

Mason County 5-Year Homeless Housing Plan

December 2019 – December 2024

Background

Washington State law requires that each county develop a five-year homeless housing plan that is consistent with the local plan guidelines issued by the Department of Commerce.

Recognizing the seriousness of the homeless crisis, the Washington State Legislature passed the Homeless Housing and Assistance Act (Chapter 43.185C RCW) in 2005 (the “Act”). The Act, along with legislation, allows the collection of surcharges on documents recorded for the sale and/or transfer of real property to fund homeless programs. The document recording surcharge funds (“surcharge funds”) are used by the state and local government agencies to reduce homelessness.

The Consolidated Homeless Grant Program (CHG) is awarded to Counties through a bi-annual process. Each county subgrants these funds to support a variety of activities that target households with an area median income of less than 30%. These funds are governed by the contract between the Department of Commerce and the county and the manual “Guidelines for the Consolidated Homeless Grant”. These funds support administration, operations, and facilities support for such programming as emergency shelters, transitional housing, rapid re-housing, diversion, coordinated entry, and data collection and reporting.

2163 Funds (RCW 36.22.179) Homeless Housing and Assistance: The Homeless Housing Grant Program was created in Washington State by Engrossed Second Substitute House Bill (ESSHB) 2163 on August 1, 2005. The law created a document recording fee on certain documents to be utilized by local jurisdictions to reduce homelessness. Funds are obtained through an imposed surcharge on document recording fees of real property, dedicating funding to low-income and very-low income individuals. Administration of the grant funds are shared between local governments and the state. Eligible uses of the funds are to provide housing and shelter for homeless people including, but not limited to: Grants to operate, repair, and staff shelters; grants to operate transitional housing; partial payments for rental assistance; consolidated emergency assistance; overnight youth shelters; grants and vouchers designated for victims of human trafficking and their families; and emergency shelter assistance; and fund the homeless housing grant program.

These funds provide resources to agencies that respond to the immediacy and urgency of homelessness and make sure that everyone has a safe and appropriate place to live. Homelessness is prevented whenever possible, or if it can't be prevented, it is a rare, brief and one-time experience as part of the Homeless Crisis Response System. Mason County Community Services is committed to supporting agencies that have a primary objective of ending homelessness in Mason County. It also supports the State Vision of “no person left living outside”.

Strategic Plan

Objective #1

Quickly identify and engage people experiencing homelessness under the state definition, and all unaccompanied youth under any federal definition, through outreach and coordination between every system that encounters people experiencing homelessness.

Measures of Success

- A) Communities with Street Outreach projects: Increase percentage of exits to positive outcome destinations to the level of the top performing 20 percent of homeless crisis response systems nationwide.
- B) Compliance with state and federal Coordinated Entry Data Collection requirements in order to build and maintain active lists of people experiencing homelessness and to track the homelessness status, engagement and housing placements for each household.

Strategies

- 1) Use outreach and coordination between every system that encounters people experiencing homelessness to quickly identify and engage people experiencing homelessness into services that result in a housing solution.
- 2) Form a CE Advisory Board to develop and maintain policies and procedures that are recommended to Crossroads Housing Board to adopt. This advisory board will also evaluate prioritization practices and vulnerability assessments.
- 3) Work with the Department of Commerce's Coordinated Entry manager in the development of a CE advisory board, prioritization, policies and procedures, and implementation of the CE Core Elements Manual's best practices.
- 4) Outreach: A) expand outreach to tribes, jail, law enforcement, hospital, schools, food banks, DSHS, Veterans, and behavioral health agencies: B) Outreach to key agencies to ensure households have access to and are referred to CE; C) Leverage current street outreach programs and/or partner with agencies coordinate outreach efforts that quickly identify and engage people experiencing homelessness
- 5) Quickly identify and engage key subpopulations to achieve functional zero for each
- 6) Identify and implement staff trainings such as diversion, progressive engagement, motivational interviewing, trauma informed care, etc.
- 7) Apply for additional funding sources to aid the outreach and engagement process

Current Condition

Crossroads Housing developed Coordinated Entry in May 2016 as a response to a "100 Day Challenge" to house all children experiencing unsheltered homelessness and create lasting system change. Coordinated Entry became locally known as the Housing Crisis Support Center in 2017 and serves all of Mason County through two access points Crossroads Housing and North Mason Resources. Community Action Council's HEN program became an access point for single adults in 2018. No street outreach

exists and there is some outreach to agencies. Crossroads Housing is the lead agency for Coordinated Entry.

Actions to Meet State Objective #1

Success is measured by meeting deadlines and the Objective Measures of Success

Action	Activity / Program	Responsible Party	Timeline / Milestone
Compliance with Washington State Coordinated Entry Guidelines and Consolidated Homeless Grant	1) Form CE Advisory Board 2) Implement all policies and procedures required by the WA State CE Guidelines 3) Implement the Coordinated Entry Core Elements Manual 4) CE Advisory Board to evaluate the CE system and document in CE P&P 5) Implement all recommendations by the Dept. of Commerce CE evaluation from April 2019	Crossroads & CE Advisory Board	2019 – Form Advisory Board 2019 – 2020 – Implement P&P per WA State CE Guidelines and from Commerce recommendations from CE Evaluation 2020 – Implement CE Core Elements Annually – update P&P
Quickly identify and engage people experiencing homelessness	1) Identify all systems that encounter people experiencing homelessness and have CE connect with each regularly 2) Apply for funding through OHY and YHDP to expand outreach efforts 3) Expand CE Access points 4) Improve CE marketing efforts	Crossroads Housing Youth Funding: Shelton Family Center, Coffee Oasis, and Crossroads Housing	2019 – Apply for OHY and YHDP Funding 2019 – 2024 – continuously evaluate access points, coverage and marketing efforts
Tracking and Reporting	CE lead agency to report on the homelessness status, engagement and housing placement for each HH	Crossroads	Annual report
Increase Staff Training	1) Comply with all trainings required by the Dept. of Commerce 2) Provide training in trauma informed care, diversion and progressive engagement 3) Agencies keep a training log on program staff	Crossroads and Mason County	Annual Trainings

Objective #2

Prioritize housing for people with the greatest need

Measures of Success

- A) Compliance with state and federal Coordinated Entry requirements for all projects receiving federal, state and local homeless funds.
- B) Consider implementation of the Coordinated Entry Core Element recommendations and the Office of Homeless Youth's "Five recommendations for making Coordinated Entry work for youth and young adults
- C) Successful implementation of prioritization policies for all projects receiving federal, state and local homeless funds, resulting in prioritized people consistently housed in a timely manner.
- D) Department of Commerce CHG Grant sections 2.1.1, 8.4.2 and 8.4.4 - Prioritize unsheltered homeless households and Increase percent served of unsheltered homeless households by 5% or maintain compliance level.

Strategies

- 1) Create prioritization policies according to the WA State CE Guidelines and CE Core Elements
- 2) Revamp the vulnerability assessment and continually evaluate
- 3) Focus By-Name meetings on the prioritization of households for programs and services they qualify and continue problem solving support among case managers

Current Condition

All households that contact Coordinated Entry and are literally homeless are assessed using a vulnerability assessment and referred to programs they qualify for and have open capacity. A master list is kept and twice per month a "by-name list" meeting is held to discuss the status and next steps for households on this list. The vulnerability assessment contains items that are barriers to housing and the same assessment is used for all subpopulations. While the goal is to serve and house the most vulnerable, who is served can be driven by the programs that are available in the community and, in the case of finding market rate housing, by who the landlord selects. Opportunities exist to partner with our local housing authority and revamp the vulnerability index. As in Objective #1, staff training in progressive engagement, motivational interviewing and diversion will help in the engagement of households experiencing homelessness and aid in resolving their housing crisis. In 2018, Mason County's unsheltered entries are 70.6% while the state average is 54%. Mason County meets the compliance level of the Consolidated Homeless Grant. A stakeholder group began meeting in November of 2017 focused solely on supporting veterans obtain housing and other services.

Actions to Meet State Objective #2

Success is measured by meeting deadlines and the Objective Measures of Success

Action	Activity / Program	Responsible Party	Timeline / Milestone
Compliance with all Prioritization Policies	1) CE Advisory Board/Governing Body to	Crossroads & Coordinated	Immediately, monthly and when new policies

	<p>evaluate and revamp prioritization policy in accordance with WA State CE Guidelines and Consolidated Homeless Grant</p> <p>2) Evaluate vulnerability assessment and adjust based on recommendations by the CE Advisory Board</p> <p>3) Implement Coordinated Entry Core Elements as recommended by the CE Advisory Board</p>	Entry Advisory Board	implemented, annually
<p>Increase percent served of unsheltered homeless households (or maintain current rate if in compliance with the Dept. of Commerce CHG Grant)</p>	<p>1) Continue to prioritize unsheltered homeless households into emergency shelter, transitional housing, homeless prevention, or any permanent housing project intervention.</p> <p>2) Prioritize households with unsheltered homelessness in their history</p>	Crossroads	Monthly data review

Objective #3

Operate an effective and efficient homeless crisis response system that swiftly moves people into stable permanent housing

Measures of Success

- A. Increase percentage of exits to permanent housing to the level of the top performing 20% of homeless crisis response systems nationwide
 - a. Increase percentage of exits to permanent housing from emergency shelters to at least 50%
 - b. Increase percentage of exits to permanent housing from Rapid Rehousing Projects to at least 80%
 - c. Increase percentage of exits to permanent housing from Transitional Housing Projects to at least 80%
- B. Reduce system returns to homelessness after exit to permanent housing to less than 10% (ES 10%, RRH & TH 5%)
- C. Reduce average length of time homeless of those served to less than 90 days

Strategies

- 1) Coordinated Entry collaborates with all shelters to ensure program participants are referred to coordinated entry and a housing plan is developed for all shelter guests. Shelter case managers implement progressive engagement, employment and other

means to help shelter guests become housed. Case managers also collaborate with the rapid rehousing staff when a shelter guest needs rental assistance to enter housing.

- 2) Housing and Behavioral Health providers partner to engage people into treatment and assist those in need of housing to remain stably housed
- 3) Determine whether a year-round shelter is needed for adults and how this will be funded
- 4) Create a task force (or work group) to explore overflow shelter options throughout the year, but especially during the winter months
- 5) Consider innovative solutions to transitional housing such as master leasing units (home or apartment) where the lease can be transferred to the tenant
- 7) Maximize resources to house people, especially where funds exist for targeted subpopulations (e.g. various funds such as VASH, SSVF, local grants, Office of Homeless Youth, local organizations)
- 8) Improve data quality to minimize error responses to housing destination that impact "exits to permanent housing" and improves confidence in the data measuring this outcome
- 9) Housing and Behavioral Health Advisory Board to evaluate the crisis response system at least annually, identify gaps and make funding recommendations to the BoCC to invest in intervention types and agencies that are successful in achieving outcomes and reducing homelessness toward functional zero. Leverage Treatment Sales Tax Funds to assist with the housing and homelessness crisis for individuals involved in treatment and recovery programs.

Current Condition - Metrics (7/1/17 to 6/30/18)

	Total Project Entries	Length of Time Homeless (days)	Exits to Permanent Housing	Returns to Homelessness	Unsheltered Entries
WA State	82,446	174	59%	15%	53%
Mason County	805	83	37%	13%	70%
Emergency Shelters	323		23%	16%	
Rapid Rehousing	89		74%	5%	
Transitional Housing	9		86%	29%	

Current Conditions – Comments

Mason County has three shelters: adult, family and domestic violence. The adult shelter operates under a 6-month special use permit and prior to 2017 was open when the temperatures were 32 degrees or below. In the 2017-2018, this shelter received enough funding to remain open for 100 consecutive days during the coldest months. During 2018-2019 the shelter received enough funding to be open for the 6-month

duration of the special use permit. Consideration should be given for a year-round shelter for single adults.

Transitional Housing: 5 units are owned by Crossroads Housing and 7 homes are master leased also through Crossroads

Rapid Rehousing: Crossroads operates a rapid rehousing program and Community Action Council operates the HEN rapid rehousing program

Housing and Behavioral Health Advisory Board created in August of 2018 to evaluate the crisis response system, identify gaps, leverage funding sources, and make funding recommendations to the BoCC

Opportunities exist to expand landlord relations, find creative housing solutions to improve exits to permanent housing, community prioritization, and improve agency collaboration to house program participants.

Actions to Meet State Objective #3

Success is measured by meeting deadlines and the Objective Measures of Success

Action	Activity / Program	Responsible Party	Timeline / Milestone
Improve System Exits (shelter + RRH + TH) to PH by 20 percentage points	1) Prioritize shelter participants for RRH 2) Create robust Housing Stability Plans 3) Create housing transition plans for shelter guests when shelter closes and partner with all agencies during this time 4) Partner with behavioral health agencies 5) By name lists both intra and inter agency	Crossroads Housing (ES, RRH) Community Action Council (RRH) Community Lifeline (ES) Turning Pointe (ES)	2022 Milestone – at target
Increase Shelter Exits to PH to 50%	6) Leverage technology for sharing information and collaborating with other agencies	Crossroads, Community Lifeline, Turning Pointe	2022 Milestone – at target
Maintain Transitional Housing Exits to PH or at least 80%	7) Work with Housing Authority on prioritization process where funding allows	Crossroads	2022 Milestone – at target
Increase Rapid Rehousing Exits to PH to at least 80%	8) Expand shelter capacity (year-round shelter for adults and use CHG funds according to allowable expenses when no shelter beds are available), partner with churches for overflow, emergency and identified populations (e.g. elderly and/or HH w/ minor children)	Crossroads	2022 Milestone – at target
Increase Rapid Rehousing Exits (HEN) to PH to at least 80%		Community Action Council	2022 Milestone – at target
Improve Data Quality	A program manager or director reviews data quality frequently and trains staff regularly	Crossroads, Community Lifeline, Turning Pointe, Community	Monthly data review

		Action Council	
Increase the number of Landlords renting to households in need of supportive services and/or people experiencing homelessness Increase the number of master-lease units (homes)	1) Agencies work together to approach property management companies 2) Landlord event annually and outreach by all agencies with exits to permanent housing outcome requirements 3) Program staff dedicated to landlord relations that benefits the County 4) Engage WA Landlord Association, Housing Authority and Realtor Associations	Crossroads, Community Lifeline, Turning Pointe, Community Action Council	Agencies report landlord outreach efforts quarterly to Mason County
Staff Training	Example Trainings: Data quality, progressive engagement, case management, motivational interviewing, follow up Agency document training in log for program staff	Crossroads Housing Community Action Council Community Lifeline Turning Pointe	Monthly and Annually depending on type of training
Reduce Returns to homelessness	1) Case management and supportive services continue after the person/family is housed to ensure stability and partner with Behavioral Health agencies where appropriate 2) Use By-Name meetings to match people to the right programs and supportive services	Crossroads Housing Community Action Council Community Lifeline Turning Pointe	2022 Milestone – at benchmark by intervention type

Objective #4

A projection of the impact of the fully implemented local plan on the number of households housed and the number of households left unsheltered, assuming existing resources and state policies.

Measures of Success

An estimate of people experiencing homelessness that will be housed during 2024 after successful implementation of the local plan using existing resources, and the count of households left unsheltered at a point in time in 2024, based on credible data and research; including the data assumptions, calculations, and related citations necessary for outside parties to review and reproduce the estimate.

Strategies

- A) Use tools provided by the Department of Commerce to assist in this prediction
- B) Use data from a variety of sources to project an estimate
- C) Use the data to identify housing solutions that will end homelessness

Current Condition PIT Count	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Unsheltered	224	139	289	98	96
Sheltered	127	111	127	118	136
TOTAL	351	250	416	216	232

Actions to Meet State Objective #4

Success is measured by meeting deadlines and the Objective Measures of Success

Action	Activity / Program	Responsible Party	Timeline / Milestone
Projection of unsheltered homeless individuals by 2024	Use the Department of Commerce Tool for this calculation	Mason County Public Health	2024 Prediction Unsheltered – 69 HH

Objective #5

Address racial disparities among people experiencing homelessness

Measures of Success

Completion of an initial analysis using a racial equity tool and data provided by the Department of Commerce

Current Condition

Mason County is a rural county that has experienced minimal population growth since 2010. Most of the population lives in the unincorporated areas of the county. According to the WA State Office of Financial Management, in 2017, Mason County's population was 63,190. Coordinated Entry completed assessments on 999 individuals or 1.5% of the population. The age categories on the census data do not match HMIS therefore confounding age group comparisons. 27% of the general population is under the age of 24 while 53% under the age of 24 accessed CE showing that a larger portion of the individuals under the age of 24 accessed CE either as an individual or part of a household. The inverse is true of those over the age of 24. 73% of the general population compared with 47% that accessed CE over the age of 24. 37% of the population that accessed CE identified as male, 62% as female and less than 1% transgender. In 2017 the population by race and ethnicity is as follows: 88% white, 5% 2 or more races, 4% American Indian, and 1% of less Asian, Black and Pacific Islander. 10% of the general population identifies as Hispanic. A challenge in analyzing the data for disproportionality, underserved, and/or underrepresented is that HMIS allows a "client refused" or "doesn't know" answer which represented 9% of the population that accessed CE. Races that accessed CE at a higher proportion in the general population are American Indian (0.7% higher), Black (1.3% higher), and 2 or more races (3%

higher). In contrast, races that accessed CE at a lower proportion are Asian (0%, 1% less), White (13% less), and Pacific Islander remained the same at 1%.

Actions to Meet State Objective #5

Success is measured by meeting deadlines and the Objective Measures of Success

Action	Activity / Program	Responsible Party	Timeline / Milestone
Eliminate gender and racial disparities	Use racial equity tool provided by the Department of Commerce Coordinated Entry advisory board and agencies evaluate data and devise plans to minimize any disparities that exist	All Coordinated Entry Advisory Board	Annual review by CE Advisory Board

Supportive Efforts aimed at Ending Homelessness

The local plan guidance from the Department of Commerce requires that plans are aimed at ending homelessness. This section of the plan address the community efforts needed to achieve this goal and reaching functional zero for at least two subpopulations.

Measure of Success

Functional zero for at least two subpopulations (Consolidated Homeless Grant section 8.4.3)

Strategies

- 1) Use "2060" Local Document Recording Fees to implement an affordable housing and preservation program
- 2) Workforce Housing Collaborative Team to expand resources that focuses on affordable rental housing and affordable home ownership for people that are working, and housing cost burdened
- 3) Create a Housing Trust Fund Task Force to identify community needs and housing projects that results in a Housing Trust Fund application
- 4) Apply for other grant funding to aid the crisis response system and provides additional funding to end homelessness within subpopulations
- 5) Work with City and County Planning and Permitting departments on ways to attract development and, if needed, incentivize private developers, revise codes, and lift restrictions that make it challenge to build
- 6) Improve the viability of the Mason County Housing Authority
- 7) Support state and local initiatives that increase housing stock
- 8) 30-unit Tiny Home village for veterans

- 9) Explore innovative, tenant-based permanent supportive housing solutions
- 10) Consider alternative living arrangements such as RV's and ADU's as allowable within city limits and Mason County

Current Condition

An Interlocal Agreement between the City of Shelton and Mason County was adopted in February of 2019 for affordable housing and homeless services. In April 2019 the City of Shelton will vote on land for an approved and funded 30-unit tiny home village for veterans. Washington state is faced with a housing shortage. When it comes to attracting developers' rural counties, like Mason, are slightly disadvantaged due to higher risk and smaller returns on investment. 490 homes are needed each year just to keep pace with projected population growth and current building trends show that Mason County is still short 210 homes per year to keep pace. Rural communities are also challenged with organizational capacity to purchase property, manage these properties and provide additional services for supportive housing homes. The Housing Trust Fund (HTF) is a complicated application that takes experienced developers, seed money and local agencies to eventually own and manage the properties. Therefore, a HTF work group or task force is needed to complete a competitive application.

Washington State vacancy rates are around 3% and rent prices, the primary driver for homelessness, continue to rise. Mason County is in a tier that evaluates vacancy rates every five years which does not give an accurate reflection of any given year.

Actions to support the goal of ending homelessness

Success is measured by meeting deadlines and the Objective Measures of Success

Action	Activity / Program	Responsible Party	Timeline / Milestone
Increase market rate housing	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Recruit developers 2. Explore ways to incentivize developers 3. Encourage micro-units, studio and one-bedroom units for single adults 	City and County Planning and Building Departments	Year over year increase in permits for building
Increase workforce housing (affordable rental and home ownership)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Recruit developers 2. Explore ways to incentivize developers 	Work Force Housing Collaborative	One project completed by 2024
Increase Public Housing	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Explore opportunities to expand the capacity of the Housing Authority 2. Encourage studio and one-bedroom units for single adults Implement HB 1406	Housing Authority and BoCC	Ongoing
Increase permanent supportive housing units	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Identify key agencies, recruit and build Housing Trust Fund Team 	Housing Trust Fund Task Force	HTF application submitted by 2024
Evaluate the capacity	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Use of "2060" funds to 	Mason County	Ongoing

needs for emergency shelter and transitional housing	support transitional housing projects 2. Identify needs and work with other organizations on shelter capacity	Public Health, Crossroads Housing, Community Lifeline and Turning Pointe	
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Recommendations to the State

The local plan guidance from the Department of Commerce, “strongly encourages local governments to include in their plans recommendations to the state for changes in state laws, policies and resources that may be necessary to further reduce homelessness and work toward the goal of ending homelessness as defined under the federal criteria”. This section of the plan attempts to address this recommendation.

Step 1 - Identify individuals, elected officials and advisory boards along with the process to make recommendations

Example Topics:

- State homeless housing program contract requirements
- State data collection and reporting
- State technical assistance and training
- Refinements, additions, or replacements for existing homeless system performance measures and benchmarks
- State behavioral health policies and investments
- State land use laws and resources
- Local taxing authority
- Criminal and civil law and enforcement
- Transportation policy
- Social services
- Supports for people with disabilities
- Medicare / Medicaid benefits
- Subsidized housing
- Market rate / workforce affordable housing