ONE SINGLE NIGHT

2016 Point-in-Time Count of People Who Are Experiencing Homelessness in Pierce County

Issued April 2016

1,762

The total number of people who were homeless in Pierce County, Washington on January 29, 2016.

THE COUNT

On Friday, January 29, 2016, over 200 volunteers in Pierce County conducted a Point in Time (PIT) count of people experiencing homelessness across the county. With the help of community agencies, the volunteers counted 1,762 homeless people. The PIT count identifies the number of people who slept in emergency shelters, transitional housing, outside or in other places not meant for human habitation.

Who we count– Persons who are experiencing homeless (outside and inside).

Who isn't counted - Persons who are in circumstances such as: couch surfing, in institutional settings such as hospitals or jails, children in foster care, or doubled-up.

> *"Volunteers and service agencies are at the heart of our Point in Time Count. They do the leg work to ensure that we know who is experiencing homeless-ness in the county."*
>
> ***Tess Colby***
> ***Housing, Community Development and Homeless Program Manager,***
> ***Pierce County,***
> ***Community Connections***

WHY WE COUNT

The County and its partners use this data to better understand who is experiencing homelessness, what factors contributed to their housing crisis, and where they are sleeping. This data, in conjunction with program performance and national best practices, helps us prioritize resources and implement strategies for housing and supportive services that effectively respond to the crisis of homelessness.

HOW WE COUNT

Trained volunteers survey individual households across the County. Volunteers go to encampments, shelters, food banks, libraries, community centers and any other place where persons experiencing homelessness may be present. Our process includes a comprehensive interview that incorporates questions about family composition, length of time homeless, presence of disabling conditions and the factors that contributed to their homeless crisis. By engaging with people experiencing homelessness, volunteers gather critical information that we use to help design programs and make funding awards. The interviews also create a safe space for volunteers to accompany people in crisis, to listen to their story and to share information about support resources.

Pierce County
Community Connections

2016 Count Results - All Persons

The 2016 PIT count showed a 37% increase over the last year in the total number of people experiencing homelessness in Pierce County, and a 46% increase in the number of people sleeping outside or in places not meant for human habitation. In 2016 the number of unsheltered people represented 28% of all homeless persons, the highest percent since 2005. Between 2006 and 2010 unsheltered homelessness averaged about 14%. Over the course of the last three years, unsheltered homelessness has grown by 69%, while total homelessness has only grown by 20%.
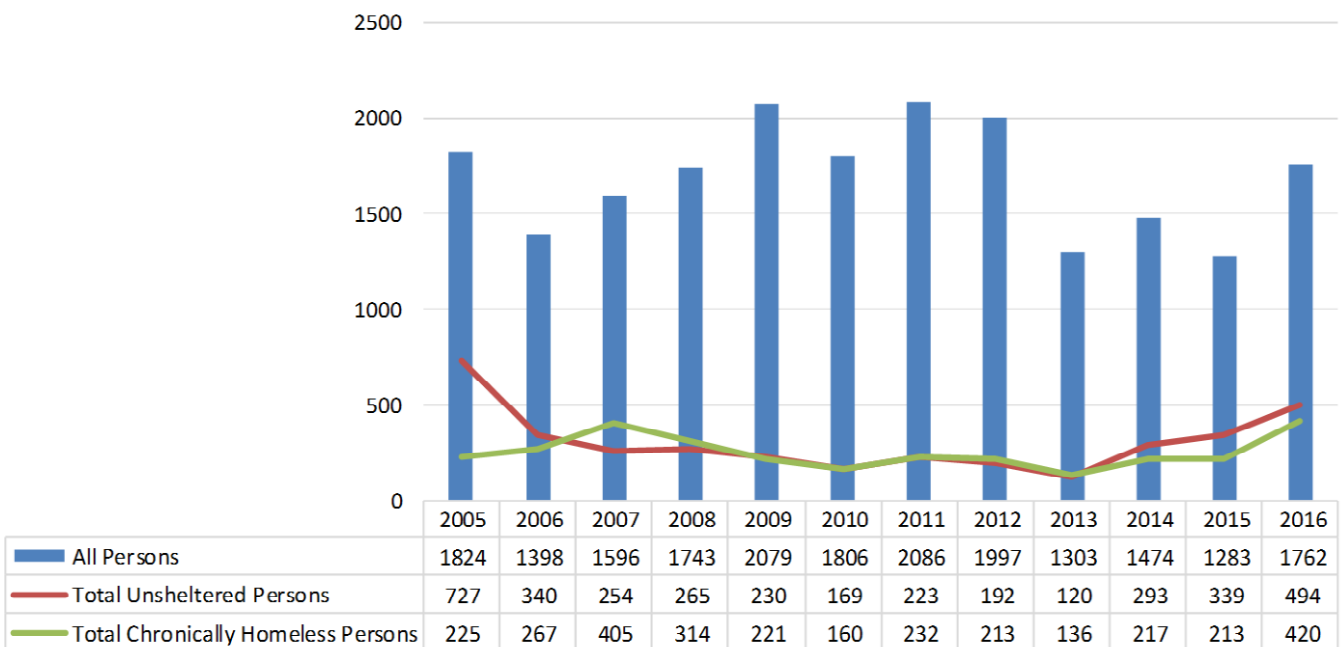
1,762 homeless persons

- 1,268 sheltered
- 494 unsheltered

Key Terms & Definitions

- **Sheltered**—Spent the night prior to the count in emergency shelter or transitional housing.

- **Unsheltered**—Spent the night prior to the count on the streets, in an abandoned building, in a car, or other place not meant for human habitation.

- **Emergency Shelter**—Short-term temporary lodging for people experiencing a housing crisis.

- **Transitional Housing**—Time-limited temporary housing and services.

Homelessness in Pierce County

	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
All Persons	1824	1398	1596	1743	2079	1806	2086	1997	1303	1474	1283	1762
Total Unsheltered Persons	727	340	254	265	230	169	223	192	120	293	339	494
Total Chronically Homeless Persons	225	267	405	314	221	160	232	213	136	217	213	420

2016 Count Results - By Population

PIT Jan 2016	Sheltered	Unsheltered	Totals
All Persons*	1,268	494	1,762
Family Households**	204	27	231
Chronically Homeless Persons*	214	206	420
Chronically Homeless Family Households**	29	10	39
Veterans*	99	91	190
Youth and Young Adults*	65	25	90
Persons Fleeing Domestic Violence*	358	129	487

* Numbers represent total individuals counted.

** Numbers represent total households counted, and is a subset of the "All Persons" number that precedes it.

The 2016 PIT count revealed an increase in homelessness among all populations. Since the 2015 count, homelessness among families increased by 50%, the number of chronically homeless individuals increased by 97%, and the number homeless veterans increased by 38%.

Certain populations are hard to find, so they are hard to count. Unaccompanied youth and young adults experiencing homelessness don't tend to sleep in encampments or in shelters, so we've had to develop specific strategies for identifying this vulnerable population. In 2015 we did our first targeted count for unaccompanied youth and young adults, and repeated that approach in 2016. Both years agencies serving youth and young adults experiencing homelessness held events on the day of the count and volunteers were able to survey those who were homeless the night before. Community Youth Services opened an overnight shelter for young adults in late 2015, which helped us improve our count in 2016. While the total number we counted in 2016 was only 1% higher than in 2015, we think the actual increase might be larger because our annual survey likely undercounts the actual number of young people experiencing homelessness.

The annual survey also undercounts the number of families sleeping outside or in places not meant for human habitation. Like youth and young adults, unsheltered families also do not tend to sleep in encampments or other easily identified outside areas. The PIT count mainly captures families who are in shelter and in transitional housing, which increased by 50% in 2016, mainly due to a seasonal increase in shelter beds.
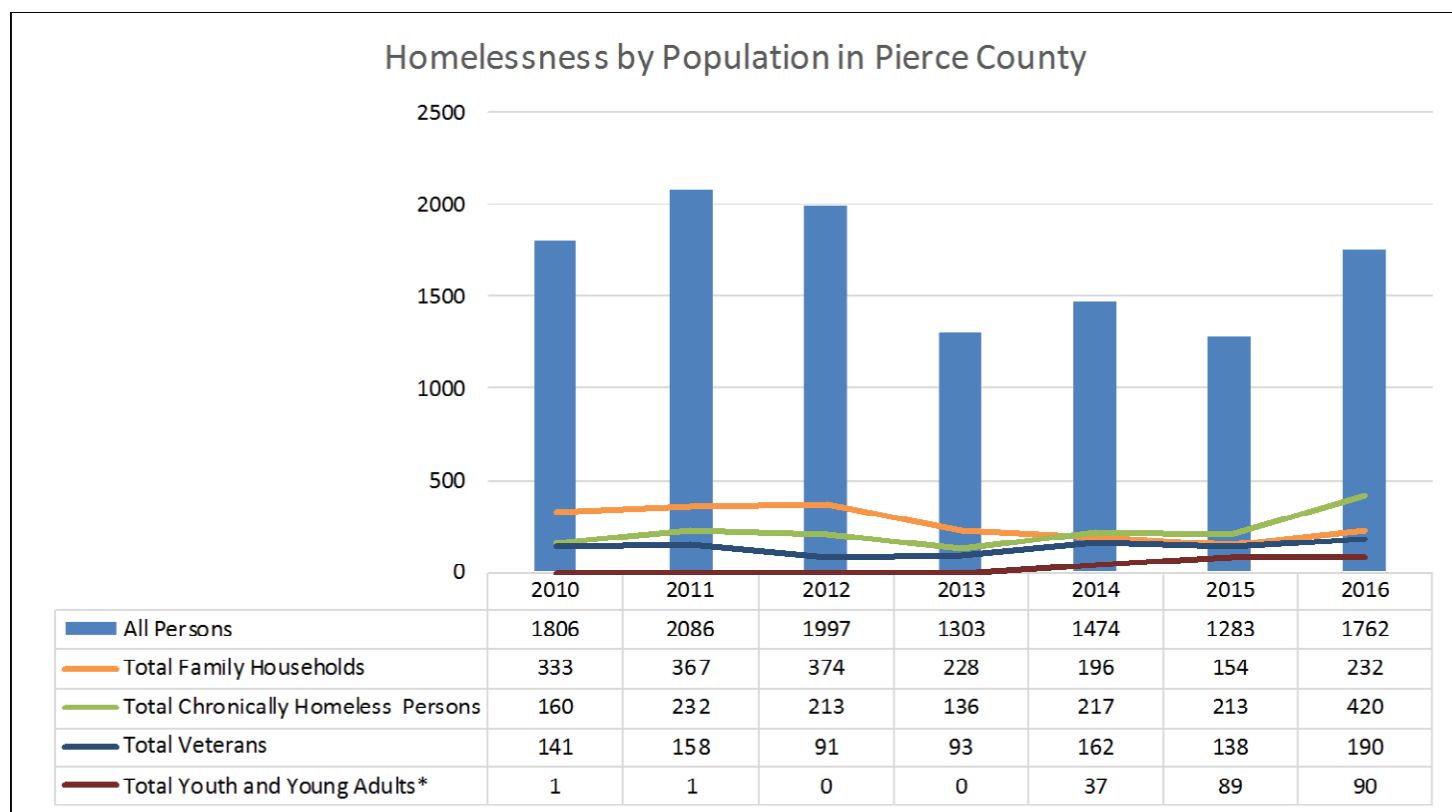
Key Terms & Definitions

- **Chronic Homelessness**— Persons or families with a disabling condition who have been homeless for more than one year continuously, or who have been homeless at least four times in the last three years for an aggregate amount of 12 months.

- **Family Household**—Any household with at least one adult head of household and at least on minor child.

- **Unaccompanied Youth**—Minor child between the age of 13 and 17 not accompanied by a parent or legal guardian.

- **Young Adult**—Adults between the ages of 18 and 24.

Background

- All of the data related to sheltered homelessness comes form the Homeless Management Information System, the data base Pierce County uses to track how many people are being served by homeless housing and service programs in the County.

- We rely on volunteers to help us count unsheltered persons. In 2016 we had 2.5 times more volunteers than in 2015 (224 vs 89). This significant increase in people counting helped us collect 55% more surveys in 2016. Since volunteers help the most with the unsheltered count, the increase in volunteers likely contributed to the increased collection of surveys from persons sleeping outside the night before.

- The City of Tacoma funded an increase in the number of winter emergency shelter beds available between November 2015 and April 2016. Their funding added an average of 241 much needed beds nightly. This contributed to the increase in the sheltered count.
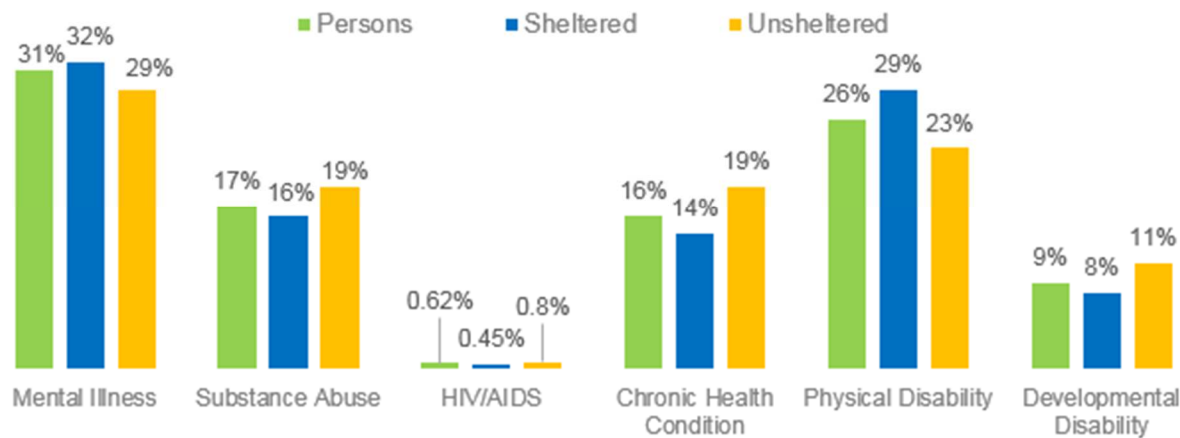
Some Quick Facts

- About 80% of persons counted reported a last permanent address inside Pierce County, 13% were from other counties inside Washington State and 9% were from outside Washington State.

- During the survey volunteers asked people a lot of questions to better understand the factors that might have contributed to a person's homeless crisis. Among those counted, 31% of persons self-reported a mental health issue, 17% of persons self-reported substance use, and 10% of persons reported the co-occurrence of both mental illness and substance abuse.

- We also learned important demographic information. For example, 27% of youth and young adults identified as Gay, Lesbian, Bi-Sexual or Other (Non-Heterosexual) Sexual Orientation.

Homelessness by Population in Pierce County

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
All Persons	1806	2086	1997	1303	1474	1283	1762
Total Family Households	333	367	374	228	196	154	232
Total Chronically Homeless Persons	160	232	213	136	217	213	420
Total Veterans	141	158	91	93	162	138	190
Total Youth and Young Adults*	1	1	0	0	37	89	90

* Between 2010 and 2014 the Count only reflected unaccompanied youth. Beginning in 2015, young adult data was included in the count.

Self-Reported Data on Disabilities (Percent of total persons homeless)

Legend: ■ Persons ■ Sheltered ■ Unsheltered

Category	Persons	Sheltered	Unsheltered
Mental Illness	31%	32%	29%
Substance Abuse	17%	16%	19%
HIV/AIDS	0.62%	0.45%	0.8%
Chronic Health Condition	16%	14%	19%
Physical Disability	26%	29%	23%
Developmental Disability	9%	8%	11%

Race

36% Multi-Racial

34% White

16% African American

8% Unknown

3% American Indian

2% Pacific Islander

1% Asian

Age

23% Under 18

9% 18-25 yr. old

19% 26-35 yr. old

15% 36-45 yr. old

17% 46-55 yr. old

11% 56-65 yr. old

2% 66+ yr. old

4% Not Reported

Income

26% had income

11% were employed

Gender
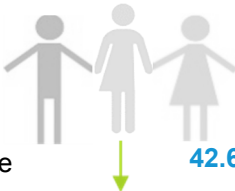
53.9% Male

42.6% Female

.1% Transgender

3.4% Refused

Top 5 Factors Leading to Homelessness

2015		2016	
Job Loss	75	Job Loss	214
Substance Abuse	61	Family Crisis*	190
Mental Illness	53	Substance Abuse	170
Economic Reasons	49	Economic Reasons	169
Health Problems	39	Loss of Temp. Living	156

* Family Crisis is a self-selection of unidentified reasons as defined by the survey respondent..

Where People Spent the Night Before the Count

Location slept on January 28, 2016	#	%
Emergency Shelter (Year Round Beds)	601	34.11%
Transitional Housing	426	24.18%
Outdoors	324	18.39%
Emergency Shelter (Seasonal)	231	13.11%
Vehicle	130	7.38%
Structure Lacking Basic Amenities	39	2.21%
Hotel/Motel Voucher	10	0.57%
Camping	1	0.06%
Total	1762	100.00%

Last Reported Place of Permanent Residence

City	Sheltered	% of Sheltered	Unsheltered	% of Unsheltered
Tacoma	418	33%	209	42%
Lakewood	105	8%	25	5%
Tacoma/Lakewood	93	7%	7	1%
Tacoma/ Parkland	69	5%	3	0.6%
Puyallup	51	4%	21	4%
Spanaway	35	3%	7	1%
South Hill	23	2%	0	0%
Sumner	22	2%	4	0.8%
Orting	18	1%	2	0.4%
Tacoma/University Place	15	1%	0	0%
Bonney Lake	14	1%	5	1%
University Place	9	0.7%	14	3%
Gig Harbor	6	0%	4	0.8%
Parkland	6	0.5%	1	0.2%
Tacoma/Fife	6	0%	0	0%
Eatonville	4	0.3%	4	0.8%
Federal Way/Auburn	3	0.2%	1	0.2%
Federal Way	2	0%	0	0%
Fife	2	0%	1	0.2%
Browns Point	1	0.08%	0	0%
Carbonado	0	0%	1	0.2%
Fircrest	0	0%	1	0.2%
Steilacoom	0	0%	2	0.4%
Tacoma/Graham	0	0%	1	0.2%
Vaughn	0	0%	1	0.2%
Out of Pierce County	180	14%	61	12%
Out of State	118	9%	37	7%
Unknown	68	5%	82	17%
TOTAL	**1268**	**100%**	**494**	**100%**

*Note: These zip codes overlap multiple cities within Pierce County

Shelter Need Compared to Supply
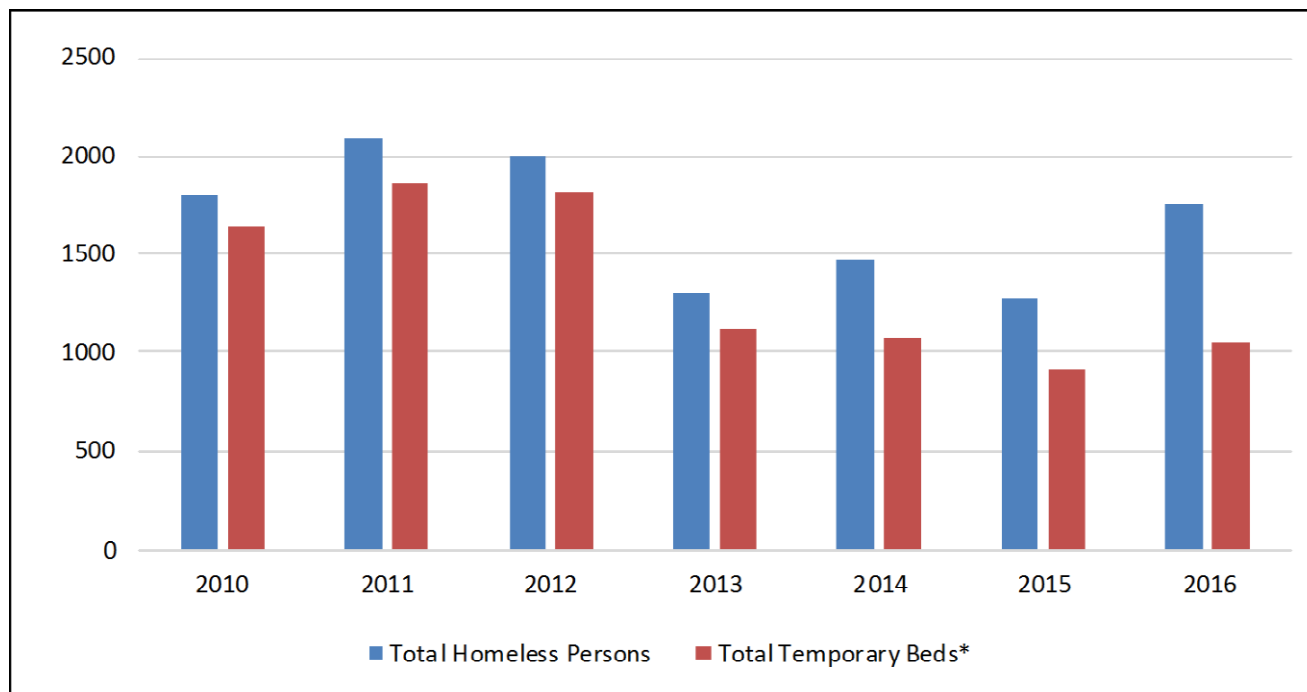
* Temporary units do not include seasonal beds. In 2016 there are an average of 314 seasonal beds between November and April.

- The chart above compares the number of available emergency shelter and transitional housing units against the number of persons experiencing homelessness identified during the Point in Time count. The total temporary beds includes only the year-round beds in emergency shelter and transitional housing that are accounted for in the County's Housing Inventory Chart. Some smaller shelters, such as those operated by churches, may not be accounted for in this chart.

- The chart shows a growing gap between the number of persons experiencing homelessness and the availability of temporary beds. In 2010, about 10% of people were unable to access temporary housing; by 2014 it was up to 27%, and in 2016 40% of people are unable to access a year-round bed to sleep in.

- Shelters play a critical role in the County's homeless system. They serve as respite for people in crisis and provide a connection to supportive services. But shelters don't end homelessness. Permanent housing ends homelessness. So the goal is that shelters also serve as a first step to re-establishing housing by connecting guests to permanent housing programs.

- Since 2010 Pierce County has been reducing the amount of transitional housing for families, and replacing it with permanent housing options such as Rapid Rehousing. This has factored into the downward trend in the number of families experiencing homelessness shown in the chart on page 3, and the overall decrease in the number of temporary beds shown on the chart above. Shifting resources from temporary housing to permanent housing has helped Pierce County end homelessness for more households: the number of households who have re-etablished housing has increased by 42% since 2012.

Making Homelessness Rare, Brief and Non-Recurring

Pierce County Community Connections is changing the way it partners with community and government organizations to confront the crisis of homeless ness in our community. We're investing in partners that focus on getting people back into housing quickly, because homelessness ends when a person regains stable housing. We're spearheading client-centered strategies that encourage people experiencing homelessness to have a voice in their own housing   so-lutions. And we're using technology to better coordinate access to housing and support services in Pierce County.

Our aim is to make homelessness a *rare, brief, and non-recurring* experience in Pierce County. Together, Pierce County and our partners use the following strategies to create a suite of housing and service resources that is more coor-dinated and client-centered, and uses emerging best practices.

> "The Point-In-Time count is the single time in a year that Pierce County can learn more about the unsheltered people who may not be approaching our home-less system and evaluate the information to help make decisions that would benefit those individuals and families."
>
> *-Valerie Pettit*
>
> **Homeless Program Evaluator**
>
> **Pierce County**
> **Community Connections**

A COORDINATED PATHWAY TO STABLE HOUSING

An approach called coordinated entry makes it easier for people experiencing homelessness to access the services of the entire community. When a person experiencing homelessness reaches out for help, coordinated entry uses a uniform assess-ment to identify the person's strengths, resources, and barriers to housing. Through coordinated entry, a single database keeps track of the available beds and services throughout the community to identify the best program available for each per-son.

SHORT-TERM PROBLEM SOLVING

It can be an uphill battle to exit any length of homelessness. Short-term problem solving techniques make homelessness *rare* by meeting a housing crisis head on with the creativity and resources of the person experiencing the crisis. By helping them to leverage their natural resources—their family, friends, and faith communities—people can find housing solutions at a critical moment. And by supporting them with short-term rental assistance, a one-time bill payment, or help finding a job or addressing health and safety needs, we can provide support to help them stay housed.

EMERGENCY SHELTER

Emergency shelters work to make homelessness *brief* by providing respite and serving as a site for people to connect to housing and support resources. Shelters provide a safe place to sleep in-doors and act as an entry point to services that help people identify permanent housing, connect with employment opportunities, or access other needed health and support services.

PERMANENT HOUSING

Access to permanent housing ends the crisis of homelessness. By helping people return to the stability of permanent housing and promoting self-sufficiency, we can make homelessness a *non-recurring* occurrence. We are working with local land-lords to quickly move people experiencing homelessness back into a home of their own. Through rapid rehousing, our partner agencies help people find appropriate permanent housing accompanied by short-term assistance, such as move-in and rent support and connections to social services, such as employment and education programs.

Permanent supportive housing can provide a stable living situation to people with significant barriers to housing, such as a long history of homelessness or a disability. Housing is paired with access to long-term supportive services—including mental and physical health services, substance use recovery, and vocational training—helping people to stay housed.

Homelessness is not a hopeless crisis. By working together, we can have a lasting impact on the lives of our com-munity members.

Together We Can...

Make homelessness a rare, brief and non-recurring experience in Pierce County. All of us who work to provide stable housing for people experiencing homelessness know the incredible toll that homelessness takes on the well-being of children, families, and individuals. As we work together to improve outcomes for those experiencing homelessness, we'll know were serving people to the best of our collective ability.

THANKS!

We are sincerely appreciative and deeply grateful for the people and organizations who volunteered their time and services during the 2016 Point in Time Count. For their hard work, dedication and leadership, we offer our recognition to these organizations and individuals:

PLANNING COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Julie Anderson	Paula Anderson
Nick Bayard	Cheryl Borden
Beverly Bowen-Bennett	Lisa Christen
Carly Christiansen	Colin DeForrest
Michelle Douglas	Corrie Hightower
Valeri Knight	Emily Less
Nicole Mims	Mike Mowat
Alanna Rodgers	Janet Runbeck
Patti Spaulding-Klewin	Marcy Stahl
Jack Stillmaker	Matthew Wilson

PARTICIPATING ORGANIZATIONS

Associated Ministries	Carbonado School District	Catholic Community Services	City of Lakewood
City of Tacoma	Clover Park School District	Comprehensive Life Resources	Courage 360
Exodus Housing	Fish Food Bank	Forever Change	Freezing Nights
Greater Lakes Mental Health	Helping Hand House	King 5	Korean Women's Association
Lakewood Area Shelter Association (LASA)	Martin Luther King Housing Development	Medical Reserve Corps	Metropolitan Development Council
New Hope Center	Oasis Youth Center	Open Hearth	Orting School District
Pierce County Community Connections	Pierce County Health Department	Pierce County News	Puyallup Homeless Coalition
Puyallup School District	Rainbow Center	REACH Center	Rotary Club of Lakewood
Salvation Army	Shared Housing Services	Sound Outreach	Spanaway School District
Tacoma Rescue Mission	Tacoma School District	Tacoma Sunrise Rotary Club	Tacoma/Pierce County Homeless Coalition
Tacoma-Lakewood-Pierce County Continuum of Care	The News Tribune	Trinity Lutheran Church	University of Washington Center for Service and Leadership
Veterans Administration	Walgreens	YWCA Pierce County	

PARTICIPATING VOLUNTEERS

Kathi Alfredson	Mohannad Alkailani	Kathy Anderson	Joe Andre	Donna Arbaugh	Brenda Arline
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