



Homelessness

Objective:

Ensure a network of integrated and effective health and human services is available to people in need

Strategy:

Join with local and regional partners to prevent and reduce homelessness for families and individuals

Why is this strategy important?

On any given night in King County, more than 8,000 people are homeless. This includes over 2,600 people staying in emergency shelter, over 3,500 in temporary transitional housing, and nearly 2,600 people counted outdoors during the 2012 One Night Count of homeless people. Over 3,100 of these individuals are members of homeless families with children.

Given the myriad causes that force people into homelessness -- financial troubles, criminal justice involvement, mental illness and substance abuse, domestic violence and others -- it is necessary to build partnership across social service and other systems if we are to end it. Through the Committee to End Homelessness in King County (CEH), we as a region have come together like never before to tackle this problem.

CEH is made up of representatives from business, faith, social services, government, homeless and formerly homeless people and advocates. It is working to implement the Ten-Year Plan to End Homelessness in King County. Our plan seeks to end homelessness, not just continue to manage it -- by working to increase homeless prevention efforts, create new units of permanent housing, and providing the supportive services necessary to those who need them to help them to maintain that housing.

The plan, introduced in March 2005, has been approved by the Metropolitan King County Council and endorsed by cities representing 85 percent of the county's population, as well as by dozens of social organizations and faith communities countywide.

How is our performance?

King County has had many successes since the launching of its Ten Year Plan to End Homelessness:

- Opened 679 homeless housing units in 2011, for a total of 5,046 units of housing from 2005 through 2011.
- Prevented homelessness for more than 5,000 people throughout King County in 2011, thanks to homeless prevention assistance.

- Moved 3,072 people to permanent housing from emergency shelter or transitional housing in 2011.

We have made great progress on expanding resources for persons experiencing homelessness. In addition, we have improved access to services through initiatives such as a single point of contact for families seeking homeless housing assistance. Unfortunately, the lingering economic downturn has resulted in a continued influx of individuals and families into the homeless service system. In 2011, 4,956 persons accessed King County homeless services for the first time. For those staying in a homeless shelter at some point in 2011, the average stay was 81 days.

Many of those placed in shelters or transitional housing have been able to move into more stable housing. In 2011, 67 percent of King County-funded clients successfully transitioned from a shelter to transitional housing and/or transitional housing to permanent housing.

Those placed in permanent housing have a very low rate of returning to the homeless service system. According to 2011 data, of all persons who were placed in permanent housing, only 126 or 2.3 percent had returned to the homeless service system within 15 months of their initial placement.

What can you do?

There are many ways communities can be involved:

- Become informed and advocate for community solutions for homelessness. Persuade your elected officials that we can and must end homelessness now.
- Take up a collection to provide first month's rent and deposit for homeless individuals or families that service providers are trying to place in housing. Jewish Family Services administers a non-denominational program coordinating such donations.
- Work with your church or service organization to support a landlord who is willing to rent to formerly homeless individuals. Groups might guarantee rent or offer to fix up an available rental unit.
- Provide life coaching/mentoring in partnership with a service provider to an individual transitioning into permanent housing.
- Make "welcome kits" or volunteer to help someone move into a new home. Visit United Way of King County to find agencies who would benefit from this type of help, or other volunteer opportunities at <http://www.uwkc.org/volunteer>

Moving forward

King County will continue to refine and apply best practices to end homelessness. Recently, it has begun implementation of plans to end family homelessness and youth and young adult homelessness, respectively. In addition, it will look for system improvement that can be made in ending homelessness for single adults and those experiencing chronic homelessness.

Related Links

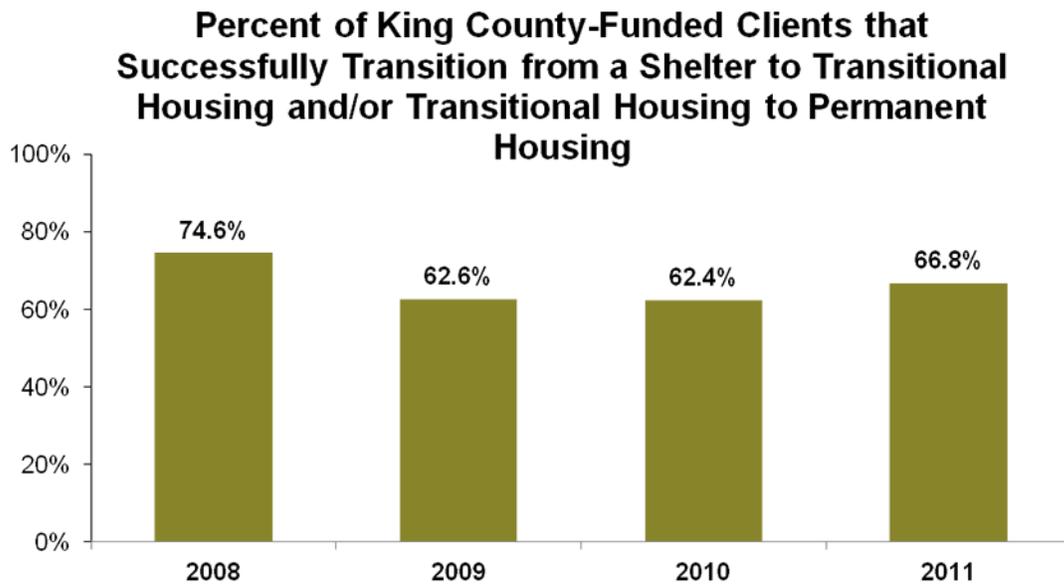
[Committee to End Homelessness in King County](#)

[National Alliance to End Homelessness](#)

[Seattle/King County Coalition on Homelessness](#)

[United Way of King County -- Ending Homelessness](#)

Charts and Maps



Data Source: King County Department of Community and Human Services