

Frequently Asked Questions about A Roof Over Every Bed in King County: Our Community's Ten-Year Plan to End Homelessness

How many people are homeless in King County?

On any given night in King County, more than 8,000 people are homeless. This includes about 6,000 people staying in emergency shelter or temporary transitional housing and more than 2,000 people counted on the streets during the 2007 One Night Count of people who are homeless. About 3,000 are members of homeless families with children.

What are we doing about homelessness?

We are coming together as never before to end homelessness throughout our region. The Committee to End Homelessness in King County, made up of representatives from business, faith, social services, government, homeless and formerly homeless people and advocacy groups is working to implement the Ten-Year Plan to End Homelessness in King County. This plan will end homelessness, not merely continue to manage it. It will do so through prevention, creation of new permanent housing, and providing supportive services to those who need them to maintain their housing.

Why is it so important to end homelessness?

Homelessness is expensive. Not only does it take a toll on people's lives, it is a huge financial burden on society. Tens of millions of dollars are spent each year in King County to feed, shelter, shower, medically treat or hospitalize people who are homeless. As we move these individuals into permanent housing and employment, helping them to become independent and productive, we will spend far less in emergency services and they will contribute far more to their community and to the economy.

What are the priorities of the Ten-Year Plan?

There are several key elements and priorities of the plan:

- 1. Prevent homelessness.** Work to make sure an adequate supply of appropriate housing *and* supportive services are available to help people stay in their homes. Services include rent and utility assistance, job training, education assistance, health care, mental health counseling, foster care and chemical dependency treatment. This also includes working to ensure people are not discharged into homelessness from jails, hospitals or foster care.
- 2. Move people rapidly from homelessness to housing.** Place homeless people as quickly as possible in permanent housing and then help them to stabilize and function independently by providing them with the supportive services they need.
- 3. Build the public and political will to end homelessness.** Expand our community's commitment to ending homelessness by educating the public, tracking our successes and building on them, and establishing steady funding.
- 4. Increase the efficiency of the existing systems.** We are restructuring systems to be more efficient, coordinating services, and streamlining rules and regulations for both providers and clients.
- 5. Measure and report outcomes.** We are working to chart the funds coming into our homelessness systems and how that money is being spent, and are producing regular reports to the public on the achievement of our goals and objectives.

Who is involved?

Ultimately, to be successful our entire community must be involved. We cannot end homelessness unless we come together and say homelessness is not acceptable and we will do something about it.

The initial leadership came from the Church Council of Greater Seattle, the City of Seattle, King County, United Way of King County, the Eastside Human Services Alliance, the North Urban Human Services Alliance, the South King County Council of Human Services and the Seattle-King County Coalition for the Homeless.

A wide range of organizations dedicate resources and staff to support the efforts of the committee.

Who is in charge of implementing the Plan?

The Committee to End Homelessness in King County is charged with implementing the plan and ensuring that its goals and objectives are met. The CEHKC is comprised of government officials and leaders of the business, faith, civic communities, service providers, homeless advocates, and philanthropy.

A **Governing Board** made up of influential community leaders provides high-level policy oversight, guides planning, coordinates funding, seeks additional resources, and offers vision and leadership for the plan.

An **Interagency Council** includes key partners working to end homelessness in King County who duties are to coordinate data collection, analysis and reporting; recommend policy direction to the Governing Board; and create ways to better serve people experiencing homelessness.

A **Consumer Advisory Council** comprised of people who are currently homeless or who have experienced homelessness will represent the broad interests and needs of homeless people countywide.

Staff support is hosted by King County Department of Community and Human Services and funded in collaboration with the City of Seattle, United Way of King County and others.

What is different about the Ten-Year Plan?

Several things:

- A very broad range of partners developed it.
- It was initiated by community members, not as a response to a government mandate.
- It reconfigures the homeless system into a housing system.
- It includes action steps tailored to certain homeless populations and their specific needs: single adults (including chronically homeless), families and youth/young adults.
- It calls for broad integration of systems and services among non-traditional partners.
- It recognizes that, by reducing homelessness and the costs of maintaining our current expensive system, we can reallocate resources to better serve vulnerable populations.

Is it really possible to end homelessness?

Yes, if we can develop and sustain the funding and the public and political will. Promising best practices, such as the housing first model, intensive case management for people with complex needs, and coordinated services for people with co-occurring disorders are all demonstrating success. It is going to be hard, we need to focus, and we will have to make tough decisions. A strong spirit of partnership now exists. We need to sustain and build upon this.

What does the plan say about Tent Cities?

The Plan neither promotes nor disapproves of tent cities. Rather, it acknowledges that tent cities are an emergency response to the greater problem of homelessness in King County and a safer alternative to life on the streets. Once safe, decent and affordable housing is available for all our citizens, tent cities will not be necessary.

Why should citizens contribute and participate?

Homelessness affects all of us in King County, whether or not we know someone who has been homeless or have experienced homelessness ourselves. Solving the problem will take a concerted and collaborative effort from all of our citizens. King County is known for its vision, compassion and wealth of resources. It is unacceptable in a region such as this, that almost 25,000 of our fellow citizens will experience at least one episode of homelessness each year. Every single person we can either prevent from becoming homeless or move from homelessness into housing, is one more life we have changed for the better.

How can you get involved?

- Learn about homelessness and the Ten-Year Plan.
- Find a way to help or contribute — make a donation of money, materials or time or become an advocate who works to build support for the plan by talking with neighbors, friends and government officials.