



HEALTH BOARD Discussion Form

February 2, 2021

AGENDA ITEM # :

PRESENTER: *Barbara Johnson-Vinna, Chris D'Onofrio, Ann Beck, Anne Deacon*

BOARD ACTION:	Action Item	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Discussion	FYI - Only
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The Health Department's Housing Program oversees program planning and administration of multiple funds that support a continuum of services focused on reducing homelessness, as well as promoting the addition of affordable housing units. Funding comes from federal, state and local sources, each with its specific requirements for use. The use of local funds is guided by state statutes.

The "Local Plan to End Homelessness" outlines the strategies the county employs that have proven to be effective in achieving stable housing for people who were previously homeless. Strategies include Coordinated Entry into the system, Case Management, Eviction Prevention, and Housing Placements. The county also supports shelter programs, which can promote an initial connection to people who may choose to engage in these strategies/services.

Shelter programs are not specifically a component of the housing continuum. People who receive shelter in congregate settings or tiny homes are still considered homeless. However, shelters are an important support for people who would otherwise live outside and unsheltered. Recently, the county has received significant sums of federal and state monies to dedicate to expansion of local shelter capacity in an effort to promote public health.

The county's housing program invests millions of dollars each year in housing programs and services. However, local funding efforts alone will never be sufficient to address completely the expansive problem of homelessness. Federal policies must be strengthened to incentivize further the production of affordable housing options. And neighboring counties could establish shelters in their locales, thereby freeing up some of our local resources to invest further in permanent housing in the Whatcom community.

The presentation today intends to provide a high-level overview of the housing continuum and how the various programs and services we fund are integrated to create a comprehensive strategy to reduce homelessness.



BOARD ROLE / ACTION REQUESTED

1. Advise ways in which the county can educate the community on the resources dedicated to reducing homelessness, increasing affordable housing opportunities, and accomplishments achieved
2. Provide feedback on shelter capacity goals, balanced with housing solutions

ATTACHMENT(S)

Local Plan to End Homelessness