes finding and maintaining permanent housing difficult for many in Pacific County. People living in low-income situations throughout the county are experiencing housing instability: moving often between friends and family; spending nights in cars, on the streets, or in tents; living in substandard housing such as houses filled with mold, buildings in disrepair, and no utilities. Many people are one health or tragic incident away from losing their current housing. Repair of old houses, an increase of low-income housing, rapid rehousing combined with temporary housing subsidies, and emergency housing are needed to catch people at the different levels at which they find themselves. With increased housing stability, in addition to other supportive services, people may be able to move toward permanent, self-supported housing.

Person-centered Support: People seek help from various organizations or groups until they happen upon the one that is equipped to help them meet their particular need. Each organization has its own method of evaluating the person's circumstances and deciding which of their services they could offer. Often those people who are more assertive about seeking assistance, or are familiar with how to access services, are the first to be served, while those who are most vulnerable or in immediate need might be overlooked. A person-centered approach that included an easy, single access point and a coordinated case management system would improve a person's ability to navigate resources, help build a sense of a compassionate community, and empower the person to determine their own needs and priorities. It would create a system in which those in need would have a single point of contact that could provide more long term, individually tailored support for an individual or family, rather than simply providing a referral with little or no follow-up.

Resource Collaboration/Coordination: There are currently several vital resources in the county but little coordination among them. People in need often do not know which agency to go to for their need and the various service providers do not always know where to refer them to. Often people will seek duplicate help from different organizations who do not have a coordinated record of support. The development, maintenance, and active use of a comprehensive resource list for county services would

allow agencies and individuals to more efficiently and effectively access appropriate resources. This, in combination with comprehensive case-management, would help avoid duplication of services.

Supportive Services: When people are in a more stable housing environment they are better able to access and benefit from other supportive services. The needs survey, as well as the conversation with partners, revealed that a high rate of mental illness, a high rate of drug abuse, a lack of an adequate food supply, and a lack of full-time, year-round employment are struggles that individuals and families face. Supportive services, such as mental health services, drug and alcohol prevention and recovery programs, job skills training, and transportation support, are important steps toward helping people achieve independence and ongoing success.

Resources

The greatest strength of Pacific County is the many dedicated community members and organizations engaging in providing and advocating for services to support those who are homeless or at-risk of homelessness. Several community coalitions have formed to improve the health of the people and communities in this county. There are also several private entities providing services and resources, such as food, supplies, clothing, etc.

Funding: A variety of grants have been available for counties to fund homeless programs, including the Consolidated Homeless Grant (CHG), Housing and Essential Needs (HEN), and the Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG). The Consolidated Homeless Grant (CHG) is a combination of state homeless resources into a single grant available to county governments and other designated entities to support housing programs focused on preventing homelessness and rapidly re-housing households who are unsheltered. The Housing and Essential Needs (HEN) Program was administered by the Department of Commerce through a network of homeless and housing partners in order to provide non-cash housing and other assistance for some recipients of Medicaid. The Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG) was funded by the HUD HEARTH Act in order to provide homelessness prevention assistance to households who would otherwise become homeless and to rapidly re-house persons who are experiencing homelessness.

Additional funding has come from the local portion of the document recording fees. In Pacific County, the document recording fee funds designated for affordable housing have reduced steadily from \$36,719 in 2008 to \$28,705 in 2012, excluding a \$2,000 increase after 2011 due to the increase in the percent per recorded document directed to these funds. On the other hand, the amount directed to ending homelessness has increased from \$83,580 in 2008 to \$129,604 in 2012. Annually, recommendations for the use of these funds are made by the Joint Pacific County Housing Authority to the Board of County Commissioners. These funds have been used for predevelopment and development of new and existing low income housing, supportive housing services, emergency housing assistance, and as the matching funds for Crisis Support Network's (CSN) Community Transformation Grant.

While Pacific County does have one representative from Crisis Support Network (CSN) on the Balance of State Continuum of Care (CoC), this county does not currently receive CoC funds. New grants were not added to the CoC in 2013 due to limited federal funding and the recent sequester. CoC funds might be a resource for Pacific County projects in the future, especially if a homeless task force is formed to oversee the homeless plan implementation and progress.

Some funding changes have been made for 2014-2015. Pacific County will not receive ESG funds, as these funds were reduced and divided among the 13 largest counties in the State. Instead, smaller

counties like Pacific County were given more CHG funds. HEN was also consolidated into CHG, leaving Pacific County's primary sources of funding as the CHG and the local portion of the document recording fees. The consolidation of funding sources was intended to reduce the overhead required to manage the funds received. Ending Family Homelessness (EFH) is another fund available to counties in the 2014-2015 grant cycle that must be matched with local fund sources and be used to serve TANF families within a rapid re-housing and progressive engagement program model. Due to the small amount of EFH funding in Pacific County, the local match has been waived.

These various forms of federal, state, and local funding have been administered by the Joint Pacific County Housing Authority (JPCHA), Crisis Support Network (CSN), and Coastal Community Action Program (CCAP). The table below summarizes the financial resources available from 2012-2015, the uses of these resources, and the recipients of these funds.

Table 3
Pacific County Financial Resources

Fund Source	Recipient(s)	Fundable Activities	2012-2013	2014-2015
Consolidated Homeless Grant (CHG)	Crisis Support Network (CSN)	Rent assistance, shelter, administration, case management, and data collection	\$67,183	\$118,597 (\$17,457 set aside for TANF families' rent assistance and case management; up to \$14,449 additional funding available 2 nd year based on performance)
Housing and Essential Needs (HEN)	Crisis Support Network (CSN)			\$75,103 through June 30, 2014 (incorporated in CHG contract; additional funds available July 2014)
Local Funds (County portion of document recording fees)	Joint Pacific County Housing Authority (JPCHA)	Supportive housing services, predevelopment and development fees for new or preservation of existing low income housing, and emergency shelter	2012 - \$124,998 2013 - \$246,500	2014 - \$240,000
	Crisis Support Network (CSN)	Matching funds for CHG	2012 - \$28,500 2013 - \$28,500	2014 - \$43,346
	Peninsula Poverty Response (PPR)	Funding to support implementation of the 10 Year Plan	2012 - \$0 2013 - \$0	2014 - \$20,000

Housing:

Rental Assistance - Pacific County has a few housing resources managed by several different organizations. Crisis Support Network (CSN) provides rental assistance through the Consolidated Homeless Grant (CHG) and the Housing and Essential Needs (HEN) funds. In 2013, CSN provided assistance to 74 clients using HEN funds and 161 individuals or 71 households using CHG funds. The Joint Pacific County Housing Authority (JPCHA) used \$20,000 in 2013 on each end of Pacific County to assist families with short-term or one-time rental assistance, motel vouchers, and deposit assistance. In that year, JPCHA assisted 10 families in north county and 9 families in south county with these funds.

Permanent Housing – Since 2012 CSN has assisted 34 households, or 79 individuals, with the Domestic Violence Housing First Grant through the Gates Foundation. JPCHA provided 94 people \$20,000 of support through Housing Choice Vouchers in 2013, which supports permanent affordable housing and is funded through the local document recording fees. In addition to this support, JPCHA manages the following permanent housing facilities on the north end of Pacific County:

- Pacific Pearl – 15 units of subsidized affordable housing with a preference for those who are victims of domestic violence
- Raymond Eagles – 16 affordable housing units with some subsidies attached

In 2013, 16 beds (2 with minors) were provided through the Raymond Eagles and 29 beds with minors were provided through the Pacific Pearl. Since 2010, CSN has provided supportive services to 42 families with permanent supportive housing at the Pacific Pearl.

Emergency Housing Support – As there is no general emergency shelter in Pacific County, service providers help people in need of emergency housing by providing a few nights in a motel. St. Vincent DePaul and Peninsula FISH (Friends in Service to Him) also assist people with a night or two in a motel when funds are available. Local ministerial associations and individual churches also help people with nights in a motel. People can sometimes piece together up to a week in a motel while they try to arrange for a more permanent solution. There is one domestic violence shelter in Pacific County, which is managed by CSN. This shelter provided emergency housing and safety for 11 adults and 8 children in 2013. Additionally, in 2013 CSN provided motel vouchers to 13 adults and 2 children who have experienced domestic violence. In addition, both CSN and JPCHA provided short-term emergency housing using the County's document recording fees as noted in the table above.

Resource Collaboration/Coordination: Service providers throughout the county link together in a variety of ways, including referrals, consulting, and serving on community coalitions. While several providers offer similar housing resources, efforts are being made to better coordinate and advertise available resources. WellSpring Community Action Network and Willapa Community Action Network are coalitions of community members, service providers, schools, public officials, and police officers on the south and north ends of the county respectively. The people and agencies in these coalitions share resources and work together to offer drug prevention events, parenting classes, prescription takeback events, and more. In addition, Peninsula Poverty Response (PPR) convened on the Long Beach Peninsula in 2012 to specifically address the needs caused by high levels of poverty in the community. PPR is working to connect community members, service providers, and those experiencing poverty through three major projects: the development of a unified, comprehensive resource guide, the first-ever Project Homeless Connect in the county, and the development of a resource center/emergency shelter.

Supportive Services: In Pacific County there are many groups committed to improving the community by offering people help with housing repairs, food resources, drug and alcohol treatment, and mental health services. Those who own their own home can seek building repair assistance through the non-profit group, Rebuilding Together. There are several food banks, feeding programs, backpack programs, and food box providers throughout the county. The county has two rehab centers helping people move out of addiction. Willapa Behavioral Health (WBH) offers service to those dealing with mental illness and the National Alliance for Mental Illness (NAMI) is actively offering support groups and educational opportunities. CSN offers support to those experiencing domestic violence. The Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) oversees food stamps, work source, and work first programs. In addition, the Coastal Community Action Program (CCAP) provides an array of support services.

Service Gaps

Pacific County offers a variety support for those in need through the many service providers, community groups, and concerned citizens working to respond. A major challenge is the lack of a coordinated homeless system. In addition, there is a need to gather feedback from those who are accessing services to assure the services are responsive to people's needs and to develop emergency housing resources for those who are homeless. In summary, the major gaps in services identified by the housing conversation partners include the following:

- Coordinated Collaboration
- Resource Connection
- Comprehensive Needs Assessment
- General Case Management
- Emergency Housing
- Affordable Rental Housing

Service Priorities

Given the gaps between identified needs and resources currently available, the housing conversation partners identified the following priorities for the Pacific County homeless plan:

- Emergency Housing
- Resource Guide
- County Wide Coordination
- Feedback from People Living in Poverty
- Mental Health Services
- Emergency Management
- Childcare
- Funding

While the HEARTH Act best practices discourages developing a shelter-centered system, in a county without one general emergency shelter this could be a critical element of short-term, immediate support in a comprehensive system of support. Currently people are forced to solicit help in the form of motel vouchers from a variety of sources in order to cover a few days to a week. This is an expensive, ineffective strategy when the goal is to get people into long-term, affordable housing. The short stay at a hotel does not provide time to find a more permanent solution, nor does it provide the support needed to assure people can maintain their housing. An emergency shelter that serves as a “gateway” to the continuum of services available is a much needed resource in Pacific County. The next three priorities identified address the importance of developing coordination of resources based on input from people in need of supportive services. In addition to these first four priorities, the county needs to focus on providing supportive services to those at-risk of homelessness and on developing more funding streams to support the work. These priorities guided the development of the strategic plan that follows.

PACIFIC COUNTY STRATEGIC PLAN TO REDUCE HOMELESSNESS

Development of the Pacific County 10 Year Plan

The Pacific County Board of Commissioners formed the Pacific County Housing Authority in 1975 to administer the county's Section-8 Rental Assistance Program. Since 1994 the Pacific County Housing Authority has ceased functioning and the county's Section-8 housing program has been administered by the Longview Housing Authority in Cowlitz County. In order to improve housing activities in the county, in 2004 the County and its four cities (Ilwaco, Long Beach, South Bend, and Raymond) established the Joint Pacific County Housing Authority (JPCHA), which is administered by the Longview Housing Authority. In response to the 2005 Homeless Housing and Assistance Act (ESSHB 2163), Pacific County and the JPCHA developed the Pacific County 10 Year Plan to Reduce Homelessness, which was adopted in June 2006 by the Board of Commissioners. The purpose of the plan was to establish priority programs targeted to reduce homelessness in Pacific County by 50% by 2015. *Strategies* included:

- increasing the number of transitional housing units for families experiencing homelessness
- expanding the housing rehab program for those living in substandard housing
- developing job training programs to increase incomes for families
- increasing supportive services for those transitioning from institutions, such as treatment programs and jails
- expanding emergency assistance programs to assist with bills, prescriptions, etc.
- developing an emergency shelter for individuals who are homeless
- distributing a resource directory throughout the area
- improving medical and mental health assistance and accessibility
- reducing youth homelessness by providing supportive housing, increasing job skills training, and decreasing drug use among the population
- improving data collection systems by strengthening point-in-time counts, collecting service provider data, and overseeing the development of the 10 year plan

In Pacific County there are many organizations working on pieces of the puzzle to reduce homelessness and improve qualities of life. Since the implementation of the Homeless Housing and Assistance Act began in 2006, JPCHA and Crisis Support Network (CSN) have both been administering housing support vouchers and managing low-income housing programs, as well as implementing the required Point-in-Time Count of people who are homeless. Progress has been made on the goal of improving the Point-in-Time counts, as CSN doubled the count in 2013 by changing the counting methods used. Throughout Pacific County there are several community groups that work to strengthen communities by assisting people with food and tangible goods, developing a sense of community concern, compiling resource guides, conducting needs surveys, and developing drug and alcohol prevention programs for youth. While there is still no emergency shelter in Pacific County, there is emergency short-term housing money available from the County's document recording fees, which is administered by the Joint Pacific County Housing Authority (JPCHA) and Crisis Support Network (CSN). Progress has also been made in mobilizing the community around this need, as is evident in the strong community coalitions that are partnering with social service and housing related agencies throughout the county to address these needs. In addition to the need for additional housing services, there is also great need in Pacific County for increased coordination among the different existing resources. Currently, services and efforts are often duplicated and people have difficulty navigating those that are offered. A more coordinated system to address homelessness would assure the limited resources available are used efficiently and effectively.

Keeping in mind the need for improved coordination and collaboration as well as the efficient use of resources, the current update of Pacific County's 10 Year Plan to Reduce Homelessness has brought many partners throughout the county into planning conversations. As the lead agency involved in the plan update, CSN identified Peninsula Poverty Response (PPR) to lead these conversations and develop the update. As a coalition of service providers, agencies, churches, individuals, and other non-profit organizations, PPR was poised to call people to the table and into partnership. Although PPR is a south county-based coalition, its partner agencies often represent both ends of the county. In addition, there was an effort to invite and include other north county partners into the conversations. This plan update has involved several conversations with these partners and other community members. The first priority for the planning partners is the development of a Homeless Plan Task Force, as Pacific County does not currently have a lead group designated to oversee the implementation of the homeless plan and ensure the coordination of efforts by the many community partners.

Other than the heavy emphasis on county-wide coordination and collaboration, many of the strategies in this update are consistent with the original plan, as there is more progress that can be made. In particular, adding an emergency shelter option into the system of care remains a primary goal of this updated plan. On the other hand, as best practices have moved away from supporting transitional housing, this update reflects that change by emphasizing rapid re-housing, permanent supportive housing, and preventative intervention. In addition to meeting the legislative requirement for the development and maintenance of a homeless plan, this *plan update aims* to:

- Strengthen collaboration and coordination among community members and organizations in order to increase the effectiveness of efforts and the efficient use of resources
- Guide an intentionally comprehensive approach in order to support people as they move out of homelessness
- Develop a person-centered homeless system aimed to address people's unique needs and utilize their individual assets
- Enhance the monitoring and data collection process in order to better evaluate progress toward the goal of reducing homeless in Pacific County by 50% by 2015

Strategy 1 Fully implement and sustain a centralized and coordinated Point of Entry into homeless housing and prevention services

Activities

- Develop policies and implement a centralized intake, assessment, and referral system.
- Prioritize people for services by housing status and by using a vulnerability index
- Provide coordinated case management for people accessing homeless services using a progressive engagement model
- Implement monthly community case conferencing of homeless service providers
- Maintain distribute a county-wide Comprehensive Resource Guide to services and conduct outreach presentations to stakeholders (faith community, social service providers, schools, etc.) at least quarterly.
- Implement a county-wide data management system to track client data in support of service delivery, communication between providers, and reporting requirements
- Develop system for faith community to pool and distribute housing assistance

Outcomes

- Reduced duplication of services from homeless service providers
- Increased leveraging of resources across the county
- Increased number of people receiving appropriate housing services
- Improved community-wide knowledge of homeless resources and providers

A centralized and coordinated entry creates a common way to access services and quickly link people to appropriate resources.

Strategy 2 Provide emergency/interim housing and supportive services for people who are temporarily homeless and waiting for permanent housing

Activities

- Support Peninsula Poverty Response to coordinate and implement the Overnight Winter Lodging (OWL) program during the winter months.
- Develop local capacity of temporary (0-3 months) housing units for individuals/families experiencing homelessness to use while waiting for permanent housing.
- Provide short-term emergency housing for north and south Pacific County
- Offer property management services to local landlords willing to rent to homeless individuals/families.
- Support DV providers to deliver short term emergency housing for victims of Domestic Violence
- Advocate for local development of state funded interim housing options (i.e. Oxford House) for individuals exiting substance use treatment

Outcomes

- Families with children have access year-round to immediate sheltering
- Vulnerable elderly and medically fragile people who are homeless are safely housed with supportive services
- Individuals who are homeless receive housing with appropriate supportive services
- Youth who are homeless have access to safe housing

Interim housing in the form of emergency shelter is an important addition to the homeless system, as the current housing stock and system are unable to meet the demand for immediate housing for all. This will allow people time to find more permanent housing.

Strategy 3 Move people who are homeless rapidly into permanent housing when possible

Activities

- Develop a system of Rapid Re-housing moving people quickly into permanent housing
- Ensure an adequate supply of rental subsidies is available to support obtaining housing as rapidly as possible
- Provide supportive services using progressing engagement to help people sustain their housing
- Provide housing counseling, problem solving, and search assistance

Outcomes

- Shorten the time people spend on the street, in cars, or in other unsafe situations
- Shorten the time it takes to get people back into permanent housing
- Increased availability of housing with supportive services for people who cycle in and out of homelessness
- Reduced number of people who return to homelessness

Rapid Re-housing is the primary tool communities can use to drive down the numbers of people experiencing homelessness. It is a cost-effective strategy that quickly re-houses individuals and families who have become homeless by helping them locate and secure housing with short-term rental assistance and follow up case management.

Strategy 4 Provide permanent supportive housing designed to meet the long term needs of individuals and families who have been chronically homeless

Activities

- Expand the supply of permanent supportive housing units using a scattered site model utilizing existing rentals.
- Support new construction to expand supply of permanent supported housing stock
- Advocate for passage of 1/10 of 1% Sales Tax and other new revenue sources to fund supportive housing for people with mental illness
- Implement an effective outreach model engaging those who are chronically homeless
- Integrate primary and behavioral health care services with housing assistance services
- Improve discharge planning with hospitals, psychiatric facilities, jails, and prisons to connect people with housing prior to discharge
- Support the implementation of a veteran's housing assistance program

Outcomes

- Reduction in chronic homelessness
- Decreased use of psychiatric facilities, jails, and state prisons
- Increased community safety
- Increased stock of permanent supported housing units

Permanent Supportive Housing is housing with subsidies coupled with supportive services.

Chronic Homelessness involves either long-term or repeated bouts of homelessness coupled with a disability.

Housing First provides people who are homeless with immediate access to housing and offers supports to sustain their housing. Treatment for mental illness and/or chemical addiction is not a precondition, but robust services and assertive engagement are an integral part of the housing.

Strategy 5 Provide intervention to prevent individuals and families from becoming homeless

Activities

- Implement a Targeted Prevention approach when providing financial assistance to people at risk of becoming homeless
- Provide case management support to help people sustain housing
- Provide education and training assisting tenants with financial literacy, renter education, and housing advocacy
- Develop a landlord education and incentive program and a list of participating landlords
- Provide financial support to help maintain existing low income housing stock to prevent eviction or displacement

***Targeted Prevention** is prioritizing households experiencing the most imminent housing crisis who would become homeless without the receipt of assistance.*

Outcomes

- Reduced number of people who enter the homeless service system
- Increased income and cost saving to landlords
- People at risk of homelessness are able to sustain housing

Strategy 6 Increase economic security and reduce financial vulnerability

Activities

- Increase supported employment opportunities for people in substance abuse and mental health treatment programs and veterans with disabilities
- Improve access to work support with strategies including transportation, child care, child support, domestic violence, criminal justice history, disabling conditions
- Provide services that help households maximize their income (e.g. utility assistance, transportation assistance, and other services) in order to offset housing costs
- Increase access to and awareness of supportive services available to reduce the housing cost burden (e.g. healthcare, food, utilities, prescription assistance)

*Providing services to help people increase their **workforce skills**, increase their income, or maximize the use of their income are most effective in stabilizing a household.*

Outcomes

- Increased family income
- Increased number of households with living wage jobs
- Increased ability to sustain housing for households with very low incomes

Strategy 7 Provide collaborative leadership and partnerships to prevent and end homelessness and to ensure efficient and effective implementation of the 10-year plan to reduce homelessness.

Activities

- Coordinate with housing, human services, and other key agencies to support implementation of the 10-year plan.
- Strengthen community coalitions aimed at building community and reducing homelessness
- Coordinate community planning, needs assessments, and funding priorities within the network
- Coordinate implementation of the annual Point-in-Time Count of people who are homeless
- Promote public awareness and advocacy regarding homelessness
- Engage the faith based and existing volunteer groups to provide a network of peer and community support
- Engage those who are homeless in all stages of planning and service implementation
- Implement annual Project Homeless Connect Events

*In order to accomplish the ambitious goal of reducing poverty, we need **strong leadership and a shared vision** among private citizens, public officials, business owners, nonprofits, faith-based organizations, and people who are homeless.*

Outcomes

- Quarterly agency participation in community coalitions
- People who are homeless or were formerly homeless participate in finding solutions to ending homelessness
- Increased community response and improved community health