



**Clackamas County**

TEN-YEAR  
PLAN & POLICY  
to  
Address Homelessness

A small, dark brown icon of a house with a white window, positioned to the left of the text "Address Homelessness".

Executive  
Summary

February, 2007



A home is a fundamental human need. Homes give people an opportunity to build better lives. With a place to call home, children are more successful in school, families have a foundation for the future, and seniors and people with disabilities can live with independence and dignity. Everyone deserves a safe, decent place to live in our community.

Unfortunately, many people in Clackamas County do not have a home. In January, 2005, a total of 2,556 homeless persons in Clackamas County were counted by volunteers for the Clackamas County Coordinating Council for Homeless Programs (Homeless Council). The count included 489 families including 1,011 children (40%). Families with children accounted for 78% of the total persons counted (2,001 people). This one-time count represents only a fraction of the total estimated number of homeless people in the county. Statistical modeling indicates a reliable estimate of 7,841 actual homeless people. This number includes:

- ☞ 1,140 families with children, totaling 5,235 persons, 2,516 of which are children.
- ☞ 2,606 homeless persons in adult-only households.<sup>1</sup>

A variety of factors contribute to homelessness, including a lack of affordable housing, rental assistance services and living-wage jobs. Cuts in public funding for social service and health care programs have left many people without the resources they need to prevent homelessness.

People without homes also face a variety of barriers to escaping homelessness. One of these barriers is invisibility. The invisibility of homeless populations is especially relevant in largely suburban and rural communities like Clackamas County. Where the homeless population is dispersed, there are opportunities to live in seclusion outdoors, and a lack of emergency shelters requires people to rely on friends and family members or to live in a vehicle. Table 1 shows the geographic distribution for the number of homeless persons actually tallied in the 2005 Count. Actual numbers of homeless individuals may vary significantly from these counts, given that the counts were affected by the relative number of volunteers in a given community and the relative visibility of homeless camps and other locations

<sup>1</sup> MacDougall and Associates, Clackamas County Homeless Count 2005, Fall 2005.

*“In 2005, there were an estimated 7,841 homeless people in Clackamas County. 67% were in families with children.”*

where homeless people stay.<sup>2</sup> However, even given these caveats, it is clear that homelessness is an issue throughout the county.

Table 1. Geographic Distribution of Homeless Persons Counted

School District	# Homeless Counted	% of Total Counted
Canby	726	28.4
Colton + Estacada	199	7.8
Gladstone	52	2.0
Lake Oswego	51	2.0
Molalla	122	4.8
North Clackamas	197	7.7
Oregon City	437	17.1
Oregon Trail (Sandy)	321	12.6
W. Linn/Wilsonville	75	2.9
Unable to allocate*	376	14.7

\* No locator information provided on survey.

Source: MacDougall and Associates, Clackamas County Homeless Count 2005, Fall 2005.

County and non-profit groups provide a total of 56 beds for emergency shelter, 126 beds for transitional housing, and 84 permanent supportive housing beds. This total of 266 beds comes far short of meeting the housing need of the estimated 7,841 homeless persons in Clackamas County.

Another issue that impacts people without homes is the criminalization of homelessness. Cities and counties across the country have made it illegal to perform life sustaining activities in public, such as sleeping/camping, eating, sitting and begging in public. Anti-camping ordinances and other law enforcement actions against the homeless may be constituted as cruel and unusual punishment and may abridge a number of fundamental rights provided by the United States and Oregon State Constitutions, including the right to travel, the right to privacy, the right to due process, and freedom of speech.

<sup>2</sup> Homeless Count 2005.

*“Homelessness impacts entire communities in terms of the cost of health care services, complaints to local governments, unsanitary conditions in and around homeless camps, impacts on education, library and other public services, and an overall reduced quality of life for all of us.”*

People without a home experience dire conditions that affect their health and well-being, as well as their surroundings. Without a home, they typically lack adequate food, clothing and basic needs like a place to bathe, as well as the ability to travel to obtain essential services. This in turn impacts entire communities in terms of the costs of health care services, law enforcement, emergency shelters, and impacts on education, library and other public services.

Clackamas County is one of many communities developing a 10-year plan. The County's Homeless Policy and 10-Year Plan to Address Homelessness will include strategies to address homelessness in all its forms.

As a first step in the Plan's development, the project team conducted an analysis of homeless needs, which included the following research and stakeholder outreach activities:

- ☞ Review of national and regional literature including regional and national homeless policies and guidelines, recently completed 10-Year plans, and other relevant documents to identify best practices.
- ☞ Analysis of relevant county reports, including the County's Continuum of Care Application, Homeless Count, Analysis of Impediments to Fair Housing, Consolidated Plan, and other relevant reports and data sources.
- ☞ Outreach to stakeholder groups in Clackamas County, including the Clackamas County Coordinating Council for Homeless Programs, (Homeless Council) Hispanic Interagency Networking Team, Local Public Safety Coordinating Council, Committee for Citizen Involvement, School District Homeless Liaisons, faith-based Love, Inc., hospital discharge planners, and others.
- ☞ Distribution of a needs assessment questionnaire to members of the groups above, through the County's Web site, and other means. Over 85 people completed and returned questionnaires. Respondents represented social service agencies (29), faith-based organizations (5), public safety agencies (2), other public agencies (7), local business (1), elected official (1), advocacy groups (4), other non-profits (12), educational institutions (13), and others (17), many of whom were affiliated with community planning organizations (CPOs).
- ☞ Outreach to homeless persons through surveys and in-person interviews.

- ☞ Meetings of a project Steering Committee representing a variety of interests and viewpoints.

A preliminary needs assessment summarized the results of these efforts. The findings were presented at a Needs and Policies Workshop in which all stakeholders identified throughout the process had the opportunity to review the preliminary needs assessment results and recommend priority goals and strategies to address homelessness in the County. Those goals and strategies were further refined through meetings of the project’s Steering Committee and additional stakeholder outreach. The following table is a list of priority actions identified by the Steering Committee for the next 18 months.

**Table 2. Priority Actions Identified by Steering Committee**

**GOAL 1: PREVENT HOMELESSNESS**

**Strategy 1. Enhance access to supportive services.**

**Action 1:** All providers who serve the homeless and those at risk of homelessness will offer comprehensive case management services that specialize in the unique needs of the homeless and at-risk population.

**Action 2:** All case managers who work with the homeless and those at risk of homelessness will participate in Case Managers Skill Group and perform exit interviews.

**Action 3:** Explore the use of a centralized application system with a standardized application for all applicants.

**Strategy 2. Ensure access to mainstream resources, alcohol and drug treatment services, and employment assistance.**

**Action 1:** Ensure all homeless and at-risk individuals have access to mainstream resources including food stamps and Medicaid.

**Action 3:** Help the homeless get qualified for Social Security Disability.

**Strategy 3. Provide eviction prevention services.**

**Action 1:** Implement Ready to Rent program.

**Action 2:** Investigate funding sources for an Eviction Prevention Fund for at-risk individuals and families.

**Action 3:** Provide legal services for the prevention of homelessness through eviction defense and other housing rights remedies.

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**Strategy 4. Improve discharge planning for people exiting institutions, including youth aging out of foster care.**

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**Action 1:** Secure additional funding to expand the HOPE Program. HOPE works with homeless and disabled inmates to plan post-discharge housing.

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**Action 2:** Maintain the Community Health Department's protocol with the jail, requiring Community Health staff to conduct active discharge planning with mentally ill inmates, including: re-entry services, medications, housing, entitlement applications and case management.

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**Action 3:** Maintain the new Mental Health Housing Coordinator position.

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**Action 5:** Maintain the Hospital Liaison position that screens and places all Clackamas County mental health clients being discharged from local and state hospitals.

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**GOAL 2: REDUCE EDUCATIONAL IMPACTS OF HOMELESSNESS ON CHILDREN**

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**Strategy 1. Provide extra support services for homeless and highly-mobile children and families including after school activity programs, meals and tutoring.**

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**Action 1:** In order to respond to the difficulties many homeless children have succeeding in school, work with the Volunteer Connection to recruit volunteers to tutor homeless students at schools.

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**Action 2:** Encourage all school districts in the county to create a group to advocate for the needs of children. Stand for Children has a chapter in North Clackamas that could be a model for other areas.

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**Action 4:** Create and distribute information on resources available to homeless and at-risk families.

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**Strategy 2. Support school districts' Homeless Liaisons programs and services.**

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**Action 1:** Expand the Homeless School Liaison program.

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**GOAL 3: TRANSITION FROM HOMELESSNESS**

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**Strategy 1. Reach out to, and build new program capacity for the homeless.**

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**Action 1:** Provide outreach and connect homeless to mainstream resources.

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**Action 2:** Expand outreach to homeless veterans.

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**Action 3:** Expand overlapping clinical programming for people with both mental illness and drug addiction.

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**Strategy 2. Provide homeless populations with adequate and consistent client assessment systems.**

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**Action 1:** Analyze and publicize the methodology and outcome of local unsheltered counts of homeless persons.

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**Action 2:** Analyze current systems for assessing client needs with a goal of better identifying and quantifying homeless populations and their needs.

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**Strategy 3. Stabilization.**

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**Action 1:** Maintain and expand all current emergency, transitional and permanent supportive housing programs that are showing effective results.

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Action 4: Link at risk and homeless individuals to permanent housing.

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Action 5: Measure ongoing stability of persons transitioning from homelessness.

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**GOAL 4: CREATE/EXPAND PERMANENT SUPPORTIVE HOUSING, AFFORDABLE HOUSING AND SERVICES**

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**Strategy 1. Increase number of PSH sites & populations served.**

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Action 2: Continue to support existing PSH projects including; Chez Ami, Fisher Ridge, Clackamas Apartments, Villebois, Shelter + Care, and HOPE.

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**Strategy 3. Expand resources for affordable housing.**

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Action 1: Consider supporting the Housing Alliance plan for \$100 Million in additional funds for affordable housing. Potential tools include Real Estate Transfer Tax, document recording fee, or fee associated with short-term turnover in housing ownership (flipping fee).

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Action 2: Offer County surplus and/or tax foreclosed properties for affordable housing projects.

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**GOAL 5: REDUCE IMPACTS OF HOMELESSNESS ON LOCAL COMMUNITIES**

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**Strategy 1. Raise awareness among community members about homelessness.**

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Action 1: Establish a speakers' bureau.

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Action 3: Identify advocates who can help address community concerns over where to site facilities.

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Action 4: Support local formal and informal referral networks.

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Action 5: BCC consider affirming housing as a basic right.

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Action 6: Produce a county cable program on homelessness.

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**Strategy 2. Assist homeless people to have fewer negative impacts on their communities.**

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Action 1: Ensure people without homes know about existing service centers where they can address personal hygiene and obtain clean clothes, sleeping bags and food.

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Action 3: Establish a peer mentoring program.

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In addition to creating the Ten-Year Plan to Address Homelessness, the County will prepare a policy that responds to state legislation requiring local governments to address homeless camps, including issues such as notice for closure, storage of individual belongings, and other conditions.