



HUD Region X
Mayors Challenge
Regional Best Practices

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Forward

The following submissions were sent by the cities and counties throughout Alaska, Idaho, Oregon and Washington that have joined the Mayors Challenge. In connection with a regional forum held February 27, 2015, each community was asked to provide a few paragraphs that summarize particularly interesting aspects of their efforts to end veteran homelessness. Some wrote more and some wrote less. We think you will find all of the submissions interesting and informative. We do note that “best practices,” strictly applied, embody clear standards around Housing First, Coordinated Assessment and Entry, Rapid Rehousing, and similar nationally-vetted and adopted practices. Not all of the programs you will see described herein contain 100% best practices. Communities vary in how far along the path they are to full incorporation of best practices. We believe, however, that the experiences of these fellow communities are all useful as we seek together to achieve the goal of ending Veterans homelessness.

Many of the submissions will inspire follow up questions, so we asked for the names of those people whom readers could contact for more information. That contact information is on the following pages.

Thank you for attending HUD’s Region X’s Mayors Challenge!

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Regional Best Practices

Anchorage, Alaska

Municipality of Anchorage

Since Mayor Sullivan's pledge to end veteran homelessness, the Municipality of Anchorage (MOA) has been investing substantial effort and resources to make that pledge a reality.

First, the MOA Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) invested resources in homeless outreach and engagement activities. Rural Alaska Community Action Program, Inc. (RurAL CAP) operates the Homeward Bound Program and the Anchorage Community Mental Health Services, Inc. operates the Pathways to Recovery Program. Although their approaches differ somewhat, both organizations provide street outreach, engagement, intervention, case management and housing to homeless persons with chronic alcoholism and other related disabilities. Staff from these two organizations work closely with Veteran's Administration staff whenever a homeless person is identified as a veteran.

Second, program year 2014 HOME and CDBG funding was awarded to RurAL CAP for their Safe Harbor development. Safe harbor Inn Merrill Field will have 50 single-room occupancy (SRO) permanent housing units, Safe Harbor Muldoon will have 50 SRO transitional housing units, and the Safe Harbor Village will have up to 20 permanent housing units. RurAL CAP has committed to provide an occupancy preference to homeless veterans and their families.

For program year 2015 funding, the DHHS will leverage a substantial portion of its HOME and CDBG allocation through a partnership with the Alaska Housing Finance Corporation (AHFC). HOME and CDBG funding from the DHHS will be included in AHFC's Special Needs Housing Grant (SNHG). Under the agreement, applicants will have access to approximately \$1.8 million from the DHHS and up to \$3 million SNHG capital funds and \$1.2 million in SNHG supportive service operating funds. The DHHS funding will require occupancy preference for homeless veterans and their families.

In a more recent development, the DHHS is a stakeholder in the steering committee for an Alaska Division of Behavioral Health \$4 million Chronic Inebriate Anti-Recidivism grant. RurAL CAP is one of the selected grantees who will assist chronic homeless inebriates, which would include homeless veterans. RurAL CAP will be providing Intensive Case Management for 100 individuals over the next two and one-half years and have up to 70 rental vouchers will be available for the program.

Regional Best Practices

Pocatello, Idaho

Pocatello Mayor's Challenge Task Force Vignette



In April 2014, Pocatello Mayor Brian Blad agreed to accept the Mayors Challenge to End Veterans Homelessness. Driven by a concern that local veterans were slipping through the cracks, Mayor Blad immediately formed and convened a task force comprised of local service providers offering assistance to veterans.

The task force comprised of representatives from the City of Pocatello, Bannock County Veterans Services, Veterans Administration, South East Idaho Community Action Agency Veterans Services, Homeless Veterans Fellowship of Ogden, the Housing Authority of the City of Pocatello, Aid For Friends and the U.S. Dept. of Housing & Urban Development began by outlining the problem veterans face. The group also reached out to other communities and service providers outside of Pocatello. The Task Force contacted an out of state SSVF provider and found them local space to meet and serve veterans. The Salt Lake VA VASH staff is utilizing that same space. When the Mayor of neighboring Blackfoot expressed his interest in the Mayor's Challenge, the Task Force invited him to join and welcomed him as part of the team. The Task Force now meets monthly to identify and tackle veteran's issues head on.

This year the Task Force took on a number of projects. To educate the community as to the needs of veterans, the Mayor's Office created and distributed a "Landlord Newsletter" <http://www.pocatello.us/mayor/documents/veterans-homelessness.pdf> describing both the needs for housing access and the impediments veterans currently face. Along those same lines, representatives from the VA and the Housing Authority of the City of Pocatello appeared on the Mayor's "Calling City Hall" television show.

As an easy way for veterans to find those services already available services, an "emergency services card" and a Crisis Services Handbook were created and distributed around the community. VA staff added yet another card specific to VA services.

Plans for the future include blending the Task Force into the Regional Homeless & Housing Coalition (a part of the Idaho Balance of State Continuum of Care) as a veteran specific committee. Mayor Blad is seeking to present about the Task Force at the annual Association of Idaho Cities conference in June 2015 to encourage other Idaho communities to establish similar programs to serve their veterans. They are also eyeing working with additional local partners such as Vocational Rehabilitation, the VFW and the Fort Hall Indian Health Service.

EMERGENCY SHELTER	
<u>Aid for Friends</u> 653 S. 4 th Avenue 208-232-5669 	<u>SEICAA</u> Jefferson House & Freedom LZ 641 S. 8 th Avenue 208-234-2466 
Hot Meals	
<u>The Salvation Army</u> – 400 N. 4 th Avenue in Pocatello – (208) 232-5318 Lunch Served Monday thru Saturday from 11:00 a.m. to 11:30 a.m.	
<u>Aid for Friends</u> – 653 S. 4 th Avenue in Pocatello – (208) 232-5669 Dinner Served Daily after 5:00 p.m.	
<u>My Brothers Table</u> – 355 W. Lander in Pocatello – (208) 237-3064 Lunch Served Sunday from 1:30 p.m. to 2:30 p.m.	
FOR ADDITIONAL ASSISTANCE CONTACT: Veteran's Services – Bannock County Veteran Services (208) 282-4245	

The progress of the Task Force led Laura Fuller of the Homeless Veterans Fellowship of Ogden, Utah (the agency that offers SSVF support in Southeast Idaho) to laud Pocatello's efforts to cities and organizations in Utah as a model of how to help the homeless veteran population.

Regional Best Practices

Oregon

Eugene

Portland

Lane County

RISING TO THE MAYORS CHALLENGE –



OVERVIEW OF EUGENE EFFORTS TO END VETERANS' HOMELESSNESS

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Statistics

- 1235 homeless veterans sought services (source: Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) 7/14-11/14 (778 of these were both homeless and disabled.)
- 230 homeless veterans estimated, based on one-day count, 1/14. (151 unsheltered, 2013 + 79 sheltered, 2014)
- 422 HUD/VA housing vouchers are available for the Eugene area. Of these 303 are filled (71.8%)
- 236 Veterans were encountered by the Health Care for Homeless Vets (HCHV) outreach team over the past year.

Key challenges

- Lack of permanent supported housing, affordable housing, studio apartments or SROs.
- Lack of affordable housing.
- Lack of harm-reduction (wet) housing (i.e. VA Safe Haven model).
- Anticipate large, growing elderly population that will increase demand for supported housing for medically needy vets and non-vets. (I.e. Medicaid & Medicare eligible recipients, as well as VA clients.)
- Difficulty overcoming overly restrictive funding restraints (To serve veterans over the maximum income for VASH, but not enough income to escape homelessness), or to serve vets with other than honorable discharges.¹
- Lag time in filling VA/HCHV positions backs up all services, from management to outreach and intake services.
- Difficulty finding funding for alternative shelters / micro-housing/ innovative approaches.

Key Local Efforts

Working in partnerships with area governments, social services and the Veterans' Affairs HCHV programs, we have many projects up and running.

Home for the Holidays – This December fundraiser, championed by Mayor Piercy, aimed to place a homeless family in a home during the holiday season. This year we designated the funds specifically for homeless veterans.

Operation 365 Veterans – Launched on Veterans Day, in conjunction with Home for the Holidays, Eugene, Springfield and Lane County governments, St. Vincent de Paul, the Housing

and Community Services Agency of Lane County (HACSA) and the V.A. joined forces to recruit community donors to help build a fund and help place 365 veterans in 365 beds by the end of 2015. We also reached out to the local Rental Owner's Association to encourage them to make apartments available for chronically homeless veterans. At least 72 veterans had been placed by the end of December.

Homeless Veterans' Analyst – The analyst coordinates and tracks overall community efforts to end Veterans homelessness. Duties also include research, outreach, briefings, trainings, networking, & advocacy, as well as managing the Operation 365 Veterans Facebook page.

Community Supported Shelters provides a secure “Vets Safe Spot” – a secure, supervised campsite providing emergency camping spots for 15 veterans.

Eugene Mission outreach partnership – The local mission is our primary emergency shelter for the area, with 339 beds. They invited the Veterans Administration BHRRS staff to a mini-stand-down at one dinner hour, leading to establishing connections with 36 veterans. Out of that meeting it became apparent that many would not qualify for veteran benefits but could use other types of assistance. As a result, a follow-up meeting pulled in representatives from **Lane County Behavioral Health** and **Senior and Disability Services**, resulting in the sharing of insights and resources.

The Westside Apostolic Hope Center provides a weekly site at which veterans can connect with services, along with a hot meal. The V.A. BHRRS outreach workers attend this event weekly.

The Veterans' Housing Project is a St. Vincent de Paul hosted, collaborative effort of private, public and nonprofit organizations to rehabilitate houses which can then serve as safe, affordable housing for veterans. Founders of this program include the City of Eugene, Eugene Water & Electric Board (EWEB), the Homebuilders Association of Lane County (HBA) and St. Vincent de Paul, along with support from hundreds of businesses, service providers, families and individuals. The Home Depot foundation donated \$75,000 for this project.

Two private entities operate apartment buildings exclusively serving veterans – **Housing Our Veterans**, which operates 6 buildings serving 47 Veterans, and **Grace Manor for Veterans**, which serves 10 veterans.

Sponsors, a model transitional program for men and women coming out of prison, offers 10 grant-per-diem units of transitional housing for 10 veterans. (This runs as a subcontract through HACSA).

Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF) is a St. Vincent de Paul program helping homeless veterans and those at risk of homelessness to become or remain permanently housed. Sponsored by a grant from the Veterans Administration (VA), SSVF provides financial assistance and case management with the objective of helping our country's veterans achieve

housing stability, and to end veteran homelessness by 2016. The grant provides \$3 million, spread over a 3 year period, with a goal of housing 200 Veterans annually. SVDP had already placed 80 by February, setting a pace that should more than meet this goal if maintained. This program is primarily geared toward initial costs, although it may pay rent for a short period while ongoing benefits, such as SSI or VASH, can be arranged.

St. Vincent de Paul's Vet LIFT (Living Independently Following Treatment) provides housing assistance (emergency shelter, transitional housing, and permanent housing) to chronically homeless and homeless veterans who have often struggled with substance abuse and/or mental health issues. Vet LIFT provides housing for more than 50 veterans. The program helps participants develop skills for independent living, obtaining/maintaining financial stability, developing a housing plan, addressing addiction/mental health issues, and transitioning to permanent housing. In 2014, Vet LIFT served 96 veterans (individuals/families). SvdP HAS 15 VA grant/ gpd beds under this program.

Sheltercare's medical respite program serves patients leaving Riverbend hospital who need temporary housing while recovering. Although not veteran-specific, the program has served 7 veterans. Not all had VA health benefits upon entering the program. Some had Medicare or Medicaid. Two had Trillium health insurance; the other 5 veterans were referred by PeaceHealth Social Workers.

The Housing and Community Services Agency of Lane County (HACSA) as of February 1st had 146 VASH vouchers leased out of 211 available. These are for Permanent Supported Housing. V.A. provides the case managers.

The V.A. Behavioral Health Reintegration & Recovery Services (BHRRS) provides "health care and essential social services to homeless veterans in order to help stabilize their lives and break the cycle of homelessness, chemical dependency, and overcome vocational limitations." Outreach workers seek out homeless veterans and connect them with housing using VASH vouchers and a close working relationship with the local housing authority (described above.)

Health Care for Homeless Veterans (V.A. program) provides grants-and-per-diem to assist public and non-profit agencies establish and operate transitional supportive housing. The goal is to help homeless Veterans stabilize in preparation for permanent housing. Short term residential treatment programs provide comprehensive rehabilitation. HUD/VASH collaborations help make housing possible, using HUD Section 8 "Housing Choice" rental assistance vouchers and VA's case management services.

In addition to the agencies above, who are *directly* related in sheltering and housing Veterans, many groups play critical support roles, including but not limited to:

Lane County Health and Human Services oversees most Social Services funding throughout the county, and manages related projects, including the Homeless Management Information

System, or Service Point, that helps track data on homelessness. The County also oversees the annual point-in-time count. In January of 2014 the count found 270 homeless veterans. Over a 4 month period (7/1/14 – 11/7/14) they found 1235 homeless veterans requesting HMIS-tracked services. Of that number, 778 veterans self-identified as both homeless and disabled. The County also launched the newly established **Poverty and Homelessness Board**, which includes a **subcommittee dedicated to ending veterans' homelessness**.

Saint Vincent dePaul also runs the **Veterans In Progress (VIP)** employment program, supported by the U.S. Department of Labor, which supports veteran households with finding gainful employment and vocational rehabilitation services. The program serves households that are literally homeless or imminently at risk of homelessness. The program offers resume crafting, educational classes about job readiness, and personalized job referrals.

Lane County Veteran Service Officers are accredited VA representatives who advocate for our community's veterans and their families to ensure they receive all entitlements provided by Federal and State law. In fiscal year 2013, they helped clients obtain over \$1.25 million in continuing monthly benefits and over \$12.24 million in lump-sum, retroactive benefits. Areas addressed include filing disability claims, obtaining military records, applying for VA Health Care, Education Benefits and Surviving spouse benefits. Outreach staff connect with house-bound Veterans or many who reside in care facilities throughout Lane County.

The Vet Center welcomes home “war veterans with honor by providing quality readjustment counseling in a caring manner. Vet Centers understand and appreciate Veterans' war experiences while assisting them and their family members toward a successful post-war adjustment in or near their community.”

The University of Oregon Veterans Center “helps eligible student veterans, reservists and dependents obtain educational benefits” in compliance with VA regulations. The U.O. Student Veterans Center provides a physical gathering space where student-veterans can connect, study, and receive general support. The Veterans and Family Student Association (VFSA) is a UO student organization that offers support to veterans and strives to educate both the public and student body about the personal sacrifices made by this nation's veterans. **Lane Community College** also has a student veterans' services office.

The Disabled American Veterans provide “free, professional assistance to veterans and their families in obtaining benefits and services earned through military service and provided by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and other agencies of government.”

The Veterans of Foreign Wars advocates for veterans rights, provides mutual support and promotes veteran-related projects.

The V.A. outpatient clinic provides primary care medical services for veterans. A new, expanded outpatient health care facility is slated to open in 2016.

Veteran's Justice Outreach (VJO) advocates for treatment of mental illness in lieu of incarceration.

ⁱ For example, here's a case recently brought to my attention by a SVDP intake worker: "The head of household is a female veteran. She served 6 years Navy with an honorable discharge in 2005. She gets 105 disability (\$133.17) and is a survivor of MST. She, her partner and baby daughter moved to Eugene in March of last year to be near his family and better job prospects. They live in a trailer on his mom's property in Halsey, which has no hook-ups and black mold and mushrooms growing in the carpet and on the walls. He was finally able to obtain full time work in December, which means that although they are now \$73 over-income for SSVF purposes, they have exhausted all their savings and cannot afford to move. Halsey is a one-hour commute from his job, as well as from any health care facilities for their daughter's use. Clearly, their trailer is not fit for human habitation and they want desperately to move closer to town."

Home Forward – Portland, Oregon

Best Practices for 100% Utilization of VASH

Home Forward in Portland, Oregon has found that administering a VASH program in the typical way the Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher program is run will not lead to success. Housing high barrier homeless veterans using a voucher is challenging at best; 100% utilization of VASH means we need to change our programs to work for the people we serve, (homeless veterans) rather than requiring them to conform to agency needs.

Home Forward (the housing authority in Portland, Oregon) has taken several steps to ensure high utilization. First, we set aside two days a month to serve VASH-eligible veterans. At that appointment, a group of veterans accompanied by their VA caseworker is taken through the entire process from determining housing eligibility through voucher issuance and a program briefing. The VA caseworkers are there through the entire process and with the knowledge they gain in these sessions, improves their ability to assist vets with the housing search process.

Next, our Moving to Work authority gives Home Forward the ability to fund security deposits, which eliminates a serious barrier- to successful housing placement. But an active and engaged VA office and housing authority taking these steps are not enough to meet the challenges of utilizing VASH vouchers. Wider community involvement is an essential ingredient. VASH funding for rent assistance and services is not flexible and so cannot deal with helping vets with the many barriers they face in using VASH, everything from paying off old utility bills to bus passes and application fees. Involving community service providers that specialize in serving the homeless was essential as we worked to identify problems and create solutions. In Portland, local government joined with the United Way and Home Forward to create a fund of flexible funds to address these barriers, which has been essential to the VA caseworkers as they work with veterans to access housing.

Ongoing monthly meetings with government and community partners that are focused on identifying strategies to fill the gaps continue. Attendees include the City, the County, the VA, Home Forward, various local service providers, and the landlord community. In addition to developing strategies, these meetings hold all of us accountable as we plot our progress towards 100% utilization. Housing retention (post placement) has become another focus for that meeting. This year Multnomah County used local funds to hire Veterans Service Officers. These new positions will focus on benefits acquisition for zero income veterans and change of status for veterans currently ineligible for VA services due to the nature of their discharge.

In conclusion, we've learned that ending veterans' homelessness will work only with community-wide focus on a shared goal, a willingness to be nimble and change processes to meet the needs of the people we serve rather than the needs of our programs, and private and public investment to fill identified gaps and help our veterans overcome barriers to finding a home.

Veterans Living Independently Following Treatment (VetLIFT)

VetLIFT is a cluster of three buildings with 41 units developed, owned, and managed by St. Vincent de Paul Society of Lane County, Inc. The Complex is designed to provide an appropriate array of housing and service options for homeless and chronically homeless veterans. The original intent of the project was to allow veterans to have service and housing choices in a veteran community setting, or to fully integrate into the broader community, as they chose. To date, 194 homeless veterans have found homes and supportive services through VetLIFT.

VetLIFT 1 provides 15 units of permanent supportive housing for chronically homeless veterans and served 37 veterans since 2006. Many of our original residents remain in place, but are now connected to either employment or have received VA benefits.



VetLIFT 2 is a 12-unit transitional Grant and Per Diem site that has served 90 veterans since opening in 2008. Again 85% of our veterans have transitioned to permanent housing and have obtained either VA or mainstream benefits or employment. SVdP has hired at least 10 residents.



VetLIFT 3 is a 10-unit permanent supportive housing project that has served 27 veterans since opening in 2009. Many veterans residing in this complex had zero income at move-in. All veterans who have moved have been able to obtain benefits or employment.



Also under the VetLIFT umbrella are 4 emergency shelter beds at another site. 40 veterans have moved through this program since 2010.

What has worked:

- Creating a close-knit supportive community of veterans in close proximity
- Creating a site-integrated continuum of housing types and decreasing service intensity
- Focus on obtaining benefits and or employment
- Excellent partnerships with the VA, City and County government entities
- The addition of Supportive Services to Veteran Families grant funds has acted as an integrative catalyst between SVDP, the VA and community at large.
- Combining HUD resources (including HOME, CDBG, and Continuum of Care), VA Capital Grants and Per Diem funds, local subsidies including tax and SDC exemptions, and state trust fund dollars.

Regional Best Practices

Washington State

Bellingham/Whatcom County

Clallam County

Kenmore

Renton

Seattle/King County

Snohomish County

Spokane

Vancouver

City of Bellingham/Whatcom County - Washington

In Bellingham and Whatcom County, our community implemented several systemic changes that resulted in a significant reduction in homelessness among veterans. These changes comprise a strategic, aligned effort among many organizations.

We began implementing coordinated entry in our local homeless housing system in 2008, with expansion to all populations and housing programs in 2011. Having all housing programs in the community working together, sharing data and other resources helps us recognize more accurately what's working, what's not, and where we have service gaps and performance issues.

Our focus on ending veteran homelessness coincided with VA Secretary Shinseki and President Obama's call to action in late 2009. That's when our homeless coalition leaders and local public officials advocated for additional housing resources for veterans and our County passed an ordinance creating the new Whatcom County Veteran Assistance Program. That major change integrated local county funding for veterans with other local, state, and federal funds to build a comprehensive response to veteran homelessness.

This major shift in emphasis included co-locating our new VASH case managers with our new SSVF program staff at the centralized coordinated entry program, which is located at Opportunity Council, our community action agency.

In 2012, City of Bellingham voters approved an affordable housing property tax levy that created the Bellingham Home Fund, a new source of revenue that creates new and specialized affordable housing and supportive housing services, some of which is being used to address veteran homelessness.

Finally, we have also established a street outreach program funded by the City of Bellingham that helps us locate homeless veterans who are not accessing our coordinated entry system on their own.



2014 LHD of the Year Award

LHD NAME: Whatcom County Health Department (Bellingham, WA)

LHD SIZE (population served): Medium (50,000–499,999)

LHD Overview

Whatcom County Health Department (WCHD) is a local county health jurisdiction serving a population of close to 210,000. Whatcom is a home-rule county with separation of powers in an executive and a legislative branch. The legislative branch consists of an elected seven-member Whatcom County Council acting also as health board to WCHD. WCHD is located in the beautiful far northwestern corner of the state of Washington, with British Columbia as its northern neighbor. This creates some unique opportunities for international partnering with its Canadian neighbor, such as cross-border partnering on health and emergency preparedness during the 2010 Vancouver Winter Olympics. Whatcom County has an interesting urban/rural mix, with Bellingham being home to some 81,000 residents. Bellingham recently ranked number seven in the Gallup-Healthways Well-Being Index of America's 10 healthiest cities. Two tribal governments are contained within the county's borders—the Lummi Nation and the Nooksack Indian Tribe. Neither has a tribal health department. WCHD's annual budget was \$18,792,489 in 2013 and it has 72.35 full-time employees. WCHD has four divisions: Communicable Disease and Epidemiology, Community Health, Environmental Health, and Human Services. It has applied for Public Health Accreditation Board accreditation and has a site visit scheduled for June 2014.

Statement for LHD of the Year Award: External Policy

Veterans' homelessness is an issue that plagues the entire nation and Whatcom County is no exception. Although flawless counts are impossible to come by—the transient nature of homeless populations presents a major difficulty—the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) estimates that 57,849 veterans are homeless on any given night.

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) states that the nation's homeless veterans are predominantly male; roughly eight percent are female. Most are single, live in urban areas, and suffer from mental illness, alcohol and/or substance abuse, or co-occurring disorders. Veterans comprise about 12 percent of the adult homeless population.

In addition to the complex set of factors influencing all homelessness—extreme shortages of affordable housing, livable incomes, and access to healthcare—a large number of displaced and at-risk veterans live with lingering effects of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and substance abuse, which are compounded by a lack of family and social support networks. Additionally, military occupations and

training are not always transferable to the civilian workforce, placing some veterans at a disadvantage when competing for employment.

The 2008 local Point in Time (PIT) Count indicated that at least 83 veterans were homeless in Whatcom County. These numbers remained stable through 2011. During a 2011 community needs assessment, Whatcom County recognized the disgrace of veterans' homelessness and made a commitment to house its local heroes. The county determined that the top priority for homeless veterans was safe, secure housing that would bring critical supportive services with it. Whatcom County had the challenge of implementing sweeping change through policy enactment and subsequent action to end veterans' homelessness in Whatcom County.

Goals

WCHD's goal was to end local veterans' homelessness through a commitment of funding and an expansion of veterans' programs and services. This goal was launched with the proposal of a new county ordinance in 2011. This ordinance officially created the Whatcom County Veterans Assistance Program funded primarily with local property tax dollars. Once the County Council approved the ordinance, the County Code was enacted, allowing the tax dollars to fund a variety of vital services. It was clear to the health department that providing a place to live was not enough to ensure a stable and productive life for veterans who had been homeless for some time. WCHD knew that it had to offer support services to ensure a return to health and an opportunity to build independent living skills. These services include behavioral health treatment, dental care, transportation to essential appointments, and legal assistance.

Implementation

In order to measure its success, WCHD used a software system, HMIS, (Homeless Management Information System) to collect data. It collected and analyzed information on demographics, successful placements into housing, and retention and stability in that housing. It even tracked how long veterans had to wait for housing once they were welcomed into our program.

The annual Whatcom County PIT Count was another method WCHD used to track its success. The PIT assists the health department with objective measures, is very well regulated and monitored, and provides a valid and replicable measure of homelessness in Whatcom County.

WCHD began to track its accomplishments of housing homeless veterans and connecting them to critical health and behavioral healthcare and the necessary supportive services to ensure their ascension to contributory citizenship. The health department counted how many veterans it housed and how many of them received the key services they required to remain successful in their new homes.

The enactment of a new County Code creating the Veterans Assistance Program initiated the drive to end veterans' homelessness. Whatcom County Ordinance 2011-033 formally established the Whatcom County Veterans Assistance Program. The ordinance was written pursuant to Washington state statute RCW 73.08.010. The ordinance called for a significant expansion of services to veterans, including housing eviction prevention assistance, housing assistance for homeless veterans, behavioral health services not paid for by other sources, training opportunities, case management services, and numerous

other supportive services to provide a comprehensive continuum of care. Local property tax millage dedicated only to this purpose could now be used more completely.

Through contract, the county funds the Whatcom Homeless Service Center (WHSC), a division of the County's Community Action Agency (The Opportunity Council). It serves as the single point of entry for homeless housing services in Whatcom County. The county committed funds to this agency for housing veterans and leveraged federal veterans' housing programs. The partnership with the Opportunity Council/WHSC helped to attract 35 Veterans Administration Subsidized Housing (HUD-VASH) Vouchers along with case management.

In 2012, the Opportunity Council became one of the first 33 grantees of the VA's Supportive Services for Veterans' Families (SSVF) Grant. The Opportunity Council obtained this grant, bringing in additional monies, in part through the promise of matching dollars from the local Veterans Assistance Program. The county tax dollars combined with these two additional federal sources to provide a solid funding foundation for efforts to end Veterans' homelessness.

WCHD also partnered with numerous community social service agencies to provide supportive services for veterans who were being housed. The County Veterans Assistance Program acts as the hub for resources such as counseling, temporary financial assistance, housing assistance, health services, compensation and pension, social service programs, legal assistance, employment assistance, and transportation.

The health department is able to offer services to veterans through its partnerships in the local community: Healthcare through the Whatcom Alliance for Health Advancement, the Bellingham Vet Center, and the VA Community Based Outreach Clinic. Veteran Service Group partners include the American Legion, Disabled American Veterans, Veterans of Foreign Wars, Vietnam Veterans of America, Combat Veterans International, Veterans for Peace, and Growing Veterans. A Work Source veterans' representative partners with the WCHD on employment services. Other partners include the partially county-funded Disabled American Veterans' Van to Seattle Hospital and the County Veteran Transportation Program Contract with the Whatcom Volunteer Center.

In partnership with the community, WCHD made significant progress in ending veteran homelessness by establishing a strategic plan and funding the effort with sufficient local dollars, which in turn leveraged additional federal monies. These dollars enhanced the existing continuum of care to such a great extent that rental assistance and supportive services could be brought to identify veterans sufficient to impact positive change. WCHD purposefully used its community partnerships in this rewarding work to ensure wide investment and the best possibility for sustained success.

Outcomes

Through the implementation of Ordinance 2011-033 and targeted housing dollars, the PIT Count demonstrated that the number of homeless veterans in Whatcom County dropped from 74 in 2011 to 28 in 2012. The number of homeless veterans has decreased by 65 percent from 2008 (the first year of the count) to 2014 (the current year.) Only three veterans who were counted in 2013 remained unhoused in 2014.

Numbers only paint a small part of the picture. It is important to remember each of the veterans represented in the PIT are individuals with unique needs and desires. (Note: The following names have been changed to protect privacy)

John was one of the very first veterans to enter the doors of the Veterans Assistance Program. A friend of John's had read about the program and encouraged him to check it out. John served two combat tours in Vietnam. Disillusioned with the United States, John moved overseas after his time in the service. He returned to the United States and started a family but struggled to reintegrate into the American way of life. After his divorce, things rapidly deteriorated for John and he found himself living on National Forest land in eastern Whatcom County.

John professed skepticism that the program would be able to help him, but he was willing to give the program his trust. John was housed through the Supportive Services for Veterans Families grant and the Veterans Assistance Program. Disabled American Veterans, which is intentionally co-located with the Veterans Assistance Program, were able to file a VA disability benefits claim for John that has resulted in compensation benefits that he is able to live on. John is a talented artist and now teaches art therapy classes and has had several successful gallery showings of his art. John desired to give back to the community and now takes an active role in shaping housing policy as a member of the Whatcom County Housing Advisory Committee.

Chad struggled for most of his life. He was separated from the military early due to behavioral challenges stemming from mental health disabilities. Chad also struggled with substance abuse. He had spent his adult life in and out of the corrections system. Chad was sleeping in a homeless camp and panhandling at a grocery store. Through the program, Chad has been housed with the help of both the Veterans Affairs Subsidized Housing Program and the Supportive Services for Veterans Families Grant. A County contract with the Whatcom Alliance for Health Achievement was able to purchase him dentures. Local county dollars funded his drug rehabilitation program. He has been linked up with the Department of Social and Health Services and now receives food and cash benefits. He is also receiving his health benefits through the VA. Chad has been clean and sober since moving into housing. Chad is very proud of his new smile and stops by to show it off.

It is clear that WCHD's dedicated commitment to ending veteran homelessness in its county produced significant success.

Advice

Whatcom County Health Department would recommend that any other LHD attempting to implement this model use well researched best practices, such as Housing First, logical and sustainable policies, and partnership with other community organizations for maximum impact. Current research on the Housing First approach can be found in the article *Housing Chronically Homeless Veterans: Evaluating the Efficacy of a Housing First Approach to HUD-VASH* by Dennis P. Culhane at http://works.bepress.com/dennis_culhane/127.

WCHD has been successful because it partnered with local and federal entities along with non-profits, veterans groups, charities, and religious-based organizations to provide wraparound services for

veterans. These wraparound services and community-focused care enable the health department to provide replicable and sustainable services for veterans. WCHD use one point of entry to access all homeless benefits (The Whatcom Homeless Service Center) and another single point of entry for all veteran-based wraparound services (The Whatcom County Veterans Assistance Program). These two agencies work closely together and network with other providers to offer robust services to veterans. Specifically, providers from the Whatcom Homeless Service Center and the Veterans Assistance Program meet on a weekly basis to discuss cases and network solutions.

By leveraging local tax dollars (The Veterans Assistance Fund per RCW 73.08.080), WCHD was able to bring in the Federal Supportive Services for Veterans Grant. This blending of funding enables the health department to be a regional leader in veterans housing. Blended funds allow it to exponentially expand services for veterans and continue to serve veterans for the foreseeable future.

In addition, by partnering with the Whatcom Homeless Service Center, WCHD has been able to target eligible chronically homeless veterans and to build relationships with landlords in the community in order to house some of its most challenged individuals.

This program strongly encourages enacting sound policy based on data and best practices and emphasizes LHD leadership and community collaboration focused on a priority valued by all.

Supporting Materials

[Whatcom County Ordinance #2011-033](#)

City of Bellingham, WA

Some of the things that Bellingham's doing under Mayor Linville's administration:

Homeless Outreach Team - \$250,000/year. This will provide new services for people in displaced or distressed housing. This is a partnership with outside organizations and the City.

Neighborhood Police Officer Program - NPOs work closely with neighbors, neighborhood associations, business and other community stakeholders to build collaborative, proactive community problem-solving efforts and integrate police response with other community outreach efforts (including social services).

Community Paramedic Program - People in distressed living environments frequently call for emergency dispatch, at times in situations that are not emergencies. Similar to the police response, a community paramedic program can provide a trusted, responsive source. We currently have ONE community paramedic - this is a very new program.

Mental Health Court - The Bellingham Municipal Court and Whatcom County District Court will operate problem-solving therapeutic courts that attempt to interrupt a cycle of criminal behavior by treating the whole person, providing improved access to treatment and ensuring accountability with judicial oversight and specially trained probation officers. All of the offenders in these courts are charged with misdemeanors.

Those are the programs that the City is specifically involved in, but the social service agencies in Bellingham are doing a wonderful job as well. The mayor's philosophy is to work within a spectrum of solutions and resources, identifying gaps and deciding on what agency is most equipped to fill in that gap. It's been a collaborative process, and the above 4 programs are all new (implementation last or this year).

Serenity House of Clallam County WA Veterans Services

Veterans experiencing homelessness and housing crisis in Clallam County receive targeted services, wrap around multi-agency support, direct links to resources, and ongoing support when and at the level of need. Serenity House offers coordinated intake, emergency shelter, transitional housing, rapid re-housing, housing first and permanent supportive housing. We have a street outreach shelter and a hygiene center, a state licensed childcare center and two thrift stores. We encourage and promote housing stability through employment and increased income. Supportive services are offered as needed with direct links to service providers and provided at the level of need of the household. Special attention is given to subpopulations of the homeless population providing meaningful services directed to individuals and households experiencing commonalities such as veterans, youth and young adult, families, chronic homelessness, etc.

Veterans access housing services through any one of three housing resource centers (coordinated intake and assessment) located across the county, one each in Sequim, Port Angeles and Forks. Through a 5 county collaborative SSVF (Supportive Services for Veterans Families) grant, veterans receive coordinated intake, prevention and rapid re-housing, housing counseling, advocacy, referrals, outreach services, vouchers for transportation and household goods, documents retrieval assistance and support by a veteran housing specialist who can provide a truly knowledgeable and relatable stabilization experience. Other HUD, state, county and private funds potentially serve as a backup if SSVF funds run out before the family is self-sufficient.

Permanent supportive housing options are located across the county for chronically homeless veterans. Clallam and Jefferson counties share 25 VASH vouchers, some of which are used in the PSH complexes Maloney Heights in Port Angeles and upcoming Sunbelt Apartments in Sequim. Sarge's Place and the Outpost in Forks provide emergency shelter and permanent supportive housing for veterans and veteran families.

Our housing resource centers provide a network of services. A Veterans benefits specialist through the DAV shares office space at two of our housing resource centers. This has been especially helpful to veterans and the benefits team for access to veterans and services. An employment readiness classroom (The HUB) is located at our Port Angeles HRC and runs five days a week, four hours a day and is partnered with DSHS (Department of Social and Health Services), WorkSource, Peninsula College, Kitsap Community Resources and many other service agencies and professionals who provide their time and resources to ongoing facilitation of classes. AA (Alcoholics Anonymous) groups meet twice weekly at our PA Housing Resource Center. At our Sequim HRC office, the WIC (Women, Infants and Children) program and First Step Family Support Center share space to provide a direct linkage between families and services.

Clallam County provides a veterans assistant who works closely with housing and other services as a liaison to services for vets.

Voices for Veterans provide 3 “Stand Downs” a year across Clallam County. Special attention is taken to identify veterans living in the forests of the Olympics. The HRC Veterans Housing Specialist serves on this committee as a housing representative.

A local group “New Lease on Life” provides veterans with certification for service animals.



Mayors Challenge to End Veteran Homelessness in King County

Last year in the annual One Night Count in King County, the number of homeless people sleeping on the streets or in their vehicles was up 21 percent, which was a sharp jump that could be attributed, in part, to more volunteers scouring more parts of the county according to the Seattle/King County Coalition on Homelessness, which conducts the annual survey. Although we don't have accurate statistics for the City of Kenmore, Seattle area statistics indicate that veteran homelessness increased 16 percent from an estimate of 587 veterans in 2011 to 682 veterans in 2013. Statistics vary greatly, but it is estimated that on any given night, between 130,000 and 200,000 veterans in the United States are homeless – approximately one fourth to one fifth of all homeless people.

The veteran homelessness population is made up of veterans who served in several different conflicts, ranging from World War II to the recent conflicts. Research indicates that veterans who served in the late Vietnam and post-Vietnam era are at greatest risk of homelessness. In fact, the number of homeless Vietnam-era veterans, male and female, is greater than the number of soldiers who died during the war. The Vietnam War had a profound effect on American society in general.

More recently, veterans returning from the recent conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq also often have severe disabilities, including traumatic brain injuries (TBIs) and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) that are known to be correlated with homelessness. And as the military evolves, so too do the challenges. Homeless women veterans, for instance, are far more common now than in any other time in the past, and make up an estimated 7 percent of the total number of homeless veterans.

No one who has served our country should ever go without a safe, stable place to call home. But veterans are a vulnerable, hard-to-reach population of mostly middle-age men, virtually all battling some type of physical or mental ailment along with substance abuse.

In 2009, the Obama Administration committed to ending veteran homelessness in the U.S. by the end of 2015. On June 4, 2014, First Lady Michelle Obama announced the launch of the Mayors Challenge to End Veteran Homelessness at the White House. The Challenge was to secure commitments from local leaders to end homelessness among Veterans by 2015, through collaboration with community partners.

The City of Kenmore is taking on the challenge and is joining in on the efforts and is prepared to collaborate with the county to help end veteran homelessness in King County by the year 2016.

Kirkland Avenue Townhomes – Renton WA

***Excerpt from the Renton Housing Authority (RHA) Project Based Voucher application that references the services concepts for Kirkland Avenue Townhomes (KAT). We will also add to this, those supports that families indicate are needed. Neighborhood House is working with RHA and the City of Renton to complete a needs survey for Sunset Terrace families this Spring (these KAT units are replacement housing for Sunset).*

“Kirkland Avenue Townhomes can provide housing to the homeless and formerly homeless which typically require a higher level of associated services and referrals. Thus Renton Housing Authority (RHA) will expand its formal working relationship with Catholic Community Services to support and augment the agency’s own referral and supportive services. In addition, RHA in its partnership with the Compass Housing Alliance’s Veterans Center in Renton and with the County funded Cedars Project with Catholic Community Services; at the Kirkland Avenue Townhomes the housing authority seeks to expand housing and services to homeless and to homeless veterans with families.

RHA offers a high-level of services and referrals to all its residents through its One Stop social services center at 2900 NE 10th Street where among other providers Valley Cities Mental Health Services and Catholic Community Services lease space. RHA and its partners will continue to act as a resident resource when called upon and proactively promote family physical and emotional health, self-sufficiency, educational and vocational growth for occupants of the Kirkland Avenue Townhomes. RHA has also secured adult education scholarships available to the families of this project through a tuition partnership with the Renton Technical College.

RHA has two fulltime self-sufficiency case managers one focusing on family services the other on elderly and geriatric services. RHA contracted with HYDE Shuttle and has two 20 passenger micro-buses on location. Dispatched weekdays from the RHA central office the HYDE Shuttles are stationed within a mile of the Kirkland Avenue Townhomes project.

Currently, a portion of the proposed RHA staff’s salaries are covered by a Resident Opportunities and Self-Sufficiency (ROSS) Grant and Service Coordinator Grant. If these grants were to be eliminated, RHA will utilize its unencumbered resources and local program revenues to pay for salaries of staff who devote time to resident services at the Kirkland Avenue Townhomes.

RHA housing communities include an active and engaging resident population comprised of families from Africa, Russia and Eastern Europe, Spanish speaking countries, and many Asian counties. With RHA’s assistance, the residents are particularly engaged which contributes to mutual understanding and a respectful and healthy community.

The modular construction of the Kirkland Avenue Townhomes units delivers several positive impacts to the families over conventional stick-frame construction. Positive aspects for both the residents and community at large include:

Indoor air quality – since the buildings will be built in a controlled environment, the building products will not be exposed to rain and therefore not likely to have any mold issues. And since the building will be dry, there should be no off-gassing of mildew or other building products resulting from the building drying out.

Noise mitigation - the offsite fabrication of the building will mean there will be less construction activity/noise for the neighbors (less hammering, nail guns, shouting, generators/pumps, delivery vehicles backing up, etc.)

Reduced construction traffic – since there will be limited deliveries of construction materials and primary building tradespeople will not be arriving on site, car traffic will be substantially reduced from a typical construction site. However, there will be a few days where a construction crane will be on site to lift the modules and this may impact road access for neighbors given the narrow residential streets.

The property will be included under RHA’s smoke-free housing policy.

RHA is not part of a religious institution and has no religious hiring or religious service delivery bias. RHA is solvent, capable of delivering self-sufficiency case management services, and otherwise fully administering these eighteen project-based two and three BR rental assistance vouchers.”

Seattle/King County WA

- The purpose of the Veterans Housing Options Group (VHOG) is to alleviate the burden of one agency being solely responsible for housing all homeless Veterans and to improve Veterans access to the best housing resource in the fewest steps.
 - The VA Community Housing and Outreach Services program implements the VHOG in collaboration with the Washington State Department of Veterans Affairs (WDVA), King County Veterans Program (KCVP), Catholic Community Services (CCS), Community Psychiatric Clinic (CPC), and the YWCA.
 - The six organizations have dedicated staff that attend and/or present the housing options available to homeless Veterans through their organization and remain onsite after the presentation to screen and discuss eligibility and specific service needs of the Veteran attendees.
 - The group occurs weekly to provide consistent information to identified homeless Veterans about the continuum of housing options in the King County region.
 - The goal is to improve trust among providers, improve access to housing and services for Veterans, and coordinate the program enrollment and housing outcomes of homeless and at-risk Veterans.

- The Veterans Engaging Targeted Services (VETS) Passport is a small booklet similar in size to an authentic passport.
 - Use of the VETS Passport is a low-tech solution to record the service agencies a Veteran has visited to reduce system fragmentation of the more than 180 Veteran-specific programs in King County.
 - It is designed to increase coordination of “warm handoffs” between service providers and allow Veterans to be in control of “walking their passport” to targeted services.
 - The goal is to ensure Veterans and their families get to the best resources in the fewest steps as well as improve their satisfaction navigating the Veterans service delivery system in King County.

Snohomish County Veterans Homelessness Committee



Community Partnership Report

July 1, 2013 – June 30, 2014



**Snohomish County
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BACKGROUND:

On June 2, 2010, Washington State's Department of Veterans Affairs held the Washington State Ending Veterans Homelessness Summit, our state's response to National Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric Shinseki's Five-Year Plan to End Veterans Homelessness. At that summit, Snohomish County representatives from Catholic Community Services and the Salvation Army decided that our county needed to have a closer knit, grass roots-type of organizing body consisting of housing providers, service agencies, citizens, government, and other necessary entities in order to better address this critical issue of veterans homelessness. The Veterans Homelessness Committee (VHC) was launched! The following organizations make up the body of the VHC:

- American Legion Post 6
- Bridgeways
- Catholic Community Services of Western Washington
- Congressman Rick Larsen's Veteran & Community Outreach Program
- Community Health Center of Snohomish County
- Department of Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing Case Management
- Housing Authority of Snohomish County
- Naval Station Everett Fleet & Family Support
- Salvation Army of Everett & Snohomish County
- Senior Services of Snohomish County
- Snohomish County AOD/Mental Health/Veterans Division Management
- Snohomish County Veterans Assistance Program
- Snohomish County WorkSource
- Therapeutic Health Services of Snohomish County
- Veterans of Foreign Wars
- Volunteers of America Western Washington
- Workforce Snohomish
- YWCA of Snohomish County

This report details progress made in those areas determined to be most critical in serving veterans facing homelessness with the reporting covering the period of July 1, 2013 through June 30, 2014. Some of the more significant challenges facing the VHC this year has been the increase in the number of Post 9/11 veterans facing homelessness, a shortage of affordable housing that is reaching epic proportions, and continuing the previous year's "Housing the Ninety-Nine" initiative.



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I. Homeless Prevention:

Homeless prevention, for the purpose of this report, is providing financial assistance (and in some instances case management) to veteran households at imminent risk of becoming homeless or providing rental assistance to rapidly re-house a veteran household. In eviction prevention cases, veterans were required to show proof of imminent homelessness by providing either a vacate notice or an eviction summons. For rapid re-housing, veterans were required to present verification of their homelessness. Homeless prevention was provided through three primary service agencies, Catholic Community Services, Volunteers of America and Snohomish County Veterans Assistance Program.

A. Veterans Eviction Prevention (EP) Rental Assistance:

1. Number of households receiving EP rental assistance: **328**
2. Sources of funding:
 - a. VA Supportive Services for Veterans Families (SSVF)
 - b. Snohomish County Veterans Assistance Fund (VAF)
 - c. Emergency Food & Shelter Program (FEMA), Ending Homelessness Program, Consolidated Homeless Grant
3. Total cost: \$242,112.05
4. Total cost, non-VA funds: \$216,091.80
5. Average cost per household: \$738.15
6. Number of households retaining permanent housing: **298**



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B. Veterans Rapid Rehousing (RR) Rental Assistance:

1. Number of households receiving RR rental assistance: **239**
2. Sources of funding:
 - a. VA Supportive Services for Veterans Families (SSVF)
 - b. Snohomish County Veterans Assistance Fund (VAF)
3. Total cost: \$188,757.33
4. Total cost, non-VA funds: \$22,574.48
5. Average cost per household: \$789.78
6. Number of households retaining permanent housing: **217**

A total of **381** households were assisted with homeless prevention and rapid rehousing dollars in our community in 2013, versus a total of **567** households during this reporting period. This **65%** increase in households can be attributed to a full year's availability of SSVF funds, along with a marked increase in rents within Snohomish County. Rent increases especially impact our veterans and their families as they struggle to obtain living wage positions in our community. Other factors include the need for additional substance abuse treatment options, veterans in overpayment status, veterans in need of additional life skills training, and a shortage of VA claims expertise. The Veterans Homelessness Committee continues to test solutions for these challenges.



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II. Emergency Shelter

Emergency shelter is a challenge in Snohomish County. There are no current shelters within Snohomish County designated specifically for veterans. The majority of the homeless veterans within Snohomish County, much like the national statistics, are single adults.

Single male veterans in Snohomish County may access the Everett Gospel Men’s Mission Men’s shelter, which operates at capacity nearly every evening; single female veterans are limited to trying to secure a bed with the Monroe Gospel Women’s Mission, which can only accommodate a handful of shelter guests. Veteran families with children may apply for shelter through Housing Hope, the YWCA, Everett Gospel’s Women & Children Shelter, or the Interfaith Family Shelter. None of the current shelters have any veteran set aside allocations.

In the addition to the current shelters, Snohomish County veterans have been able to access Veterans Assistance Fund (VAF) resources for emergency shelter, in the form of motel vouchers. These vouchers are exclusively for homeless veterans exiting homelessness or medically unable to access other shelters, and are very limited

1. Number of veterans receiving VAF shelter assistance:	54
2. Total amount of shelter assistance:	\$19,505.59
3. Shelter assistance cost per veteran:	\$361.21

*Source of funding ~ Snohomish County Veterans Assistance Fund

VHC subcommittee members have initiated discussions with the Everett Men’s Gospel Mission, the Interfaith Family Shelter, and the YWCA Single Women w/Children Shelter for priority placement for veterans needing shelter. We anticipate having at least two (2) family shelter set aside units and three (3) single male set aside beds by early 2015.



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III. Employment

To say that employment for our literally homeless and imminently homeless is a huge challenge would be an understatement. The numbers produced over the past two years are staggering:

Percentage of homeless veterans with part/temp/fulltime employment – **9%**

Percentage of imminently homeless veterans with living wage incomes – **5%**

*The total number of veterans in Snohomish County overall is approximately 59,000; the number of veteran households represented above would be the 948 households served with either homeless prevention or rapid rehousing funds over the past two years.

WorkSource, through their Local Veteran Employment Representatives, Disabled Veterans Outreach Program, and non-Veteran employment counselors, provide one-to-one direct employment and training counseling to county veterans. Their service report includes:

Veterans served:	1759
Veterans employed:	951
Vets receiving job preparatory services:	1433
Vets receiving case management-type services:	689
Vets receiving training services:	103
Vets receiving job ready services:	997
Disabled Veterans Outreach Program enrollments:	652
Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment enrollments:	50
Local Veteran Employment Rep enrollments:	269

**Total Program Cost:
\$317,902**

**Equates to:
\$602 per job placement
\$327 per veteran served**

Funding sources utilized by WorkSource to serve veterans include:

- Disabled Veterans Outreach Program
- Local Veterans Employments Representative Program
- Wagner-Peyser/Labor Exchange
- Workforce Investment Act
- Unemployment Insurance Re-Employment Program
- Trade Act Assistance



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Snohomish County SERVE Center

On November 13, 2013, the Snohomish County SERVE Center opened, with sponsorship by Workforce Snohomish, the City of Everett, and the Boeing Corporation. The SERVE Center provides one-stop services for veterans and their families with a myriad of both on- and off-site partners and resource access points. A total of **291** veterans were served during this reporting period, with many accessing services with these partners:

- Catholic Community Services
- CS Consulting Business & Career Resources
- Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing
- Veterans Employment Services Office
- Volunteers of America
- Washington Department of Veterans Affairs
- Workforce Snohomish Homeless Veterans Reintegration Program
- Wounded Warrior Project
- WorkSource Snohomish County
- YWCA of King & Snohomish County

SERVE Center Off-Site Partners:

- Naval Station Everett Fleet & Family Support
- Northwest Justice Project's Veterans' Legal Assistance
- Snohomish County Veterans Assistance Program
- Everett Vet Center



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IV. Substance Abuse Treatment

The 2014 Snohomish County Point-in-Time Count report shows that **24.7%** of the overall homeless people surveyed indicated that alcohol/substance abuse was a primary cause for their homelessness. This is virtually unchanged from 2013, where **24.8%** indicated the same. Communities must develop innovative partnerships in order to be able to provide critical services to the veterans in dire need of them--veterans looking to break free of the stranglehold of addiction and homelessness.

The Seattle Veterans Affairs Hospital is the primary treatment facility for Snohomish County veterans, but due to location, transportation, and availability, it is sometimes difficult to access. In order to provide better access, our community of drug and alcohol treatment providers has been providing treatment options for veterans over the past few years. This partnership group includes:

- A. Catholic Community Services
- B. Evergreen Manor
- C. Sea Mar Behavioral Health
- D. Stillaguamish Tribe of Indians
- E. Therapeutic Health Services
- F. Tulalip Tribal Behavioral Health Services

Snohomish County Veterans Assistance Program staff provided referrals to **66** veterans for substance abuse assessment and treatment facilities, both VA and non-VA. In all, **61** veterans received treatment services through non-VA facilities from July 1, 2013 through June 30, 2014.

One provider, **Therapeutic Health Services (THS)**, provided treatment services for **33** veterans, at a cost of **\$115,400**. With a clearly defined veterans' mission, THS also provides assistance in accessing key veterans' benefits and claims processing.



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V. Housing w/Services

VASH Voucher Program

The Housing Authority of Snohomish County (HASCO) has received a total of **187** HUD-Veterans Administration Supportive Housing (VASH) vouchers. The VASH program is an innovative federal partnership that combines Section 8 vouchers from HUD with case management through the Veterans Administration (VA) to house homeless veterans.

VA staff out-stationed in Everett and Marysville are expected to locate and refer chronically homeless vets living in the woods and on the streets to HASCO for VASH vouchers. VA clinicians provide ongoing case management to VASH participants to help them remain stable.

The target population for VASH vouchers for 2014 is chronically homeless veteran individuals and families who have been honorably discharged from military service and have incomes below 50% of the area median. Clinical exceptions to the chronically homeless criteria are made for families with children and for other compelling situations.

HASCO's awards of VASH vouchers to date are summarized below.

Year	Number of Vouchers Awarded	Amount of Annual Funding Awarded
2009	35	\$296,495
2010	25	\$233,031
2011	25	\$158,496
2012	75	\$585,873
2013	15	\$118,359
2014	12	\$95,790
TOTAL	187	\$1,488,044



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V. Housing w/Services (continued)

Since receiving the first award in 2009, HASCO and the VA have been able to serve up to 175 homeless veterans and veteran families with VASH vouchers. These vouchers will continue to be available to homeless veterans as they turn over.

HASCO received notification on 10/1/14 that another 12 VASH vouchers will be awarded to house more homeless veterans. In partnership with the VA, HASCO continues to inform the VA that it can administer additional VASH vouchers if they are available, based on the needs of homeless veterans in the County.

Program Implementation

Implementing a program that involves multiple partner agencies is always a challenge, and the VASH program in Snohomish County was no exception. Some of the challenges that HASCO and the VA encountered in the past year were:

- Arranging for office space within HASCO for additional VA staff that are assigned to provide case management to the VASH clients
- Once a veteran received their voucher, finding a unit and a landlord that would rent to them, since many had rental history or other barriers

HASCO and the VA worked together to improve the VASH program. Some of the innovative solutions that helped overcome these challenges were:

- HASCO made available an off-site office location in one of HASCO's buildings that is located in the north end of the County to house VA staff, that continues to keep the VA staff available to the community locally, strengthening the VA's connections with local service agencies and HASCO staff, improving their ability to connect with veterans in remote areas, and allowing them to transport vets to Seattle if needed.
- HASCO and the VA case managers continue to provide landlord education and outreach about the VASH program, to give landlords confidence in renting to VASH voucher holders
- HASCO continues to prioritize housing inspections for VASH clients so they could move off the street and into their unit as quickly as possible
- HASCO continues to make available units for difficult to house veterans when possible



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V. Housing w/Services (continued)

- HASCO continues to provide information about VASH to all new applicants who identify as veterans
- HASCO implemented a telework policy for some HASCO employees, which freed up office space to allow HASCO to continue to offer office space for VASH case managers
- HASCO partnered with Catholic Community Services to apply for **20** competitive VASH PBVs to subsidize the Filbert Road Veterans Housing project, a permanent supportive housing project for chronically homeless Veterans with barriers to obtaining and maintaining housing on the private rental market

Currently all wait list applicants that come to the office stating they are a veteran will be referred to the VA staff at the HASCO office. The VA staff will work with the applicants to identify services and other housing options they may qualify for as needed, including VASH.

HASCO’s voucher intake staff handles all VASH applications in a high priority fashion so that the veteran can be housed as soon as possible. Veterans can lease up in as little as two weeks on up to an average of 60 days after receiving their voucher.

Catholic Community Services (CCS) Permanent Supportive Housing

CCS has various permanent supportive housing (PSH) projects in Snohomish County and has made veterans a priority population in direct support of the community partnership to end veteran homelessness. Specifically:

Number of new veterans housed:	6
Total number of veterans housed through PSH:	18
Total amount of housing subsidies:	\$93,600
Average cost per veteran:	\$5,200
Total case management hours provided:	936
Total cost/case management services:	\$20,736



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VII. Transportation

Snohomish County veterans in need of transportation to and from necessary appointments receive this service through the Catholic Community Services (CCS) Disabled Veterans Transportation Program, the Disabled American Veterans, and Snohomish County’s Veterans Assistance Program. Highlights of the transportation services provided for this reporting period include:

A. CCS Disabled Veterans Transportation Program

1. Number of Veterans Transported (unduplicated):	95
2. Total Number of Rides Provided:	1,337
3. Total Miles Travelled Supporting Veterans:	45,360
4. Number of Veterans Turned Away:	0

*Source of funding ~ FTA 5310 (Mobility Management) and FTA 5317 (New Freedom)

B. Snohomish County Veterans Assistance Program

1. Number of Veterans Served – Bus Passes:	142
2. Total Cost – Bus Passes:	\$21,180
3. Average Cost per Veteran – Bus Passes:	\$149
4. Number of Veterans Served – Fuel Vouchers:	227
5. Total Cost – Fuel Vouchers:	\$15,097
6. Average Cost per Veteran – Fuel Vouchers:	\$66

*Source of funding ~ Snohomish County Veterans Assistance Fund

We have seen our transportation expenditures decrease over the past two years after an all-time high in 2012. While transportation remains a concern, the overall stabilization services and continued development and access to resources for our veterans in crisis has helped reduce the need in Snohomish County.



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VIII. Medical/Dental – Non VA

In addition to the VA Puget Sound Medical Facilities, Snohomish County homeless and low-income veterans can seek medical assistance through Community Health Center (CHC) of Snohomish County. CHC operates clinics in Arlington, North Everett, South Everett, Lynnwood, and Edmonds. CHC is a non-profit provider of medical, dental and pharmacy services founded in 1983 to serve the health needs of county residents who face barriers to health care.

Veterans service data for this reporting period, July 1, 2013 through June 30, 2014, follows:

Total number of veterans served (unduplicated):	111
Total number of clinic visits, veterans:	406
Average number of visits per veteran:	3.65
Total funds provided:	\$82,000

Fund source: Department of Health & Human Services – Bureau of Primary Health Care – Health Resources & Services Administration

Many of these veterans are either not yet registered with the VA Puget Sound, are not eligible for VA medical, or will not access VA medical care. For many of the homeless veterans, this is the only preventive care they receive. CHC fills the emergency medical role for our chronically homeless veterans exiting homelessness and are able to stabilize medical conditions that could prove to be life-threatening.

It is particularly noteworthy that quite a few of the veterans accessing health care services at CHC are engaged in regular, preventative care. Preventative care and early detection have been significant in quality of life as we work with these veterans to provide other wraparound services and attempt to end their cycles of homelessness.

Otherwise, dental care is provided by **Snohomish County Veterans Assistance Program’s Dental Van project**. The dental van is available once per month for veterans with emergency dental needs. The dentist is a volunteer dentist from Naval Station Everett, so the program costs are minimal, just over **\$6,256** this period. A total of **80** dental visits were completed by the dental van staff, with an average of eight veterans per year returning to good dental health!



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IX. Additional Items of Significance

Mental Health – Veterans in Snohomish County who suffer from mental illness are a community priority as far as outreach and treatment. Veteran providers have added increased outreach to veterans through programs such as County First Responder Training, Senior and Aging Mental Health Fairs, and other activities. Snohomish County’s first Mental Health Court was launched in early 2013, and although it has no veteran-specific allocation, it is available for long-suffering veterans if they meet program eligibility requirements. Additionally, the Everett Veterans Center, our primary provider for combat veterans seeking mental health services, reported **4,754** veterans served through their facility during this reporting period. Veterans also receive mental health services through the numerous private sector providers.

Community Training – Snohomish County Human Services, specifically the Alcohol & Other Drugs, Mental Health, and Veterans Division Supervisor, coordinated and executed multiple veterans service provider trainings, featuring Dr. Peter Schmidt. These trainings are in **Veterans Cultural Competency, Working with Veterans with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder,** and **Working with Veterans with Traumatic Brain Injury.** Additionally, Snohomish County Veterans Assistance Program added a **Claims Seminar** this year geared toward those provider agencies serving our most vulnerable veterans. These trainings, now four years running, ensure that our non-profits, government, and private sector staff understand some of the complexities of our veteran population.

Homeless Events -- In December, 2013, Snohomish County government, law enforcement, housing providers, non-profit agencies, and the public hosted a **Homeless Memorial Day Vigil,** with an emphasis on veterans who died on our streets. This event serves as a remembrance of those who have passed away and raised community awareness and support in continuing to attack our veteran homelessness. Snohomish County also hosts a **Veterans Stand Down** as part of our annual **Project Homeless Connect (PHC).** By combining the Stand Down with PHC, we are able to provide countless services to our homeless and at-risk veterans, many of which wouldn’t be available if we hosted a stand-alone event. A total of **82** veterans were served at this year’s event, ranging from a **24-year old battle-tested medic** to a **74-year old Vietnam War combat troop.**



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Veterans Seeking Services – The two primary means for veterans seeking help in an emergency or crisis are Snohomish County Veterans Assistance Fund (VAF) Program and North Sound 211. Requests for assistance through VAF for this period were just over **6,200** via the telephone and in-person. VAF also monitors the web-based Network of Care for Veterans and Their Families in Snohomish County and the total amount of web traffic was **97,606** web-based sessions, which averages out to **267** active sessions per day. North Sound 211 reports serving **1,111** veterans (a nearly 300% increase) through their information and referral portal, with a total of **2,103** of those veterans receiving a referral to other resources. There were a total of 126 veterans turned away, but that was due to no resource being available in the immediate area.

Utility Assistance – Similar to eviction prevention, utility assistance experienced a significant increase in need during this reporting period. Snohomish County VAF served a total of **232** veteran households at imminent risk of being shut off or already disconnected from a major utility (electric, gas, water). A total of **\$90,440** was expended to ensure life threatening utilities stayed active for our veteran families. This is another concern for the community moving forward, as the average assistance has gone from **\$200/per** in 2012, to **\$310** in 2013, to **\$390** during this reporting period.

Oso – On March 22, 2014, a major mudslide destroyed an entire community near Oso, Washington. A total of 43 community members perished that day, including 10 veterans. The mudslide, and subsequent flood, destroyed or heavily damaged many homes in the area. **Snohomish County Veterans Assistance Program**, in tandem with the **Washington State Department of Veterans Affairs (WDVA)**, **Catholic Community Services**, **Volunteers of America**, **Washington State Disabled American Veterans**, and many other local service partners provided services ranging from military burial protocols to rapid rehousing rental assistance to ensure our veterans and their families received any and all services necessary to begin the recovery process.

This disaster also educated us as a community on how to be prepared to provide critical services during natural or man-made disasters. Procedural guides have now been developed and shared with **WDVA** for inclusion in other Washington county disaster preparedness plans.



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Housing the Ninety-Nine Initiative.

Background – In February 2013, following the results of the Snohomish County Point in Time Count, the Veterans Homelessness Committee unanimously approved the implementation of the Housing the Ninety-Nine Initiative. This initiative was developed in direct response to the number of homeless veteran households identified during the count (99) in 2013. The committee adopted two primary strategies in order to house “99” homeless veterans: (1) Increase targeted outreach to veterans in ALL areas of the county, urban and rural; and (2) make access to existing housing programs more streamlined for veterans. The target was to permanently house 99 veteran households by December 31, 2013. Virtually no new funding was made available to implement this initiative.

Results – As of December 31, 2013, Snohomish County providers were responsible for permanently housing **112** homeless veterans! A total of **24** households were veteran families with children, while the remainder were singles or couples without children. Additionally, a significant number saw household income increases, while still others were provided with assistance filing for disability resources. Just over ninety percent of the households maintained their housing through their first six months, as outcomes were met or exceeded across the board.

Resources – Contributing agencies/programs included Veteran Affairs Supportive Housing (VASH), Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF), Housing and Essential Needs (HEN), Snohomish County Veterans Homeless Prevention & Rapid Rehousing Program (VHPRP), Compass Health Supportive Housing, and Volunteers of America Housing.

Future – The committee voted unanimously again in 2014 to continue the “Housing the Ninety-Nine” initiative as our impetus for ending veteran homelessness by 2015. When the 2014 Point in Time Count was completed, the overall number of homelessness increased by 12% in Snohomish County, but the veteran numbers decreased **28%**!



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CONCLUSION:

The challenges that lie ahead are many; most importantly, maintaining this high level of energy and dedication to those who sacrificed much for our freedom. Our efforts have been successful in our community because this partnership has continued to grow stronger as our focus intensifies. Our partnership model has been shared at the local, state, and federal levels as we strive to share our successes and best practices with other communities.

Looking forward we have procured Homeless Veteran Reintegration Program dollars to enhance employment opportunities for our veterans exiting homelessness and we are just launching our formal Coordinated Entry model to ensure our literally or imminently homeless veterans are provided the best opportunity to stabilize and succeed. These are just two of the measures moving forward as we continue to strive to end veterans' homelessness!

Our mission statement is:

“The Veterans Homelessness Committee is committed to working together to plan and implement services for Snohomish County homeless veterans.”

Our vision statement is:

“All Snohomish County veterans are stabilized, housed and have achieved optimal self-sufficiency.”

Snohomish County's VHC

Snohomish County WA

As Snohomish County Executive, I am committed to support the efforts to end Veterans homelessness. As a U.S. Coast Guard Veteran, I know the importance of getting the men and women; who have served our country the services that they need and deserve. Our veterans made a commitment to protect us at any cost. It is our duty as a community and as Americans to make a commitment to the health and wellbeing of our veterans.

Snohomish County has many efforts already in place and we plan to continue to take steps to find solutions, create new partnerships and strengthen what we currently have in place.

A few examples of our community coming together to provide hope and help for our former service members include:

Partnering with local non-profit organizations to build a 20-unit complex on county surplus property for homeless Veterans with mental health and/or chemical dependency issues.

Point In Time Count; where in January 2014; 99 veterans were amongst the homeless population. Together the partnership between Snohomish County, local nonprofit and social service agencies were able to provide assistance to the 99 veterans and their families, finding them housing. The count also spurred the county's Veterans Homelessness Committee.

Snohomish County's Veterans Homeless Committee brings together non-profit agencies, veteran service organizations and local, state and federal government entities to work collaboratively in support of indigent and low income Veterans. There are approximately 20 organizations that represent the committee and they range from non-profits, government, and various military organizations. The committee began their initiative; Housing 99 and declared that their two key methods would allow them to provide housing for at least 99 veterans in Snohomish County. The first step was to increase outreach about programs available to veterans, targeting both urban and rural areas throughout the county; the second was to make existing housing programs more easily accessible to those most in need. By Aug. 31, 72 veteran households now have permanent homes as a direct result of this partnership.

Together we are committed to continuing our work here. I invite and challenge each of the Mayors here in Snohomish County to strengthen their communities by coming together to provide hope and help for our former service members and support initiatives to End Veteran Homelessness.

Spokane, WA Mayors Challenge to END Veteran Homelessness

LEAVE NO VETERAN BEHIND – The goal is zero homeless veterans.

Initiative Name: *TBD*

Background: Through the [Mayors Challenge to End Veteran Homelessness](#), mayors and other state and local leaders across the country will marshal Federal, local, and nonprofit efforts to end Veteran homelessness in their communities. Ending Veteran homelessness means reaching the point where there are no Veterans sleeping on our streets and every Veteran has access to permanent housing. Should Veterans become homeless or be at-risk of becoming homeless, communities will have the capacity to quickly connect them to the help they need to achieve housing stability. When those things are accomplished, our nation will achieve its goal.

Spokane, through funding to the Supportive Services for Veterans Families Program, Healthcare for Homeless Veterans Program and the Spokane Housing Authority, has the resources to meet this goal by the end of 2015.

In 2014 199 homeless veterans accessed services at the House of Charity in downtown Spokane. The Veterans Administration predicts that 256 veterans in our region will become homeless this year. To address this need an ambitious effort developed in conjunction with non-profits serving the homeless, Spokane's Coordinated Assessment systems and the City's CHHS Department is being launched to ensure that no Veterans are sleeping on the street and have access to permanent housing

Goal:

As a community, we will *identify* and *house* 150 veterans in the *City of Spokane* who are homeless or who will become homeless by September 2015. We will house at least 21 veterans monthly until we accomplish this goal. Any homeless veteran, once identified, will be housed within 90 days.

In addition to the focus on homeless veterans in the downtown core a regional effort to house 250 additional veterans in the inland northwest regions will be happening simultaneously.

How the Community Can Help:

If you know of any individual or household who has served in the armed forces and is homeless or at risk of becoming homeless please refer them to the SSVF Outreach Hotline 509-828-2449 Or the Health Care for Homeless Veterans Office located at 705 W Second Ave in Spokane

IMPLEMENTATION COMPONENTS:

LEADERSHIP AND DECISION-MAKING

Develop core elements and numerical goals and timeline, develop benchmarks, review progress, coordinated communication.

Suggested Partners: HCHV- Lily Haken, SSVF- Fawn Schott, Spokane CoC lead- Sheila Morley, VOA- Jon Carollo, Spokane Housing Authority

SET CLEAR NUMERICAL GOALS AND TIMELINE

Establish the target

Set the trajectory for the goal of ending homelessness:

How much of each core strategy is needed?

Who will deliver it?

Who will pay for it?

When will it be done?

Establish a time limit for homelessness (example; any homeless veteran, once identified, will be housed within 90 days)

CREATE ACCOUNTABILITY

Solid, shared data and performance benchmarks measure progress toward the goal and hold participants accountable. At present, different partners may use different data and benchmarks.

Establish the data system(s) to be used, and the entity(s) that will be responsible for collecting and reporting data – How many homeless veterans are being housed? How long is it taking? How many veterans remain homeless?

Create a system of regular reporting on progress; identification of problems; and use of collective knowledge to address issues or make course corrections promptly.

EMPLOY CORE STRATEGIES

Achieving the goal within the timeframe will require peak effectiveness from program interventions.

Outreach to identify and engage homeless veterans.

SSVF outreach will work with emergency shelters, day centers, homeless outreach teams and overflow sites to identify unsheltered and sheltered veterans.

Possible partners: House of Charity, Union Gospel Mission, Hope House, Women's Hearth, TSA- Warming Center, FBH Homeless Outreach Team, CHAS Homeless Outreach Team,

Crisis housing to keep people safe until they are quickly re-housed.

Project leadership will meet with emergency shelter providers to talk about bed prioritization for unsheltered Veterans who are in housing search.
Research possible funding sources for emergency hotel stays for unsheltered Veterans when shelters are at capacity.

Possible partners: House of Charity, Union Gospel Mission, Hope House

Rapid re-housing for those requiring less assistance, including linkages to services.

Utilize SSVF RRH for lower barrier clients and as a bridge to VASH vouchers. For clients who do not qualify refer to other RRH programs.

Possible Partners: SSVF, HCHV, Catholic Charities- RRH program.

Permanent supportive housing for those with disabilities and long homeless histories.

Connect high barrier clients identified through SPDAT with HCHV. When clients do not qualify connect with Coordinated Assessment system for PSH in the homeless housing system.

Transition appropriate clients current housed VA transitional housing to VASH and other PSH projects.

Possible Partners: SSVF, HCHV, VOA TH projects, Coordinated Assessment Systems, Spokane Housing Authority

Coordinated assessment and entry systems

Connect Veterans who do not qualify for VA sponsored assistance with Homeless Housing Options.

Possible Partners: SHCA, HFCA, SSVF

COMMUNICATIONS PLAN

A communications strategy is necessary to: Maintain momentum by articulating goals and reporting on progress; Engage key constituencies such as landlords, employers, veteran service organizations, philanthropy, the faith community, and the public; Define

what ending veteran homelessness means (example: Ensure Homelessness Among Veterans is rare and when it does occur, it is brief); Challenge your local community's misperception that veteran homelessness is a problem that cannot be solved.

Possible Partners: Project Leadership Team- Lead- City of Spokane

Sheila Morley, City of Spokane, is keeping a blog about the on-going progress of the initiative, which can be accessed here: <https://beta.spokanecity.org/blog/2015/02/09/mayors-challenge-to-end-veteran-homelessness/>

There is also a hotline set up to connect any person or household that anyone you interact with who may meet that criteria **509.828.2449**.

DRAFT

**Council for the Homeless' Submission for
Portland Mayor's Challenge to End Veteran Homelessness
Vancouver/Clark County WA**

Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF) is a national program designed to end homelessness for veterans and their families. SSVF has multiple contracts nationwide and Portland's Transition Projects holds the contract for the Portland/Vancouver area. In the past, veterans experiencing homelessness in Vancouver were instructed to call Transition Projects to be screened for SSVF assistance.

In order to increase access to the SSVF program for Clark County veterans, Transition Projects has subcontracted with the Vancouver office of Impact NW. Veterans seeking assistance will now call the Council for the Homeless Housing Hotline in order to be screened for SSVF. At the same time, CFTH will screen vets for emergency shelter and any other housing programs they may be eligible for. To further increase access to needed resources, a Veteran's Administration outreach worker will hold bi-weekly office hours at the CFTH Housing Solutions Center.