Homeless Housing Program Updates

Ann Beck, Chris D'Onofrio and Michaela Mandala

3/10/26
Whatcom County Committee of the Whole

WHATCOM COUNTY
HEALTH AND COMMUNITY SERVICES

OUR PURPOSE: We serve Whatcom County by ADVANCING EQUITY & PARTNERING WITH OUR COMMUNITY to:

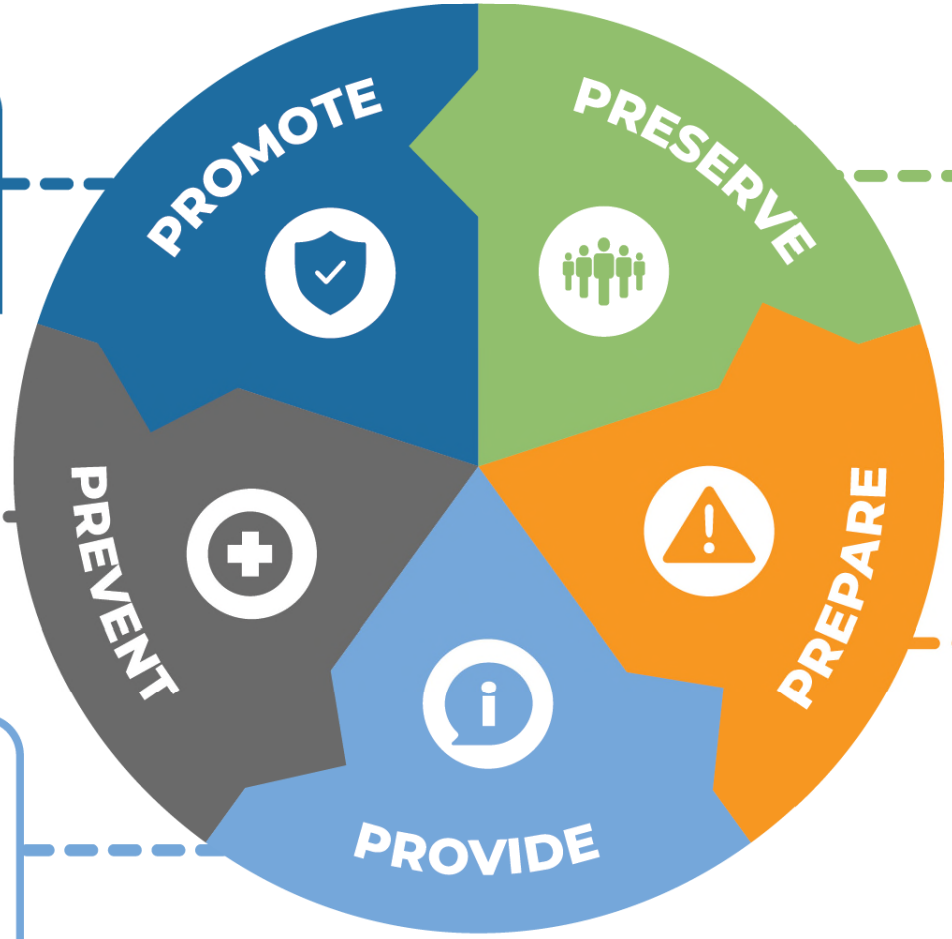
PROMOTE
health through policy and systems improvement

PRESERVE
a healthy environment where everyone can thrive

PREVENT
disease and injury

PREPARE
for and respond to emergencies

PROVIDE
accurate and reliable health communication



What Do We Do

The housing team (3 specialists and one supervisor) support this program by funding community partners who offer a wide range of services, including rental assistance, transitional housing, permanent housing, emergency shelters, outreach, and housing stability case management.

During winter, this team also manages the severe weather shelter. The majority of the funding comes from a large state grant, but the program also uses local housing-specific funding tied to local sales tax and recording fees. General fund is not used in the program.

SWS Highlights ‘25-‘26

- *20 nights of operation*
- *4 of those on holiday weekends*
- *1,139 beds used*
- *2,278 meals served*
- *106 medical services*
- *624 transportation services*
- *348 volunteer hours*

Quarterly Reporting

Housing Partners and Data

- **2025 Q4 Report**
  - Data show limited services challenged by growing needs
  - Structural imbalance in housing market is creating enormous need for housing services
  - How we are using this data?
    - We want to put our resources where they do the most good and prevent the most harm

Housing Plan Update

5 Year Housing Plan Update

- 2026 Priorities and Next steps
  - Working with WCHAC
  - BH provider now hired at PSH facility
  - PIT count data being sorted
  - CE Governing Body meeting regularly
  - Preparing funding update for affordable housing acquisitions
  - Presentations to County Council

Strategy	Performance Measures
1.6 Assess whether increased coordination of Housing Prevention (HP) referrals is needed	• Homeless Prevention coordination assessment completed. • Pathways for accessing prevention services for people exiting institutions identified and published.
2.3 Complete a county-wide inventory of affordable housing units	• Establishment of, and periodic update to, affordable housing inventory.
2.6 Implementation of prioritization criteria for low-income housing or emergency shelter capital projects	• All low-income housing or emergency shelter capital projects will be prioritized based on the established policy.
2.7 Establishment of a framework to assess and guide the acquisition of existing properties	• Establishment of a framework to assess and guide the acquisition of existing properties.
3.3 Rapid Rehousing*	• At least 218 program slots will be available. • At least 80% of exiting households will exit into permanent housing.
3.8 Build programs' capacity to serve currently underserved households	• The disparity in the proportion of people who identify as Alaskan Native, American Indian or Indigenous in the homeless population and those receiving services will go down. • Strengthen pathways for medically fragile adults to exit homelessness and receive adequate care. • Fewer people in the Housing Pool will be ineligible for programs because of their criminal history.
3.9 Implement recommendations from PSH evaluation	• Increase onsite behavioral health providers at a minimum of one PSH facility. • Improvement in retention or exits to permanent housing for PSH households.
5.4 Update Prioritization Policy and Processes	• Prioritization policies will transparently reflect community values and availability of services. • A determination is made about whether it is feasible to invest in a technology system for Coordinated Entry.
5.5 Update Intake and Assessment Tools	• The updated Coordinated Entry assessment tool will only collect the information needed to better measure vulnerability and make a referral. Other information collected will be limited.
6.2 Establish new trainings	• At least 3 trainings will be offered each year. • Increased knowledge among training attendees.
7.3 Consulting†	• WCHCS will receive a final report with recommendations for implementation.
7.5 Point in Time Count + annual plan update report	• A PIT infographic will be made available to the public by the end of the second quarter of the year. • An annual report update on the Homeless Housing Plan will be made available to the public during the first quarter of each year.
7.6 Bi-annual presentation to Whatcom County Council	• WCHCS will provide presentations to Whatcom County Council each year in quarters one and three.

Things to keep our eyes on…

HUD NOFO Update

- HUD funds do not come directly to the County, but they do fund the WA Balance of State Continuum of Care programs
- Two housing partners in community receive funding through this program
- Whatcom County receives funding through the WA BoS CoC
- NOFO released last year is still in litigation, assuming FY25 will remain the same
- Potential impacts to PSH programs and RRH programs with next NOFO

Questions?