



City of Seattle
Human Services Department

MEMORANDUM

DATE: May 18, 2011

TO: Councilmember Nick Licata, Chair
Seattle City Council Housing, Human Services, Health and Culture Committee

Sally Bagshaw, Councilmember
Tim Burgess, Councilmember
Sally Clark, Councilmember

FROM: Dannette R. Smith, Director
Human Services Department

RE: Response to SLI 65-3-A-2: Review of City of Seattle Funded Shelters

Please find attached to this memorandum, a report prepared by the Seattle Human Services Department (HSD) in response to SLI 65-3-A-2 reviewing City of Seattle funded shelter programs. The document describes HSD's investments in shelter, the populations served by these programs, services provided by contractors, program outcomes, shelter occupancy, and methods used to report data into the Safe Harbors Homeless Management Information System (HMIS).

In addition, this memo transmits HSD's plan for an inclusive process to create a framework for future investments in emergency shelter, transitional housing, day center and hygiene centers which includes a community engagement process from May through October 2011. Request for Investment criteria and recommendations will be developed during this timeline.

The City of Seattle's investment framework will align with regional goals and strategies to end homelessness. As we move forward to develop an investment plan, HSD will also take the lead to convene regional stakeholders who will coordinate a work plan and action agenda in response to the Committee to End Homelessness (CEH) mid-plan recommendations on emergency shelter for homeless single adults.

We approach our work with a renewed sense of urgency. Shelters are operating at maximum capacity and cannot accommodate all the needs of homeless individuals in our community. In January 2011, during a one-night count of unsheltered individuals, there were at least 1,753 people in Seattle who were without shelter: sleeping in alleys, doorways, greenbelts, and other outdoor locations.

In August 2010, Mayor Michael McGinn created a Citizen Review Panel on Housing & Services for Seattle's Unsheltered Homeless Population. The findings of the Review Panel reinforce the need to look at our investments in homeless services in new ways. Encampments will never be a permanent solution to homelessness and the City of Seattle maintains its commitment to increasing access to affordable, permanent housing as a primary strategy to prevent and end homelessness. Providing services that connect people to education, jobs, medical and behavioral health care, community and mainstream support is a primary component for assisting households to achieve long-term housing stability and maximum self-sufficiency.

Background

The SLI was written in anticipation of HSD conducting a RFI process for emergency shelter in 2011, with new contracts intended to begin in January 2012. Since that time, federal and state funding for programs and people who are homeless and at-risk of homelessness has been reduced. Simultaneously, the City of Seattle is facing pressure on the General Fund budget due to revenue decreases, increasing cost and other potential federal and state budget reductions. Because of these issues and an interest in integrating components of the Committee to End Homelessness (CEH) evaluation and mid-course review of the Ten-Year Plan, the RFI was postponed to January 2012. This provides the Department and its partners time to plan for future investments with a better picture of the overall budget and a shared vision for future investments.

This extensive public engagement process, *Communities Supporting Safe and Stable Housing*, begins May 26, 2011 and will bring the City's funding partners, the Committee to End Homelessness, United Way of King County, shelter and housing providers, community members and other stakeholders together for discussion and work group sessions from May through October 2011. The process emphasizes planning with the end goal in mind. By focusing on people, communities and housing, the Department endeavors to direct future work on systems of care for individuals, families, victims of domestic violence, youth and youth adults who are experiencing homelessness.

Shaping the Future

In 2011, HSD is investing more than \$30 million from local and federal funding sources to prevent and end homelessness. Shelter investments are part of Seattle Continuum of Care services for people who are homeless. Shelter funding totals \$6.7 million dollars of the more than \$30 million dollars that HSD invests to prevent and end homelessness. Of the \$30 million dollars invested from local and federal funding, approximately 74% of these funds are invested in intervention programs that include shelter, day centers, meal programs, transitional housing, healthcare services, employment assistance, case management and supportive services for persons who are homeless; 17% is funding services to support formerly homeless individuals in permanent housing; and 9% is dedicated to homelessness prevention programs.

With more than 8,361 unduplicated adults served in emergency shelters for single adults and 1,161 persons assisted in family shelters in one year¹, HSD's planning process to define an investment framework for the RFI asks our community partners to consider:

- **How are investments ending homelessness?**

¹ Seattle Human Services Department, [City of Seattle Investments in Emergency Housing and Shelter](#), May 2011.

- With a continued commitment to ending adult homelessness, **how can investments prevent the next generation of homelessness?** More than 590 of the persons assisted in family shelters were children under 18 years old. Almost half of the children in shelters are under the age of five.
- **Can we sustain the existing system given current economic pressures** (e.g. pressures from federal, state and local funding reductions/cuts; and new federal performance measures under the HEARTH Act)?

The series of meetings with HSD contractors, community members and funding partners will incorporate the findings and recommendations from recent mid-plan review of the Ten-Year Plan to End Homelessness. HSD also will take the lead to convene regional stakeholders to create an action agenda in response to the mid-plan recommendations on emergency housing for single adults identified through a two-day intensive community “Charrette” process which called for the “support of shelters in their refined focus on housing placement and rapid re-housing. King County, and particularly Seattle, has an opportunity to reorient the business and program model of the emergency shelter system as a whole, and to provide access to flexible housing and service assistance dollars to move people out of shelter and into housing.”²

At the conclusion of the process, HSD will have a plan to:

1. Create intentional pathways out of shelter to housing, especially for those who have resided there for long periods of time and have most frequently used the shelter system.
2. Implement performance-based contracts that focus on measurements and goals to:
 - Increase the number of people moving into housing;
 - Decrease reoccurrences of homelessness (stop repeated episodes of homelessness);
 - Reduce the length of stay in shelter.
3. Integrate services to increase impact and efficiency:
 - Create places where people can go to connect with care and support to stay in housing or move quickly into housing;
 - Increase integrated service system responses for families and individuals who are victims of domestic violence;
 - Increase early intervention services to stabilize families and youth to end the cycles that can lead to adult homelessness;
 - Weigh costs/benefits and explore feasibility for: a system-wide, real-time direct data entry into the Safe Harbors HMIS system; and an on-line shelter bed reservation system.

I am excited to begin this process and look forward to lively and productive discussion with our community members. I appreciate the City Council’s commitment to preventing and ending homelessness in Seattle and welcome your participation in the community meetings.

Attachments:

Seattle Human Services Department, City of Seattle’s Investments in Emergency Housing and Shelter, May 2011.

² King County – Mid Plan Review Recommendations from Charrette. As presented by the Corporation for Supportive Housing to Committee to End Homelessness and its Partners and Stakeholders, May 2, 2011.