

“A Roof Over Every Bed in King County” within ten years A plan to end homelessness . . .

How many people are homeless in King County?

On any given night more than 8,500 people are known to be homeless in King County. This includes at least 400 youth and young adults, and approximately 2,400 people in families. About 2,500 meet the federal definition of chronically homeless, often with disabling conditions. Over 30% are children under the age of 17. As a community, we know this is unacceptable.

What are we doing about homelessness?

We are coming together to end homelessness across boundaries, politics and systems. The Committee to End Homelessness in King County - made up of representatives from nonprofit organizations, business, local government, homeless advocacy groups, the faith community and people who are or have been homeless - has developed the Ten-Year Plan to End Homelessness in King County. The effort is focused on regional and cross-system collaboration, and engaging communities and institutions that have not previously prioritized housing as their area of focus. This plan will **end homelessness**, not merely manage it.

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 imprison homeless people. By providing housing, services and employment we will spend far less in emergency services and people will contribute far more to their community and to the economy.

What is in the Ten-Year Plan?

The plan (available in full at www.cehkc.org) lays out a series of specific strategies and actions, with clear goals and measurable outcomes. The plan works to ensure alignment and coordination among all the entities in our community that are engaged in meeting the needs the homeless, and builds on local and national best practices for resolving homelessness. The key strategies are:

- 1. Prevent homelessness.** It is more cost-effective (and compassionate!) to “close the front door” on homelessness through rent and utility assistance, job training, employment and education, health care, mental health counseling, foster care and chemical dependency treatment. We must also make sure that people are not discharged into homelessness from jails, mental health programs and foster care.
- 2. Move people rapidly from homelessness to housing.** Shelters are not a place where people can stabilize their lives. We enable people to move quickly into permanent housing and then stabilize their lives through integrated supportive services.
- 3. Increase the efficiency of the existing system.** We are restructuring the system to be more efficient. Programs are working together to coordinate services according to their area of expertise, and funders are streamlining rules and regulations that get in the way of efficiency. This makes the best use of scarce resources. For example, where people in service-intensive housing have stabilized their lives, we help them “graduate” to lower services housing through incentives and continued support, thereby freeing up high services units for a new group of people in need.
- 4. Build the public and political will to end homelessness.** A recently completed survey by a local research firm tells us that our community wants to end homelessness and understands that it is possible. We are building on this finding by educating the public, tracking our successes, replicating proven housing and service models, and establishing steady funding.
- 5. Measure and Report Outcomes.** The Committee to End Homelessness is charting the funds coming into our homelessness provider system, and how that money is currently being used. Further, every project in our system sets outcome goals in order to receive funding, and regularly reports on whether it is achieving its goals. This information guides our planning and future actions.

How does the Plan differ from current practices?

The Plan guides major changes in how we do business through broad and systemic integration of “best practices”. In the context of ending homelessness this means integrating services and housing through single points of entry (providing access to both housing and services), permanent supportive housing (helping individuals get and keep their housing), and common funding processes (to avoid fragmentation of funds and services). These system changes are creating efficiencies and reducing duplication, helping us keep people housed rather than cycling through an expensive system. Studies have shown that providing housing to chronically homeless individuals is significantly more efficient and economic than the current system. For example, a local study of 1811 Eastlake found that providing housing and services to 75 chronically homeless individuals significantly reduced their use of Harborview emergency room, jails and sobering centers by \$4 million annually. Providing supportive housing to such populations saves money, is more compassionate and is a much better use of public dollars.

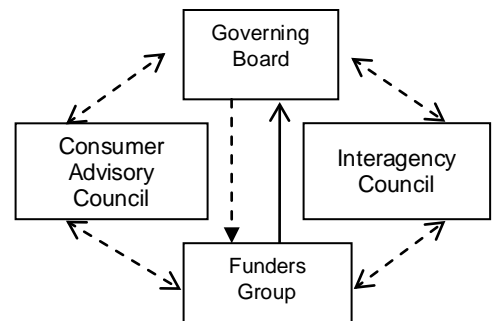
How is the plan being implemented?

The Committee to End Homelessness has three primary policy entities:

A **Governing Board** made up of more than 20 influential leaders provides high-level oversight. They mould and sustain the vision and leadership of the plan and work to create additional resources. Members include business, faith, and elected officials from throughout the County, including, Enumclaw, Shoreline, Bellevue and Seattle.

A **Consumer Advisory Council** comprised of people who are currently homeless or who have experienced homelessness in the past. They provide needed expertise in how the system really runs and represent the broad interests and needs of homeless people countywide. Representatives include those who can speak to issues of homeless families, adults, veterans, youth, foster kids, and barriers to accessing services in every region in the County.

An **Interagency Council** consists of executive director and department director level personnel from many of the entities working to end homelessness in King County. The Interagency Council provides insight into needed changes to current programs and identifies ways to better serve people experiencing homelessness. Members include business, faith, and agency and division directors from Kent, Bellevue, Redmond, City of Seattle, King County DCHS, YWCA, Kent Youth and Family Services, Plymouth Housing Group, Hopelink and more.



Local Collaborations and Committees focus on implementation strategies. A primary group is **The Funders Group**, made up of representatives of public and philanthropic entities who provide major funding to housing and homeless services, including the City of Seattle, King County, United Way of King County, Gates Foundation, local Housing Authorities and Building Changes, plus representatives from south and east King County. The Funders Group takes into account policy recommendations from the Interagency Council, Governing Board and Consumer Advisory Council and develops an annual workplan to align their respective strategies to further the goals of the Ten-Year Plan.

Three population committees integrate housing and services solutions for **Single Adults, Families, and Youth and Young Adults**. **Communications Workgroup** work on day to day communications, legislative advocacy and creating long term public will. The **South King County Forum on Homelessness** and **Eastside Homelessness Advisory Committee** identify regional solutions in keeping with local needs and priorities. Finally, ad hoc workgroups are regularly convened to implement strategic priorities, such as establishing discharge policies for the criminal justice system and working with landlords to create incentives and other supports to allow them to house formerly homeless persons.

Staff support for implementing the plan is provided by the King County Department of Community and Human Services (DCHS) and funded in collaboration with the City of Seattle, United Way of King County and others.

For more information on the plan, our work and the committees

Visit our website at www.cehkc.org or contact Bill Block, Director of the Committee to End Homelessness, 206-263-9001 (bill.block@kingcounty.gov) or Gretchen Bruce, Program Manager, at 206-263-9085 (gretchen.bruce@kingcounty.gov).