



King County

Department of Community and Human Services

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IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

2012 – 2017 Veterans and Human Services Levy:

Activity 2.1 D: Outreach and Engagement: South King County Homeless Outreach

1. Goal

The primary goal of this activity is to prevent and reduce homelessness.

2. Strategy

The Veterans and Human Services Levy Service Improvement Plan (SIP) set a goal of Ending Homelessness.

3. Activity 2.1 D: Outreach and Engagement: South King County Homeless Outreach

Activity 2.1 D, South King County Homeless Outreach is one of four activities described in the Service Improvement Plan under Activity 2.1 Outreach and Engagement.

4. Service Needs, Populations to be Served, and Promotion of Equity and Social Justice

a) Service Needs

This program is designed to serve long term homeless people in targeted areas of South King County. We base our definition of the South King County sub-region on school districts. South King County is defined as the areas encompassed by the following school districts: Enumclaw, Tahoma, Auburn, Federal Way, Highline, Kent, Renton Tukwila and Vashon.

The population served by this program will include both men and women, although the majority is men. Many have severe mental illness and substance abuse issues; and most have significant physical health problems.

We expect to learn more about specific characteristics and needs of long term homeless people in South King County through the implementation of this outreach. However, we do know the following:

- In the 2012 “One Night Count,” there were 298 homeless unsheltered people counted in targeted areas of South King County. (The One Night Count focuses on targeted geographic areas within jurisdictions, it is not meant to be comprehensive.)

- In the 2013 “One Night Count,” 311 people were counted in South King County.
- The HOME and ARISE emergency shelters for single men operated by Catholic Community Services in Renton and Kent report that at any given time approximately 10% of their 50 clients are veterans.
- In 2012, there were 8 known deaths of homeless people in South King County communities that came under the jurisdiction of the King County Medical Examiner. This was 14% of the total known deaths of homeless people.

b) Populations to be Served

This program prioritizes single adults in targeted areas of South King County who are chronically homeless. This is one of the primary target populations of the Veterans and Human Services Levy. The client population to be served characteristically have mental health and substance abuse conditions (including post traumatic stress disorder), and includes veterans of the U.S. military.

c) Promotion of Equity and Social Justice

The Equity and Social Justice Ordinance requires King County to consider the impacts of its policies and activities on its efforts to achieve fairness and opportunity for all people, particularly for people of color, low-income communities and people with limited English proficiency.

i) Will your activity have an impact on equity?

The program is designed to increase access to behavioral health, housing and social supports to homeless persons in South King County through outreach and access. As such it increases access to services for persons in the south county region, which has some of the highest concentration of low-income population residents as well as communities with the highest immigrant and language barrier rates.

ii) What population groups are likely to be affected by the proposal? How will communities of color, low-income communities or limited English proficiency communities be impacted?

The project will affect communities of color, low-income communities or limited English proficiency communities by providing outreach and access to services that they may otherwise be unaware of or unable to access. The target population of this project is without housing and has extremely-low or no income. Because the PATH¹ team is situated in a larger agency, the team has access to interpreters to support work with individuals who have limited English proficiency.

¹PATH, “Projects for Assistance in Transition from Homelessness,” is a federal funding source for community-based outreach, mental health, substance abuse, case management and other support services. The program is discussed in more detail in Section Six of this document.

- iii) What actions will be taken to enhance likely positive impacts on these communities and mitigate possible negative impacts?

Resources developed and relationships built in outreach to an individual, particularly of a given cultural or language group will be maintained by the team for use in current and future outreach and engagement. This should positively impact all communities served.

5. Activity Description

According to the SIP, the goal of this strategy is to “continue to provide capacity for outreach and engagement of people who are chronically homeless in South King County. The SIP also recognizes the need and opportunity to work in coordination with other outreach programs toward greater efficiency and reduction of duplication. This Implementation Plan lays out a program for increasing outreach and engagement to chronically homeless people, including veterans, in South King County. Please note that the funding of housing and housing-based supportive services for this population is being addressed through other sections of the SIP, and Implementation Plans for those areas have already been presented to the Levy’s Oversight Boards.

Funding of one outreach worker

This program funds one outreach worker as part of the PATH team in South King County. Projects for Assistance in Transition from Homelessness (PATH) is a federally funded program through the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. PATH funds community based outreach, mental health, substance abuse, case management and other support services to address the needs of people who are homeless and have serious mental illnesses. Unlike many mental health focused programs in which funding is provided only for enrolled clients, PATH is unique in that it provides funding throughout the engagement process. This gives outreach workers the time and resources they need to build relationships with homeless people with mental illness – people who often have not been well served through traditional programs.

Currently the King County Department of Community and Human Services (DCHS) contracts with Sound Mental Health (SMH) for the South King County PATH team. That team has 1.6 full-time equivalent (FTE) staff persons providing outreach services in limited areas of South King County. Several jurisdictions also contribute funds to the PATH team (Kent, Tukwila). The worker funded through the levy is integrated into the PATH team, trained in the “Relational Outreach and Engagement” model, (described below) and receives clinical supervision from SMH.

The addition of an outreach worker to the team increases the capacity of the team to reach more areas of South King County. In addition, the Veterans and Human Services Levy funds can be used somewhat more flexibly than the PATH funds, adding focus on chronically homeless people who are long time substance abusers and those who are veterans, complementing the current focus on persons with several mental illnesses. We expect many of those to be served will be dually diagnosed with both mental illness and substance abuse issues.

Outreach will be conducted in a number of ways, with the primary emphasis on taking services to the locations where homeless people are found rather than expecting homeless people to initially come through the doors of an office or agency. The locations the outreach

workers will visit include but are not limited to encampments, parks, libraries, food programs, emergency shelters, and other locations that knowledgeable local contact people identify as places where homeless people are found. Once initial contact is made, staff will continue to meet with clients outside of an office location in order to successfully continue engagement.

We anticipate that the outreach team will receive referrals from police, parks staff, city staff, library staff, church workers, non-profit agency staff or others who encounter long term homeless individuals. For example, a city staff person may receive a call from a citizen regarding an individual who appears to be mentally ill and is regularly spending long hours on a park bench. She can call the PATH team and ask that an outreach worker make contact with the individual, and begin the engagement process. The PATH team will be responsible to ensure that their services are well-known in the targeted areas.

Why is outreach important? Homeless people, especially those experiencing serious disabling conditions and/or long term homelessness, often have difficulty finding or accepting the services and care they need. This may be related to fear, lack of awareness, ambivalence, loss of hope, or any other number of personal reasons. Too often, services are difficult to access because of significant barriers presented by the system itself. Outreach workers attempt to mediate and overcome these psychological, informational and systemic barriers to care. They offer an entryway to services and safety, providing a bridge between the streets and a more stable life. Craig Rennebohm of the Mental Health Chaplaincy has developed a theoretical framework: "Relational Outreach and Engagement Model" for outreach to homeless people on the street. This theoretical framework is used by the PATH team, and emphasizes the development of a relationship between outreach worker and homeless person.

The length of time it takes for homeless people to engage in services varies greatly depending on the individual and his or her disabilities, as well as the availability of housing and other benefits. For chronically homeless people, engagement is typically a slow process because they have disabling conditions. The experience of the current PATH workers in South King County is that the length of time varies depending on how the client was first contacted. If a client is referred by another agency or by another homeless individual already engaged with PATH, they may engage on the first interaction. If a client is approached through assertive outreach, it is usually the 2nd to the 5th interaction before they are willing to engage. This could take a week to a month. The average time of engagement to enrollment in services is usually about a week. At that same time, there are situations where a client is met, not seen again for 2 to 6 months, and then seen again for possible enrollment in services.

PATH workers describe their clients as extremely reluctant to access services of any kind, including needed medical services. In many cases, they have been homeless and isolated for many years, and this isolation coupled with mental illness and/or substance abuse issues creates strong suspicion with regard to formal treatment services. Housing has proven to be a major incentive to engage long term homeless people. PATH has been the conduit for referring clients for the South County Housing First Pilot Project, whose 25 units are now at full occupancy. Connection to housing is the ultimate goal, although limited housing resources are a challenge. As additional supportive housing units are developed through Levy and other housing finance resources, the expectation is that the housing developers would partner to accept referrals of these clients into portions of that housing. Because of the important of engaging and housing homeless veterans in our community, the PATH

program will make identifying, assessing and obtaining housing for homeless veterans a priority.

6. Funds Available

The 2012 Service Improvement Plan identified the following allocations for this activity.

	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Veterans Levy	\$ 15,000	\$ 15,000	\$ 15,000	\$ 15,000	\$ 15,000	\$ 15,000
Human Services Levy	\$ 65,000	\$ 65,000	\$ 65,000	\$ 65,000	\$ 65,000	\$ 65,000
Total	\$ 80,000	\$ 80,000	\$ 80,000	\$ 80,000	\$ 80,000	\$ 80,000

Additional funds will be available annually through 2017 based on the activity's performance.

7. Evidence-based or Promising Practices

Outreach is an evidence based practice. This project adds capacity for outreach into the base PATH team in South King County. According to "Blueprint for Change: Ending Chronic Homelessness for Persons with Serious Mental Illnesses and Co-Occurring Substance Use Disorders" outreach is "recognized as the initial, most critical step in connecting or reconnecting a person who is homeless to needed health, mental health, substance abuse, and social services and to housing. However, people who are homeless are not focused initially on receiving mental health or substance abuse treatment. Outreach workers must meet them on their own terms and on their own turf. This process of engagement is essential to develop the trust and rapport needed to help individuals accept more long-term services, the ultimate goal of outreach efforts. Regardless of how or where outreach is provided, successful outreach workers must adopt a non-threatening approach; must be flexible in the number and types of services offered, as well as the manner in which they are provided; and must make numerous contacts over extended periods of time (Interagency Council on the Homeless, 1991; McMurray-Avila, 1997).

Research shows that given the opportunity, most people with serious mental illnesses and/or co-occurring substance use disorders who are homeless are willing to accept treatment and services voluntarily. A study of individuals enrolled SAMHSA Access to Community Care and Effective Services and Supports program who were contacted through street outreach revealed that even individuals with the most severe disorders, who are the most reluctant to accept treatment, will enroll in services and show improved outcomes when served by an outreach team (Lam and Rosenheck, 1999)

A study of the effectiveness of outreach with homeless people who abuse substances found that nearly half of persons contacted through outreach became enrolled in services (Tommasello et al., 1999). More important, those contacted through outreach had significantly higher levels of substance use than walk-in clients, and were more likely to be engaged in HIV risk behaviors. This indicates that outreach can be successful in reaching individuals most in need of services.

Consistent, caring, personal relationships and the introduction of services at the client's pace are critical elements in outreach efforts designed to engage people who are homeless into treatment.

8. Service Partnerships

Initial planning for this project was carried out by a team of staff from the cities of Kent and Renton, South County United Way, DCHS and Public Health. Planning included consultation with other South King County Cities, non-profits and the King County Veterans Program, and, as the details of the program were developed, we worked closely with even more partners in the target area.

The success of this project is fully dependent upon partnerships and coordination. It is designed to build on current efforts in South King County and does not “reinvent the wheel”, leveraging SMH’s PATH team. They have built many relationships with service and housing partners, and with homeless people. They have been the conduit for the South King County “Housing First” pilot project, which is now fully occupied. These relationships continue to be strengthened with the additional capacity provided through this project.

Cross-system coordination is also key to this project. Programs and systems must work together if clients engaged through this project are to lead more secure, safe and satisfying lives. Management of the PATH team communicates regularly with jurisdictions and actively participates in a monthly South King County Outreach gathering designed to ensure sharing of information and coordination of services amongst outreach programs [including Mobile Medical Van, Valley Cities Bridges program, and AYR outreach).

The project is clearly aligned with the goals of the Ten Year Plan to End Homelessness, and responds to the interests and needs of South King County jurisdictions as they craft their response to homelessness in their communities.

The following table summarizes the role to be played by various partners in this effort:

Partner	Role
Sound Mental Health	Provide outreach and engagement of long term homeless people in selected areas of South King County; assist people in enrolling in services and benefits and finding housing.
Community and grass roots organizations and other partners such as DSHS offices, police and churches.	Referrals to PATH team – will call PATH when they know of homeless people who seem appropriate for this service; may also provide information about new locations where long term homeless people are sleeping or congregating and communicate this to the PATH team.
South County cities (represented in the human services planners group)	Periodic consultation regarding implementation of the project. Several jurisdictions regularly participate in the South County Outreach meetings.
King County DCHS	Coordination of the PATH outreach portion of the project, through a contract with Sound Mental Health.

9. Performance Measures

The following performance measures and targets were identified by the Levy's Evaluation Team. Performance will be evaluated annually and targets will be adjusted accordingly as needed for the following year. Current measures can be found on the Levy website: http://www.kingcounty.gov/~media/operations/DCHS/Levy/Docs/Attach_B_2012_2017_Levy_Evaluation_Updated_Imp_Plan_posted_06_19_2013.ashx

Objectives	Service Outputs/ Measures	Most Recent Performance 2012	2013 Target(s)	Data Source
Engagement/ Assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of clients contacted 	373**	150	Report Card – Services
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clients engaged 	120	90	Report Card – Services
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of engaged clients successfully linked with either services or benefits <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enrolled in primary health care; • Enrolled in chemical dependency treatment; • Enrolled in mental health treatment; and • Increased their income • Improved their housing stability; 	60 (50% of those engaged)	75% achieved at least one	Report Card – Outcomes

** In late 2012, SMH outreach workers, including the levy-funded PATH worker, were engaged by King County to provide outreach to a homeless encampment located in a flood zone on county-owned property, and to inform the residents of upcoming camp removal and of alternative housing options and support. The additional funds for this initiative were amended onto the levy contract and those individuals contacted and engaged by all staff were reflected in the services report for the levy contract. This resulted in a much higher performance level than expected for the base contract.