

Approaches to Unsheltered Homelessness in Washington State

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Washington State
Department of
Commerce

Washington State



State Homeless Housing Funds

State homeless and prevention programs are funded through a county-level document recording fee (\$183) and state general funds.

Commerce

- Grants funds to local governments
- [Publicly reports](#) on performance outcomes
- Provides technical assistance to help counties and projects meet performance targets

County Governments

- Determine what to fund within allowable activities
- Subcontracts to local providers
- Monitors contract compliance, including performance and fiscal transparency requirements

Local non-profit housing providers

- Provides housing and services
- Reports outcome data at client level into HMIS

State Homeless Housing Funds: Where Commerce has influence

Unsheltered Prioritization Requirement – 2016

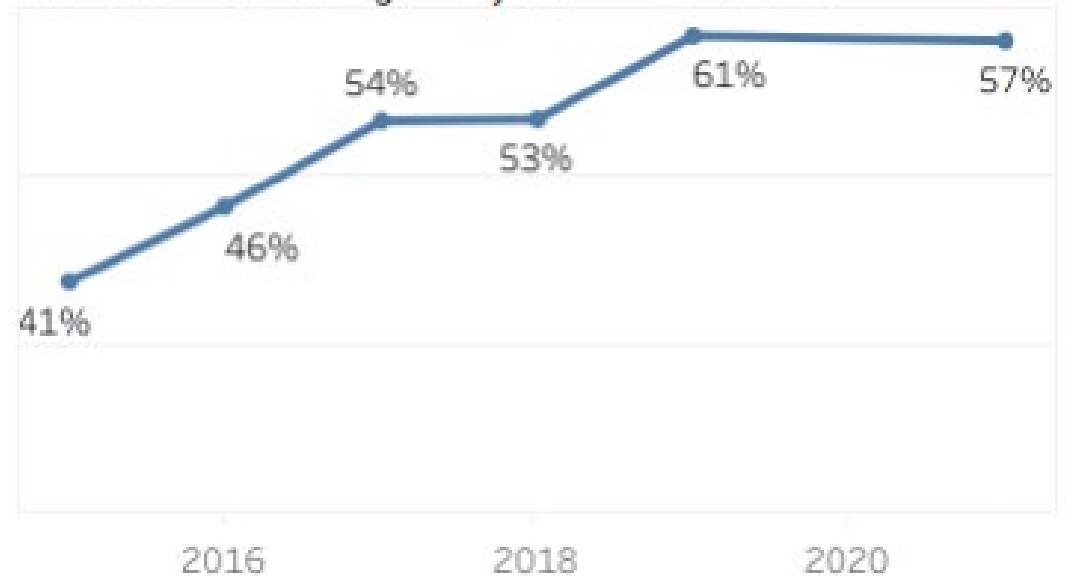
Prioritize Households with a recent history of unsheltered homelessness or fleeing violence

Measured over time by looking at progress towards functional zero

Non-compliance = technical assistance

Shift in service delivery philosophy from serving the most households to serving the most vulnerable households

Year over Year change in System Prioritization :



State Homeless Housing Funds: Where Commerce has influence

Racial Equity Performance Measures

- 1st attempt (2020): System entries by race/ethnicity as compared to race/ethnicity of population as reported in Census data
- State legislation: [House Bill 1277](#) (2022) now requires racial equity performance measures
- 2nd attempt (2023): System entries AND outcomes by race/ethnicity as represented in homeless population

Rights of Way Safety Initiative (2022)

Washington State Legislature approved funding to provide housing and services to individuals and families living in state-owned rights of way in five counties

- Partnership with Commerce, Washington State Department of Transportation and Washington State Patrol
- Housing First strategy
- Started with federal funding (state and local recovery \$), now a permanent line item in the state budget

Rights of Way Safety Initiative

Funds a comprehensive approach, including:

- Purchase and conversion of property (typically class B-C hotels) into non-congregate shelters, with an eye towards transitioning to PSH
- Outreach and housing case management services
- Clean up and 'hardening' of site
- Continued supportive services for individuals relocated to other housing

Rights of Way Safety Initiative

Challenges:

- Finding and sustaining housing for individuals with histories of arson, sexual offenses, severe mental health disorders, and violence
- Local pushback against Housing First approach

Rights of Way Safety Initiative

Successes:

- High rates of retention in non-congregate shelter (90% vs 30% in congregate shelter)
- Continued funding
- Keeping sites clear
- State and local support. Work is highly visible and there is public-buy in
- A camp is often a cohesive unit. Putting individuals into housing together, there is a built-in sense of community. This has largely been positive and contributed to high retention rates.

Rights of Way Safety Initiative

- Camp Hope

- Spokane
- At one time, it was the largest homeless camp on state property with a peak population of over 600 individuals in summer 2022.
- The first official by name list in October 2022 showed 467 residents.
- As of March 1, 2023, there were 78 residents.
- Interventions include:
 - Shared housing and master leasing with supportive services
 - For profit partnerships
 - Continuity of services



Thank you!



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