



Housing First

Yakima County's 5-year Homeless Plan



2017 – 2021 Homeless Plan

APPROVED JANUARY 18, 2017

TABLE OF CONTENTS

I. INTRODUCTION	3
CONTINUUM OF CARE (CoC) BODY	3
VISION AND VALUES	4
PURPOSE OF PLAN	4
SCOPE OF PLAN	5
BARRIERS	5
GAPS IN HOMELESS HOUSING AND SERVICES	5
ULTIMATE GOALS OF PLAN	6
II. BACKGROUND	6
HOMELESSNESS AMONG OUR NEIGHBORS	6
CAUSES OF HOMELESSNESS	6
PRIORITY POPULATIONS	7
SOCIAL IMPACT OF HOMELESSNESS: THE COST OF DOING NOTHING	7
III. YAKIMA COUNTY HOMELESSNESS	7
DEMOGRAPHICS	8
POINT IN TIME COUNT (PIT)	8
HOMELESS MANAGEMENT INFORMATION SYSTEM (HMIS)	8
BRIEF: HOW LONG ARE PEOPLE HOMELESS?	9
ADDITIONAL DATA / INFORMATION AVAILABLE ABOUT HOMELESSNESS IN YAKIMA COUNTY	10
RARE: HOW MANY PEOPLE EXPERIENCE HOMELESSNESS?	11
IV. THE HOUSING CRISIS	11
AFFORDABLE HOUSING CRISIS	11
PROGRESS AND INNOVATION	12
EFFICIENCY OF THE RESPONSE SYSTEM	12
INCREASED SUBSIDIZED HOUSING	13
INCREASED SUPPORTIVE SERVICES	14
V. FUNDING PLAN AND PROGRAMS	14
EXISTING FUNDING SOURCES	14
VI. ACTION PLAN	15
BOLD STEPS	15
VII. MEASURING SUCCESS	15
RESOURCES	16
ACRONYMS	16
REFERENCES	16
APPENDIX A	17
GOALS, TASKS, RESPONSIBLE PARTIES, TIME FRAME	17
APPENDIX B	
WASHINGTON STATE NEEDS ASSESSMENT	ATTACHMENT

I. INTRODUCTION

This plan has been developed to address the issues of homelessness in Yakima County and give direction to better serving those in need. The five-year plan will accomplish its goals by creating a plan that prioritizes housing first core values-that a person should be housed in safe housing as a primary tool after which services and support will be offered and provided through collaboration and cooperation with service and support providers. Reducing homelessness takes determination, perseverance and collaboration. Our intent is to create solutions that will reduce homeless in Yakima County so that it is BRIEF AND RARE by providing the homeless with better access to safe, decent, and affordable housing.

The Five-Year Plan to address homelessness in Yakima County will accomplish this by: 1) defining core problems facing the residents of Yakima County, 2) identifying gaps in the housing market for low-income and very low-income citizens, 3) assessing additional needs for prevention and service provider assistance for the homeless and at-risk populations, and 4) ensure that people quickly get the help they need to be safe and stable.

The process by which Yakima County will reduce homelessness so that it is Brief and Rare will depend on utilizing the Continuum of Care as follows:

- Outreach, intake, and assessment in order to identify service and housing needs and provide a link to the appropriate level of both;
- Emergency shelter to provide an immediate and safe alternative to sleeping on the streets, especially for homeless families with children,
- Medical Respite Care -- Recuperative Housing for those not sick enough to be in the hospital, and those discharged from the hospital but not well enough to go back to the streets. Medical Respite Care provides medical oversight and health education, care transitions, and discharge planning to and from primary care, inpatient hospital, Emergency Rooms, and supportive housing. Quality Standards have been developed nationally by the National Health Care for the Homeless Council to establish Best Practices for medical respite care.
- Transitional housing with supportive services to allow for the development of skills that will be needed once permanently housed; and
- Permanent and permanent supportive housing to provide individuals and families with an affordable place to live with services if needed.

This is the process by which to move through services.

CONTINUUM OF CARE (CoC) APPROVED BY THE DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT (HUD)

Homeless Planning and Policy Council:

Lowel Krueger	Yakima Housing Authority
Larry Mattson	Yakima Valley Conference of Governments
Patrick Baldoz	South Central Workforce
Teresa Carlson	Washington State Corrections
Beth Dannhardt	Triumph Treatment Services
Joan Davenport	City of Yakima
Ryan Enright	Landmark Management Services
Janice Gonzalez	Northwest Community Action Center
Rhonda Hauff	Yakima Neighborhood Health
David Helseth	Justice Housing Yakima

Stacy Kellogg
Kelly Penfold
Andrea Reyes
Kathy Tierney
Debra Whitefoot
Joshua Jackson
Joan Souders
Verlynn Best
Brian Ketcham

People for People
ALPHA Team
Yakima County Public Services
Northwest Justice Project
Yakama Nation Housing Authority
Rod's House
Grandview City Council
Greater Chamber of Commerce
Catholic Charities

On March 3-4, 2016, the Homeless Planning & Policy Council (HPPC) began its journey to develop a new Five-Year Homeless Plan for the Yakima County. Partners with the HPPC assisted in the development of goals and focus for this plan which included law enforcement, city elected officials, service providers, and a Chamber of Commerce representative. The issues around homelessness are complex and multi-faceted and with this in mind, the group determined Bold Steps are necessary to achieve their vision: To Reduce Homelessness within Yakima County so that it is Brief and Rare. The Strategic Planning Committee believes this vision will be realized by successfully taking these Bold Steps to achieve the specific goals identified within this plan.

VISION

To Reduce Homelessness in Yakima County so that it is Brief and Rare.

VALUES

- **Human Dignity**

A person who is homeless should have the right to an adequate standard of living, the right to education, the right to liberty and security of the person, the right to privacy, the right to social security, the right to freedom from discrimination, the right to vote, and all other rights provided to all U.S. Citizens.

- **Resiliency**

Recognize the strengths and resiliency of those experiencing homelessness. The homeless are resilient, capable and adaptable and should be given opportunities to be involved in every level of advocacy, outreach, and planning.

- **Nonjudgmental, Respectful & Responsive to the needs of the homeless community**

- **Transparency**

Remain direct and transparent in our approach to address the housing crisis

- **Inclusive and engaging**

Provide proactive services that are inclusive and strengths-based

PLAN PURPOSE

The overall purpose of this Plan is to **work together as a community to make homelessness a Brief and Rare occurrence in Yakima County through an efficient and effective homeless response system that prioritizes and focuses on putting people into stable housing first.**

The Homeless Planning and Policy Council (HPPC) analyzed the needs of homeless people in Yakima County by reviewing:

- Homeless Point-In-Time (PIT) data
- Annual report distributed by the Department of Commerce
- Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) data
- Service provider survey results

- Homeless individuals survey results
- Stakeholder workshops
- Meetings with elected officials
- National evidence-based practices.

To achieve making homelessness brief and rare, the Council will utilize the following tools:

- Data analysis
- Needs assessment
- Coordination and linkage of resources to avoid duplication
- Community-wide collaborative approaches.

The included Action Plan is intended to address homelessness by promoting a continuum of housing and support services that augment individual and family stability, resiliency, and economic independence.

Additional objectives of this plan are to create a:

- **Blueprint for Implementation:** A clear and concise agreement about the strategy to reduce homelessness.
- **Tool for Advocacy:** An informational focal point to inspire local advocacy and leadership to embrace homelessness as a priority for action.
- **Reference for Funders:** An articulation of the community’s priorities for funding, ensuring that these priorities meet the Federal, State, and local requirements that the funded programs are in alignment with the community’s homelessness plan.
- **Collaboration:** Ensure that cities, counties and business communities have the opportunity to work together towards one goal.

SCOPE OF PLAN – per Department of Commerce Guidelines

This plan addresses issues of homelessness throughout Yakima County, including:

- Current demographics of homelessness in Yakima County
- Resources available and current needs and gaps, and
- An action plan that outlines the goals, strategies, and action steps that will be used over the next five years to address homelessness.

BARRIERS

Despite significant improvements in the provision of housing and services to people experiencing homelessness, and a vastly improved capacity over the last 10 years, the planning process revealed specific barriers and gaps within our community’s capacity to assist all people experiencing homelessness. These barriers and gaps are the underlying causes of Yakima’s inability to meet the needs of all homeless residents at this time. They include:

- Funding restrictions
- Limited capacity – both in housing stock and providers’ limited ability to enhance services

GAPS IN HOMELESS HOUSING AND SERVICES

The following needs and gaps in housing resources have been identified:

- Emergency shelter for single men, men with children, couples, households with pets, and large families
- Housing and services for homeless individuals entering the community from jails, correctional facilities, foster care, hospitals, mental institutions, and those who are chronically unsheltered.
- Emergency Overnight shelter

- Housing First/Harm Reduction housing (for chronically unsheltered and other high-needs populations)
- Additional units of Permanent Supportive Housing
- Additional units of Medical Respite Care to provide medical oversight for sick and injured homeless individuals.
- Coordination of case management both between homeless providers and other systems of care
- Resident outreach and communication
- Integration of planning efforts

ULTIMATE GOALS OF PLAN

This Homeless Housing Plan includes the strategy to implement a Housing First model comprised of the following four goals with supporting strategies and action steps.

- 1) **Make homelessness brief and rare** (by providing rapid re-housing and accompanying case management services for all non-chronically homeless households).
- 2) **Expand and Diversify Funding**
- 3) **Create and Implement Outreach, Advocacy and Engagement Plan**
- 4) **Engage and provide permanent supportive housing for the chronically homeless.**

II. BACKGROUND

HOMELESSNESS AMONG OUR NEIGHBORS

According to the 2016 Point-In-Time Homeless Count, on any given day there are estimated to be nearly 600 people living on the streets, in vehicles, in shelters, in transitional housing, or with friends and family in temporary situations. Homelessness happens to people of all ages, genders, education levels, races, income levels, and household types. It happens to good people in our community who work hard to be self-sufficient but live on the brink of economic instability. Health issues, poor credit, job loss, family break-up, domestic violence, mental illness or substance use disorders can also push people into homelessness. Whatever the underlying reason for their homelessness, they are in crisis. Visible or hidden, everyone deserves a safe and decent place to live.

CAUSES OF HOMELESSNESS

Homelessness was a relatively rare phenomenon until the 1980s, when many economic and social changes converged to cause its dramatic rise. Top reasons for homelessness in Yakima found during the 2016 Point in Time Count include:

- Alcohol/drug use
- Unable to pay rent or mortgage
- Family breakup or crisis
- Job loss

Ultimately, homelessness is a result of many societal factors that create financial instability and inability to afford housing: lack of affordable housing, inter-generational poverty, expensive health care costs, lack of living-wage jobs, lack of education and training, severe mental illness, and substance use disorders. Addressing homelessness is, essentially working backwards or “up-stream” attempting to fix the conditions that lead to homelessness and then providing individualized social supports to address the underlying social issues facing each individual household.

PRIORITY POPULATIONS:

1. Chronically Homeless (including chemical dependency and mentally ill) –
 - a. A person who is “chronically homeless” is an unaccompanied homeless 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. In order to be considered chronically homeless, a person must have been sleeping in a place not meant for human habitation and/or in an emergency homeless shelter.
 - b. A disabling condition is defined as a diagnosable substance use disorder, a serious mental illness, a developmental disability, a chronic physical illness, or a disability including the co-occurrence of two or more of the previously mentioned conditions. A disabling condition limits an individual’s ability to work or perform one or more activities of daily living.
2. Homeless Veterans
3. Homeless Families with Children (including victims of Domestic Violence)
4. Homeless Unaccompanied Youth
5. Homeless Elderly over the age of 62

SOCIAL IMPACT OF HOMELESSNESS: THE COST OF DOING NOTHING

Homelessness not only has huge impacts on the individuals experiencing it, it is also expensive for our community. Homelessness almost always escalates an already unstable family situation. Youth and adults with mental illness or drug and alcohol problems get worse when they do not have stable housing to get the behavioral and/or medical attention they need.

Homelessness costs our community in other ways, as well. Each year, Yakima County residents’ tax dollars are spent caring for homeless people through our emergency services – including 911, emergency rooms and clinics, law enforcement, fire and rescue units, jails, detoxification programs, public health system, the judicial system and more. The estimated “hidden” expense of supporting a homeless person in this piecemeal manner is approximately \$40,000 per year.

Homelessness also has a particularly troubling impact on children. Homeless children often are impacted by adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) resulting in impediments to growth and development and overall weak performance in school. Numerous studies have found that housing instability and homelessness result in lower academic performance, increase the chances of repeating a grade, and reduce high school completion rates. Homelessness also puts children at greater risk of serious physical health problems. All of these factors contribute to perpetuating the cycle of homelessness.

III. YAKIMA COUNTY HOMELESSNESS

DEMOGRAPHICS

Understanding the scope of homelessness in Yakima County is an important step in developing key strategies to address it. Homelessness is an extremely complex social challenge and requires significant community investments to create an impact. There is a constant flow of people becoming homeless while others move out of homelessness into housing. Many may only experience one episode of homelessness, while others may experience multiple episodes over several years or remain homeless for many years. Fortunately, we have better data and statistics on the homeless population to guide our efforts. Although we have better and more complete data than in years past, there are always variables to take into account in acknowledging that there may be more homeless individuals and families than are indicated in the statistics.

- The face and composition of homelessness is ever evolving. Each day new households enter into homelessness and each day homeless households are re-housed and regain self-sufficiency.

- Due to the ongoing stigmatization of being homeless, many individuals and households either do not self-identify as homeless and do not seek services, or simply do not admit to being homeless. Our data collection efforts require voluntary participation, so households that do not seek services or volunteer to be counted in our homeless census are not included in statistical gathering.
- Data about homelessness gathered from different sources does not necessarily provide a consistent picture, since homelessness may be defined differently or data collected differently.

Data about Yakima County homelessness is collected in two primary ways through the efforts of the social service and housing providers who work with people experiencing homelessness.

POINT IN TIME COUNT

Point in Time Count (PIT) is required by the Department of Commerce and HUD in order to receive homeless grant funding. The information from the count is compiled and submitted to Washington State and is used locally for evaluation and planning purposes. The PIT surveys sheltered and unsheltered people experiencing homelessness during the fourth week of January during a specific 24-hour period in all Washington counties. Yakima County has conducted an annual Point in Time Count of the homeless since 2005. The PIT count provides limited information about the full scope of homelessness, because external factors affect the results: weather, volunteers, and the social stigma of homelessness. However, the PIT count provides a large sample, from which we can extrapolate general information about our homeless population, including reasons for homelessness. While the HUD sponsored PIT count is our official count, it is only as accurate as the participation rate. HUD has projected for every person counted during the annual PIT count, two additional persons go uncounted.

The 2016 PIT Count revealed the number of homeless in Yakima County as follows:

- Yakima 465
- Wapato 46
- Toppenish 31
- Granger 10
- Sunnyside 16
- Grandview 7
- Selah 3

HOMELESS MANAGEMENT INFORMATION SYSTEM

The second tool that is used to collect information about homelessness in Yakima is the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS). This is a federally-mandated and state-managed database of information that is required to be collected by homeless housing and service providers who receive funding from Washington State Department of Commerce and/or HUD McKinney-Vento Act funding. The database provides information about every client who receives homeless assistance provided by these programs. (Faith-based or privately-funded programs are not required to participate, though some of these programs still choose to do so.)

Yakima County HMIS providers share a common enterprise of the state's HMIS system – service providers share one database so they can share and see what services homeless residents in Yakima County are receiving, and are able to coordinate services among the providers. This also reduces duplication of data entry among providers and avoids repetition of collecting eligibility information from clients who have previously registered for services from another homeless services provider.

Significant providers of homeless services in Yakima County do not participate in the shared HMIS system, either due to philosophical reasons, concern for client confidentiality (youth, domestic violence), or lack of infrastructure to participate and no requirement to do so.

Required HMIS data includes demographic information such as gender, age, prior living situation, last permanent address, length of time homeless, education level, ethnicity, and family composition. (Clients must provide signed consent to have identifying information entered into the system.) When a client enters a particular housing or homeless service program, information about their participation in the program is also recorded in HMIS. Client identifying information is not shared as part of the Point in Time Count report information.

HMIS information is used at the state level to develop state-wide statistics and models. At the local level it provides accurate information about clients who access services. Its limitation is that clients, who are not using services, either by choice or because needed services are not available, are not included. Thus, it provides limited or no information about under-served populations or gaps in service.

BRIEF: How long are people homeless?

Chart 1.2 2016 Homeless Households

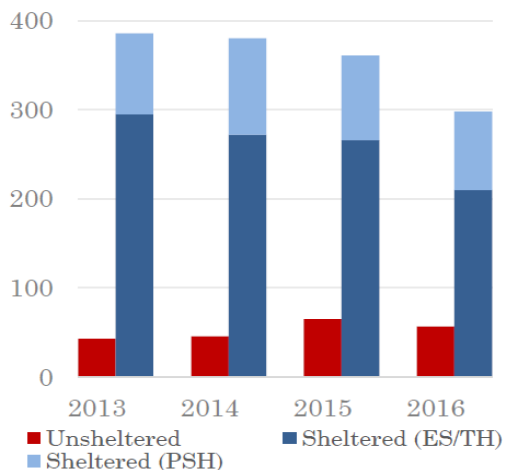
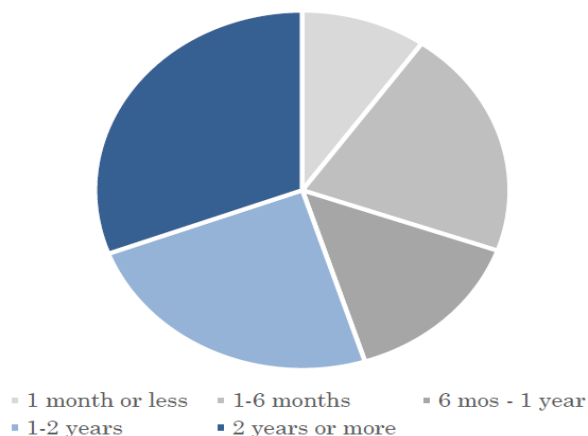


Chart 2.3 – Sheltered Count Individuals by Duration of Homelessness



It is important to note that duration of homelessness includes not just the time spent in a housing program, but also the (sometimes substantial) length of time spent homeless and unsheltered or couch surfing prior to entry into a housing service. In spite of this factor, nearly a third of the emergency shelter and transitional housing population has been homeless for less than 6 months (31%). Unlike prior years, more than half of those counted as part of the outreach count has been homeless for a year or more (55%).

Shorter stays in temporary housing are considered to be better for building long-term stability. In addition, when people regain permanent housing faster, more people are able to be served with the limited temporary housing resources. HUD sets the goal of less than 20 days in emergency shelter.

This data does not include people who are unsheltered and are NOT seeking services – often these individuals experiencing “chronic homelessness” are unsheltered for extended periods of time (1+ years) or repeatedly over the course of many years.

Additional Data / Information Available about Homelessness in Yakima County:

A complicating factor to understanding the true picture of homelessness is attributed to the fact there is no single federal definition of homelessness in the United States. Two additional programs and definitions describe our communities in Yakima County, and each report varying magnitudes of homelessness:

1. Education

The McKinney-Vento Act defines homeless children as "individuals who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence." The act provides examples of children who would fall under this definition:

- Children and youth sharing housing due to loss of housing, economic hardship or a similar reason;
- Children and youth living in motels, hotels, RV parks, or camp grounds due to lack of alternative accommodations;
- Children and youth living in emergency or transitional shelters;
- Children and youth abandoned in hospitals;
- Children and youth whose primary nighttime residence is not ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation (e.g. park benches, etc);
- Children and youth living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations; or
- Migratory children and youth living in any of the above situations.

Yakima County schools count and report homeless children throughout the year, and in the 2015-2016 school year reported approximately 800 homeless children and families known in our school systems.

2. Health and Human Services / Bureau of Primary Health Care – The Bureau of Primary Health Care

Health centers funded by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) use a different definition of homeless individual. A homeless individual is defined in section 330(h)(4)(A) as "an individual who lacks housing (without regard to whether the individual is a member of a family), including an individual whose primary residence during the night is a supervised public or private facility (e.g., shelters) that provides temporary living accommodations, and an individual who is a resident in transitional housing." A homeless person is an individual without permanent housing who may live on the streets; stay in a shelter, mission, single room occupancy facilities, abandoned building or vehicle; or in any other unstable or non-permanent situation. [Section 330 of the Public Health Service Act (42 U.S.C., 254b)] An individual may be considered to be homeless if that person is "doubled up," a term that refers to a situation where individuals are unable to maintain their housing situation and are forced to stay with a series of friends and/or extended family members.

In addition, previously homeless individuals who are to be released from a prison or a hospital may be considered homeless if they do not have a stable housing situation to which they can return. A recognition of the instability of an individual's living arrangements is critical to the definition of homelessness. (HRSA/Bureau of Primary Health Care, Program Assistance Letter 1999-12, Health Care for the Homeless Principles of Practice). Formerly homeless individuals who are living and supported in Permanent Supportive Housing are also considered homeless so long as they continue to receive supportive services by an HCH provider. Yakima Neighborhood Health Services is the designated HCH provider in Yakima

County, and has consistently, since 2007, reported over 2,200 unduplicated users of health services from homeless residents of Yakima County. Many of these residents are now in Permanent Supportive Housing.

RARE: How many people experience homelessness?

At a Point in Time

The Point in Time Count provides information about homeless households who choose to participate in a survey on one particular day, regardless of whether they are seeking or receiving services, and includes individuals who are sheltered and unsheltered, by federal definition. The Homeless Management Information System provides information only about clients who seek and access services.

The following table shows data compiled from annual Point-In-Time count from 2010-2016.

Table 1.1 Homeless Individuals

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Unsheltered	83	61	53	47	47	72	64
Sheltered (ES/TH)	424	399	472	516	486	466	348
Sheltered (PSH)	115	150	178	132	168	150	168
	622	610	703	695	701	688	580

ES – Emergency Shelter TH – Transitional Housing PSH – Permanent Solutions Housing

The numbers of unsheltered individuals who have been counted in the annual Point in Time Count have declined between 2010 and 2016 by 23%. This decrease in the number of homeless counted may be due to several factors, likely reflecting new funding for services and facilities.

- In 2016, more than half of those counted in the PIT count, 60%, were being served by current facilities, staying in an emergency shelter or in transitional housing.
- 29% were living with family or friends, considered to be unstable housing situations.
- 11%, or 64 individuals, were not being served by current homeless housing programs and were living in situations not meant for human habitation, such as abandoned buildings, encampments on private and public property, on the streets, or in their cars.
- Data also shows that children under the age of 18 are a significant proportion of the homeless population-- 38% of the total shelter count population.

IV. THE HOUSING CRISIS

AFFORDABLE HOUSING CRISIS

Many factors contribute to homelessness, but in most situations the underlying cause is the gap between income and the cost of available housing. Housing is considered “affordable” when it costs no more than 30% of household income. In Yakima, housing costs are well beyond the affordability of low-income households, particularly single-adult households or households with children, where an adult must provide childcare. See Appendix II.

- Affordable rent for a person earning minimum wage is \$477
- In Yakima, the estimated mean renter wage is \$11.26; making \$586 an affordable rent with a single wage-earner.
- For a household of any size earning 30% or less of Area Median Income (\$22,380), affordable rent would be no more than \$560.
- Yakima fair market rent (FMR) for a two-bedroom apartment is \$769 (statewide: \$1,128). The annual household income needed to make this affordable is \$30,760, or \$15.26 per hour.

Final FY 2015 FMRs By Unit Bedrooms				
<u>Efficiency</u>	<u>One-Bedroom</u>	<u>Two-Bedroom</u>	<u>Three-Bedroom</u>	<u>Four-Bedroom</u>
\$490	\$597	\$769	\$1,027	\$1,240

PROGRESS AND INNOVATION

When individuals or families are in danger of becoming homeless, or have already lost their housing, the goal is to get them into housing and provide services that best meet their needs as quickly as possible. This “homeless response system” involves many organizations, a diverse set of programmatic tools, and multiple funding sources. Ten years after the initial legislation, Yakima has made progress in many areas, adding additional units of subsidized housing and temporary housing beds, as well as adding supportive services and programs.

Data reported on the annual Department of Commerce Housing Inventory Chart (HIC) shows what housing resources are available to combat homelessness in the County:

Homeless Housing Options	Capacity (<i>total beds</i>)
Emergency Shelters (ES)	355
Emergency Shelters (ES) - Domestic Victims only	59
Transitional Housing (TH)	205
Transitional Housing (TH) - Veterans	11
Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH)	128
Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH) - Veterans	118
Other Permanent Housing	77
Total	953

EFFICIENCY OF THE RESPONSE SYSTEM

A critical aspect of the [McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act](#), as amended, is a focus on viewing the local homeless response as a coordinated system of homeless assistance options as opposed to homeless assistance programs and funding sources that operate independently in a community. To facilitate this perspective, the Act now requires communities to measure their performance as a coordinated system, in addition to analyzing performance by specific projects or project types.

The Act has established a set of selection criteria for HUD to use in awarding CoC funding in section 427 that require CoCs to report to HUD their system-level performance. The intent of these selection criteria are to encourage CoCs, in coordination with ESG Program recipients and all other homeless assistance stakeholders in the community, to regularly measure their progress in meeting the needs of people experiencing homelessness in their community and to report this progress to HUD.

Since 2005, tremendous progress has been made to improve the efficiency of the housing and services delivery system. The **Point in Time Count** has been conducted in coordination with a low-income services fair, **Project Homeless Connect**. This consistency, in addition to a stable planning committee, has resulted in more similarity in methodology from year to year. Project Homeless Connect provides services not only to homeless individuals and families, but also “near homeless”, connecting individuals and families to resources in their communities that prevent homelessness through rental and utility assistance, weatherization programs, consumer credit counseling, Basic Food, Veterans Benefits, entitlement program outreach, health coverage assistance, etc.

Department of Housing and Urban Development and Washington State Department of Commerce required implementation of the **Homeless Management Information System (HMIS)**, which requires certain data to be collected about all clients receiving homeless housing and services that are funded through federal, state, and local homeless grants. This information is used to produce high-level reports to evaluate the outcomes of homeless housing and service providers. Yakima has fully implemented HMIS among all required homeless service providers.

Many years of work has gone into designing a **coordinated entry system** for Yakima County, wherein all residents seeking assistance with housing or homeless services are greeted, assessed, and referred through a single access point.

The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act passed by Congress in 2009 provided significant investment in eviction prevention and rapid rehousing programs; this program and its successors provide assistance in the form of short-term **rental and mortgage assistance**. Assistance with **utilities costs** is provided through a Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) and partnerships with local utilities companies. Other programs provide funding for minor home repairs for extremely low-income households to rectify health and safety issues that might result in homelessness. **Weatherization programs** help low-income households to reduce utilities costs through small grants to improve energy efficiency. Other strategies provide **job training, financial literacy**, and links to **education opportunities**.

INCREASED SUBSIDIZED HOUSING UNITS

Each type of housing in the subsidized housing continuum plays a key role in moving people from homelessness to self-sufficiency. A description of homeless housing options available in Yakima County include:

- **Emergency shelters (ES)** provide immediate relief from homelessness and the opportunity for service providers to assess the needs of each individual (usually 90 days or less).
- **Transitional housing (TH)**, with supportive services, provides the time needed for a homeless household to get stabilized (usually limited to 24 months).
- **Permanent supportive housing (PSH)** is needed for individuals who are unable to achieve and sustain economic self-sufficiency.

Affordable housing is a necessary option for many low-income people in our community, whether they've experienced homelessness or not. Due to the continuing shortage of emergency shelter beds, creative short-term methods have been implemented, such as short-term indoor tent cities, safe car parks, and severe weather shelters. This plan supports increasing the inventory for emergency shelters, transitional housing, and permanent supportive housing to provide more housing options and alleviate the needs for emergency measures.

Yakima County adopted the use of **Rapid Re-housing** programs (supported by national studies) that provide a brief and graduated subsidy to homeless households, placing them in permanent housing as quickly as possible while providing short-term supportive services. Rapid rehousing has proven successful for

households with few barriers to self-reliance. It should be recognized the majority of Yakima County’s homeless residents have many barriers and are not suited to the short-term Rapid Re-housing model.

Increasing access to private market units has also recently become a focus with local landlords to provide incentives for renting to “hard to serve” households.

Subsidized Housing

	Washington	Yakima County
Number of subsidized units	84,694	1,868
Average monthly rent for subsidized units	\$322	\$282
Average household income for subsidized households	\$12,555	\$11,520
Households where wages are the major source of income	19%	16%
Households where welfare is the major source of income	7%	6%
Households where some other source is the major source of income	74%	78%
Average subsidized household income as percent of area median income	21%	26%
Average months on waiting list	23 months	13 months

Source: U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), A Picture of Subsidized Housing, 2013 (Note: subsidized units counted here include Public Housing, Housing Choice Vouchers, Moderate Rehabilitation, Section 8 New Construction/Substantial Rehabilitation, Section 236, LIHTC, and other federally-subsidized multifamily housing.)

INCREASED SUPPORTIVE SERVICES

Housing alone is usually not enough to enable people to make this transition from homelessness to stable housing. Supportive case management services provide assistance and skill-building to overcome the crises and dire circumstances that cause homelessness. Progress has been made in providing supportive services in a variety of areas, such as **legal services, job counseling, initiatives to improve income, training and placement, homeless childcare, “ready to rent” classes, financial literacy classes, and behavioral health services.** However, expanded access to all of these services is needed to meet the demand.

SERVICES INCLUDE, BUT ARE NOT LIMITED TO:

- Permanent Supportive Housing
- Respite Care
- Transitional Housing
- Emergency Shelter
- Case Management for Self-Sufficiency

V. FUNDING PLAN AND PROGRAMS:

EXISTING FUNDING SOURCES

In order to fund these programs Yakima County housing and services providers annually rely on a number of federal, state, local and private funding sources of funds. There are some sources specifically “targeted” towards the homeless; these funds are restricted to services and projects which directly benefit homeless individuals and families and others with special needs. Programs such as HUD funded programs are not funded through this plan and are distributed to the community directly via service providers.

The current award contracts targeted to the homeless are *approximately* as follows:

• Local Filing Fee Revenue (2163 Funds) – Yakima County	\$750,000
• Consolidated Homeless Program (CHG) – State	\$303,677
• Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG) – Federal	\$524,554
• Housing and Essential Needs (HEN) – State	\$337,467
Restricted for:	
- Rental Assistance	
- Monthly Housing Costs and Essential Needs Items	
- Individuals who are homeless or at imminent risk of homelessness with a temporary disability.	
- Requires a referral from DSHS (225 enrollments)	
TOTAL	\$2,687,737

VI. ACTION PLAN

We will work together as a community *“To Reduce Homelessness in Yakima County so that it is Brief and Rare”* through an efficient and effective homeless response system.

Despite strong leadership and a diversity of existing resources, homelessness is still a persistent issue in Yakima County, illustrated by the current demographics of homelessness. This is due to specific barriers and gaps that represent some of the underlying causes of our inability to meet the needs of ALL homeless residents.

Yakima Valley Conference of Government and the Homeless Planning and Policy Council identified **three bold steps** that constitute the critical path to Reducing Homelessness so that it is Brief and Rare in the Yakima County with the ultimate goal of improving our response system and engaging our community.

Bold Step #1: Engage with and provide permanent supportive housing for the chronically homeless.
Bold Step #2: Create and Implement Outreach, Advocacy and Engagement.
Bold Step #3: Expand and Diversify Funding

Specific goals and tasks including responsible parties and expected time frame to achieve each goal are listed below in Appendix A. Because many of the strategies are closely related, some of the action steps support more than one strategy. This plan is not intended to be a comprehensive list of the existing strategies and programs already in place in our county. Instead, it anticipates that the existing continuum of housing and homeless services that has been developed over the last decade is maintained, with improvements that reflect evidence-based practices. This plan also does not enumerate every possible action step that could be implemented; instead it focuses on achievable action steps that are needed to fill identified gaps in housing and services.

VII. MEASURING SUCCESS

It will be important to measure this plan’s success by setting measurable targets. Per Department of Commerce Guidelines, measurable targets will include:

1. Achieving functional zero for unsheltered homelessness by June 2018 for at least **two** subpopulations, **or**
2. Increasing from the baseline percent the number of served unsheltered homeless households in temporary or permanent housing programs by 10 percentage points by June 2018.

RESOURCES

ACRONYMS

2163	Local recording filing fees
CHG	Consolidated Homeless Grant
CoC	Continuum of Care
ESG	Emergency Services Grant
HB	House Bill (of the Washington State legislature)
HMIS	Homeless Management Information System
HOME	Although capitalized, this is not an acronym.
HUD	U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development
NOFA	Notice of Funds Available
YVCOG	Yakima Valley Conference of Governments
WA	State of Washington
WA Commerce	Washington State Department of Commerce.

REFERENCES

<http://livingwage.mit.edu/counties/53077>

https://www.huduser.gov/portal/datasets/fmr/fmrs/FY2015_code/2015summary.odn
PITstakeholder_report2016.pdf

Department of Commerce 2015 Annual Report

www.commerce.wa.gov/housingneeds

APPENDIX A

OBJECTIVE: Reduce Homelessness in Yakima County so that it is BRIEF and RARE

Goal 1: Utilize a Coordinated Entry, Assessment and Referral System			
<u>Tasks</u>	<u>Responsible Party(ies)</u>	<u>Start Date</u>	<u>Completed</u>
1.1 Design, implement and utilize an efficient Coordinated Entry System (CES)	HPPC, I-team, and YVCOG	Launch Date January 2017	
1.2 Simplify personal identification requirements for clients accessing programs and services	Homeless Service Providers, HPPC, I-team	1/1/2017	
1.3 Track available housing utilizing the Housing Inventory Chart (HIC)	YVCOG, Homeless Service Providers, Coordinated Entry Entity	2016	
1.4 Tailor centralized intake services to individuals and families in need	Homeless Service Providers, Coordinated Entry Entity	1/1/2017	
1.5 Direct necessary resources to establish and maintain a successful coordinated entry system	HPPC, YVCOG	1/1/2017	
1.6 Use Vulnerability Index (VI-SPDAT) to prioritize services (highest need receives top priority)	Homeless Service Providers, monitored by YVCOG	1/1/2017	
1.7 Utilize a Coordinated Entry Entity to provide oversight and maintain a coordinated intake, assessment and referral system.	Third Party Coordinated Entry Entity?	1/1/2017	
1.8 Ensure provider use of the Coordinated Entry System	YVCOG	1/1/2017	
1.9 Improve outreach to identify homeless clients and encourage participation in services through Coordinated entry.	Homeless service providers	ongoing	
Goal 2: Coordinate funding for Homeless Programs			
<u>Tasks</u>	<u>Responsible Party(ies)</u>	<u>Start Date</u>	<u>Completed</u>
2.0 Provide ongoing information to YVCOG Board of Directors about homelessness and provision of services in Yakima County	Homeless Service providers, HPPC	1/1/17	
2.1 Develop clear and predictable funding criteria for programs throughout the Valley in order to distribute funds in an equitable manner utilizing a Call for Projects (CFP) and detailed uniform Request for Proposals (RFPs)	YVCOG with recommendation from HPPC's RFP subcommittee	2016	
2.2 Develop and implement an established cycle for submitting funding requests for programs with a standing calendar of anticipated funding deadlines	YVCOG with recommendation from HPPC's RFP subcommittee	2016	

2.3 Prioritize funding requests by scoring applications based on a pre-determined rubric to maintain consistency with this 5-Year Plan, as adopted	YVCOG with recommendation from HPPC's RFP subcommittee	1/1/2017	
2.4 Respond appropriately to Emergency Situations:	YVCOG with recommendation from HPPC's RFP subcommittee	2/1/2017	
2.4 a Define what qualifies as a "Homeless Emergency (i.e. an UNEXPECTED and potentially dangerous situation).	YVCOG with recommendation from HPPC's RFP subcommittee	3/1/2017	
2.4 b Develop a Plan that ensures a timely response to emergent community situations that merit immediate funding.	YVCOG with recommendation from HPPC's RFP subcommittee	4/1/2017	

Goal 3: Develop additional Shelter beds with access to services and maintain existing resources

<u>Tasks</u>	<u>Responsible Party(ies)</u>	<u>Start Date</u>	<u>Completed</u>
3.1 Support existing shelter programs, including Cold Weather Emergency Shelter	Homeless Service Providers, HPPC, and YVCOG	2016	
3.2 Encourage increased utilization of existing shelter services when appropriate for individuals	Homeless Service Providers, HPPC, and YVCOG	2016	
3.3 Obtain additional existing indoor location(s) for low barrier shelter	Homeless Service Providers	2016	
3.4 Support potential capital projects for building low barrier permanent supportive housing that is in line with this 5-year plan	YVCOG, HPPC, private investors	2017	
3.5 Provide daytime shelter(s) and common areas for homeless persons that create a safe environment	Homeless Service Providers	2016	
3.6 Increase Medical Respite capacity to meet community demands for recuperative care of homeless needing medical oversight.	Homeless Service Providers, HPPC	2017	
3.7 Establish consistent emergency shelter options including interim emergency measures.	Homeless Service Providers, HPPC, Cities	2017	

Goal 4: Create additional Rapid Re-Housing options to provide a transition from homeless shelter to more permanent housing

<u>Tasks</u>	<u>Responsible Party(ies)</u>	<u>Start Date</u>	<u>Completed</u>
4.1 Work with landlords to gain acceptance to participate in this program with existing housing	Homeless Service Providers	1/1/2017	
4.2 Support construction of new low income housing with appropriate program supervision	YVCOG, HPPC, and Homeless Service Providers	3/1/2017	

4.3 Work with the owners of existing motels, single room occupancy and other existing structures	Homeless Service Providers	2016	
4.4 Provide funding for case management related to the human service needs of those in the Rapid Re-housing programs	YVCOG, HPPC, and Homeless Service Providers	2016	
4.5 Improve affordable housing by working with landlords to close the gap between average rent and median wages. In Yakima County 51% of renters pay more than 30% of their income toward housing costs.	HPPC, and Homeless Service Providers	1/1/17	

Goal 5: Expand Permanent Supportive Housing options and prioritize services and housing for chronic homeless families and individuals using Coordinated Entry

<u>Tasks</u>	<u>Responsible Party(ies)</u>	<u>Start Date</u>	<u>Completed</u>
5.1 Promote Housing First as a model of care. We encourage providers to obtain Housing First Certification through CSH.	Homeless Service Providers	1/1/2017	
5.2 Coordinate services to place individuals into drug and alcohol rehabilitation programs and housing	Homeless Service Providers and Coordinated Entry Entity	1/1/2017	
5.3 Coordinate services to address special needs of veterans into appropriate housing and programs	Homeless Service Providers and Coordinated Entry Entity	1/1/2017	
5.4 Support existing programs and housing to address the special needs of the chronic homeless	Homeless Service Providers	2016	
5.5 Coordinates services for youth into appropriate housing and programs	Homeless Service Providers and Coordinated Entry Entity	1/1/2017	
5.6 Coordinate PSH services so access to mental health benefits are available	Homeless Service Providers	1/1/2017	

Goal 6: Facilitate continued data collection efforts and share data between all programs

<u>Tasks</u>	<u>Responsible Party(ies)</u>	<u>Start Date</u>	<u>Completed</u>
6.1 Use HMIS data and processes – continue to promote the shared enterprise of a county-wide HMIS database.	Homeless Service Providers and Coordinated Entry Entity	2016	
6.2 Support Point in Time data collection efforts and improve accuracy	HPPC, YVCOG and Homeless Service Providers	1/1/2017	
6.3 Obtain additional data on youth when available	YVCOG, Family and Youth Service Providers, State HYP Office	1/1/2017	
6.4 Create and utilize visual reports/aides to provide transparency of program performance of clients being served	YVCOG	3/1/2017	

Goal 7: Prevent Homelessness when possible			
<u>Tasks</u>	<u>Responsible Party(ies)</u>	<u>Start Date</u>	<u>Completed</u>
7.1 Support affordable housing initiatives for new construction of very low income units such as accessory or efficiency housing	HPPC, YVCOG and Homeless Service Providers	1/1/2017	
7.2 Support programs to provide rent assistance or eviction assistance when warranted	HPPC, YVCOG and Homeless Service Providers	2016	
7.3 Support and increase landlord tenant counseling	Homeless Service Providers	3/1/2017	
7.4 Coordinate services of rehabilitation of existing housing units to keep low income and senior citizens in their homes as long as possible	HPPC, YVCOG and Homeless Service Providers	2016	
7.5 Support case management to reconnect clients with family members at imminent risk of homelessness to enhance family stability and alternative living situations, including victims of Domestic Violence.	Homeless Service Providers including Case Management Service providers	2016	
7.6 Participate in re-entry programs so individuals discharged from correctional institutions have necessary supports in place.	Homeless Service Providers including Case Management Service providers	1/1/2017	

Goal 8: Build the Community and Political commitment to end homelessness in our County			
<u>Tasks</u>	<u>Responsible Party(ies)</u>	<u>Start Date</u>	<u>Completed</u>
8.1 Develop understanding and information to foster a community voice and consistent message on issues related to homelessness	HPPC, Faith Community, Concerned Individuals, Chamber of Commerce and Local Businesses	2/1/2017	
8.2 Engage political leaders to participate in creating solutions for addressing the causes of homelessness as well as programs to assist those individuals	HPPC, YVCOG, and Homeless Service Providers	4/1/2017	
8.3 Engage and use the business community as well as faith based organizations to lead in support of programs and solutions that address homeless issues	HPPC, YVCOG General Membership, Concerned Individuals, and Faith Community, Chamber of Commerce and Local Businesses	2016	
8.4 Engage with consumer advocate agencies	Homeless Service Providers	2016	
8.5 Engage with homeless individuals	Homeless Service Providers, and advocates	2016	
8.6 Support and increase Valley-wide provider outreach to obtain new services that can address client needs.	YVCOG, HPPC,	1/1/2017	

Goal 9: Better serve youth homelessness

<u>Tasks</u>	<u>Responsible Party(ies)</u>	<u>Start Date</u>	<u>Completed</u>
9.1 Engage with agencies including, but not limited to, School Homeless Liaisons, Rod's House, Henry Beauchamp Community Center, Bonlender BESTY House, and Catholic Families Youth to identify youth and determine their specific needs	HPPC, YVCOG, School Districts, and Homeless Service Providers	3/1/2017	
9.2 Create a safe overnight facility model for youth experiencing homelessness	HPPC, YVCOG, School Districts, and Homeless Service Providers	6/1/2017	
9.3 Support after-school programs to encourage mentoring in a safe environment	HPPC, YVCOG, OIC, School Districts, and Homeless Service Providers	1/1/2017	
9.4 Create partnerships to advocate for youth homelessness and educate providers on legislatively acceptable strategies for addressing the needs of youth.	HPPC, YVCOG, Service Providers, local legislators, Catholic Charities/Catholic Families, YNHS, Building Changes, School Districts, and Department of Youth Homelessness	3/1/2017	
9.5 Increase opportunities for LGBTQ homeless youth to access support, resources, housing, and family reunification when possible.	YNHS "The Space", Building Changes, Department of Commerce Homeless Youth Services, School Districts, Rod's House, Homeless Service providers.	1/1/17	

Goal 10: Increase Capacity to add employment opportunities for self sufficiency

<u>Tasks</u>	<u>Responsible Party(ies)</u>	<u>Start Date</u>	<u>Completed</u>
10.1 Create or increase systems to help homeless people get and secure income. Train case managers on SOAR.	HPPC, YVCOG, and Homeless Service Providers (including Work Force Council)	5/1/2017	
10.3 Collaborate with the workforce, housing, and transportation systems to make employment an essential component of supportive housing models	HPPC, YVCOG, and Homeless Service Providers (including Work Force Council)	6/1/2017	

Goal 11: Increase Transparency of Program funding and services provided and Monitor program performance with measureable benchmarks.

Tasks	Responsible Party(ies)	Start Date	Completed
11.1 Create a transparent funding reporting system that is user friendly for all stakeholders.	HPPC, YVCOG, and Homeless Service Providers (including Work Force Council)	5/1/2017	
11.2 Maintain oversight of second tier sub recipient documentation to ensure program compliance	YVCOG	6/1/2017	
11.3 Monitor and track program performance to ensure performance targets are being met and make results known to all stakeholders	HPPC, YVCOG, and Homeless Service Providers	1/1/2017	