

WA STATE TEN-YEAR HOMELESS PLAN

Prevention, Diversion and Re-entry Strategies

Strategy 1: Expand successful local programs to prevent homelessness that provide short-term housing assistance, eviction prevention services, and other short-term supportive services; and build on the success of existing prevention programs within CTED and DSHS.

Description: At the local level, provide resources through local service provider activities to meet the critical needs of persons in crisis in order to prevent them from becoming homeless. Meet the short term housing costs of households with rental payments to prevent eviction, first and last month's rent, utilities deposits, utilities payments, mortgage default prevention, or other activities to stabilize their housing. Meet the crisis needs of households through landlord-tenant counseling, legal assistance, crisis respite needs, mental health treatment, and other stabilizing services designed to maintain their self-sufficiency. Promote best practices of housing stabilization programs for replication to local providers and continuums of care through training, networking and technical assistance. Promote financial literacy through training, counseling and education about predatory lending.

At the state level, build on successful state homelessness prevention programs, including eviction prevention services, emergency rental assistance and mortgage default prevention.

Specific Actions:

Work with local governments to develop better measurements and benchmarks, including the potential of tracking eviction rates. (one of four action steps/measures)

WDVA plan: Expanding King County Veterans Reintegration Services to include communities currently not included in the King County plan. Network with county Veterans Assistance Funds (VAF's), law enforcement personnel, judicial system and the Veterans Incarcerated Project (VIP) to include Pierce County. Market WDVA homeless programs and seek to develop better tracking systems by getting everyone onboard with the HMIS system.

Strategy 2: Review current pre-release planning policies for persons being discharged from state and local public institutions with the goal of reducing the number of people released into homelessness by improving links to local housing, services and other community supports prior to release.

Description: Work to expand housing options for people being discharged from state psychiatric hospitals or residential treatment facilities, state correctional facilities, local jails, and local hospitals. Improve local-level procedures for early planning and coordination of the release of people from jails, and patients from local hospitals and treatment facilities who will be at risk of homelessness upon release. Procedures include steps such as case managers entering correctional facilities to begin planning for the scheduled release of offenders, providing for local community support systems, re-entry counseling, employment and particularly, identification of housing.

Specific Actions:

At the state and local level actively pursue opportunities to link offenders who would be homeless at release with affordable housing. Explore development of collaborative programs among ICH member agencies.

WDVA plan: Although WDVA was not listed as a responsible agency for this measure, we are, however, expanding our outreach to the county jail systems throughout the state regarding our Veterans Incarcerated Project (VIP). Pierce County has just begun a VIP program, and Kitsap, Snohomish, and Clark counties have

expressed an interest and are already scheduled for briefings on the program. Secured the funding for 36 Section 8 housing vouchers in King County.

Strategy 3: Expand local programs, such as drug and mental health courts that divert people with mental illness and misdemeanor drug offenses from local jails.

Description: At the local level, promote the development of additional drug and mental health courts to provide specialized treatment to persons with drug addictions, responding to their disease rather than their crime. Provide funding to support the development of local drug or mental health courts. At the state level, support local programs diverting persons with mental illnesses and/or misdemeanor drug offenses from local jails. Seek tie-ins with state assisted housing when needed.

Specific Actions: Continue local planning for establishing drug or mental health courts in communities (local continuum of care records).

WDVA plan: Same as Strategy #2

Strategy 4: Establish new methods of working with landlords to prevent homelessness through eviction and establish incentives for landlords to rent to lower income households with limited or poor credit histories, felony convictions or poor rental history.

Description: At the local level, develop incentives for landlords including increased case management of tenants, security/damage deposits, tenant training and certification programs, risk reduction insurance pools and tax breaks. Develop a carefully designed and implemented community education program aimed at landlords, landlord associations and realtors to reduce the reluctance of landlords to rent to persons considered risks or with disabilities.

At the state level, explore the value and costs of incentives to local private for-profit and non-profit landlords to house more homeless people. Examples include risk pools for excess repair and maintenance expenses, 24/7 emergency response capacity and respite beds.

At the state level explore the issue of income source (e.g. Section 8) and protection order discrimination.

Specific Actions: Initiate new activities with landlords to increase willingness of landlords to rent to people with risks. (CTED)

WDVA plan: The WDVA's Homeless Veterans Reintegration Project for women veterans (HVRP-W serving King, Snohomish, Pierce, Kitsap, and Thurston counties) and Homeless Veterans Reintegration Project – Rural (HVRP-W serving 22 counties in E WA) both have established good working relationships with many of the landlords in our service delivery areas. WDVA's Veterans Estate Management Program (VEMP) also works directly with landlords to prevent homelessness among their caseload of over 570 veterans. Our programs for services to National Guard and Reserve personnel also work closely with landlords. Expand our marketing of programs and services to apartment complexes, Chambers of Commerce, etc...

Strategy 5: Preserve and expand the supply of housing affordable to persons with very low incomes to prevent homelessness and serve as an option for permanent housing affordable to homeless persons.

Description: At the state and local level, monitor federally assisted multi-family housing with expiring contracts that are in jeopardy of loss of housing for lower income households. Appropriate candidates for preservation should be actively pursued via interventions with owners, non-profit buyouts and other methods.

At the state and local level, develop joint solutions to the precipitous loss of affordable housing in mobile home parks. Provide solutions for preserving and/or replacing mobile home parks as a source of low and moderate income housing while protecting tenants' rights. Mobile home parks are being lost as landowners are redeveloping the parks for higher economic value. Many mobile homes cannot feasibly be moved to new locations. Several parks have significant health and safety conditions both with infrastructure and with the individual units owned by at-risk families who are unable to maintain the units. Funding is needed for relocation, rehabilitation costs, infrastructure for new affordable parks and enforcement of codes on landowners and mobile home owners.

At the state and local level, expand and support programs aimed at maintaining or repairing existing housing stock that is affordable to low-income people.

Specific Actions:

1. Local continuums will study the potential for retaining local mobile home parks in jeopardy of closure.
2. CTED will fund research and recommendations on potential models for preservation or replacement of at-risk mobile home parks.
3. CTED will continue to monitor contracts and seek solutions for retaining federally assisted projects in jeopardy of loss.
4. CTED will continue to provide housing rehabilitation funding for housing occupied by or available to lower income persons.

WDVA plan: WDVA is not listed as a responsible agency, however, through the King County Veterans, we have provided the funding for thirty-six (36) Section 8 housing vouchers for homeless veterans case managed through the VA Puget Sound Health Care System (VA PSHCS).

Strategy 6: Undertake new approaches to assist homeless youth to become self-sufficient and resilient. Work to improve existing efforts to successfully reintegrate youth who are transitioning out of foster care or are being released from JRA facilities.

Description: Outreach, shelter, case management and counseling are among the primary needs of youth. In addition, few communities have a solid understanding of the number of at-risk or homeless youth. Few communities have developed strategies to meet the needs of youth.

At the state and local level: planning for the needs of runaway and homeless youth needs to be conducted at both the state and local level. The plan must identify new approaches and provide additional housing and services (particularly skills development, education and employment) resources to impact the problem of hard-to-serve homeless youth.

At the state level, conduct a review of current transition programs designed to assist youth to create a housing and education/employment plan before they exit foster care, and identify barriers to successfully implementing these plans. Consider revision of legal requirements regarding emancipation, responsibilities of the state and reduction of barriers to access to non-crisis assistance.

Specific Actions:

1. At the state level, implement the existing "aging out extension" pilot to determine if extending foster care and services to 18-21 year olds, who are successfully participating in academic or vocational education programs, will improve their stability and potential for successful discharge from foster care. Include housing status in the information collected on participating youth. (DSHS)
2. At the state level review current outcomes of JRA re-entry programs and identify potential opportunities to improve outcomes. (DSHS)
3. At the state level, provide information on best practices for youth housing to local continuums of care. (CTED)
4. At the local level, explore opportunities for targeted services and housing for homeless youth and/or begin implementation of activities prioritized in local plans.
5. At the state level, compile and analyze data on youth aging out of foster care. (DSHS, ICH)

WDVA plan: WDVA is not listed as a responsible agency and does not work with homeless youth. We may, however, work with veterans who have children with them and by helping the veteran, we are helping the children to live more stable lives. We are also working with “Operation Military Kids,” a program designed to help children in schools whose parent/s are serving in Iraq.

Short-term Emergency Response

Strategy 7: Expand outreach, assessment and case management services to persons who are on the streets.

Description: Expand outreach to unsheltered populations, including “hard to serve” people who are living in the streets, in parks and other places not fit for humans, to encourage entry into housing and services. Provide early assessment and referral and case management services at intake. Promote coordination of access locally with multiple access points to housing and services. Add shelter beds, including safe haven models, only in those communities where there are limited emergency response options and where the additional of shelter will expedite movement of homeless people to affordable housing.

Specific Actions:

1. Provide funding for outreach services.
2. Expand access through multiple entry points into coordinated systems of housing and services.

WDVA plan: WDVA is not listed as a responsible agency, however, we provide outreach services through our HVRP-W (5 counties in the Puget Sound Region), HVRP-R (22 counties in E WA), King County Veterans Reintegration Services (KCVRS), and Retsil Transitional Housing Project in our service delivery areas, as well as the Defenders Fund statewide.

Strategy 8: Improve coordination among health, human services, housing, domestic violence and employment providers with the goal of preventing duplication, and simplifying/expediting access to and use of housing and mainstream services for people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.

Description: Develop improved information and referral systems to expedite local assessment of client needs for services and housing, determining eligibility, application for assistance and receipt of assistance for people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. Explore potential cooperative efforts towards system integration. Assure that case managers maintain high level of understanding and knowledge of state program requirements and applicability. Assure that victims of domestic violence receive legal protection to improve safety and secure assets necessary to remain housed.

Specific Actions:

1. Expand efforts at the local continuum level to exchange and coordinate the provision of mainstream housing and services programs.
2. Participate in state training of case management staff to upgrade skills and knowledge of state mainstream programs.
3. Explore potential to expand the number of local communities that have coordinated health, mental health, and substance abuse outreach and service provision.

WDVA plan: WDVA is not listed as a responsible agency, however, working on the ICH subcommittee will get our agency more involved in improving the coordination among health, human services, housing, domestic violence and employment providers.

Strategy 9: Expedite accessibility to mainstream services supports such as SSI, SSDI, GAU, Tribal benefits, Community Health Centers, Medicare, Medicaid, TANF, WIC, veteran’s benefits and other services. Improve

program flexibility and dedicate specialized staff to enroll and serve homelessness persons. Ensure that obtaining temporary housing does not result in a loss of benefits.

Description: Review and modify, as necessary, program delivery procedures to expedite benefits and reduce gaps in assistance. Enhance access to public services, and in particular, to assure homeless families' access to medical, dental, mental health services, and community and migrant health centers. Increase homeless families' awareness of, and access to, medical service. Provide training and information to local service providers to assure high standard of understanding and knowledge of state programs. Assure that homeless persons and persons at-risk who are not Medicaid eligible have primary care and health benefits. Expedite access to subsidized dental services for homeless persons.

Specific Actions:

1. Continue training program to expedite access to SSI.
2. Expand DSHS and DVA cooperative effort to identify DSHS clients that are also eligible for veteran's benefits.
3. Continue local implementation of effort to place staff in correctional facilities to enroll offenders in mainstream programs they are eligible for before release.
4. Explore the potential of expanding access to benefit specialists for programs to assist individuals and families experiencing homelessness.

WDVA Plan: WDVA has a contract with the DSHS Mental Health Division to expand the homeless network capacity to access VA and veteran service programs to include monetary benefits. WDVA will train Projects for Assistance in Transition from Homelessness (PATH) providers on how to access hard-to-get entitlements (SSI, SSDI, VA). Also, as a part of the ICH subcommittee, Homeless Data Group, Jim Rising met with the group and spoke with Liz Kohlenberg, DSHS Director of RDA (Research and Data Analysis) who seemed very interested in sharing data on veterans. Ric Price will become the WDVA representative for this team. WDVA has continued involvement with tribal veteran's representatives through services with the Advocates for American Indian Veterans (AAIV).

Housing Plus Services Strategies

Strategy 10: Coordinate CTED funding for housing and operating subsidies with DSHS/DOH/DVA/ESD/DOC mainstream funding for services to meet the needs of homeless people, including people with mental illnesses, chemical dependencies, histories of domestic violence, developmental disabilities, persons with HIV/AIDS, sex offenders and veterans.

Description: State programs have evolved separately over time with individual goals and objectives. State housing programs can help fill gaps in the housing affordable to homeless persons continuum in the state for special populations. The coordination of housing and operating subsidies of the individual programs will provide opportunities for connecting program resources to focus on targeted populations and support local activities designed to end homelessness.

Common application forms and criteria to expedite processing will be explored. A review of the programs' operational procedures and funding criteria will be conducted to determine if additional resources can be applied to homeless activities and if the operational/funding decision-making process can be modified to improve access to homeless providers and developers. As part of this assessment, possibilities for services integration to improve program delivery will be explored. Best practices from other states that have documented successful outcomes will be considered, including housing first and transition in place models.

Specific Actions:

1. ICH will explore opportunities for collaborative supportive housing programs for homeless people with mental illness and chemical dependencies and for people exiting state correctional facilities and jails.
2. CTED will add \$3 million from HOME General Fund to the \$5 million available from the Homeless Act for housing affordable to homeless persons.

WDVA plan: Ray Switzer has participated in the Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Community Block Grant Opportunities (CBGO) application scoring process and we are developing a list of contacts and community providers to assist in creating veteran’s components in their HUD applications. WDVA has obtained a \$300,000 Grant & Per Diem Program (G&PD) for transitional housing for homeless veterans. WDVA will also work with the ICH as a member of the committee.

Strategy 11: Develop additional permanent supportive housing for people with disabilities who have experienced long term homelessness to meet the specific needs and gaps identified in community plans for disabled homeless persons.

Description: At the local level, plan and create additional affordable housing for homeless people with ongoing supporting services. Consider housing first models that move people quickly into housing and then provide supporting services to assist them in maintaining their housing. Housing creation to be a combination of adding rent subsidies to existing housing, preservation and repair of existing affordable housing, and developing additional housing affordable to homeless people.

At the state level, coordinate allocation of housing and service investments for homeless people with disabilities and provide training and technical assistance to assist local providers in the development of permanent supportive housing.

Specific Actions:

1. Local communities will begin implementation of their strategies to increase housing affordable to homeless people who need long-term services through a combination of new development, preservation and repair, and rent subsidies.
2. Existing housing funds at the state and local levels will include a priority for permanent housing for homeless people.
3. CTED will pursue technical assistance resources to provide training for local housing developers and local non-profit and governmental agencies to assist them in planning, financing and developing new affordable housing with services.
4. Prepare a plan to address housing with state and local partners for people with mental health disabilities. (DSHS, CTED, local partners)

WDVA Plan: Veterans going through the Retsil Transitional Housing Project will have access to permanent supportive housing at the community level. Thirty-six (36) King County Section 8 housing vouchers have been purchased.

Strategy 12: Expand the amount of permanent housing with transitional services that is affordable to single adults, families, and youth who are homeless. Employ “housing first” and transition in place models, wherever appropriate, to assist homeless people toward self-sufficiency.

Description: Through “housing first” models, provide opportunities for homeless persons who are capable of independent living to move to permanent housing with services supports such as case management, child care, counseling and employment assistance. Conduct intake and assessments to screen for those persons that can benefit from scattered site independent living with supports. Stabilize homeless families and individuals by providing permanent housing resources, through tenant based rental assistance combined with supportive services.

Expand other programs that prevent unnecessary dislocation and homelessness such as “transitioning in place”, which selectively provides rental assistance to stabilize households in their current housing while they resolve other barriers to their self-sufficiency.

Specific Actions:

1. The Balance of Washington State Continuum will provide information and best practices models to 33 counties to encourage local county continuums to integrate housing first models into their programs where feasible.
2. Local continuums will provide additional funding for tenant based rental assistance to support housing first models.

WDVA plan: HVRP-W, HVRP-R, Retsil Transitional Housing Project, thirty-six (36) King County Section 8 housing vouchers.

Strategy 13: Increase the employment outcomes of homeless people by improving existing employment programs, including WorkSource, and design new employment programs combined with childcare, permanent housing and other essential supportive services to increase incomes of homeless persons and those at risk of homelessness.

Description: Self-reliance is impossible without employment income, health care and affordable housing. Disabled people have improved opportunities for increased self-sufficiency with employment. Homeless persons are often under-employed without the means to afford housing. Affordable and specialized childcare for homeless children suffering from mental illness is a major barrier for homeless persons and those at risk of homelessness obtaining and maintaining employment.

At the state and local level, focus resources on the increasing homeless peoples' income through developing improved access to jobs. Improve linkages of supportive activities such as education, vocational skills training, literacy, General Equivalency Diploma study, resume writing/interview skills development, employment placement and employment counseling. Pursue the development of community partnerships with employers to serve as a source of job training and employment with the goal of developing more livable wage jobs.

At the state level, explore options for additional funding for employment programs serving homeless persons. Coordinate employment and child care supports with affordable housing subsidies, and provide technical assistance to local continua on employment programs.

Specific Actions:

1. CTED will seek technical assistance to assist McKinney-Vento homeless project sponsors to improve the percentage of participants with jobs at exit of transitional housing through expansion and focus of services.
2. CTED and ESD staff will meet with the State Labor Council and the Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board to explore potential actions to improve employment opportunities for homeless persons.
3. Local continuums of care will develop activities to improve employment of participants in transitional housing and permanent supportive housing.
4. ESD will work with the state association of Workforce Development Council Directors to identify service delivery opportunities to more effectively serve the homeless population through partnering with the Developmental Disabilities and the Mental Health communities at both the state and local levels.

WDVA Plan: Work with Employment Security (ESD) staff and private for profit employment providers to improve employment opportunities. Through the HVRP-R program, we work with the VA's Health Care for Homeless Veterans (HCHV) who have a supportive employment program. WDVA has a database of recently separated veterans to include Guard and Reserve personnel. These individuals are contacted through a "Welcome Home" letter and are offered a variety of services which includes emergency support through the Veterans Innovation Program (Defenders Fund and the Competitive Grant Program).

Strategy 14: Identify existing state resources including land, facilities, and programs across all agencies that could be used more strategically to reduce homelessness.

Description: Conduct a review of state agencies' assets to determine resources that could be utilized for housing affordable to homeless persons and services delivery. Leverage these state resources with other state, local and/or federal funds to maximize the investment.

Specific Actions:

ICH will develop a process to identify potential state resources.

WDVA Plan: The Retsil Transitional Housing Project utilizes existing state resources for homeless veterans. WA Soldiers Home has 182 acres, some of which could be used for permanent housing for veterans. Work with ICH to develop process to identify potential state resources.

Strategy 15: Simplify access to state housing and services dollars through performance-based contracts that combine accountability for outcomes with flexibility in the use of funds to meet locally defined needs.

Description: Review state program procedures to remove unnecessary barriers and restrictions in programs serving the homeless and those at risk of homelessness. Expand performance-based standards and reporting for contractors of state funds. Coordinate among state agencies to establish a limited number of common outcomes and performance measures for programs.

Specific Actions:

1. Complete the implementation of performance-based evaluation systems for the Transitional Housing Operating and Rent Program and for the McKinney-Vento projects of the Balance of Washington State Continuum and implement performance based contracts for 2008. (CTED)
2. Implement performance based contracts for the new demonstration projects funded by the State Homeless Housing Program. (CTED)
3. Explore the potential of including performance measurement related to homeless persons in other state funded programs that serve homeless people. (ICH)

WDVA Plan: Work with ICH to explore the potential of including performance measurement related to homeless persons in other state funded programs that serve homeless people.

Strategy 16: Provide technical assistance and support to local and regional homeless planning organizations and homeless providers to improve their capacity to design and implement effective program activities and to measure the impacts of their plans and activities.

Description: Through a combination of workshops, provide information on "best practices", distribution of "how to" guides, planning facilitation and one on one assistance to providers, developers and continuum of care organizations, and assist local communities to successfully implement their plans. Examples of areas of assistance include: Point in time counts, HMIS, public education strategies, incentive programs for private landlords, discharge planning, development and management of sustainable permanent supportive housing, performance measurements/self-evaluation, prevention programs, best practices for housing and services programs for homeless youth and chronic homeless adults, mobile home park preservation/mitigation for closures and employment services.

Leverage other technical assistance funding sources such as federal housing technical assistance funds to maximize the impact through a coordinated approach. A minimum of two workshops per year to increase the capacity of local government, local homeless providers or local housing developers.

Specific Actions:

1. Provide funding for technical assistance to counties to facilitate the completion of their local plans. Provide funding from CTED and secure funding from HUD to provide technical assistance on the implementation of state and local plan strategies

WDVA plan: WDVA is not listed as a responsible agency, however, we provide technical assistance and support to the DSHS MHD PATH program and the Balance of Washington State Continuum.

Strategy 17: Collect and analyze data on homelessness utilizing the data to evaluate progress on outcomes, improve decision-making and expand public education.

Description: At the state level, establish data systems to determine the number of homeless clients served by DSHS, CTED, DOC, ESD, DVA, and DOH programs. Coordinate the collection and reporting of data on the housing status of all individuals served in these state agencies. Expedite the implementation of HMIS systems assuring compatibility among the systems of individual continuums in the state. Utilize data sources for performance measurement and assessment of progress against outcomes of the Plan. Make use of the data to make program decisions and modification of procedures as needed to expedite activities under the plan. Expand the collection of data from state agencies to include identification of individuals and families who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. Utilize data for public education on a statewide and local level. At the local level, provide information and data for the HMIS database and report annually on progress toward ending homelessness. Continuums will have increased capacity to make sound decisions based upon data available for assessment of progress against outcomes.

Specific Actions:

1. ICH will explore cross-agency reporting on homeless clients in state-funded programs.
2. ICH will compile and review housing status/homeless data currently collected by state programs.
3. CTED will expand coverage of HMIS to additional counties.
4. CTED will provide training and technical assistance to local Continuums of Care and/or local housing affordable to homeless persons and services providers on input and standards requirements.
5. CTED will develop a statewide report (as well as county by county reports) on HMIS data and performance measurement data.
6. CTED will work with all eight continuums of care HMIS system coordinators to assure that the independent systems in the state are sufficiently compatible to provide statewide data.
7. CTED will explore the possibility of altering the HMIS requirements to collect housing status for 30 days as opposed to the current “night before.”

WDVA Plan: As a member of the ICH, will help to explore cross-agency reporting on homeless clients in state-funded programs. Compile and review housing status/homeless data currently collected by state programs through the HMIS program.

Strategy 18: Create community education strategies to build public awareness and support for local activities to end homelessness.

Description: Currently, the general public has limited information about homelessness: who is homeless, what is the nature of their problems, and what are the solutions to those problems. Investments in education should include building better public understanding about the answers to these questions and more support for investments to end homelessness. Communicating the successes of existing efforts is essential to expanding implementation of solutions statewide.

A community education program on the local level, supported by information and technical assistance at the state level is an essential component to ending homelessness in Washington State.

Specific Actions:

1. At the state level, develop and distribute materials that describe current state programs serving homeless people and provide specific information on how to access homeless services and housing across the state.
2. At the state level provide technical assistance and materials to support local community education efforts
3. At the local level, develop strategies to provide information on homeless needs and successes in meeting those needs to the public and local decision-makers.

WDVA Plan: Continue in our efforts to market the agency and our programs relating to homelessness through conferences, meetings with other state, federal, and community organizations in our service delivery areas and expand our influence in community-based programs throughout the state.