

**DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS FOR HOUSING SERVICES FOR THOSE EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS OR AT-RISK OF HOMELESSNESS**

~~February 27~~ March 29, 2019

**Draft Goal: Reduce homelessness<sup>1</sup> by 30% ~~over the next 2 years~~ by 20XX.**

**Recommendation ~~74~~ 71: Provide more homelessness and eviction-prevention funding to slow the number of households falling into homelessness.**

Clackamas County currently has great partnerships, systems, and some funds to help those at immediate risk of eviction due to financial hardship. This funding includes rental assistance and, in some cases, deposits for new rental units. However, data show more than 50% of callers (representing nearly 300 households from Oct-Dec, 2018) who request such funding are not assisted due to inadequate funding.

**Specific Recommendations:**

**a) Identify and allocate additional funding for eviction prevention financial assistance.**

Task force members identified the Short-Term Rental Assistance (STRA) program model as a viable option. In addition, limited case management and highly flexible funding would allow for more creative long-term solutions beyond rental assistance payments.

**b) Provide relocation assistance for those households who are experiencing no-cause evictions or need to identify more affordable housing options.**

In some cases, households will continue to experience instability, even after receiving rental assistance for one to three months. Program flexibility, allowing funding to assist households to relocate to more affordable accommodations when appropriate, could address this unmet need.

**c) Support and expand homelessness diversion programs.**

Homelessness diversion refers to a creative, problem-solving approach unique to each household in need. With appropriate staff time and access to highly flexible funding, it is estimated that 10-30% of those requesting homelessness prevention services could be assisted with minimal financial costs.

**d) Provide assistance to low-income<sup>2</sup> homeowners at risk of losing their homes.**

Similar to the recommendations above, short-term financial assistance, case management and highly flexible funding should be available to efficiently address the unique needs of each household.

**e) Ensure adequate residential services and other more-intensive support for high-needs residents in affordable housing properties**

**Commented [MV1]:** County staff to review SB 608 to identify gaps and how the County can fill those gaps.

<sup>1</sup> As defined by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)

<sup>2</sup> [Insert definition of "low income" here]

**Recommendation 28: Encourage the introduction of more culturally specific providers in Clackamas County.**

Culturally specific providers, especially working with housing instability, are recognized as being able to provide more effective services to communities of color and other historically underserved populations. Specifically, Black/African-American communities are the most overrepresented population in our homeless and affordable housing waitlists. There is currently only one culturally specific provider (for immigrants) in the homeless housing system. The County could do a better job of nurturing small, emerging culturally specific providers present in Clackamas County and encouraging culturally specific providers in neighboring counties to expand services into Clackamas.

**Commented [MV2]:** IRCO which focused on immigrant

**Recommendation 39: Provide more assistance to those currently experiencing homelessness.**

Clackamas County currently has great partnerships and systems to help those experiencing short-term and chronic homelessness. This funding includes case management and rental housing subsidy for 338 households each year. However, some households receive services for many years, and waitlists for homeless housing programs continue to grow. As of November, 2018, there are 1,138 households currently experiencing homelessness, who are waiting for services to become available.

**Specific Recommendations:**

**a) Create preferences for homeless populations in new affordable housing development**

As new affordable housing is developed, placement of households experiencing homelessness should be a priority, contingent on service provision identified in Recommendation 7E or other more intensive services. -

**Commented [MV3]:** Jill and Abby review and refine.

Discussion considerations:

- Metro funding: 50% below MFI / 30% MFI?
- Deeper service commitment
- RFP evaluation piece

**b) Provide additional funding for Rapid Rehousing and Permanent Supportive Housing programs**

Rapid-rehousing serves families and individuals experiencing homelessness, providing wrap-around case management and housing subsidy for a length of time that is unique to each household. This model is not to exceed 2 years of assistance, but current funding rates generally allow for up to 6 months of subsidy. Permanent Supportive Housing serves families and individuals experiencing chronic/long-term homelessness, providing intensive wrap-around case management and housing subsidy for an indefinite length of time. To be eligible, the head of household must have a significant disability, and households are often served for 5 or more years before they gain stability. Turn-over rate for these programs is extremely low because, in most cases, households always rely on a housing subsidy for stability and cannot be forced to leave the program.

**c) Ensure a balance between homeless housing services and prevention**

Adequate resources are needed to address those currently experiencing homelessness as well as those at risk of entering homelessness. Reducing the overall homeless numbers requires balanced attention to both groups.

**Commented [MV4]:** Jill and Abby to review against recommendation A above. Combine?

**d) Ensure adequate funding to effectively move households experiencing homelessness from shelters and "Safety off the Streets" into permanent housing**

To effectively implement the “Safety off the Streets” model, appropriate funding, staffing and connection to existing resources need to be in place to move those experiencing unsheltered homelessness into permanent housing. As with the successful Veteran Village model, case management and long-term housing options that meet the needs of residents must work together.

**e) Consider employing those with lived homelessness experience when expanding homeless housing services**

Those with lived experience uniquely understanding the challenges of moving from homelessness to permanent housing. Additionally, providing housing navigation and case management positions for those with lived experience perpetuates stability.

**f) Use current data to identify priority populations, recognizing these will shift over time**

Rely on local data to steer services and funding to effectively reduce the overall homeless population.

**g) Identify and allocate highly flexible funding to allow for more creative and effective programming**

Much of the current homeless housing assistance funding comes with strict rules on allowable use. For example, HUD funding cannot be used to pay for gas to help participants look for housing or work, but can fund bus tickets. Many homeless families and individuals live in their cars and rely on them for transportation, especially in areas of Clackamas County where public transit is sparse. Infusing highly flexible funding in the current programs allows staff and clients to meet their unique needs.

**Recommendation 10: Evaluate and apply an Equity Lens to the County’s Planning, Zoning and Housing Outreach efforts.**

The Task Force has developed an Equity Lens to help evaluate actions related to housing affordability and homelessness. The lens contains the following vision statement:

We envision a Clackamas County Task Force on Affordable Housing and Homelessness that engages communities of color and those disproportionately impacted by historic and current housing disparities in the county, that leads by example and actively makes informed decisions while bringing the voices of those disproportionately affected to the table, and that considers current and future impacts that our decisions make on communities of color and impacted populations.

The Task Force recommends that the County apply the attached equity lens or a similar tool to evaluate how the county communicates and works with diverse communities in its planning and zoning outreach processes. A copy of the Task Force lens is attached (not here, but in the recommendation document).