

A ROOF OVER EVERY HEAD: REVITALIZING THE HOMELESS CRISIS RESPONSE SYSTEM IN KING COUNTY

Vision: Reduce the number of families and individuals living on the streets of King County and re-engage the community in short- and long-term solutions to reach our collective goal of ending homelessness.

Background: Over the last eight years the Ten-Year Plan to End Homelessness in King County has successfully ended homelessness for thousands of individuals. A national leader in this effort, we have developed more than 5,000 units of new housing, launched coordinated entry systems to ease access to services for people who become homeless, and prevented thousands from ever entering the homeless system.

Despite this progress, the 2013 One Night Count found over 2,700 individuals and members of families struggling to survive without shelter in King County (70% are in Seattle). The number of people living on the street or in places not meant for human habitation is growing. Shelter programs are routinely operating at or above their maximum capacity. Data from Family Housing Connection shows that families who are on the street tonight will have to wait months for an emergency shelter opening. This presents significant health and safety concerns and is simply not acceptable in a community of our resources, creativity and compassion. We can and must do better for the most vulnerable members of our community.

Problem:

- The number of people living on the street or in a place not meant for human habitation in King County remains high;
- The Great Recession and Federal Budget Sequestration have increased the number of people living on the edge and reduced the availability of resources to adequately respond;
- Our system does not have existing capacity to move people quickly from the street to shelter or from shelter to housing;
- We have been unable to dedicate significant new resources to quickly moving people off the streets or to support the health and safety needs of people struggling to survive on the streets;
- The successes of the Ten-Year Plan are being undercut by the broad and persistent concern for people who are living on the streets.

Solution: We have emergency plans for earthquakes, hurricanes, floods, and other disasters. Our existing system is at capacity and doesn't have the resources to respond when a family or individual becomes homeless. We are calling upon public and private partners to revitalize our crisis response - our emergency plan - for people who become homeless.

At this point in the Ten-Year Plan it is time to accelerate our strategies, increase our focus on moving people off the streets, and aggressively work to lower the number of people trying to survive outside.

The Roof Over Every Head Initiative will mobilize existing and new resources to move 1,000 people off the streets by summer 2014. At the same time we will engage a diverse group of stakeholders to revitalize the Crisis Response System and significantly reduce the number of people staying outdoors. This effort will support and bolster ongoing systems change activities

Nan Roman
Keynote Address
2013 National Conference
on Ending Homelessness

"Far from abandoning the front door of homelessness, we need to make it a whole lot better. If homelessness is going to be shorter, short term crisis housing or shelter is exactly where the action will be.

We have often said that shelter is not the solution to homelessness: I have said it myself. But in fact, if we do a good job we can make the crisis system shelter the solution for homelessness.

Most people who enter shelter do leave homelessness and do not come back; and if we had good shelter, that could be an even higher percentage. If we had a crisis system that could actually provide people with crisis services -- that had some tools for diversion, mediation with landlords or family members, rapid rehousing, service linkage, critical time intervention, and permanent supportive housing placement -- it really could be the place where homelessness was ended.

Shelters need to be nicer. The crisis system needs the tools to solve the problem."



COMMITTEE TO
END HOMELESSNESS
KING COUNTY

Recommendation: The Governing Board of the Committee to End Homelessness launch an initiative to significantly reduce the number of people living on the street in King County through the *Roof Over Every Head Initiative* and the development of a comprehensive Crisis Response System.

PHASE 1: THE ROOF OVER EVERY HEAD INITIATIVE

The Roof Over Every Head Initiative will be an immediate response that maximizes existing resources and mobilizes new funding (amount to be determined) to move 1,000 people off the streets by summer 2014. We believe that setting an ambitious target will help accelerate the good work happening in our CEH Investment priorities, leverage investments included in 2014 City of Seattle budget, and be a catalyst for new funding to support this important work.

To achieve these ambitious goals, investments will be results-driven and directed toward strategies that have been highly effective locally and nationally. Strategies **may** include:

- ▶ Prevent homelessness for **350** people seeking shelter through targeted diversion programs that help them identify immediate alternate housing arrangements.
- ▶ Work with local governments, community based organizations, and faith groups to add **60** low-cost shelter beds for families and link them to stable housing through the Rapid Rehousing Pilot.
- ▶ Maintain the nearly **500** existing winter shelter beds and open **35** additional winter shelter beds outside Seattle.
- ▶ Enhance shelter capacity throughout the year by reducing the length of time people stay before moving to stable housing and transitioning **50** long-term stayers into permanent housing, freeing up shelter beds for others.
- ▶ Ensure support for **176** units of permanent housing scheduled to open by April 2014.
- ▶ Increase targeted outreach, mental health services, and case management for **500** people living outside.
- ▶ Rapidly return **250** people experiencing homelessness to stable housing.
- ▶ Expand rental subsidies and shelter for **20** young adults.
- ▶ Increase market rate housing placements by **20%** through expansion of the Landlord Liaison Project.

PHASE 2: REVITALIZING THE CRISIS RESPONSE SYSTEM

This phase will focus on longer-term strategies to significantly reduce the number of people living outside. A diverse group of stakeholders will form a time-limited Implementation Team which will be data-driven and build on current work happening across the system. It will draw on the recommendations outlined in the Single Adult Shelter Task Force Report and include information gleaned from the recent system mapping work and the performance calculator.

Proposed Process for Crisis Response Implementation Team:

- ▶ Launch a CEH Investment Priority that focuses on Crisis Response. The effort will incorporate critical elements of the single adult investment priority which will sunset as the new priority is launched.
- ▶ The work will be co-chaired by CEH Governing Board Members.
- ▶ United Way of King County will sponsor and staff the investment priority.
- ▶ The Implementation Team will include business leaders, funders, agencies, and advocates. It will be important to include leaders who haven't been involved in CEH planning to provide a new perspective on the work.
- ▶ The Implementation Team will be charged with researching and developing action plans for the following:
 - ✓ New strategies such as lower-cost housing models, alternatives to shelter and enhanced roles for the faith community and community volunteers;
 - ✓ Policy changes that are needed to ensure everyone has a roof over head;
 - ✓ Strategies that are needed to move people off the street and into stable housing;
 - ✓ Reducing unnecessary shelter placement - Seattle's shelters are often used as a housing solution for institutions or communities without housing solutions of their own; often, individuals are released from the criminal justice and social service systems without sufficient housing support;
 - ✓ Assessment of current funding that can be used to revitalize the existing crisis response elements in the community as well as an assessment of new funding needed to achieve our goals;
 - ✓ New financing tools like Social Impact Bonds (SIB) or, Pay For Success Bonds, could help propel innovation. A SIB is a contract with the public sector, whereby it pays for better social outcomes in certain areas and passes on part of the savings achieved to an investor.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT CRISIS RESPONSE SYSTEM PROPOSAL

2012 UNSHELTERED RATES FROM HUD 10 AREAS WITH HIGHEST SHELTERING RATES

Why is this effort needed?

The 2013 One Night Count found over 2,700 individuals and members of families struggling to survive without shelter in Seattle/King County. The number of people living on the street or in places not meant for human habitation is growing. The chart on the right compares our sheltering rate to that of other cities.

What is the goal of this effort?

There are three goals for this effort. First, significantly reduce the number of families and individuals living on the streets of Seattle and King County. Second, highlight and accelerate current efforts to house these individuals. Third, re-engage the community in finding both short and long-term solutions to reach our collective goal of ending homelessness.

Where does the number 1,000 come from?

Moving 1,000 people off the street by summer 2014 is a working target. It is informed by efforts that are currently planned for 2014 and work that could be expanded or accelerated. We believe that setting an ambitious target will help accelerate the good work happening in our CEH Investment priorities, leverage investments included in 2014 City of Seattle budget, and be a catalyst for new funding to support this important work.

What is different about this effort?

The Roof Over Every Head Initiative and revitalization of the Crisis Response System will work to address the immediate needs of people living on the streets. While homeless advocates have raised this issue in the past, to date the Ten-Year Plan has not focused on this population. We will engage a diverse group of stakeholders to discuss and debate a variety of strategies before taking any off the table. These strategies may include but are not limited to: new rapid rehousing resources; new temporary shelter, 24-hour shelter; support for people living in their cars; support for people living in tents; and increasing affordable housing options.

What will be the impact of the Crisis Response Work?

The impact of the Crisis Response work will be to significantly reduce the number of people staying outside or in places not meant for human habitation. Initially by focusing on moving 1,000 individuals off the streets by summer 2014 and then through the transformation of the crisis response system.

Where will the housing or shelter come from?

We anticipate that this effort will require a variety of different housing options including market rate, emergency shelter, and subsidized housing. By leveraging programs like Landlord Liaison Project and engaging the faith community we believe we can develop new housing options. The budget for both phases may include funding for additional emergency shelter and new housing models.

How much will it cost to implement this proposal?

We are in the process of determining the cost for each phase. We anticipate having a budget for Phase 1 by early November. The budget for Phase 2 will be included in the Crisis Response Plan developed by the Implementation Team.

How will this end homelessness?

Ending homelessness means that we can help people right away if they do become homeless, and get them back to stability. Ending homelessness means not letting people suffer, not letting people languish. Because the faster we can act, the better we can break someone's fall. The Roof Over Every Head Initiative will create the system we need to be effective in responding to individuals life crises.

Continuum of Care District	Total Homeless	Total Unsheltered	Sheltering Rate
Boston CoC	5,607	193	96.6%
New York City CoC	56,672	3,262	94.2%
Philadelphia CoC	5,780	500	91.3%
District of Columbia CoC	6,954	679	90.2%
Metropolitan Denver Homeless Initiative	6,358	964	84.8%
Miami/Dade County CoC	3,976	868	78.2%
Chicago CoC	6,710	1,722	74.3%
Phoenix/MESA/Maricopa County Regional CoC	6,485	1,749	73%
Seattle/King County CoC	8,899	2,618	70.6%
Honolulu CoC	4,353	1,318	69.7%

For more information on this effort, please contact: Vince Matulionis - Vmatulionis@uwkc.org,
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