

# Special Focus Areas: Homelessness and Heroin & Prescription Opioids



# Homelessness System, Services and Needs in King County, Bellevue and East King County

## Homelessness Response:

- Emergency & Winter Shelters
- Day & Drop-in Centers
- Outreach
- Permanent Supportive & Supportive Housing

**All Home**  
goals are to  
make  
homelessness  
rare, eliminate  
racial disparities,  
make it a brief  
and one-time  
occurrence.

 **873** homeless  
students in EKG or  
**12%** of the total  
number of homeless  
students in King County

Over **1,200**  
men, women and children received  
**temporary shelter**  
in EKC



# SPECIAL FOCUS AREA: HOMELESSNESS SYSTEM, SERVICES AND NEEDS IN KING COUNTY, BELLEVUE AND EAST KING COUNTY

Homelessness continues to be a crisis in King County. So much so that in November 2015, County Executive Dow Constantine declared homelessness a state of emergency.<sup>1</sup> Over the past several years, the number of unsheltered people have steadily and visibly increased on the Eastside as well, a sub-region that many King County residents would be surprised to find single adults, children and families and youth living on the streets, in vehicles

and in shelters. **In 2015-16, over 1,200 men, women and children received temporary shelter and other services from a variety of agencies in East King County located throughout the major cities.**

For example, during the winter of 2016-2017, the men's winter shelter in Bellevue served a total of 429 unduplicated men, the shelter for women served 192 women and the winter shelter for families served 137 adults and 182 children all increases compared to previous years.<sup>2</sup>

This Special Focus Area of the 2017-2018 Human Services Needs Update provides:

- Root causes of homelessness
- Bellevue's approach to addressing homelessness
- Preventing homelessness
- An overview of All Home, the lead organization in Seattle and King County in coordinating the work to respond to homelessness and its root causes

- Data trends
- Services currently available for people experiencing homelessness
- Implications/Gaps

## Root Causes of Homelessness

Though studies support that the main root cause of homelessness is poverty, there are also several recent trends that contribute to people becoming homeless.

Affordable rental housing, is in short supply with often a long waiting list, often years, for public housing units. Another trend is the lack of living wage jobs. It is estimated that between 10% and 20% of the population experiencing homelessness is employed but minimum wage jobs don't pay for the cost of an apartment, particularly in the Seattle and East King County area. While King County is economically vibrant and experiencing growth, income inequality and the ability of families living in poverty to maintain housing stability is strained. The recession which began in December 2007 and ended in June 2009 also significantly reduced federal funding for affordable housing and homeless programs.<sup>3</sup>

Other issues that contribute to a person becoming homeless include:

- Catastrophic medical events resulting in large bills combined with limited or no health insurance
- Mental illness that often decreases employment options and ability to take care of one's self
- Substance Use Disorder, especially relevant due to the recent Heroin and Opioid Crisis
- Domestic Violence
- Traumatic Brain injury or PTSD experienced by returning veterans
- Foster children who "age out" of the child welfare system and at age 18 have no family or other supports to help them transition into adulthood
- LGBTQ youth whose parents who are not supportive of their gender choices<sup>4</sup>

Another lens by which to look at the what causes homelessness is providing what is needed to ensure that all residents have equal access to opportunity including:

- Good Health (physical and mental)
- Housing
- Education
- Employment
- Transportation
- Social Connections

## Bellevue's approach to addressing homelessness

Working together with other eastside jurisdictions and agencies, our community provides a wide network of services to support individuals experiencing homelessness. The City of Bellevue has undertaken a comprehensive approach toward homelessness and is guided by a commitment to compassion and pragmatism, with the focus on preventing individuals from becoming homeless, transitioning individuals out of homelessness while maintaining our commitment to enforce current

codes. This approach requires a high level of coordination between services, facilities, policies and enforcement.

In partnership with local community providers, the system of response to homelessness in Bellevue falls broadly into these categories:

- Services to prevent homelessness – basic needs provision, emergency financial assistance, counseling and treatment programs, medical care, employment opportunities, affordable housing;
- Services for individuals experiencing homelessness – mental health resources, job retraining programs, housing assistance, and addiction treatment and counseling; life coaching, etc.;
- Facilities for individuals experiencing homeless – includes day centers, shelters, and other facilities where homeless individuals can not only sleep, but keep belongings, meet with case managers, and focus on addressing underlying issues that may have contributed to their situation; and
- Enforcement – response to behaviors and activities that don't comply with existing city rules and regulations. This would include police and code enforcement response to unauthorized encampments on private or city-owned property, as well as any criminal activity.

## Prevention: What are best practices?

Research indicates that some of the best practices to prevent homelessness include the following components:

- Jobs that pay a livable wage, and job training and education that helps workers move up the wage and job ladder;
- Economic development to create a wider range of opportunities for living wage jobs, including those that do not require advanced college degrees;

- Preservation and creation of more affordable housing that takes into account family income as rents and other basic needs increase;
- Affordable, quality childcare so that parents can work knowing that their children are well taken care of;
- Access to assistance that already exists such as tax credits and utilizes rebates for low-income people that frees up more of their limited income for housing;
- Access to transportation to maintain employment and needed services;
- Elimination of racial disparities by promoting equity and social justice in funding and program design;
- Healthcare that provides for both mental and physical health services;
- Access to emergency assistance for times of crisis, such as financial help to prevent eviction, legal aid for those who have had past criminal histories.<sup>5</sup>

## All Home (formerly The Committee to End Homelessness)

### History

- In 2005 the Committee to End Homelessness was formed in King County, and adopted a 10-Year Plan to End Homelessness (2005-2015). These plans were promoted by the Federal Government and eventually required by Washington State. King County's plan focused on preventing homelessness, coordinating countywide, building political will, securing 9,500 units of housing, providing culturally competent services, and measuring progress.
- The plan set an aspirational goal for the community. Over the past decade, the community responded with unprecedented partnerships and results. Nearly 40,000 people exited homelessness for stable housing, and 85 percent stabilized in that

housing for at least two years. More than 5,700 units of housing were secured, and Seattle/King County now has the third most housing for the homeless in the nation.<sup>6</sup>

- Innovative public/private partnerships were developed, including the Campaign to End Chronic Homelessness, Landlord Liaison Project, Family Homelessness Initiative, and the Homeless Youth and Young Adult Initiative. Funding has increased through state and local levies, businesses, faith communities, nonprofits, local governments, and people experiencing homelessness came together to address the crisis of homelessness.

- In July 2015, King County, the cities of Seattle and Bellevue, Sound Cities Association, and United Way all endorsed a new 4-year homelessness strategic plan.<sup>7</sup> The effort, renamed **All Home, includes more than 500 stakeholders-people experiencing homelessness, nonprofits, businesses, faith leaders, and residents. Their goals are to make homelessness in King County rare, to eliminate racial disparities, and, if one becomes homeless, to make it a brief and one-time occurrence only.**<sup>8</sup> The plan fulfills federal and state requirements that local jurisdictions must have a community plan for addressing homelessness. All Home is the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development designated Continuum of Care for the Seattle/King County area, and King County receives State Consolidated Homeless Grant funding from Washington State. The governance structure for All Home includes a Coordinating Board, Funders Alignment Committee, Consumer Advisory Council, System Performance Committee and Coordinated Entry Policy Committee.

In addition, there are three affinity groups composed of providers and funders that focus on three population groups: Families, Youth and Young Adults, and Single Adults and Veterans. Each has its own Strategic Plan that corresponds to the overarching All Home Strategic Plan.<sup>9</sup>

## All Home Homeless Response System for King County

All Home’s vision of a homeless response system focuses on the principles of Housing First and Racial Equity. Housing First is a homeless system orientation designed to return people experiencing homelessness to housing as quickly as possible without a housing readiness test or other conditions to entering housing. Racial Equity is a core component of the system because people of color are disproportionately represented among the numbers of people experiencing homelessness.

The response system has the following components:

- Core component of All Home is **Coordinated Entry for All (CEA)**. CEA is the access point for which people who are experiencing homelessness are assessed for and connected to homeless housing resources. The purpose of a coordinated entry system

is to ensure that all people have a fair and equal access and are quickly identified, assessed for and connected to housing or homeless assistance based on their strengths and needs. A common assessment tool, the Housing Triage Assessment, is used; participants’ vulnerability scores place them in “bands” that determine if they are eligible for services including housing. Higher scores indicate the person is more vulnerable and is more likely to be placed in permanent supportive housing.

- Reducing the number of people who experience homelessness by targeting **Prevention** resources: Homeless prevention strategies assist households in resolving a housing crisis that would otherwise result in homelessness.
- Reducing the number of people who need emergency shelter by utilizing **Diversion** strategies: Diversion services target households that are requesting entry into shelter or housing and have not yet accessed homeless services. Diversion services assist households to identify immediate, alternative housing arrangements and, if necessary connect them with services and financial assistance to help them obtain or return to housing.
- Providing immediate safety and a pathway to housing through **Emergency Shelter**: Emergency shelters offer temporary housing to people living outside or in their vehicles to ensure their safety as well as allow them an opportunity to connect with needed, available resources, such as mental health counseling, and be assessed for

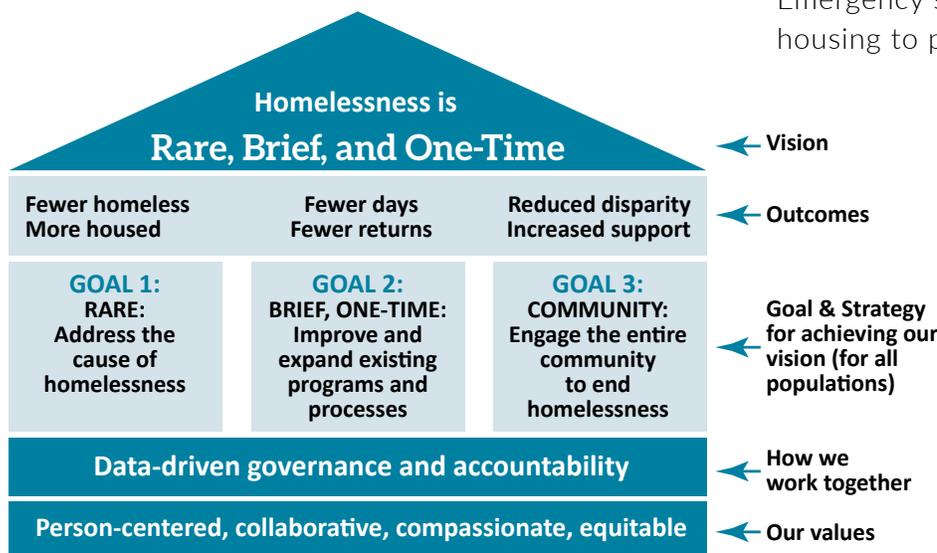


Figure 1 | Source: All Home Strategic Plan, 2015-2019

2017				
UNSHELTERED			SHELTERED	
Region	%	n	%	n
East County	5%	284	6%	347
North County	1%	53	2%	148
Northeast County	2%	119	1%	47
Seattle	70%	3,857	76%	4,665
Southwest County	20%	1,102	15%	915
Southeast County	1%	70	1%	36
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>5,485</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>6,158</b>

Figure 2 | Source: Seattle-King County Count Us in Report 2017

permanent supportive housing.

- **Transitional Housing** is a time-limited intervention to provide assistance to households experiencing homelessness who need more intensive and deeper levels of support service to attain permanent housing. Emphasis is still placed on rapid exit to permanent housing, but lengths of stay are flexible and tailored to the unique needs of each household.
- Increasing the number of people who rapidly exit homelessness into permanent housing. **Permanent Supportive Housing** provides non-time limited housing for individuals with a disability or conditions that created multiple and serious ongoing barriers to housing stability. Tenant are offered flexible, long-term array of comprehensive service, mostly onsite, to maintain housing. **Permanent Housing with Supports** is non-time limited affordable housing for households experiencing homelessness with high to medium levels of service need. Tenant holds a rental agreement, with individualized services offered to support the household to maintain housing stability.
- Increasing the number of people who exit to permanent housing by maximizing Rapid Re-Housing: Rapid Re-Housing is an intervention designed to help individuals and families to quickly exit homelessness and return to permanent housing. Rapid re-housing assistance is offered without

preconditions (such as employment, income, absence of criminal record, or sobriety) and the resources and services provided are tailored to the unique needs of the household. These can include help paying for housing with a subsidy and/or helping someone find employment to have more income to pay for housing.

## Services Available for People Experiencing Homelessness

### Data Trends

#### Count Us In (One Night Count)

- Since 1980, the Seattle/King County Coalition on Homelessness had been the lead agency in conducting a point in time count in January of people experiencing homelessness in Seattle/King County to provide a snapshot of the problem and track trends over time. These findings must be included in the annual Continuum of Care funding application to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). In 2017 All Home, the lead agency for the Seattle/King County Continuum of Care, worked with Applied Survey Research implementing new data collection methods. The methodology was changed to include several elements that would improve the quality of the data, such as counting all census tracts instead of already known locations, and including a sample-

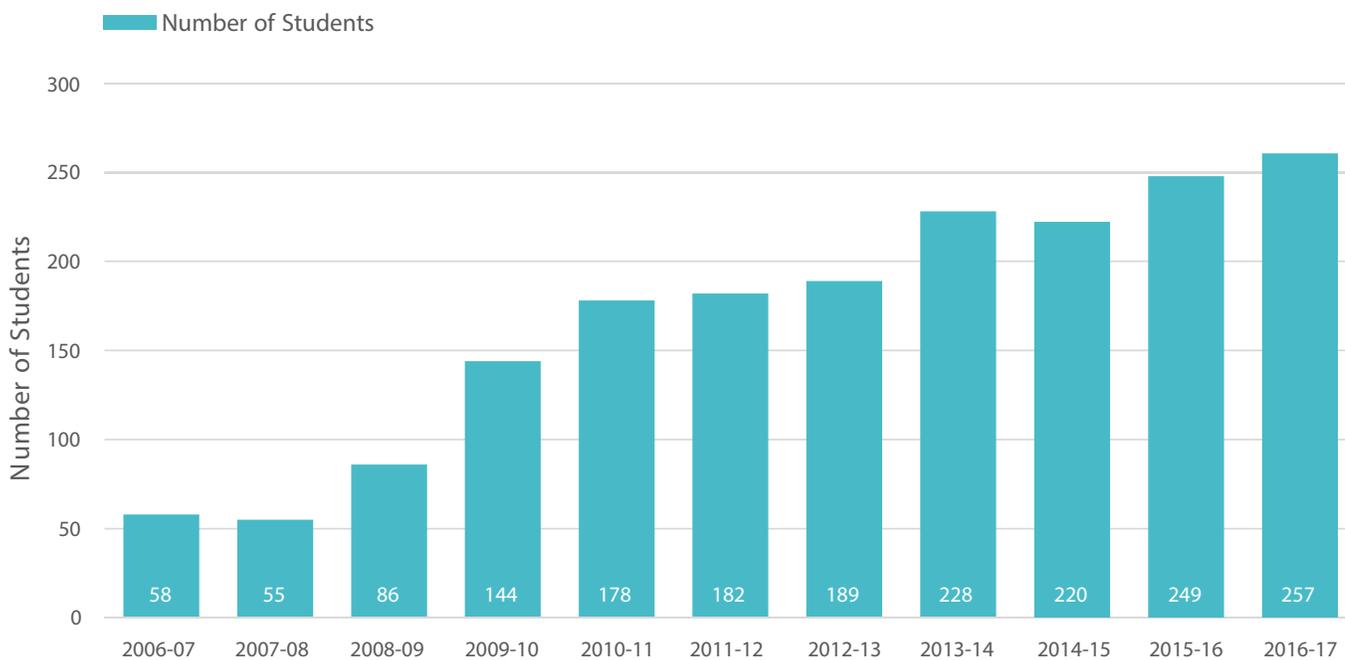
based qualitative survey including shelter and service locations. The count conducted in January 2017 found a total of 11,643; 47% (5,485) were sleeping unsheltered on the street, in cars or RVs, tents or in abandoned buildings and 53% (6,158) were sheltered in emergency shelters and transitional housing as Figure 2 shows.

- In 2016 the One Night Count found 245 unsheltered individuals in urban East King County (including portions of Bellevue, Kirkland and Redmond). Compared to the 134 individuals counted in 2015, this represents a 45% increase.<sup>10</sup> Due to the significant changes in count methodology, the data from previous years' counts is not comparable to 2017 numbers although at 284 unsheltered individuals, in all of East King County, the number has more than doubled.

## Homeless Students in the State, County, Sub-Region and Bellevue School District

- The McKinney-Vento Act is federal legislation, in effect since 1987, that ensures the rights and protections of children and youth experiencing homelessness. The purpose of the Act is to ensure that homeless children and youth are enrolled in and succeed in school. The McKinney-Vento Act defines homeless children and youth as "individuals who lack a fixed, regular and adequate nighttime residence."<sup>11</sup>
- During the 2015-2016 school year there were 39,671 students experiencing homelessness in Washington State. Between the 2008-2009 and 2015-2016 school years, Washington State experienced a 90% increase in the number of enrolled homeless students reported by school districts.<sup>12</sup>

**BSD Students Receiving McKinney-Vento Services by School Year, 2006-07 to 2016-17**



Source: Bellevue School District

Source: Bellevue School District

- **In 2015-2016, the number of homeless students in East King County was 873, or 12% of the total number of homeless students in King County** as compiled by the Washington State Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI).<sup>13</sup>
- As shown in Figure 3 the number of homeless students continues to grow in the Bellevue School District. This increase was not explained by growth in the district population, since both the total number of students experiencing homelessness and the rate per 1,000 students increased. In the 2013-14 school year, 228 students (12.6 per 1,000 students) received McKinney-Vento services. In the 2016-2017 school year the Bellevue School District reported 257 students experiencing homelessness. Of these 257 students, 89 were living in emergency shelters or transitional housing, 138 were living in “doubled up” housing situations (for economic reasons and cannot afford a place of their own), 19 students were living unsheltered in a car or tent, and 11 were living in a hotel/motel.<sup>14</sup>
- **Congregations for the Homeless (CFH)** operates a year-round emergency shelter program with comprehensive case management for single homeless men. This is the only Eastside shelter for single adult men, capped at 35 beds per night. The shelter rotates each month between different congregations, primarily in Bellevue.<sup>15</sup>
- **The Sophia Way** operates a six-month intensive shelter program for 21 single women per night, offering case management to help clients overcome barriers to independence.<sup>16</sup>
- **Hopelink** Hopelink operates 19 units of apartment style shelter for families with children partnered with comprehensive, trauma informed case management. Avondale Park (8 units) is located in Redmond and Kenmore Place (11 units) is located in Kenmore. This is the only year around shelter for families with children in East King County.<sup>17</sup>
- **LifeWire** provides a confidential shelter for individuals and families experiencing domestic violence. The shelter is located in apartments that are in scattered sites around East King County. Residents live there and receive support from case managers, mental health and substance use disorder counselors and legal advocates who can assist them with any legal issues that arise due to the domestic violence.
- **Friends of Youth** operates two Eastside shelters for runaway and homeless youth and young adults and youth in crisis. Youth Haven in Kirkland is licensed staffed residential home for up to 12 youth, ages 11-17. In addition, The Landing is an overnight shelter for 20 young adults age 18-24 in Redmond open seven nights a week, the only emergency shelter for young adults on the Eastside. The young people who access The Landing are too old for traditional youth services, yet too young for adult shelters. Case managers help the

## Services for People Experiencing Homelessness

### Emergency and Winter Shelters

- “Emergency Shelter,” according to a federal definition, means “any facility with overnight sleeping accommodations, the primary purpose of which is to provide temporary shelter for the homeless in general or for specific populations of the homeless.” There is an extensive network of emergency shelter facilities in Seattle/King County, but demand far exceeds availability.

find resources including transitional living programs, food and clothing, pregnancy support, employment, medical care, education, and counseling.<sup>18</sup>

- **Tent City 4** consists of homeless adults who form temporary encampments to live together as a self-managed community. Tent City 4 sets up on land owned by faith communities for several months before moving to another location. Since first arriving on the Eastside in Spring 2004, the camp has maintained a consistent presence on the Eastside, locating in Bellevue, Bothell, Issaquah, Kirkland, Mercer Island, Redmond, Woodinville, and unincorporated King County. The resident population of Tent City 4 fluctuates based upon the time of year and the location; however, they consistently have 60-70 individuals.<sup>19</sup> In November 2012, Camp Unity Eastside was established as a new nonprofit temporary encampment organization. Its residents were previously affiliated with Tent City 4.
- **Safe parking programs** for people living in vehicles are operated at several locations on the eastside, serving different populations. A vehicle camp for adult women and anyone with children is located at Lake Washington United Methodist Church in Kirkland, and in 2017, they were serving an average of 40 people a night. Two programs in Redmond, one at Overlake Christian Church, with 15 spots, and one at St Jude's Parish, with 6 spots, serve adult men and women. The Savior Lutheran in Issaquah has a program with 6 spots for women or families with children. There is also a program started at Newport Presbyterian in Bellevue by referral only through REACH Center of Hope. None of these programs can accommodate RVs, trailers or campers. The programs have differing requirements, amenities, and length of stay.<sup>20</sup>
- **A Severe Weather Shelter (SWS)** was initiated in 2008 by the City of Bellevue after a homeless man died from exposure

in downtown Bellevue. After two years, the weather-activated Severe Weather Shelter evolved into the nightly Eastside Winter Shelter (EWS). There are currently three Eastside Winter Shelters, one for men, one for women, and one for families with children, with a capacity of 100 per night for men and approximately 50 for women and 50 for families with children. This exceeds the previous year-round shelter capacity of 35 men and 21 women per night. During the winter of 2016-17, a total of 429 were housed in the men's shelter, 192 were housed in the women's shelter, and 319 families in that shelter.<sup>21</sup> Due to additional funding from faith communities, the family shelter was able to stay open throughout 2017 and did not have to close in the spring, as did the single adults' shelters.

- **The Eastside Winter Shelter for men** began through the City of Bellevue's leadership, in the winters of 2013-2014 and 2014-2015. It was located in property leased by the City from Sound Transit in the Bel-Red area (Spring District). With a significantly larger space, the number of homeless men served more than doubled from the winters of 2012-2013 and 2011-2012 when the shelter was located at St. Peter's United Methodist Church in Bellevue. In 2015-2016, the men's EWS was moved to Lincoln Center, a property owned by the City of Bellevue, and is being renovated to serve as such for the next several years. In 2016-2017 429 men were provided shelter and services, averaging about 81/night. The capacity at the remodeled shelter will be about 100 beds similar to the space owned by Sound Transit.
- **Future shelters:** Bellevue is working with the cities of Redmond and Kirkland, in collaboration with the Eastside Human Services Forum and the two winter shelter providers, Catholic Community Services and The Sophia Way, to help site the two winter shelters for the next few years until permanent shelters are developed and

operational. A Regional Coalition for Housing (ARCH) has committed \$700,000 in capital funding for a permanent shelter space for men and siting efforts are underway in Bellevue. The City of Kirkland is taking the lead on siting the permanent winter shelter for single women and families with children. In 2017 the Salt House congregation in Kirkland agreed to dedicate a new building that would be built on their property to be used year round for a day and night shelter for single women and families. Plans for this project are in process.<sup>22</sup>

## Day and Drop-In Centers

Day and Drop-In Centers for people experiencing homelessness are critical resources to keep people safe and provide food and respite. Another important function of day centers is for people working in the centers to establish relationships with users of the centers. These relationships are helpful in allowing them to trust and seek help for mental health and other issues.

- **New Bethlehem Day Center** for families opened in mid-November 2016 in Kirkland at the Salt Box Church. It is open Sunday through Friday from 2-8 pm. It is a program of Catholic Communities services, with the idea for the project initiated by Holy Family Church and Saint Louise Church. Families and children receive snacks and dinner, and have access to showers, social services, laundry facilities and computers. From November 2016 when it first opened to April 2017 it served about 36 individuals a day, with about 239 unduplicated clients.
- **Congregations for the Homeless** operates a day center for single men experiencing homelessness. It is open at the Lincoln Center in Bellevue from Sunday through Thursday from 8 am-3 pm. It offers resource referrals, meals, access to computers, case management and showers. Between December 2016 to March 2017, 117 men used the day center, an average of about 37 men/day.

- **Sophia Way Day Center** in Bellevue sees 35-45 women per day Monday through Sunday from 8 am to 3 pm. Besides breakfast, lunch, showers and access to computers, each day providers from various agencies have office hours, to find employment, sign up for healthcare and other benefits, and counseling.
- **Friends of Youth** operates a drop-in center for youth and young adults at the Together Center in Redmond. Open 6 days a week, hours are varied. Services provided include case management, connections to resources and basic needs such as food and clothing.

## Outreach

Outreach programs are vital for reaching out to people who are experiencing homelessness—going where they are and developing relationships and trust that has often been lost due to traumatic experiences and systems that failed to meet their needs. Through outreach people experiencing homelessness can get referrals to services and resources including how to find shelters or other supports they need. This is especially important for people experiencing homelessness who are resistant to accepting services, such as substance abuse addiction treatment or mental health counseling. Developing an ongoing relationship with the person refusing services is recognized as a long-term but can often lead to successful outcomes.<sup>23</sup>

The following organizations in East King County provide outreach services and work with one another to provide comprehensive coverage to the community:

**Congregations for the Homeless.** Outreach services are currently provided to men, women and families in Bellevue, Issaquah, and Kirkland. Outreach Case Managers, who respond to concerns regarding homelessness in these communities, serve as an important point of connection between cities, agencies, and the surrounding area. The CFH Outreach Program also works to increase the understanding of homelessness on the Eastside. Flexible funds provided through the United Way of King County

provide outreach workers the capacity to help people experiencing homelessness fix their car, renew their identification card, or pay for a deposit on a room which can help them get out of the cycle of homelessness.

**City of Redmond.** Through the Redmond Police Department, the Homeless Outreach Specialist works with people who are experiencing homelessness to connect them with resources. In addition the Outreach Specialist operates the Next Steps Resource Center at the Redmond Public Library weekly for two hours so people know where to come to him for help.

**Sophia Way.** The Outreach Worker for Sophia Way also works with the winter shelter guests and provides services to women on the street who are homeless, many times in crisis. She can direct the women that she works with to shelter services and also has access to flexible funds to meet immediate needs.

**Friends of Youth.** Friends of Youth's Outreach Team provides street outreach, case management and wraparound services to homeless youth age 16-24 in East and North King County. The Team seeks out youth where they are likely to gather, arriving in a van equipped with basic needs including food, clothing, hygiene and first aid supplies. The van can also be used to transport youth to shelters, health clinics and job interviews.

## Transitional, Permanent Supportive and Supportive Housing

In Bellevue and East King County, there are a number of non-profit organizations that are funded by King County, local cities and other sources to provide these kinds of housing including Imagine Housing, Low-Income Housing Institute, Lifewire, YWCA, Hopelink, Attain Housing, Sophia Way and Congregations for the Homeless. However there continues to be more demand than available units.

## Implications and Gaps

- While efforts are currently underway for a dedicated location(s) for the Eastside Winter Shelter(s), this will take several years to implement and, in the interim, finding suitable sites for the shelters will continue to be a challenge. Shelter space during non-winter months is also needed.
- Employment opportunities that pay living wages for people experiencing homelessness as well as to keep them from becoming homeless are needed.
- The affordable housing supply is far short of the need. Increased diligence is needed to bring funding and to find appropriate sites on which to build housing that people exiting homelessness can afford.
- Two of the many reasons people become homeless are mental illness and substance abuse disorders. Funding for services, both in-patient and outpatient, is inadequate to meet the need. Through advocacy in the State Legislature more funding should be prioritized.
- Safe parking facilities for people residing in their vehicles are needed, especially for single men and for those living in recreational vehicles.
- Community education and awareness is critical to align all partners to action in ending homelessness. Engaging new sectors, such as the business community and service clubs, is needed; the strong commitment of congregations countywide could be a model for engaging these new communities.
- More outreach especially expanded to be available during the evening hours, more flexible funding and more access to transportation for people experiencing homelessness would be an important addition to the array of services currently available.

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