

2025

Yakima County Five-Year Homeless Housing Strategic Plan
2025-2029

DRAFT

**Not yet adopted by the Board of
County Commissioners**

Yakima County
Human Services Department



Written by Esther Magasis
12/9/2025

Table of Contents

Introduction	1
Vision	1
Values	1
Focus Areas	2
Priorities	2
Plan Development Process	3
Plan Development Participants	3
Yakima County Homeless Coalition Executive Committee	3
Five-Year Homeless Housing Strategic Plan Development Strategic Session Participants	4
YHC Data Committee	8
YHC Lived Experience Committee	8
Community Engagement Sessions	8
Educational System Survey	11
Local Comprehensive Planners	11
Yakima County Board of County Commissioners	11
State Objectives	11
CHG Contract Performance Requirements	12
Significant Changes to the Plan	13
Yakima County Homeless Response System	13
The Homeless Response System Continuum	13
Prevention/Diversion	13
Pathways In	14
Conditions of Homelessness	14
Pathways Out	14
Wraparound Services	15
SWOT Analysis	15
Strengths	15
Weaknesses	16
Opportunities	16
Threats	16
Homeless Response System Funding	16
Estimates of Service Levels	17

Expenditures	17
Enrollments	17
Housing Interventions.....	17
Funding Breakdown	18
Estimates of Permanent and Emergency Housing Needs	18
Bed Availability.....	19
Subsidized Housing.....	19
Local Landscape: Homelessness Among our Neighbors	20
Point in Time Survey Data	20
Homeless Population as a Percentage of Total Population	22
Current Condition of Homelessness	22
Total HMIS Entries (Households).....	23
Exits to Permanent Housing	23
Exits to Transitional Housing	23
Income (Government Support) at Program Exit	23
Income (Earned Income) at Program Exit	24
Unknown Destination at Program Exit.....	24
No Interview Conducted at Program Exit.....	24
Unknown Destination at Program Exit.....	24
Causes of Homelessness	25
Performance in Meeting the Goals	25
Action Plan	26
Needs and Gaps, Core Strategies, and Tasks.....	26
Focus Area 1: System Improvement and Accountability	26
Focus Area 2: Prevention and Early Intervention	27
Focus Area 3: Accessibility and Housing.....	28
Focus Area 4: Community Impact and Engagement	29
Detail Matrix.....	31
Appendix I: Definitions.....	65
Appendix II: Notice of Plan Development.....	69
Appendix III: Notice of Public Hearing.....	70
Appendix IV: Prioritization Criteria of Homeless Housing Capital Projects.....	71
Appendix V: Yakima County Board of County Commissioners Recommendations to the State.....	73

Appendix VI: SWOT Analysis	74
Appendix VII: Factors Impacting Homelessness	97

DRAFT

Introduction

This document, the Yakima County Five-Year Homeless Housing Strategic Plan, is a living document. It will be updated annually to track progress and to assess successes and lessons learned. Annual updates can be found linked on the Yakima County Human Services website: www.yakimacounty.us/3032/44395/Five-Year-Homeless-Housing-Strategic-Plan

Vision

To reduce Homelessness in Yakima County so that it is *brief* and *rare* in Yakima County through an *efficient* and *effective* homeless response system.

Values

Honoring Human Dignity

A person who is experiencing homelessness should have the right to an adequate standard of living, the right to an education, the right to liberty and security of the person, the right to privacy, the right to freedom from discrimination, and the right to vote and receive social security if they are eligible.

Recognizing Resiliency

Individuals who experience homelessness are resilient, capable, and adaptable, and should be given opportunities to be involved in every level of advocacy, outreach, and planning.

Nonjudgmental, Respectful, and Responsive Planning

Any plans or programs related to homelessness must be nonjudgmental, respectful, and responsive to the actual needs of those experiencing homelessness.

Transparency

It is important that any approach to addressing homelessness be direct and transparent.

Inclusive and Engaging Services

Services delivered for people experiencing homelessness should be proactive, inclusive, and strengths-based.

Focus Areas

The Yakima County Five-Year Homeless Housing Strategic Plan has eight Objectives, grouped into four Focus Areas:

Focus Area 1: **System Improvement and Accountability**

Objective 1: Promote an equitable, accountable, and transparent homeless crisis response system.

Objective 2: Strengthen the homeless service provider workforce.

Focus Area 2: **Prevention and Early Intervention**

Objective 3: Prevent episodes of homelessness whenever possible.

Objective 4: Increase income opportunities for low-income households.

Focus Area 3: **Accessibility and Housing**

Objective 5: Prioritize those with the most significant barriers to housing stability and the greatest risk of harm.

Objective 6: Seek to house everyone in a stable setting that meets their needs.

Focus Area 4: **Community Impact and Engagement**

Objective 7: Reducing stigma by increasing awareness, challenging stereotypes, and changing language.

Objective 8: Balance outreach strategies with public space stewardship and safety to reduce homelessness in critical areas.

Each Objective is accompanied by a series of Tasks and Subtasks, which are detailed on page X in the Action Plan Detail Matrix.

Priorities

The Objectives and their associated Tasks were ranked in a vote of Strategic Session participants, resulting in the following prioritization recommended by community stakeholders, with 1 being the highest priority and 8 being the lowest:

Ranking	Objective
1	Objective 5: Prioritize those with the most significant barriers to housing stability and the greatest risk of harm.
2	Objective 3: Prevent episodes of homelessness whenever possible.
3	Objective 6: Seek to house everyone in a stable setting that meets their needs.

4	Objective 7: Reducing stigma by increasing awareness, challenging stereotypes, and changing language.
5	Objective 1: Promote an equitable, accountable, and transparent homeless crisis response system.
6	Objective 2: Strengthen the homeless service provider workforce.
7	Objective 4: Increase income opportunities for low-income households.
8	Objective 8: Balance outreach strategies with public space stewardship and safety to reduce homelessness in critical areas.

Plan Development Process

Plan Development Participants

RCW 43.185C.160 requires that “Each county shall create a homeless housing task force to develop a five-year homeless housing plan addressing short-term and long-term housing for homeless persons.” In Yakima County, that homeless housing task force is the Yakima County Homeless Coalition (YHC).

Yakima County holds the belief that the best solutions are based in collaboration among all those who are affected by the issues at hand. As such, Yakima County committed to including community stakeholders ranging from government officials, individuals with lived experience, service providers, landlords, law enforcement, and beyond in the five-year homeless plan process. To that end, the Yakima County Board of County Commissioners, Department of Human Services, and Yakima County Homeless Coalition worked with a broad array of people and organizations to develop, review, and ultimately finalize the 2025 Yakima County Five-Year Plan to Address Homelessness. Participants are listed by name and affiliation below.

Yakima County Homeless Coalition Executive Committee

The purpose of the Yakima County Homeless Coalition (YHC) Executive Committee is to provide strategic oversight and accountability for the YHC.

Category	Position	Representative
Government	Yakima County	Kyle Curtis, County Commissioner
	City of Yakima	Matt Brown, Assistant Mayor
	Yakama Nation	Brian Saluskin, Tribal Council Member
	City/Town	Janice Gonzalez, City of Zillah Councilmember
	City/Town	Elpida Saavedra, City of Toppenish Mayor
Homeless Coalition General Membership	Homeless Coalition Chair	Mike Gonzalez, City of Sunnyside City Manager
	Homeless Coalition Vice-Chair	Trevor Martin, City of Yakima Planning Manager
	Data Committee Chair	Dave Hanson, Sunrise Outreach Center Executive Director

	Balance of State Representative	Annette Rodriguez, Yakima Neighborhood Health Services Homeless Services Officer
	Balance of State Representative	Sherran Campos, Northwest Community Action Center Program Manager - Housing Support Services
Sector-Specific Representatives	Public Safety	Deputy Chief Jon Schwarder, Toppenish Police Department
	For-Profit Business	Linda DiLembo, Valley Mall General Manager
	Individual with Lived Experience	Carla Smith Schneider
	Individual with Lived Experience	Miriam Saavedra
	Individual with Lived Experience	Chayene Charles

Five-Year Homeless Housing Strategic Plan Development Strategic Session Participants

In lieu of regularly scheduled YHC meetings, Yakima County hosted four Strategic Sessions in 2025 open to all members of the YHC and to stakeholders from the broader community. It was at these Strategic Sessions where the Objectives, Tasks, and Subtasks were developed and assigned priorities. The Strategic Session engaged 129 different stakeholders from across 79 unique agencies and departments. Engagement was targeted across 10 key stakeholder sectors: Behavioral Health, Community, Education, For-Profit Business, Government, Healthcare/Public Health, Homeless Services, Housing Developers, Lived Experience, and Public Safety. Participants in Strategic Sessions were as follows:

Behavioral Health

Name	Agency
Meagan Takamori	Barth Clinic
Courtney Hesla	Comprehensive Healthcare
Jon Schlenske	Comprehensive Healthcare
Jay Hirst	Kittitas Interactive Management
Jim Stephenson	National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI)
Mary Stephenson	National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI)
Alicia Tobin	Safe Yakima Valley (SYV)
Jamie Simmons	Triumph Treatment Services (TTS)
Robert Douthitt	Triumph Treatment Services (TTS)
Robert Douthitt	Triumph Treatment Services (TTS)
Shawna Estep	Triumph Treatment Services (TTS)
Sophia Sanabria	Triumph Treatment Services (TTS)
Doug Gill	Trouves Health
Edie Dibble	Trouves Health
Gwen Gill	Trouves Health

Steve O'Ban	Trouves Health
Megan Tweedy	Yakima Valley Community Foundation (YVCF)

Community

Name	Agency
Christie Love	Englewood Christian Church
Peter Knutson	Mt. Olive Lutheran Church
Steven Gonzalez	People for People
Zachary Welch	People for People
MaryEllen Robinson	Sisters of the Holy Names
Amy Martinez	South Central Workforce
Shane Moore	Wesley United Methodist Church (Wesley UMC)
Heather Campbell	Yakima Valley Libraries
Jeanna Hernandez	
Melissa Kishwalk	
Mike Johnson	
Rick deVilla	
Steve Altmayer	
Susan Martin	

Education

Name	Agency
Emily Nelson	Educational Service District 105 (ESD 105)
Gladys Manriquez	Educational Service District 105 (ESD 105)
Hope Baker	Educational Service District 105 (ESD 105)
Nicole DeLeon	Educational Service District 105 (ESD 105)
Aidee Frais	Mount Adams School District 209
Krisi Irion	Selah School District 119
Sasha Washut	Selah School District 119
Guadalupe Huitron-Lilly	Yakima Valley College (YVC)

For-Profit Business

Name	Agency
Yanira Cisneros	Central Washington Hispanic Chamber of Commerce (CWHCC)/ Yakima County Development Association (YCDA)
Dan Koommoo	Crafted Yakima
Curt Wilson	Downtown Association of Yakima (DAY)
Kristy Foster	Greater Yakima Chamber of Commerce
Lisa Vallejo	Hilton Garden Inn
Susan Soto Palmer	Stokes Lawrence Velikanje Moore & Shore Law Firm
Luis López	Yakima Eco Solutions
Anne Knapp	Yakima Valley Landlords Association
Linda DiLembo	Yakima Valley Mall

Government

Name	Agency

Mike Gonzalez	City of Sunnyside
Trevor Martin	City of Yakima Planning Division
Mike Costello	Selah City Council
Rick Evans	Senator Cantwell's Office
Toni Ball	Senator Murray's Office
Elpidia Saavedra	Toppenish City Council
Brian White	Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT)
Denny Foster	Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT)
Will Smith	Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT)
Brian Saluskin	Yakama Nation Tribal Council
Deland Olney	Yakama Nation Tribal Council
Matt Brown	Yakima City Council
Rick Glenn	Yakima City Council
Kyle Curtis	Yakima County
Tua Vang	Yakima County Code Enforcement
Tony Miller	Yakima County Emergency Management
Esther Magasis	Yakima County Human Services Department
Aimz Rabadan	Yakima Valley Conference of Governments (YVCOG)
Janice Gonzales	Zillah City Council

Healthcare/Public Health

Name	Agency
Maria Galven	Coordinated Care
Andy Wilson	Yakima Health District
Mike Vachon	Yakima Neighborhood Health Services (YNHS)
Stephanie Hansen	Yakima Valley Farmworkers Clinic (YVFWC)

Homeless Services

Name	Agency
Whitney Carlson	Catholic Charities Youth and Housing Supportive Services
Avery Zoglman	Catholic Charities Youth and Housing Supportive Services
Alan Harris	Generating Hope
Darlene Hansen	Grace City Outreach
Jamie Adams	Grace City Outreach
Suzi Carpino	Grace City Outreach
Jennifer Schlenske	Justice Housing Yakima
Jenn Semanko	Opportunities Industrialization Center of Washington (OIC)
Asuncion Marquez	Rod's House
Lori Tamburro	Rod's House
Sylvia Munoz	Rod's House
David Hanson	Sunrise Outreach Center (SOC)
Leticia Garcia	The Lighthouse
Billy Daughtry	Yakima Veteran Center (YVC)
Mandy Rodriguez	Veterans Affairs (VA)

Matt Atford	Veterans Affairs (VA)
Jenece Howe	Yakama Nation Village of Hope
Juan Casteneda	Yakima County Community Grants and Partnerships
Melissa Holm	Yakima County Community Grants and Partnerships
Rosana Negrete	Yakima County Community Grants and Partnerships
Ray Hernandez	Yakima County Veterans Program
Annette Rodriguez	Yakima Neighborhood Health Services (YNHS)
Elena Mendoza	Yakima Neighborhood Health Services (YNHS)
Bryan Grove	Yakima Union Gospel Mission (YUGM)
Jason Johnston	Yakima Union Gospel Mission (YUGM)
Michael Schneider	Yakima Union Gospel Mission (YUGM)
Scott Thielen	Yakima Union Gospel Mission (YUGM)
Heather Elmore	Yakima Valley Farmworkers Clinic (YVFWC)
Sherran Campos	Yakima Valley Farmworkers Clinic (YVFWC)

Housing Developers

Name	Agency
Bryan Ketcham	Catholic Charities Housing Services
Joel Mendoza	Office of Rural and Farmworker Housing (ORFH)
Autumn Torres	Pacific Contracting LLC
Felicia Twohatchet	Yakama Nation Housing Authority (YNHA)
Marla Shike	Yakama Nation Housing Authority (YNHA)
Teresa Umtuch	Yakama Nation Housing Authority (YNHA)
Brian Hedengren	Yakima County HOME Program
Carlos Guel	Yakima Housing Authority (YHA)
Elsa Mendez	Yakima Housing Authority (YHA)

Lived Experience

Name	Agency
Anthony Garret	Justice Housing Yakima
Marci Barton	National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI)
Chaylene Charles	Village of Hope
Amethyst Busch	Yakima Union Gospel Mission (YUGM)
Carla Smith Schneider	Yakima Union Gospel Mission (YUGM)
Eric Joseph	
Miriam Saavedra	

Public Safety

Name	Agency
David Lynde	American Medical Response (AMR)
Sara Watkins	City of Yakima Legal Department
Jim Lange	Selah Fire Department
Erica McNamara	SunComm
Jonathan Schwarder	Toppenish Police Department
Paul Kelley	Yakima County Department of Assigned Counsel

Travis Irion	Yakima County Department of Corrections (DOC)
Therese Murphy	Yakima County District Court
Tracy Hyatt	Yakima County Sheriff's Office (YSO)
Aaron Markham	Yakima Fire Department
Maritza Davis	Yakima Police Department
Shawn Boyle	Yakima Police Department
Yvette Inzunza	Yakima Police Department

YHC Data Committee

The YHC Data Committee was the working group where the Tasks and Subtasks generated in Strategic Sessions were refined to be specific and demonstrable actions, and Objectives were assigned measurables. Participants in the Data Committee in 2025 were:

Anne Knapp	Edie Dibble	Kyle Curtis	Shamira Moore
Annette Rodriguez	Elizabeth Tellez-Lopez	Linda DiLembo	Sherran Campos
Bryan Grove	Esther Magasis	Melissa Holm	Suzi Carpino
Dave Hanson	Jeanna Hernandez	Reann Rowe	Sylvia Munoz
Deann Bergquist		Rosa Garcia	

YHC Lived Experience Committee

The YHC Lived Experience (LE) Committee was developed in an effort to create a space for individuals with lived experience of homelessness to speak openly and safely regarding their thoughts on the homeless response system. Individuals with lived experience who participate in YHC activities (including the Strategic Plan Development Sessions and the Executive Committee meetings) are compensated for their time by the Human Services Department, if they are not already otherwise compensated for participation by an employer. Participants in the LE Committee in 2025 were as follows:

Anthony Garret	Carla Smith Schneider	Miriam Saavedra
----------------	-----------------------	-----------------

Community Engagement Sessions

While the Strategic Sessions were open to all community members who wished to participate, they required a full day commitment during working hours. With the understanding that this was not accessible to many members of the community, Yakima County hosted three additional Community Engagement Sessions in Upper Valley (Union Gap), Mid Valley (Toppenish), and Lower Valley (Sunnyside). Participants in the Community Engagement Sessions included:

Alberto Saldana	Dave W. Matson	Hortencia Villanova	Lisa Graham
Amely P. Osorio	Debbie Mendoza	Jacob Castillo	Lori Arregui
Anthony Garrett	Derek Cockran	Jerry Farrell	Marla Shike
Asuncion Marquez	Eddie Perez	Jim Cerna	Megan Tweedy
Bernie Trujillo	Elisa Amador	Joan E. Souders	Melissa Kishwalk
Brandon Reeder	Eric Miller	Jon Schwarder	Mike Shuttleworth
Charlene A. Arriaga	Erik Jimenez	Jorge Galvin	Nila Duval
Cindy Olivias	Geoff Baker	Kenton Gartrell	Oscar Martinez
Corrie Blythe	Heather Campbell	Lary Rabe	Pat Braten
Dave Hanson	Hilda Gonzalez	Lea Draven	Phil Windian

Raquel Ferrell- Crowley	Shery Rynd	Sylvia Munoz	Yadira Moran
Reann Rowe	Sister Charlyne Brown	Terry Denko	Zulema Diaz
Rev. Tim Carnahan	Sister Kathleen Ross	Tina Muñoz	
Rich Kallenberger	Susie Munoz	Toni Soto	
Roen Atn	Suzi Carpino	Veronica Uribe	
Rosmary Saul	Sydney Hill	Vicki Baker	

Educational System Survey

The Strategic Sessions were not accessible to many educators, because they took place during the school day where educators were engaged in teaching. Educators, and especially McKinney-Vento Liaisons, have valuable perspectives on youth and family homelessness. In order to capture more feedback from the educational system, a survey soliciting input on the homeless response system SWOT analysis was sent to every McKinney-Vento Liaison in Yakima County and survey responses were integrated into the materials used in the Strategic Sessions.

Local Comprehensive Planners

Yakima County Human Services Staff worked with Planners from the Yakima County Public Services Department to collaborate on the development of the Housing for All Planning Tool (HAPT, see page X) estimates for use in this document. Human Services Staff also attended a Planning Commission meeting to discuss the Housing Element of the Comprehensive Plan.

The Planners who consulted on the development of this Strategic Plan document were Olivia Story and Aaron Cohen.

Yakima County Board of County Commissioners

The Yakima County Board of County Commissioners gave the final approval for the completion of the five-year plan.

The members of the Yakima County Board of County Commissioners are:



Kyle Curtis, District 2

Chairman, Lead Commissioner on Homelessness



LaDon Linde, District 3



Amanda McKinney, District 1

State Objectives

Washington State requires, at a minimum, the inclusion of five State Objectives, which are reflected in this plan:

- Objective 1: Promote an equitable, accountable and transparent homeless crisis response system.
- Objective 2: Strengthen the homeless service provider workforce.
- Objective 3: Prevent episodes of homelessness whenever possible.
- Objective 4: Prioritize assistance based on the greatest barriers to housing stability and greatest risk of harm.
- Objective 5: Seek to house everyone in a stable setting that meets their needs.

CHG Contract Performance Requirements

Finally, the performance requirements identified in the Consolidated Homeless Grant guidelines for State Fiscal Year 2026-2027¹ were identified and included:

Intervention Type	Performance Measure	Performance Target
Drop In Emergency Shelter (ES) or Sanctioned Encampment (SE)	Increase Exits to Positive Outcomes ²	50%
Emergency Shelter (ES)	Increase Exits to Permanent Housing	50%
Transitional Housing (TH)	Increase Exits to Permanent Housing	80%
Rapid Re-Housing (RRH)	Increase Exits to Permanent Housing	80%
Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH) or any Permanent Housing Type (excluding RRH)	Increase Exits to or Retention of Permanent Housing	95%
Homelessness Prevention (HP)	Housing Retention after 6 months	95%
All of the interventions above	Equitable Outcomes	Outcomes across racial and ethnic demographics should not be significantly less than the overall rate

¹ These Performance Targets apply to the date range between July 1, 2025, and June 30, 2027. This plan will be updated with the relevant Performance Targets for SFY 2028-2030 once they are released.

² Positive Outcomes from ES and SE include: Host home (non-crisis), staying or living with family (permanent tenure), staying or living with friends (permanent tenure), moved from one HOPWA funded project to HOPWA PH, rental by client with GDP TIP Subsidy, rental by client with VASH housing subsidy, Permanent Housing (other than RRH) for formerly homeless persons, rental by client with RRH or equivalent, Rental by client with HCV voucher (tenant or project based), rental by client in public housing unit, rental by client with no ongoing subsidy, rental by client with other ongoing housing subsidy, owned by client with ongoing housing subsidy, or owned by client with no ongoing housing subsidy.

Significant Changes to the Plan

This is the first version of the Five-Year Plan that has been developed by Yakima County, under the newly formed Human Services Department (est. 2020). Due to the significant changes in leadership, concerns regarding the measurability of the previous plan, and the scale of disruption presented by COVID to the priorities previously identified in the 2019-2024 plan, the decision was made not to recycle the previous plan and instead use this as an opportunity for a fresh start for our community's strategic approach to homelessness. As such, this plan does not build on the previous version of the five-year plan, but instead is based in an extensive effort to collect wide-ranging community and stakeholder feedback.

Yakima County Homeless Response System

The Homeless Response System refers to the entire network of resources within a community meant to serve individuals experiencing homelessness. Includes (but is not limited to) outreach, permanent supportive housing, transitional housing, housing choice vouchers, case management, prevention, diversion, rental and eviction assistance, low-barrier overnight shelters (including cold-weather emergency shelter), domestic violence shelters and emergency services hotlines, day-shelters, drop-in programs, short-term crisis residential programs, respite, drug and alcohol rehabilitation programs, mental health programs, and employment assistance.

The Homeless Response System Continuum

The network of services and activities within the Homeless Response System falls along a continuum; although individuals experiencing homelessness each have a unique experience, and do not necessarily progress through that continuum in a linear fashion. Similarly, organizations and institutions may connect with individuals at varying points along the continuum.



Prevention/Diversion

Prevention and Diversion happen at the point *before* a household loses housing. Being able to either keep someone at-risk of homelessness in their home or immediately divert them into permanent housing without them ever having to stay in an emergency shelter or in a place not meant for human habitation is usually the

strategy to reduce homelessness that is most cost-effective and least traumatic, but it is not always possible. Prevention/diversion strategies can look like:

- Provider Strategies
 - Landlord development/engagement
 - Rental assistance to cover arrears and potentially future rent
 - Rental move-in costs such as rental application fees, security deposits, first/last months' rent, etc.
 - Housing stability case management
 - Mediation
 - Legal Services
 - Credit repair
- Housing Developer Strategies
 - Mixed income housing development
- Government Strategies
 - Zoning code review
 - Providing funding for prevention and diversion programs
 - Building pathways to housing for those otherwise exiting incarceration into homelessness

Pathways In

If a household experiences a precipitating event that triggers the loss of housing, and is not given the opportunity to access prevention/diversion programs or accesses prevention/diversion unsuccessfully, they end up on a pathway into homelessness. Pathways in can look like:

- Eviction
- Relocation
- Fleeing domestic violence/abuse
- Aging out of foster care without housing
- Institutional discharge (such as hospital, incarceration, inpatient treatment) without housing

Conditions of Homelessness

Once undergoing a pathway into homelessness, there are varying forms of homelessness that a household can experience:

- Unsheltered homelessness
 - Unsanctioned encampment (tents or other forms of street homelessness)
 - Sanctioned encampment (such as Camp Hope)
 - Vehicles/RVs (not including mobile homes/permanent housing using a mobile home)
- Sheltered homelessness
 - Night-by-night/drop-in shelter
 - Continuous stay shelter
- Transitional housing
 - Time-limited sober living
 - Time-limited supportive housing

Pathways Out

Ideally, households that have found themselves experiencing homelessness will eventually find a pathway out, back to stable housing. Programs that support pathways out of homelessness range from intensive

residential programs to lighter-touch financial assistance with case management to get households back on the right track. The best pathway out for a household will vary based on the experiences and needs of that household. Pathways out program types include:

- Rapid Re-Housing
- Permanent Supportive Housing
- Long-Term Care
- Family reunification

Wraparound Services

Throughout the homeless response system, there are opportunities for services that can bolster housing stability to prevent eviction, support individuals experiencing homelessness to achieve stabilization, and help reinforce those pathways out to ensure they are successful. Wraparound services are team-based services that embrace each client's unique strengths, needs, and natural support systems in order to meet the specific outcomes of each client. Case managers and social workers implementing a wrap-around program create holistic, customized, intensive, strengths-based, outcomes-oriented, and individualized care plans that are delivered in a structured, team-based framework with the client at the center. Team members implementing a wrap-around plan for a client are responsible for working collaboratively to develop, implement, monitor, and evaluate any given wrap-around plan. Goals and strategies of a wrap-around plan should be tied to observable or measurable indicators of success, which allows for the plan to be monitored and improved as it is executed.

Wrap around services, teams, and plans will look different for each individual client, as they are structured in accordance with addressing that client's unique needs. Wraparound services can look like:

- Outreach teams
- Specialty services
- Benefits acquisition
- Family engagement
- Employment/income supports
- Physical healthcare
- Mental healthcare
- Substance Use Disorder services
- Or anything that helps meet a client's needs

SWOT Analysis

A Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats analysis was developed using feedback from Strategic Session participants, Community Engagement Session Participants, and McKinney-Vento Liaisons.

The SWOT responses are summarized below, but a full document detailing feedback in further detail can be found in Appendix VI: SWOT Analysis.

Strengths

Yakima County demonstrates strong collaboration, a caring community, and a network of service providers offering wraparound supports. Many committed staff in the workforce, available housing and shelter options, and coordinated entry systems help ensure individuals can access services. Strong partnerships

across sectors—including schools, healthcare, and faith communities—form a solid foundation for addressing homelessness.

Weaknesses

Yakima County's homelessness response system faces major challenges related to service gaps, workforce limitations, and housing shortages, particularly in rural areas and among special populations. Fragmented communication, weak accountability systems, stigma, and policy barriers further complicate navigation and reduce effectiveness. Limited funding, burnout, and inadequate prevention or mental health resources create a largely reactive system that struggles to meet the scale and complexity of community needs.

Opportunities

Yakima County has substantial opportunities to expand affordable housing, strengthen service coordination, and increase prevention and early intervention strategies. Investments in workforce development, community partnerships, and mental health services can significantly improve system effectiveness. Policy improvements, flexible funding, and community engagement can help build a more sustainable, equitable, and data-driven homelessness response system.

Threats

Yakima County faces significant threats from rising housing costs, unstable funding, workforce shortages, and fragmented systems, all of which strain the homelessness response system. Severe gaps in mental health and addiction treatment, combined with community stigma, legal barriers, and insufficient housing options, limit the effectiveness of interventions. Political uncertainty, economic pressures, and inadequate supports for high-need populations further threaten long-term progress and community stability.

Homeless Response System Funding

Fund Source	Source	Status	Allowable Uses	Amount received SFY 24	Actual/Projected received SFY25
Mental Health Sales and Use Tax³	Local	Collecting	Operating/ Capital	\$ 5,911,007.17	\$ 5,696,246.75
Housing and Related Services Sales and Use Tax	Local	Not Collecting	Operating/ Capital	-	-
Affordable and Supportive Housing Sales and Use Tax	Local	Collecting	Operating/ Capital	\$ 440,535.51	\$ 351,655.51
Local Housing Levies	Local	Not Collecting	Capital	-	-
Document Recording Surcharge	Local	Collecting	Operating/ Capital	\$ 995,647.84	\$ 943,679.43
Consolidated Homeless Grant	State	Collecting	Operating	\$ 4,980,946.17	\$ 8,181,904.17

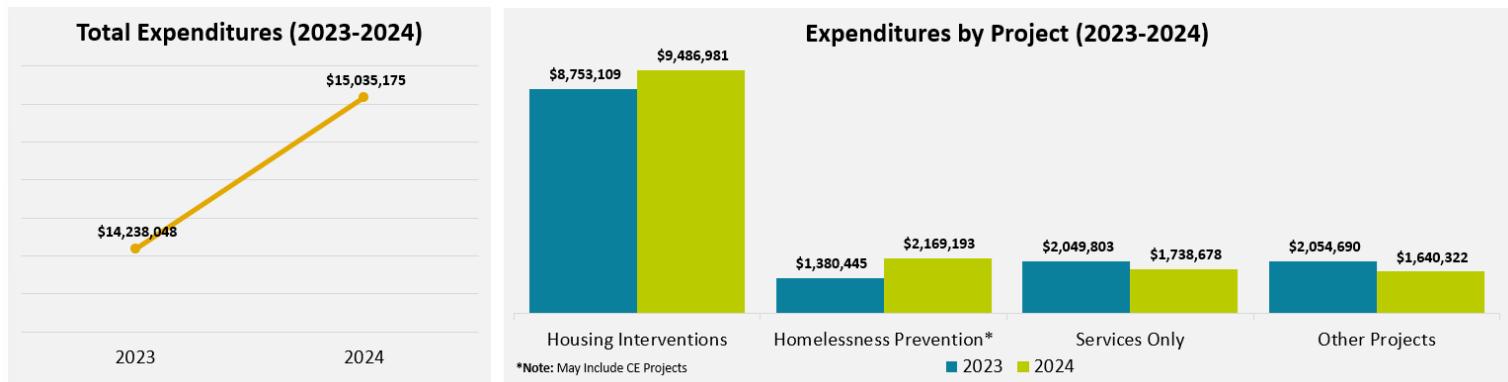
³ Mental Health Sales Tax (MHST) is not explicitly or exclusively for spending within the homeless response system, but since behavioral health and substance use disorder issues are so significant in addressing homelessness, these funds have also been included. Not all of the MHST dollars are spent on issues related to addressing homelessness.

Emergency Solutions Grant	Federal	Not Collecting	N/A	-	-
Community Development Block Grant	Federal	Collecting	Operating	\$ 307,000.00	\$ 159,000.00
HOME Consortium Grant	Federal	Collecting	Operating/ Capital	\$ 421,427.14	\$ 410,866.00
			TOTAL	\$ 13,056,563.83	\$ 15,743,351.86

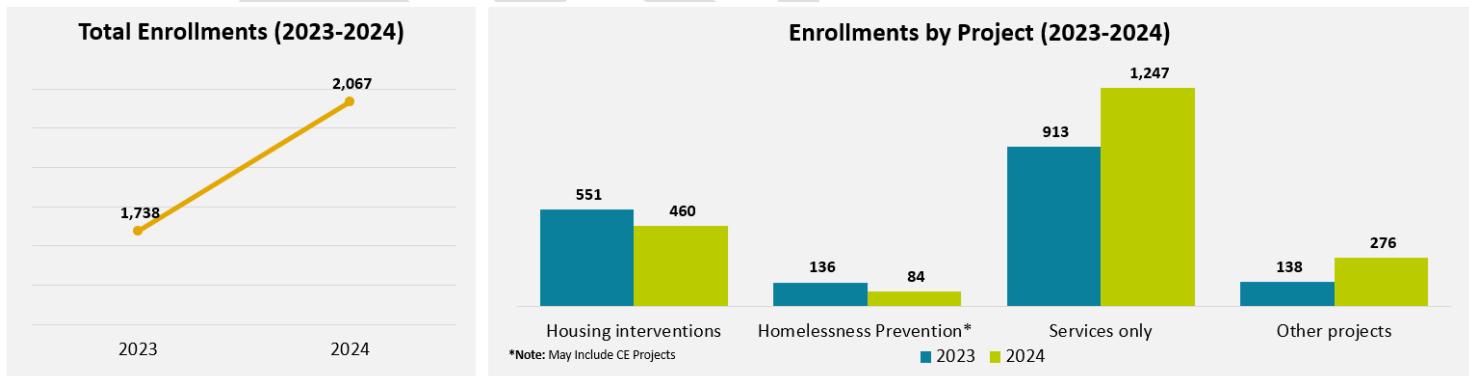
Estimates of Service Levels

The following estimates have been generated with data from the Washington State Annual Expenditure Reports (The Golden).

Expenditures



Enrollments



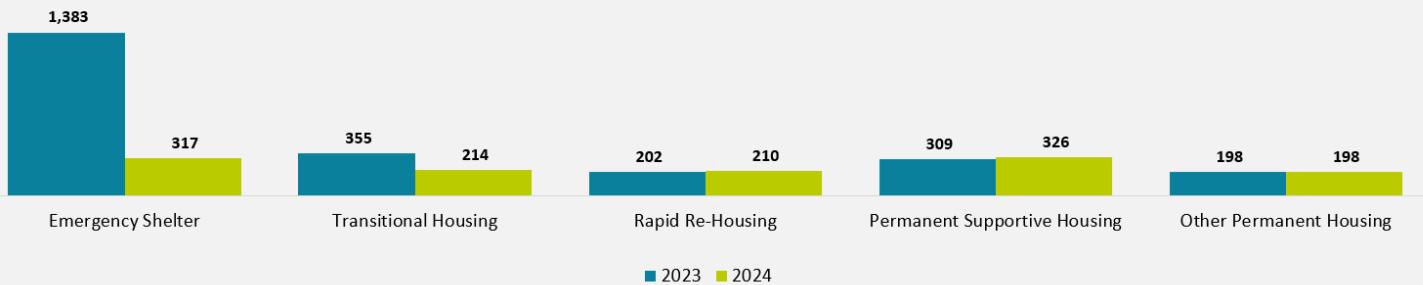
Housing Interventions

Note that the categories represented in this Housing Interventions section do not include Camp Hope, which does not meet minimum qualifications to be considered an Emergency Shelter. Camp Hope is a Sanctioned Encampment and is classified as a form of unsheltered homelessness.

Expenditures on Housing Interventions Only (2023-2024)

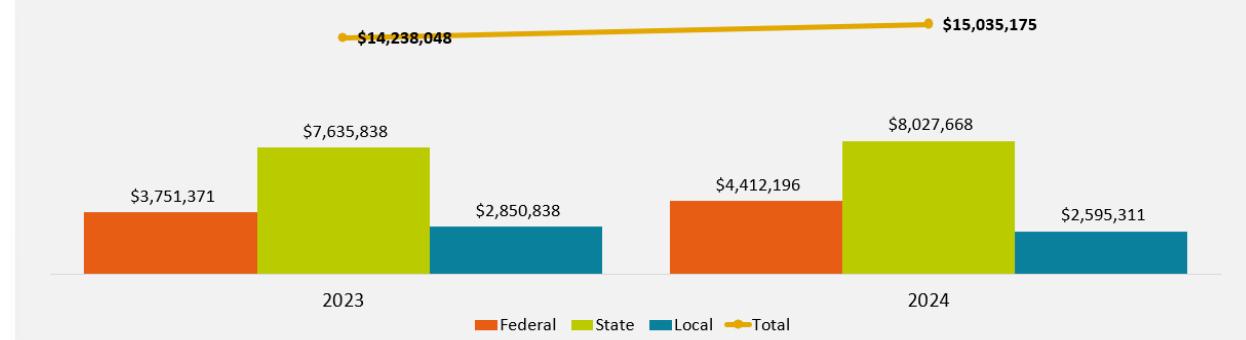


Beds By Housing Interventions Only (2023-2024)



Funding Breakdown

Annual Expenditures By Funding Source (2023-2024)



Estimates of Permanent and Emergency Housing Needs

Understanding the importance of housing units available to those in the 30% AMI range or below, we can utilize the Washington State Housing for All Planning Tool (HAPT) to project housing needs in that range within Yakima County from 2025 through 2029:

	Permanent Housing Needs by Income Level (% of Area Median Income)							
	0-30% Non- PSH	0- 30% PSH	>30- 50%	>50- 80%	>80- 100%	>100- 120%	>120%	Emergency Housing Needs (Temporary)
Grandview	64	69	89	47	28	19	72	22
Granger	24	27	34	18	11	7	28	9
Harrah	0	1	1	0	0	0	1	0

Mabton	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Moxee	81	89	114	60	35	24	92	29
Naches	14	16	20	11	6	4	16	5
Selah	79	86	110	58	34	23	89	28
Sunnyside	60	66	85	44	26	18	69	21
Tieton	23	25	33	17	10	7	26	8
Toppenish	8	9	11	6	4	2	9	3
Union Gap	31	34	43	23	13	9	35	11
Wapato	6	6	8	4	3	2	7	2
Yakima	324	354	454	238	141	95	366	114
Zillah	9	9	12	6	4	3	10	3
Unincorporated	0	0	0	28	17	11	176	0
TOTAL	724	790	1,014	561	331	224	995	255

Bed Availability

Data reported on the annual Department of Commerce Housing Inventory Chart (HIC)⁴ shows the beds available in Yakima County:

HMIS Project Type	Total Beds		Beds by Type
	Entry/Exit	Night by Night	
Emergency Shelter (ES)	370		876
	296		
Sanctioned Encampment	210		
Transitional Housing (TH)	214		214
Permanent Housing (PH)	152		746
	46		
	377		
	171		

Subsidized Housing

Each type of housing in the subsidized housing continuum plays a key role in moving people from homelessness to self-sufficiency. Yakima County adopted the use of Rapid Re-Housing programs that provide a brief and graduated subsidy to households experiencing homelessness, placing them in permanent housing as quickly as possible while providing short-term supportive services. Rapid Re-Housing has proven successful for households with low barriers to self-reliance. It should be recognized that many of Yakima County's residents experiencing homelessness have many barriers and are not suited to the short-term Rapid Re-Housing model.

For those requiring a more long-term version of housing subsidy, there exist many options for providing housing support. the table below shows changes in the housing subsidy landscape at a state and local between 2019 and 2024 (the period of the previous Five-Year Plan).

⁴ Housing Inventory Chart, Washington State Department of Commerce

Subsidized Housing State and Local Data During Previous Five-Year Plan Period⁵

		2019		2024	
		Washington State	Yakima County	Washington State	Yakima County
Units	Number of Subsidized Units Available	89,630	1,830	95,872	2,056
	Percent of Units Occupied	94%	95%	88%	88%
	Average Number of People Per Unit	2	1.9	1.9	1.8
	Number of People Total	174,312	3,386	170,021	3,614
	Average Household Expenditure Per Month	\$372	\$327	\$445	\$401
	Average HUD Expenditure Per Month	\$799	\$479	\$1,125	\$670
Household Income	Average Household Income Per Year	\$15,315	\$13,405	\$18,508	\$16,393
	Percentage of Households where Wages are Major Source of Income	22%	18%	19%	15%
	Percentage of Households where Welfare is Major Source of Income	5%	5%	7%	7%
	Percentage of Households with Other Major Source of Income	70%	75%	68%	75%
	Average Household Income as Percentage of Area Median Income	21%	26%	19%	23%
Head of Household Age	Percentage of Households where Head of Household or Spouse is 24 Years or Less	2%	2%	2%	2%
	Percentage of Households where Head of Household or Spouse is 25 to 49 Years	37%	35%	36%	34%
	Percentage of Households where Head of Household or Spouse is 51 to 60 Years	22%	16%	20%	17%
	Percentage of Households where Head of Household or Spouse is 62 Years or More	39%	47%	43%	47%
	Percentage of Households where Head of Household or Spouse is 85 Years or More	4%	5%	4%	4%
	Percentage with Disability Among Head of Household or Spouse Aged 61 Years or Less	50%	41%	48%	44%
	Percentage with Disability Among Head of Household or Spouse Aged 62 Years or More	53%	42%	56%	44%
Time	Average Months on Waiting List	27	21	16	18
	Average Months Since Moved In	106	73	113	79

Local Landscape: Homelessness Among our Neighbors

Having had an overview of the homeless response system, what do we know about those experiencing homelessness, navigating that system in our community?

Point in Time Survey Data

Every January, Yakima County conducts a Point-in-Time (PIT) survey to assess homelessness in our county. This one-day snapshot captures the characteristics and situations of people without housing. 602 individuals were recorded in the 2025 Point in Time as staying on the streets or in shelters. By comparison, approximately 2,070 unique individuals connected to our homeless crisis response system across the

⁵ US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), Picture of Subsidized Households, based on 2010 and 2020 census data (Note: subsidized units represented on this table include: Public housing, Housing Choice Vouchers, Moderate Rehabilitation, Section 8 New Construction/Substantial Rehabilitation, Section 236, Low-Income Housing Tax Credit, and other federally-subsidized multifamily housing)

entire year of 2024⁶. The Point in time should not be interpreted as a complete count of homelessness, but rather an annual survey that provides unique insights into local homelessness, providing data that is not typically captured throughout the rest of the year.

The following are some unique insights provided by 2025 Point in Time survey data:



MOST TOLD US THEY LIVED IN YAKIMA COUNTY BEFORE THEY BECAME HOMELESS

● Yakima County ● Other WA Counties ● Outside of WA ● Not Reported

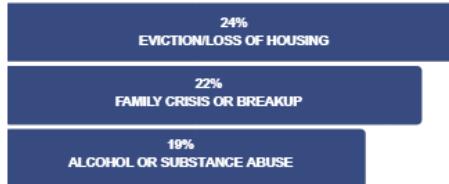


TOP FIVE JURISDICTIONS WHERE PEOPLE LAST HAD HOUSING

42% City of Yakima 9% City of Wapato 8% City of Toppenish 4% White Swan CDP 3% City of Sunnyside

THERE ARE MANY CAUSES OF HOMELESSNESS

THE TOP THREE MOST COMMONLY REPORTED REASONS FOR LOSING HOUSING WERE:

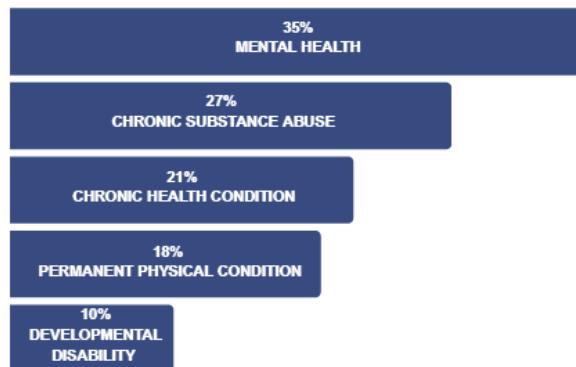


MOST PEOPLE EXPERINCING HOMELESSNESS HAVE AN INCOME



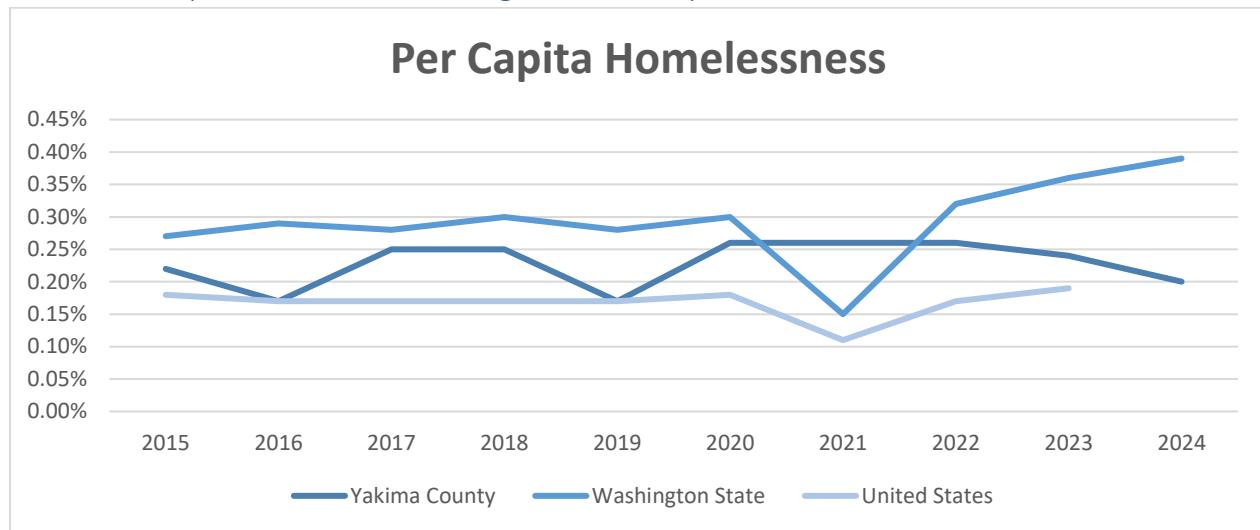
MENTAL HEALTH IS THE MOST COMMONLY REPORTED DISABILITY

THE TOP FIVE MOST COMMONLY REPORTED DISABILITIES ^{*4} WERE:



⁶ Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) data

Homeless Population as a Percentage of Total Population



Comparing Point in Time and Census population data at state and federal levels to Yakima County, we can see that the percentage of the population experiencing homelessness in Yakima County consistently lags behind state per capital homelessness rates and has been trending consistently downwards since the program was taken on by Yakima County in contrast to upwards state and national trends. The one exception in the comparison to state data was in 2021—but it is worth noting that since the PIT is conducted in January 2021 would be the report most impacted by COVID. The National data also shows an inconsistent dip that year, indicating that statewide and nationally there may have been a significant number of communities that did not conduct thorough PIT counts due to concerns about COVID. Although PIT numbers should always be interpreted as a trend survey, not a complete count, this holds true for all communities, so it is still valuable as a point of comparison.

The numbers compared in the graph above are individuals, not households.

Current Condition of Homelessness

The following data has been pulled from the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS). Please note that all 2025 data represented below is an annualized projection based on Q1 data.

Yakima Union Gospel Mission, the largest shelter in Yakima County, did not begin entering data until partway through 2024. That means that, while this is the best data available, these numbers are known to be an undercount of inputs and outcomes for the homeless responses system since 2020.

Agencies are represented in the tables below with the following acronyms:

Acronym	Agency
YNHS	Yakima Neighborhood Health Services
GCO	Grace City Outreach (Camp Hope)
GH	Generating Hope (Noah's Ark)
RH	Rod's House
TTS	Triumph Treatment Services
YUGM	Yakima Union Gospel Mission
LH	The Lighthouse
YWCA	YWCA

NCAC	Northwest Community Action Center (Yakima Valley Farm Workers Clinic)									
CCCW	Catholic Charities of Central Washington									

Total HMIS Entries (Households)

	YNHS	GCO	GH	RH	TTS	YUGM	LH	YWCA	NCAC	CCCW	TOTAL
2020	948		98	171	50		23	283	348	42	1963
2021	1044	134	136	99	90		13	295	277	38	2126
2022	1202	805	112	271	120		21	437	311	36	3315
2023	3223	1099	72	244	126		15	446	265	32	5522
2024	1635	859	53	394	138	436	11	307	546	33	4412
2025	1796	1364	32	976	136	68			1,376	36	5784
TOTAL	9848	4261	503	2155	660	504	83	1768	3123	217	23122

Exits to Permanent Housing

	YNHS	GCO	GH	RH	TTS	YUGM	LH	YWCA	NCAC	CCCW	TOTAL
2020	451		3	38	9		6	76	161	26	770
2021	411	0	0	3	29		1	42	61	25	572
2022	605	138	0	49	50		5	87	62	28	1024
2023	1794	123	0	36	36		7	25	143	26	2190
2024	1127	99	1	86	58	7	8	0	479	26	1891
2025	1080	120	0	160	64	4	0	4	1312	28	2772
TOTAL	5468	480	4	372	246	11	27	234	2218	159	9219

Exits to Transitional Housing

	YNHS	GCO	GH	RH	TTS	YUGM	LH	YWCA	NCAC	CCCW	TOTAL
2020	19		0	1	6	8	0	21	0	0	55
2021	24	0	0	4	11	0	0	18	0	2	59
2022	11	11	0	3	23	0	0	0	0	0	48
2023	52	13	0	2	26	0	0	16	0	0	109
2024	33	17	0	7	30	1	0	6	0	1	95
2025	24	8	0	0	56	20	0	0	4	0	112
TOTAL	163	49	0	17	152	21	0	61	4	3	470

Income (Government Support) at Program Exit

	YNHS	GCO	GH	RH	TTS	YUGM	LH	YWCA	NCAC	CCCW	TOTAL
2020	191		0	0	9		2	50	81	9	342
2021	187	5	0	0	15		2	56	65	10	340
2022	204	63	0	1	25		2	19	81	3	398
2023	546	211	3	2	30		2	54	83	4	935
2024	270	184	0	2	31	21	2	11	109	8	638
2025	352	264	0	0	8	4	0	0	220	4	852
TOTAL	1750	727	3	5	118	25	10	190	639	38	3505

Income (Earned Income) at Program Exit

	YNHS	GCO	GH	RH	TTS	YUGM	LH	YWCA	NCAC	CCCW	TOTAL
2020	74		0	2	3		3	22	20	13	137
2021	75	0	0	0	7		3	26	9	10	130
2022	102	35	0	7	7		2	32	14	13	212
2023	425	35	1	12	2		1	37	19	15	547
2024	275	39	0	6	7	4	1	5	74	13	424
2025	232	24	0	12	12	0			192	16	488
TOTAL	1183	133	1	39	38	4	10	122	328	80	1938

Unknown Destination at Program Exit

	YNHS	GCO	GH	RH	TTS	YUGM	LH	YWCA	NCAC	CCCW	TOTAL
2020	69		73	84	166		6	141	30	4	573
2021	105	53	117	49	24		10	148	82	0	588
2022	114	316	103	166	13		8	227	36	1	984
2023	329	183	68	155	21		0	284	19	1	1060
2024	116	113	48	235	15	392	0	147	24	1	1091
2025	44	72	24	748	20	44	0	80	16	4	1052
TOTAL	777	737	433	1437	259	436	24	1027	207	11	5348

No Interview Conducted at Program Exit

	YNHS	GCO	GH	RH	TTS	YUGM	LH	YWCA	NCAC	CCCW	TOTAL
2020	28		6	66	7		0	122	16	1	246
2021	50	21	75	27	16		2	105	3	0	299
2022	0	233	103	131	0		1	63	3	0	534
2023	105	135	67	102	3		0	0	0	1	413
2024	69	86	48	187	3	377	0	0	1	1	772
2025	28	64	24	544	12	44			4	4	724
TOTAL	280	539	323	1057	41	421	3	290	27	7	2988

Unknown Destination at Program Exit

	YNHS	GCO	GH	RH	TTS	YUGM	LH	YWCA	NCAC	CCCW	TOTAL
2020	69		73	84	166		6	141	30	4	573
2021	105	53	117	49	24		10	148	82	0	588
2022	114	316	103	166	13		8	227	36	1	984
2023	329	183	68	155	21		0	284	19	1	1060
2024	116	113	48	235	15	392	0	147	24	1	1091
2025	44	72	24	748	20	44	0	80	16	4	1052
TOTAL	777	737	433	1437	259	436	24	1027	207	11	5348

Causes of Homelessness

See Appendix VII: Factors Impacting Homelessness.

Performance in Meeting the Goals

The timeframe for this plan is 2025-2030, and the plan is being adopted in December of 2025. At the time of the adoption the following Subtasks have already been achieved:

6.2.1 (section 1): Request increased funding for Permanent Supportive Housing from Commerce in Consolidated Grant Cycle.

7.6.1 (section 1): Identify and define engagement priorities for Lived Experience Advisory Committee aligned with Charter goals, draft engagement framework.

This subtask has also been attempted, and ruled out for the time being:

8.4.1: Establish a pilot project for First Street and Downtown cleanup efforts in the City of Yakima, utilizing People for People subsidized work experience program placements in key local nonprofits focused on beatification and outreach.

The People for People program was not found to be a good fit for this project, as the participants were not job-ready and did not have adequate case management support at the time. The Subtask will remain in the plan, as it was agreed upon by the community, and it may be revisited at a later date if conditions change.

Additionally, the following subtask has made significant progress already:

5.1.1 Explore a medically assisted detox facility that accepts drop-ins 24/7/365. Focus on co-occurring licensure.

On November 17, 2025, the Yakima County Board of County Commissioners awarded a \$6,000,000 five-year contract to Triumph Treatment Services to establish a Medical Detoxification program in Yakima County. The contract will begin on January 1, 2026.

Action Plan

Needs and Gaps, Core Strategies, and Tasks

Focus Area 1: System Improvement and Accountability

Focus Area 1 aims to enhance the effectiveness of the homeless crisis response system by promoting transparency, accountability, and workforce development.

Objective 1

Promote an equitable, accountable, and transparent homeless crisis response system.

Tasks

- 1.1 Improve service coordination and accessibility.
- 1.2 Ensure that Yakima County Homeless Housing and Assistance Program (HHAP) subgrantee outcomes are standardized against the Washington State Department of Commerce Performance Measures, and that outcomes are monitored and met.
- 1.3 Improve Yakima County homeless response system data reporting.
- 1.4 Expand resources into the Lower Valley.
- 1.5 Increase collaboration between elected officials and providers operating within their jurisdictions.

Measurables

- 1A. 80% homeless service provider participation in HMIS and Coordinated Entry by 2027, and 100% by 2029.
- 1B. Yakima County Homeless Coalition Data Committee to publish annual report on data quality and public availability, including trend data year over year, starting in 2025.
- 1C. Yakima County Homeless Coalition Cities and Towns Committee to publish annual report on elected official engagement and information availability, including trend data year over year, starting in 2026.
- 1D. Demonstrable increase in services available in Lower Valley, including additional shelter beds.
- 1E. Homeless service providers meeting or exceeding Washington State Department of Commerce Performance Measures (see CHG Contract Performance Requirements on page X).

Priority Ranking

In a vote of Strategic Session participants, this Objective and its associated tasks ranked 5th highest out of the 8 Objectives.

Objective 2

Strengthen the homeless service provider workforce.

Tasks

- 2.1 Improve workforce retention and reduce burnout.
- 2.2 Improve competency at both the individual social worker and nonprofit agency level.

- 2.3 Increase pathways to employment for individuals with lived experience and strengthen service provider workforce by creating and staffing peer advisor positions and/or other non-peer positions.
- 2.4 Collaborate with local educational institutions to support workforce training and placement with local agencies.
- 2.5 Develop a Yakima County job board for nonprofits.

Measurables

- 2A. Annual service provider workforce survey indicating reduction in turnover and vacant positions year-over-year, starting in 2025.
- 2B. Creation of additional formal pathways to training and employment placement from educational institutions to employers within the homeless response system.

Priority Ranking

In a vote of Strategic Session participants, this Objective and its associated tasks ranked 6th highest out of the 8 Objectives.

Focus Area 2: Prevention and Early Intervention

Focus Area 2 focuses on preventing homelessness before it occurs and improving economic stability for low-income households.

Objective 3

Prevent episodes of homelessness whenever possible.

Tasks

- 3.1 Expand Prevention and Early Intervention Efforts.
- 3.2 Expand recidivism reduction efforts for individuals exiting incarceration.

Measurables

- 3A. Demonstrate increased placement from incarceration into housing for individuals being otherwise released without identified housing (i.e. Project Pause participants).
- 3B. Homeless service providers meeting or exceeding Washington State Department of Commerce Performance Measures for Homelessness Prevention (see CHG Contract Performance Requirements on page X).

Priority Ranking

In a vote of Strategic Session participants, this objective and its associated tasks ranked 2nd highest out of the 8 priorities.

Objective 4

Increase income opportunities for low-income households.

Tasks

- 4.1 Provide employment training and referral opportunities.
- 4.2 Safeguard equitable access to employment support for individuals with disabilities.

Measurables

- 4A. Track employment training and referral opportunities across the homeless response system over time.
- 4B. Track access to employment support specifically for individuals with disabilities over time.

Priority Ranking

In a vote of Strategic Session participants, this Objective and its associated tasks ranked 7th highest out of the 8 Objectives.

Focus Area 3: Accessibility and Housing

Focus Area 3 prioritizes equitable access to housing by addressing the needs of those facing the most significant barriers and ensuring everyone can be stably housed.

Objective 5

Prioritize those with the most significant barriers to housing stability and the greatest risk of harm.

Tasks

- 5.1 Enhance behavioral health and substance use disorder support with a focus on pathways to treatment and/or housing.
- 5.2 Strengthen Coordinated Entry and Prioritization Systems.
- 5.3 Increase referral partners to and from the Homeless Response System.
- 5.4 Improve population-specific support to increase effectiveness and reach of programs (e.g. veterans, domestic violence victims, trafficking victims, tribal members).

Measurables

- 5A. Demonstrate an increase in housing placements for individuals with complex barriers such as chronic homelessness and/or substance use disorder.

Priority Ranking

In a vote of Strategic Session participants, this Objective and its associated tasks ranked 1st highest out of the 8 Objectives.

Objective 6

Seek to house everyone in a stable setting that meets their needs.

Tasks

- 6.1 Strengthen landlord engagement and tenant housing readiness.
- 6.2 Expand Permanent Supportive Housing for qualifying households with disabilities.
- 6.3 Expand the availability of housing for households at or below 30% AMI.
- 6.4 Generate solutions for barriers to housing and treatment presented by pet ownership.

Measurables

- 6A. Increase number of landlords working with service providers to accept placements into housing from homelessness.
- 6B. Increase PSH units.
- 6C. Reduce incidents in which a housing placement failed due to pet ownership.

Priority Ranking

In a vote of Strategic Session participants, this Objective and its associated tasks ranked 3rd highest out of the 8 Objectives.

Focus Area 4: Community Impact and Engagement

Focus Area 4 seeks to reduce the visible impacts of homelessness and foster community understanding through stigma reduction and public engagement.

Objective 7

Reducing stigma by increasing awareness, challenging stereotypes, and changing language.

Tasks

- 7.1 Develop trainings for community members not experiencing homelessness but interacting with individuals experiencing homelessness/at-risk of homelessness.
- 7.2 Share data and positive outcomes to reduce stigma.
- 7.3 Develop local community media campaigns sharing stories of experiences of homelessness that challenge stereotypes.
- 7.4 Monitor and analyze public discourse.
- 7.5 Engage community groups to volunteer.
- 7.6 Execute 2025-2026 Lived Experience Advisory Committee Plan.

Measurables

- 7A. Track changes in public discourse through media representation on issues of homelessness and self-reported survey data.
- 7B. Demonstrate increased engagement by community groups and volunteers in efforts related to addressing and reducing homelessness in a meaningful way.
- 7C. Measure increased opportunities for general community awareness of the experiences and stories of individuals with lived experience through trainings and community forums.

Priority Ranking

In a vote of Strategic Session participants, this Objective and its associated tasks ranked 4th highest out of the 8 Objectives.

Objective 8

Balance outreach strategies with public space stewardship and safety to reduce homelessness in critical areas.

Tasks

- 8.1 Create Unsanctioned Encampment Outreach, Cleanup, and Enforcement Coordination Plan—including establishing Zero-Tolerance Zones.
- 8.2 Engage the community in volunteer cleanup and outreach efforts.
- 8.3 Advocate for increased resources to support cleanup and improvement activities that mitigate the physical effects of homelessness on infrastructure, private buildings, and public spaces.
- 8.4 Utilize job training programs and local nonprofits to create capacity for cleanup efforts in critical urban areas.

8.5 Increase day shelter, outreach, and behavioral health resources to ensure there are places for people to go during the day and adequate resources to stabilize, engage, and transport those in street homelessness who are not otherwise prepared to engage in daytime services.

8.6 Explore moving Union Gospel Mission low-barrier single adult shelter services off of North First Street.

Measurables

- 8A. Demonstrate increased coordination between outreach, code enforcement, and law enforcement teams.
- 8B. Measure community member impressions of space stewardship and safety impact through self-reported survey data.
- 8C. Demonstrate increased behavioral health resources available to individuals experiencing chronic homelessness.

Priority Ranking

In a vote of Strategic Session participants, this Objective and its associated tasks ranked 8th highest out of the 8 Objectives.

Detail Matrix

The tables below outline the subtasks and subsequent details for the Five-Year Plan. The Objectives, Tasks, and Subtasks are laid out like so:

Objective			
Task	Responsible Parties	Due Date	Measurables
1.1 Task			
1.1.1 Subtask	Entities	Date	Data

The objective is a **goal**: what is it that we hope to **achieve** in our community? This is the **why** for everything we are going to commit to in our plan. Washington State provides five State Objectives that must be included, but we have the ability to create additional Local Objectives if we feel our concerns are not adequately addressed without them.

The task is an **activity**: what is it that we are going to **do** in order to meet our objective? This is the **what** for everything we are going to commit to in our plan.

The subtask is an **action**: what needs to be **executed** in order for the task to be successful? This is the **how** for everything we are going to commit to in our plan.

For the Funding Required category in each table, funding estimates are represented with one, two, or three dollar signs. The number of dollar signs indicate:

\$ = zero to tens of thousands of dollars

\$\$ = hundreds of thousands of dollars

\$\$\$ = millions of dollars

Objective 1: Promote an equitable, accountable, and transparent homeless crisis response system.				
Task	Responsible Parties	Due Date	Outcome	Funding Required
1.1 Improve service coordination and accessibility				

1.1.1 Develop a centralized information hub with clear service maps and navigation tools for providers and individuals experiencing homelessness.	Yakima County Human Services, Washington 211	December 2026	Create a functional information hub (available as a website, handout and hotline) that can be utilized easily by providers and a second hub for community members and local businesses. Integrate some form of navigation tool that includes eligibility components and a needs survey.	\$
1.1.2. Strengthen referral processes and codify them with formal procedures and MOUs to ensure follow-ups and reduce duplication of services. Expand Coordinated Entry to serve as an improved county-wide hub for case conferencing and collaboration across all sectors. Increasing sector participation in CE/MOU	Yakima County Human Services, Coordinated Entry Policy Team, service providers	February 2026	Adopt drafted CE Policy and expand website to include Policy Committee Outcomes.	\$
		February 2026	Evaluate CE policy team participation for missing organizations (housing authority, DOC, vets), invite necessary players not yet involved.	\$
		June 2026	Create and adopt formal MOUS for participating CE entities.	\$
		June 2026	Evaluate CE case conferencing participation, invite necessary players not yet involved. Require active participation as a condition of the MOU.	\$
		December 2026	Explore expanding Access Points. Access Point expansion would be contingent on developing credentialing and training criteria and confirming a need.	\$
		December 2027	Functionally Expand CE system to support and adapt for further referral processes. Adopt and Document changes in policy documents. Measure the number of referral loops that are closed through system improvements.	\$
1.1.3 Reduce duplication/redundancies of services.	Yakima County Human Services, Service Providers	December 2027	In the process of compiling information for the information hub (see task 1.1.1) document which services are abundant (potentially duplicative), and which needs are yet unmet in our community. Identify whether there are population-specific services making services available to certain groups (e.g. veteran services, senior services, resources for registered sex offenders), that are scarce for the general population.	\$

	Yakima County Board of County Commissioners	June 2028	Utilize information regarding systems gaps created in December 2027 and priorities identified in this plan to determine priorities for HHAP awards.	\$
1.1.4 Increase tracking of resource restraints—how often does an individual seek services and get turned away due to unavailability of resources?	Yakima County Human Services, Service Providers	December 2028, with ongoing updates every three years	Conduct a formal systems mapping exercise through the CE system every three years to identify unmet needs.	\$
1.1.5. Increase tracking of individual barriers—how often does an individual seek services and opt out due to lack of fit for their need?	Yakima County Human Services, Service Providers, Lived Experience Committee	December 2028, with ongoing utilization	Create a jotform to capture barriers that lead to denial of services/lack of fit/lack of availability at the point of individual case conferencing. Jotform developed by case managers and Human Services staff, reviewed by LE Committee members, and completed/submitted by case managers.	\$
1.2 Ensure that Yakima County Homeless Housing and Assistance Program (HHAP) subgrantee outcomes are standardized against the Washington State Department of Commerce Performance Measures, and that outcomes are monitored and met.				
1.2.1 Increase Exits to Positive Outcome destinations for Emergency Shelters (ES) and Sanctioned Encampments (SE).	ES and SE providers	June 2027	Of people in ES and SE who exited, 50% exited to Positive Outcome destinations	\$\$\$
	Yakima County Human Services	July 2026, with ongoing updates	Outcome destinations for ES and SE providers are published and updated quarterly on the Yakima County Website	\$
	Yakima County Human Services	July 2027	This plan is updated with the SFY 28-29 benchmarks when they are released	\$
1.2.2 Increase Exits to Permanent Housing destinations for Transitional Housing (TH) and Rapid Rehousing (RRH) programs.	TH and RRH providers	December 2029	Of people in TS and RRH who exited, 80% exited to Permanent Housing destinations	\$\$\$
	Yakima County Human Services	December 2026, with ongoing updates	Outcome destinations for TS and RRH providers are published and updated quarterly on the Yakima County Website	\$
	Yakima County Human Services	July 2027	This plan is updated with the SFY 28-29 benchmarks when they are released	\$

1.2.3 Maintain Exits to Permanent Housing destinations for Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH) programs.	PSH providers	December 2029	Of people in PSH and RRH, 95% remained in or exited to Permanent Housing destinations	\$\$\$
	Yakima County Human Services	December 2026, with ongoing updates	Outcome destinations for PSH providers are published and updated quarterly on the Yakima County Website	\$
	Yakima County Human Services	July 2027	This plan is updated with the SFY 28-29 benchmarks when they are released	\$
1.2.4 Achieve housing retention for Homelessness Prevention (HP) programs.	HP providers	December 2029	Of people in HP, 95% retained their housing after 6 months	\$\$\$
	Yakima County Human Services	December 2026, with ongoing updates	Outcome destinations for EP providers are published and updated quarterly on the Yakima County Website	\$
	Yakima County Human Services	July 2027	This plan is updated with the SFY 28-29 benchmarks when they are released	\$
1.2.5 Ensure all programs participating in HMIS for any interventions listed in Task 1.2 achieve equitable outcomes based on race and ethnicity.	Homeless service providers	December 2029	Outcomes across racial and ethnic demographics should not be significantly less than the overall rate	\$\$\$
	Yakima County Human Services	December 2026, with ongoing updates	Equitable outcome information for providers is published and updated quarterly on the Yakima County Website	\$
	Yakima County Human Services	July 2027	This plan is updated with the SFY 28-29 benchmarks when they are released	\$
1.3 Improve Yakima County homeless response system data reporting.				
1.3.1 Improve the existing data dashboards based on the available HMIS data to answer any remaining questions prioritized by the community not already addressed in Task 1.2.	Yakima County Human Services, Yakima County Homeless Coalition Data Committee	July 2027	Additional dashboards as requested by the Homeless Coalition Data Committee are published and updated on the Yakima County Website	\$

1.3.2 Increase HMIS reporting from non-subgrantee agencies.	Yakima County Human Services, Service Providers	December 2027	Integration of at least three non-subgrantee agencies into HMIS.	\$
1.3.3 Establish financial data reporting dashboards to improve understanding of award and spending data for HHAP subgrantees.	Yakima County Human Services	July 2027	Additional dashboards reflecting financial information are published and updated quarterly on the Yakima County Website	\$
1.3.4 Create a night-by-night emergency shelter capacity public-facing dashboard so that community members, outreach workers, and law enforcement partners can easily view the real available capacity of any given shelter every night.	Yakima County Human Services, night-by-night emergency shelter providers	March 2026	Establish a scan-card check in system for night-by-night shelters to create the infrastructure needed to collect real-time check in data.	\$
		June 2026, with ongoing updates	Dashboard is published and updated daily (on weekdays) on an ongoing basis.	\$
1.3.5 Annual performance monitoring “report cards” are created and posted annually to the Yakima County website.	Yakima County Human Services	December 2027, with ongoing updates	Report cards are published and updated annually on an ongoing basis.	\$
1.3.6 Development of a consumer feedback report component.	Yakima County Human Services, HMIS participants.	December 2028, with ongoing updates	Consumer feedback reports are published and updated annually on an ongoing basis.	\$
1.3.7 Improve training for Coordinated Entry—including data entry and how to interview to collect data.	Yakima County Human Services, service providers	June 2026, continuing annually	As many as 3 training sessions with all HMIS active staff within access points and shelter providers.	\$
		December 2026	Improved data quality in HMIS.	\$
1.3.8 Improve Data Committee page on Yakima County Human Services website, to include information about joining the	Yakima County Human Services, Yakima County	December 2026	Updated website with clear directions on how to engage with Data Committee.	\$

committee or submitting data questions to the committee.	Homeless Coalition Data Committee			
1.4 Expand resources into the Lower Valley.				
1.4.1 Develop a year-round shelter in Toppenish, with the option of a sanctioned encampment as a short-term solution if necessary.	Yakama Nation, Yakima County, City of Toppenish	December 2027	A year-round shelter is established in Toppenish	\$\$\$
1.4.2 Develop a year-round shelter in Sunnyside	Yakima County, Yakama Nation, City of Sunnyside, service provider	December 2029	A year-round shelter is established in Sunnyside	\$\$\$
1.4.3 Explore opportunities to expand resources in Lower Valley.	Yakima County, Yakima County Homeless Coalition, nonprofits, Cities and Towns	December 2029	Accessibility of homeless services increases outside of the City of Yakima	\$\$\$
1.4.4 Increase Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH) in the Lower Valley.	Yakima County Human Services, Yakima County GIS, service providers, Lower Valley Cities and Towns,	January 2026	Solidify inventory of current capacity, hotels that could be converted, land that could be used for affordable housing development. Compare available inventory to housing needs identified in HAPT.	\$
		February 2026	Meet with Service Providers to determine capacity for expanding PSH.	\$
		April 2026	Specify Lower Valley PSH are a priority in upcoming HHAP RFP.	\$\$

	planning offices			
1.5 Increase collaboration between elected officials and providers operating within their jurisdictions.				
1.5.1 Implementation of culturally appropriate Good Neighbor Agreements, and Shelter Protection Zones, developed in conjunction with local elected officials for jurisdictions containing shelter services.	Yakima County, Yakama Nation, Cities and Towns containing shelters, Shelter Providers, Law Enforcement in jurisdictions containing shelters, Code Enforcement in jurisdictions containing shelters, landlords	February 2026	Hold roundtable to discuss Good Neighbor Agreements and Shelter Protection Zones.	\$
		February 2026	Roll out public relations/media releases regarding concept development.	\$
		April 2026	Work with interested jurisdictions and service providers to develop scale of zones.	\$
		May 2026	Establish zones, develop universal signage.	\$
		June 2026	Roll out coordinated outreach and law enforcement effort to begin changing culture around shelters.	\$\$
		July 2026	Roll out public relations/media regarding implementation.	\$

Objective 2: Strengthen the homeless service provider workforce.				
Task	Responsible Parties	Due Date	Outcomes	Funding Required
2.1 Improve workforce retention and reduce burnout.				
2.1.1 Provide regular debriefing sessions, peer support groups, and access to counseling services for frontline workers.	Yakima County Human Services	April 2026	Develop HHAP RFP with a prioritization component for programs with demonstrable and effective frontline worker support activities.	\$
	Yakima County Board of County Commissioners	June 2026	Consider demonstrable and effective frontline worker support activities in the RFP award process.	\$
	Yakima County Human Services	June 2026	Develop monitoring criteria for assessing presence and effectiveness of frontline worker support activities.	\$

	Service Providers	July 2026, observed annually	Provider programs established and utilized to support frontline workers including structured debriefing, needed support, and access to counseling as needed (i.e., weekly staff meetings with support structures in place).	\$\$
2.1.2 Establish a mentorship/leadership model accessible to providers promoting career growth opportunities and improved staff retention of frontline staff.	Yakima County Human Services, service providers	July 2027	Best practice strategies are defined and accessible to providers within the homeless response system. Model should include: Person-Centered Approach, Trauma-Informed Care, Housing First Model, Strengths-Based Approach, Motivational Interviewing, Collaborative Partnerships, Empowerment and Goal Setting, Cultural Competence, Holistic Health and Wellness, and Outcome Monitoring and Evaluation.	\$
2.1.3 Advocate/fundraise for funding to support increased wages, competitive benefits, and financial incentives (e.g., student loan forgiveness, tuition reimbursement, and housing stipends).	Homeless service providers, community members, and local elected officials	June 2026, updated annually	Increased/sustained funding for staff costs in the 2026 legislative session and beyond.	\$\$
		July 2026	Track increases in staff pay as a result of fundraising efforts	\$\$
2.1.4 Implement trauma-informed workplace policies (e.g. Mental Health First Aid) for management and staff to reduce secondary trauma.	Yakima County Human Services	April 2026	Develop HHAP RFP with a prioritization component for programs with trauma-informed workplace policies.	\$
	Yakima County Board of County Commissioners	June 2026	Consider trauma-informed workplace policies in the RFP award process.	\$
	Yakima County Human Services	June 2026	Develop monitoring criteria for assessing presence and effectiveness of trauma-informed workplace policies.	\$
	Service Providers	July 2026, observed annually	Trauma-informed workplace policies adopted at all subgrantee agencies, and reviewed as part of annual performance monitoring	\$
	Yakima County Human Services, service providers, Triumph	December 2026	Ensure that at least one Mental Health First Aid course is available to staff working at homeless service agencies each calendar year.	\$

	Treatment Services			
2.2 Improve competency at both the individual social worker and nonprofit agency level.				
2.2.1 Establish a local conference on Human Services issues to bring together trainings, resources, education on best practices and local services, and networking opportunities across silos within our community.	Yakima County, United Way of Central Washington, local nonprofit providers	October 2026, continuing annually	Establish local Human Services Conference.	\$\$
2.2.2 Promote, strengthen, and utilize existing resources like the Central Washington Nonprofit Network's Conference for the Greater Good.	Central Washington Nonprofit Network, Yakima Valley Community Foundation, Yakima County, local service providers	June 2026	Increase in local nonprofits attending Conference for the Greater Good.	\$
2.2.3 Incentivize various types of Certifications for service provider workforce (e.g. Case Manager CCM, peer certifications, Agency Affiliated Counselor AAC through WDOH, and Accredited Case Manager ACM credentialing) by creating a 50% reimbursement for qualifying certifications.	Yakima County Human Services, service providers	August 2027	Identify certifications that should be incentivized.	\$
	Yakima County Human Services	September 2027	Create annual budget for certification reimbursement.	\$\$
	Yakima County Human Services, Yakima County Auditor's Office, Yakima County Corporate Counsel	November 2027	Create policy document stipulating reimbursement process for certifications.	\$

	Yakima County Board of County Commissioners	December 2027	Adopt reimbursement policy for certifications and Human Services Department budget item for certifications.	\$\$
2.3 Increase pathways to employment for individuals with lived experience and strengthen service provider workforce by creating and staffing peer advisor positions and/or other non-peer positions.				
2.3.1 When creating new positions, consider whether they might be a good fit for individuals with lived experience.	Service providers	December 2029	Increased number of employees at local nonprofits who have lived experience.	\$\$
2.3.2 Review contracts to ensure that there isn't language limiting ability to hire (e.g. educational requirements).	Yakima County Human Services, Yakima County Corporate Counsel	June 2026	Ensure that language in the next round of HHAP RFP contracts has been reviewed for potential limiting requirements, and that limiting language, if it exists, is removed or modified, if allowable.	\$
2.3.3 Seek expertise and guidance from the Yakima County Homeless Coalition Lived Experience Committee for recommendations on trainings, resources, and support to provide to individuals with lived experience transitioning into social service work.	Service providers, Yakima County Human Services, Yakima County Homeless Coalition Lived Experience Committee	December 2026	Lived Experience Hiring and Training Guidance is created and disseminated to providers.	\$
2.3.4 Partner with employment training agencies to receive referrals for open positions.	Service providers, employment support	June 2026	Homeless service providers receiving increased referrals from employment training agencies for appropriate candidates with lived experience in homelessness.	\$
2.4 Collaborate with local educational institutions to support workforce training and placement with local agencies.				
2.4.1 Establish at least two formal partnerships with local healthcare universities or colleges to create preceptorship opportunities within local agencies,	Universities, social service providers, Yakima County Human Services	December 2029	Measuring internship/externship placements within the community and employment retention.	\$\$

enhancing workforce development and placement pipelines.				
2.4.2 Cultivate more student-friendly internship opportunities.				
2.5 Develop a Yakima County job board for nonprofits.				
2.5.1 Consolidate and highlight Yakima County nonprofit jobs by creating a local job board, or promoting existing nonprofit job boards such as idealist, National Council of Nonprofits, and Work for Good.	Yakima County Human Services	December 2026	Creation of a webpage directing people to nonprofit job opportunities in Yakima County.	\$

Objective 3: Prevent episodes of homelessness whenever possible.				
Task	Responsible Parties	Due Date	Outcomes	Funding Required
3.1 Expand Prevention and Early Intervention Efforts.				
3.1.1 Strengthen partnerships with schools, hospitals, housing providers, and law enforcement to identify at-risk individuals early and connect them to resources.	Yakima County Human Services, homeless service providers, schools, hospitals, and law enforcement teams	December 2027	Establish clear protocol and MOUs for warm handoffs from and to appropriate partners.	\$
3.1.2 Invest in Eviction Prevention programs.		June 2026	Increase funding allocated to Eviction Prevention in 2026 grant cycle.	\$\$

	Yakima County Board of County Commissioners	June 2028	Maintain increased funding in Eviction Prevention in 2028 grant cycle.	\$\$
	Local businesses, local property owners, community members, and local elected officials	April 2026, with ongoing efforts	Consistent advocacy efforts to support Eviction Prevention funding in the 2026 legislative session and beyond.	\$
3.1.3 Expand financial literacy trainings for low-income households.	Yakima County Human Services, nonprofits	December 2027, continuing annually	As many as 3 training sessions to be held in the Upper Valley and 3 in the Lower Valley.	\$
		July 2026	Incentivize participating in financial literacy classes by offering one month future rent to Eviction Prevention participants, contingent on completion of class.	\$
3.1.4 Segment data to understand root causes of homelessness in order to target interventions.	Yakima County Human Services, Yakima County Homeless Coalition Data Committee	December 2026	Identify data points to track monthly related to root cause issues from data repositories such as HMIS and census data.	\$
		December 2027	Create dashboard that tracks trends.	\$
		December 2028	As many as 3 targeted resource connection events to be held in the Upper Valley and 3 in the Lower Valley, aimed at addressing root cause issues.	\$
3.1.5 Explore the establishment of flexible funding to address potential triggers for homelessness creatively (e.g. fixing a vehicle to help keep a job to maintain income to prevent eviction).	Yakima County Human Services, Yakima County Board of County Commissioners, Yakima County Corporate Counsel	March 2026	Include flexible funding in the budget categories for 2026 HHAP RFP.	\$
		June 2026	Determine appropriate parameters and documentation for flexible funding reimbursements, include language in HHAP contracts.	\$
	Yakima County Board of County	July 2028	Establish or expand transitional housing model with employment supports.	\$\$

	Commissioners, service providers			
3.2 Expand recidivism reduction efforts for individuals exiting incarceration.				
3.2.1 Expand Project Pause beyond individuals exiting to homelessness to all inmates, to reduce recidivism overall and prevent destabilization that could lead to homelessness in the future.	Yakima County Human Services, Yakima County Department of Corrections, local service providers	December 2029	Project Pause increased to be accessible to all inmates, not just those exiting to homelessness.	\$\$
3.2.2 Expand modified version of Project Pause to other local jails.	Yakima County Human Services, City of Yakima, Yakama Nation, City of Sunnyside	December 2029	Increase some version of Project Pause support to at least one additional jail (priority Sunnyside).	\$\$
3.2.3 Expand Project Pause to extend to Therapeutic Courts with strong case management support that can cater to both felony and misdemeanor cases.	Yakima County Judges and Court Administrator, Board of County Commissioners, Yakima County Human Services	June 2025	Begin discussions identifying therapeutic court needs.	\$
		May 2026	Engage stakeholder roundtable to understand case management needs and potential solutions.	\$
		December 2027	Establish appropriate expansion of therapeutic court case management services and support.	\$\$
3.2.4 Engage pre-trial services to provide information about local social service resources.	Yakima County Human Services, Yakima County Courts, City Courts	December 2027	Establishment of information-sharing protocol in pre-trial services across Yakima County	\$

Objective 4: Increase income opportunities for households experiencing homelessness.				
Task	Responsible Parties	Due Date	Outcomes	Funding Required
4.1 Provide employment training and referral opportunities.				

4.1.1 Work with employment readiness organizations to build referral pathways from homeless services to employment training opportunities.	South Central Workforce/ WorkSource, People for People, OIC, Entrust, service providers, Yakama Nation Tribal Employment Rights Office, Yakima County Human Services	October 2027	Establishment of formal referral pathways between homeless service providers and at least three workforce development partners (South Central WorkSource, People for People, and Entrust), including tracking system for total numbers of those referred to employment training opportunities annually.	\$
		October 2027	Ensure all shelters and service providers are aware of pathways available for employment.	\$
		October 2027	Monthly onsite job employment/enrollment opportunities at shelters or other high-traffic homeless service locations.	\$
4.1.2 Work with local employers in low barrier to entry employment sectors such as agriculture to cultivate more employment opportunities for individuals experiencing homelessness.	South Central Workforce/ WorkSource, People for People Entrust, Yakama Nation Tribal Employment Rights Office, Washington Tree Fruit Association, Washington Farm Bureau, OIC	October 2027	Establish partnerships with at least five local employers in low-barrier employment sectors (e.g. agriculture, food processing, warehouse, hospitality) to create or expand access to employment opportunities for individuals experiencing or at risk of homelessness.	\$
		October 2027	Monthly onsite job employment/enrollment opportunities at shelters or other high-traffic homeless service locations.	\$
4.1.3 Explore a transitional housing model with employment supports, similar to or expanded upon Sunrise Outreach's current program.	Service providers, employment support providers	February 2028	Develop potential transitional housing models with transitional housing supports, determine funding and staffing needs.	\$
	Yakima County Human Services	March 2028	Include transitional housing with employment supports in the budget categories for 2028 HHAP RFP.	\$
	Yakima County Board of County Commissioners, service providers	July 2028	Establish or expand transitional housing model with employment supports.	\$\$

4.1.4 Take services to where homeless individuals are—shelters, encampments, libraries, etc.—with mobile workforce teams.	South Central Workforce/WorkSource, People for People, Entrust, Yakama Nation Tribal Employment Rights Office	December 2026	Establishment of mobile workforce engagement unit, with a regular schedule for outreach.	\$
4.1.5 Explore farmworker housing as a stable housing option for individuals experiencing homelessness but engaging in agricultural labor.	Yakima County, farmworker housing operators, Washington Tree Fruit Association, Washington Farm Bureau	December 2027	Connect with farmworker housing operators to determine allowability for residence.	\$
	Yakima County, service providers, farmworker housing operators, Washington Tree Fruit Association, Washington Farm Bureau	March 2028	If appropriate and allowable, create referral pathways from homelessness to agricultural employment and farmworker housing for those eligible.	\$
4.2 Safeguard equitable access to employment support for individuals with disabilities.				
4.2.1 Utilize YNHS supported employment grant programs to help individuals with disabilities, 18 years and older, obtain and navigate employment while securing/maintaining ABD.	Yakima Neighborhood Health Services, Yakama Nation Vocational Rehabilitation	December 2029	Increased number of individuals with disabilities who receive Individual Placement and Support (IPS) assistance obtaining employment or training. Increased number of employer job development contacts made by case managers. Increased number of individuals employed or in training at the end of each quarter.	\$

Objective 5: Prioritize those with the most significant barriers to housing stability and the greatest risk of harm.				
Task	Responsible Parties	Due Date	Outcomes	Funding Required
5.1 Enhance behavioral health and substance use disorder support with a focus on pathways to treatment and/or housing.				
5.1.1 Explore a medically assisted detox facility that accepts drop-ins 24/7/365. Focus on co-occurring licensure.	Yakima County Board of County Commissioners, Yakima County Human Services, behavioral health treatment providers	December 2029	Create MAT detox service center.	\$\$\$
5.1.2 Explore expanding ITA/AOT (Involuntary Treatment Act/Assisted Outpatient Treatment) bed capacity.	Yakima County Board of County Commissioners, Yakima County Human Services, behavioral health treatment providers, Yakima County Superior Courts, Office of the Assigned Counsel, Prosecuting Attorney's Office	December 2027	Create a formal feasibility study.	\$
5.1.3 Explore 12-hour sobering units.	Yakima County Board of County Commissioners, Yakima County Human Services, behavioral health treatment	December 2029	Develop 12 hour Sobering Unit in Yakima.	\$\$

	providers, City of Yakima			
	Yakima County Board of County Commissioners, Yakima County Human Services, behavioral health treatment providers, City of Toppenish, Yakama Nation	December 2029	Develop 12 hour Sobering Unit in Toppenish.	\$\$
5.1.4 Develop second Social Sub-Acute Detox Center in Lower Valley.	Yakima County Board of County Commissioners, Yakima County Human Services, behavioral health treatment provider	December 2029	Develop 16 bed Social Sub-Acute Detox Center in Lower Valley.	\$\$
5.1.5 Create referral processes from short-term behavioral health programs such as detox programs to housing supports and continued treatment. Bolster the long-term treatment, services, and stable housing that are required for lasting change.	Yakima County Human Services, BHASO, behavioral health treatment providers, housing providers, Coordinated Entry Policy Team	December 2027	Create priority referral processes through Coordinated Entry to refer from detox to housing supports and continued treatment.	\$
	Yakima County Human Services, BHASO, behavioral health treatment providers, housing providers, Yakima County Homeless	December 2028	Measure and publish data on number of referrals routed through Coordinated Entry process and outcomes.	\$

	Coalition Data Committee			
5.2 Strengthen Coordinated Entry and Prioritization Systems.				
5.2.1 Standardize Policy and Procedure with Coordinated Entry	Yakima County Human Services, CE Policy Team	February 2026	Adopt CE Policy and Procedure as Controlled Document with a dated Initial Release	\$
	Yakima County Human Services, CE Policy Team	July 2026	Develop a plan for 'No Front Door—No Wrong Door'.	\$
	Yakima County Human Services, CE Policy, Provider, and Interdisciplinary Teams	December 2026	Develop Training and Credentialling Plan	\$
	Yakima County Human Services, behavioral health treatment providers, homeless and housing service treatment providers	December 2027, continuing annually	Train and certify all outreach workers and case managers, including DOC and treatment centers in Coordinated Entry credentialling.	\$
5.2.2 Enhance outreach efforts to rural and underserved areas to ensure individuals outside urban centers have access to services.	Yakima County Human Services, outreach providers	December 2027	Increased engagement with unsheltered individuals outside of the City of Yakima.	\$
5.2.3 Investigate Housing Trust Fund homeless set aside tax credits and Apple Health and Homes FCS units to identify	Yakima County Human Services, Housing Trust Fund, Wellpoint	December 2027	Identification of units, establishment of process to maintain updated availability information on an ongoing basis.	\$

where housing is in our community.	Yakima County Human Services	December 2028	Creation and deployment of a resource summarizing available units for case managers to use.	\$
5.2.4 Integrate FCS clients into Coordinated Entry	Yakima County Human Services, FCS providers	December 2029	Integration of FCS clients into CE.	\$
5.3 Increase referral partners to and from the Homeless Response System.				
5.3.1 Establish centralized referral processes for partners on the Homeless Response System Housing and Treatment Placement Processes draft document	Yakima County Human Services and partners identified in draft document.	December 2027	Create formal policies for referrals from each sector and have at least one partner within each center actively practicing referrals.	\$
5.4 Improve population-specific support to increase effectiveness and reach of programs (e.g. veterans, domestic violence victims, trafficking victims, tribal members).				
5.4.1 Improve population-specific service referrals and coordination in and out of services that are not population-specific, creating a homeless response system that is truly “no wrong door” even for individuals with specific needs.	Yakima County Human Services, social service providers, Coordinated Entry Policy Team	December 2028	Create formal referral pathways for at least three population-specific providers to refer in/out of CE.	\$
5.4.2 Increase trainings and technical assistance to improve competency of service providers to specific populations. Develop cross-training opportunities for existing population-specific providers to train non-population-specific providers.	Yakima County Human Services, social service providers	December 2026, continuing annually	Host at least one annual cross-training session for service providers.	\$

Objective 6: Seek to house everyone in a stable setting that meets their needs.				
Task	Responsible Parties	Due Date	Outcomes	Funding Required
6.1 Strengthen landlord engagement and tenant housing readiness.				
6.1.1 Develop a tenant training and certification program to improve placements by improving tenant accountability and reduce landlord risk for tenants transitioning out of homelessness into rental housing.	Yakima County Human Services, Yakima Valley Landlords Association, rent assistance service providers, tenant and landlord legal representation agencies	December 2027	Creation of tenant training programs curriculum that is agreed upon by all parties.	\$
		December 2028	At least one training provided per quarter, certifying at least twenty prospective tenants over the course of a year.	\$
6.1.2 Increasing communication between landlords and case managers to provide better support to landlords in ensuring accountability of tenants.	Yakima County Human Services, Yakima Valley Landlords Association, rent assistance service providers, tenant and landlord legal representation agencies	December 2028	Standardized policies instituted at each rent assistance agency that define expectations for case manager engagement/involvement with tenants placed out of homelessness into market housing.	\$
6.1.3 Explore local landlord mitigation fund	Yakima County Board of County Commissioners, Yakima County Human Services, Yakima Valley Landlords Association, rental assistance service providers	December 2028	Explore the possibility of a locally administered landlord mitigation support strategy that aligns with and complements Washington State's Landlord Mitigation Program. This includes securing sustainable funding, increasing landlord participation, and ensuring accessible pathways for landlords and case managers to request support.	\$\$

6.1.4 Conduct a policy scan of Oregon's Rent Guarantee and Landlord Assistance programs to assess their applicability and adaptation potential for Yakima County.	Yakima County Human Services, Yakima County Corporate Counsel	March 2027	Produce a policy brief comparing Oregon's landlord insurance/guarantee frameworks with local housing policy.	\$
	Yakima County Human Services, rent assistance providers, Yakima Valley Landlord Association	December 2027	Collaborate to propose at least one formal strategy for replicating or adapting components locally and present to the BOCC.	\$
6.2 Expand Permanent Supportive Housing for qualifying households with disabilities.				
6.2.1 Invest in Permanent Supportive Housing Programs.	Yakima County Human Services	May 2025	Request increased funding for Permanent Supportive Housing from Commerce in Consolidated Homeless Grant Cycle.	\$
	Yakima County Board of County Commissioners	June 2026	Increase funding allocated to Permanent Supportive Housing in 2026 grant cycle.	\$\$
		June 2028	Maintain increased funding in Permanent Supportive Housing in 2028 grant cycle.	\$\$
6.3 Expand the availability of housing for households at or below 30% AMI.				
6.3.1 Reduce the cost burden to developing housing by exploring options such as: coordinated efforts to leverage public funding, streamlining permitting processes, creating pre-approved ADU blueprints and making them free to use, and reducing infrastructure-related expenses.	Yakima County Board of County Commissioners, Yakima County Human Services, Yakima County Public Works, Cities and Towns, Yakama Nation, housing developers	December 2028	Implement at least two new strategies to reduce the cost burden to developing housing.	\$\$
6.3.2 Explore utilization of city and county-owned land for	Yakima County Board of County	December 2028	Develop an accessible inventory of all publicly owned parcels suitable for affordable housing and mixed-use	\$

affordable housing development in conjunction with commercial development.	Commissioners, Yakima County Human Services, Yakima County Public Works, Cities and Towns, Yakama Nation, housing developers		(commercial/residential) development, aligned with Growth Management Act (GMA) goals.	
	December 2029	Creation and distribution of marketing materials to generate awareness of the opportunity.	\$	
6.3.3 Explore available land and strategies to promote housing development.	Yakima County Board of County Commissioners, Yakima County Human Services, Yakima County Public Works, Cities and Towns, Yakama Nation, housing developers	December 2029	Develop a total comprehensive land inventory detailing publicly owned land available for housing development, and what all jurisdictions within Yakima County are doing to increase housing development.	\$
6.3.4 Facilitate discussions with religious organizations regarding use of religiously owned land, legal carve-outs for religious exemptions and land use.	Yakima County Human Services, Faith Organizations, Faith Action Network	December 2026	At least one discussions held in Upper Valley and one discussion held in Lower Valley with faith leaders.	\$
6.3.5 Explore options that support mixed-income housing models.	Yakima County Board of County Commissioners, Yakima County Human Services, Yakima County Public Works, Yakima County	December 2027	Identify and evaluate at least three viable mixed-income housing models and develop a local policy or incentive framework to support the development of at least one pilot mixed-income project by 2028.	\$\$\$

	HOME Board, housing developers, planning commissions			
6.3.6 Track State housing development changes and make updated residential options available to property owners in the County, for the purpose of making residents aware of zoning changes and options beyond the traditional ADU.	Yakima County Board of County Commissioners, Yakima County Human Services, Yakima County Public Works, Yakima County housing developers, planning commissions	December 2029, updated annually	Publication of information regarding additional residential models.	\$
6.3 Expand the availability of housing for households at or below 30% AMI.				
6.4.1 Establish a mechanism for soliciting and coordinating temporary pet fostering during treatment or long-term adoption for permanent pet rehoming.	Yakima County Human Services, Humane Society, service providers, Yakima County Corporate Counsel, Yakima County Homeless Coalition, Community at large	December 2029, maintained ongoing	Identify a community-based or agency-based solution for temporary or long-term pet placements.	\$

Objective 7: Reducing stigma by increasing awareness, challenging stereotypes, and changing language.

Task	Responsible Parties	Due Date	Outcomes	Funding Required
------	---------------------	----------	----------	------------------

7.1 Develop trainings for community members not experiencing homelessness but interacting with individuals experiencing homelessness/at-risk of homelessness.				
7.1.1 Launch Community Listening Sessions for Lived Experience Committee to speak with community members not experiencing homelessness but interacting with individuals experiencing homelessness/at-risk of homelessness to solicit feedback to shape the Lived Experience Committee's guidance on training content.	Yakima County Human Services, Yakima County Homeless Coalition Lived Experience Committee, community partners	December 2026	Host as many as three listening sessions to be held in Upper Valley and Lower Valley, focusing on the same potential hosting organizations where the trainings might be held.	\$
7.1.2 Create training content in partnership with Lived Experience Committee (insights from those who have experienced homelessness), service providers (best practices for engagement), Human Services Department (what resources exist in our community, where to go for what).	Yakima County Human Services, service providers, Yakima County Homeless Coalition Lived Experience Committee	December 2028	Create a one-hour training curriculum.	\$
7.1.3 Work with local businesses associations, faith community, libraries to establish community trainings accessible to potentially interested parties.	Yakima County Human Services, community partners	October 2029	As many as five training sessions to be held in the Upper Valley and five in the Lower Valley with one to three hosting organizations, who will set the target number of individuals for each training session. The intent is to reach as many individuals as possible, while keeping County costs efficient and effective.	\$

7.2 Share data and positive outcomes to reduce stigma.				
7.2.1 Creation of a public metrics dashboard that displays outcomes of homeless services	Yakima County Human Services, service providers	April 2026	Improve data quality and reporting from local homeless service providers, including technical assistance for staff entering service data and implementation of standardized night-by-night projects for drop-in shelter, along with adoption of scan-card intake systems.	\$
	Yakima County Human Services	December 2026, with quarterly updates	Publish dashboard(s) showing outcomes of local homeless services.	\$
	Yakima County Human Services, Yakima County Technology Services	June 2027	Track website traffic to the dashboard and qualitative feedback from community members (e.g., through surveys on the website or at community meetings) on whether the data presented has influenced their understanding or perceptions.	\$
7.2.2 Addition of a quarterly outcome narrative reporting requirement for homeless program subgrantees, to collect more of the stories of what is happening in our community	Yakima County Human Services, subgrantees	June 2026, with quarterly submissions	Create and successfully implement narrative reporting requirements.	\$
7.2.3 Creation of a website where stories of success can be compiled and shared with the community (either deidentified or with permission).	Yakima County Human Services, Yakima County intern, Yakima County Homeless Coalition Lived Experiences Committee	May 2026, with quarterly updates	Create website with stories collected through reporting.	\$
		August 2026, with annual updates	Yakima County internship project focused on developing five in-depth success stories and interview to share on website (with consent).	\$
	Yakima County Human Services, Yakima County	December 2027	Track website traffic to the dashboard and qualitative feedback from community members (e.g., through surveys on the website or at community meetings) on whether the data presented has influenced their understanding or perceptions.	\$

	Technology Services			
7.3 Develop local community media campaigns sharing stories of experiences of homelessness that challenge stereotypes.				
7.3.1 Launch Community Listening Sessions for Lived Experience Committee to speak with individuals with lived experience to solicit feedback and engagement with the Homeless Coalition.	Yakima County Human Services, Yakima County Homeless Coalition Lived Experience Committee, service providers	December 2026	Host as many as three listening sessions to be held in Upper Valley and Lower Valley, focusing on the same potential hosting organizations where the trainings might be held.	\$
7.3.2 Yakima County internship project focused on developing media releases on stories of success	Yakima County Human Services, Yakima County intern, Yakima County Homeless Coalition Lived Experiences Committee	August 2026, with annual updates	Creation of a series of media releases. Creation of five press releases correlated to the stories collected in subtask 8.2.3.	\$
7.3.3 Engage a local PR firm to develop and execute a targeted, multi-platform media campaign.	Yakima County Human Services, Yakima County Homeless Coalition Executive Team	December 2029	Reach: Track impressions (e.g., ad views, social media reach), media mentions (print, online, broadcast), and engagement rates (e.g., likes, shares, comments on social media posts).	\$
		December 2029	Sentiment Analysis: Work with the PR firm to conduct media monitoring for sentiment analysis related to homelessness before, during, and after the campaign. Look for changes in keywords used by media and the public (e.g., shift from "the homeless" to "people experiencing homelessness")	\$
		December 2029	Public Perception Surveys: Conduct brief, anonymous community surveys (online, at community events, possibly through partnerships with local businesses) before and after the campaign to measure shifts in attitudes, understanding of root causes, and willingness to support homelessness initiatives. These surveys would target the general public, not just those who self-select for training.	\$

7.4 Monitor and analyze public discourse.				
7.4.1 Establish a system for monitoring local media (news, social media, public forums) for language and sentiment related to homelessness.	Yakima County Human Services, Yakima County Homeless Coalition Executive Team	December 2029	Quarterly reports analyzing trends in language usage (e.g., prevalence of person-first language vs. stigmatizing terms), frequency of discussions about root causes vs. individual blame, and overall sentiment.	\$
7.4.2 Encourage and track the adoption of person-first language across community organizations and public agencies.	Yakima County Human Services, Yakima County Homeless Coalition Executive Team	December 2029	Development of a "person-first language guide" and tracking its adoption through self-reporting by organizations or periodic audits of public-facing materials.	\$
7.5 Engage community groups to volunteer.				
7.5.1 Coordinate volunteer service activities for religious congregations to participate in.	Local faith leaders (e.g. Yakima Association of Faith Communities)	December 2026, with ongoing maintenance	Dissemination of volunteer opportunities through Faith Group Cohort established in 8.2.1.	\$
7.5.2 Organize volunteer service activities for non-faith-based community groups.	Local community members and secular community groups, high schools	June 2027	At least one community service activity lead and operated by secular groups in Yakima, Toppenish, Wapato, and Sunnyside.	\$
7.6 Execute 2025-2026 Lived Experience Advisory Committee Plan.				
7.6.1 Develop the foundation for meaningful engagement with persons with lived experience, and ensure inclusive participation in all Homeless Coalition Charter related activities.	Lived Experience Committee, Yakima County Human Services	December 2025	Identify and define engagement priorities aligned with Charter goals, draft engagement framework.	\$
	Lived Experience Committee, Yakima County Human Services	March 2026	Develop tools and processes to collect input from persons with lived experience (surveys, listening sessions, focus groups, etc.), create LE engagement toolkit.	\$

	Lived Experience Committee, Yakima County Human Services	April 2026	Create plan for how collected information will be shared with the group (data summaries, meeting presentations, etc.), establish information sharing protocol.	\$
	Lived Experience Committee, Yakima County Human Services	June 2026	Finalize 2026 implementation schedule for direct engagement activities, create approved engagement calendar.	\$
7.6.2 Launch engagement activities with persons with lived experience and integrate their perspectives into ongoing planning, decision-making, and reporting.	Lived Experience Committee, community members with lived experience, Yakima County Human Services	September 2026	Conduct first round of engagement activities (listening sessions, forums, interviews), generate summary report.	\$
	Lived Experience Committee, YHC Exec Committee, YHC Data Committee, YHC General Membership, Yakima County Human Services	December 2026	Incorporate feedback into program design and policy recommendations, generate updated program recommendations.	\$
	Lived Experience Committee, Yakima County Human Services	December 2026	Share engagement outcomes with broader community and partners, generate community report-out	\$
7.6.3 Expand and diversify Lived Experience Advisement Committee membership to include a broader range of community perspectives and	Lived Experience Committee, Yakima County Homeless Coalition, Yakima	Ongoing	Actively recruit additional members with relevant lived or professional experience	\$

ensure sustainability of the group.	County Human Services			
	Lived Experience Committee, Yakima County Homeless Coalition, Yakima County Human Services	Ongoing	Share and post application materials through partner networks	\$

A Note on Objective 8

Objective 8 has been added due to overwhelming feedback about the homeless response system received from elected officials, businesses, and community members—but this section requires acknowledgement that Objective 8 does not address or reduce homelessness in any way. Yakima County and the Yakima County Homeless Coalition feel it is appropriate to place emphasis here that the goal of the homeless response system is not to hide homelessness in order to make it less uncomfortable or confrontational for housed members of the community. With that recognition, the following objective is intended to protect the safety of both unhoused and housed members of our community and to promote the economic vitality of our region, which ultimately makes our entire community stronger, more prosperous, and more resilient.

Objective 8: Balance outreach strategies with public space stewardship and safety to reduce homelessness in critical areas.				
Task	Responsible Parties	Due Date	Outcomes	Funding Required
8.1 Create Unsanctioned Encampment Outreach, Cleanup, and Enforcement Coordination Plan—including establishing Zero-Tolerance Zones.				
8.1.1 Creation and adoption of Unsanctioned Encampment Outreach, Cleanup and Enforcement Coordination Plan	Yakima County Human Services	November 2025	Draft initial plan and engage necessary partners for review and to cultivate buy-in.	\$
	Yakima County Human Services, Board of County Commissioners, Cities and Towns, Yakama Nation, law enforcement, code enforcement, outreach	June 2026	Agree on and adopt final version of Unsanctioned Encampment, Outreach, Cleanup, and Enforcement Plan, issue MOUs with appropriate entities, establish a formal Unsanctioned Encampment response system.	\$

	providers, Yakima County Corporate Counsel, Yakima County Homeless Coalition Lived Experience Subcommittee			
8.1.2 Law enforcement within each jurisdiction identifies their <u>capacity</u> to enforce “zero-tolerance zones,” and to keep them cleared on a daily basis. This assessment should be done based on the capacity of local law enforcement, the prioritization for law enforcement set by city officials, and the needs of the community as it relates to the impacts of visible homelessness and unsanctioned encampments.	Law enforcement leaders, City, Town, Yakama Nation, and County elected officials and administrators as appropriate	June 2026	Establish a defined range (e.g. five square miles) within each jurisdiction in Yakima County which the appropriate law enforcement can commit to consistent, daily responsiveness to.	\$
8.1.3 Creation of a risk-assessment rubric to prioritize zones for enforcement, taking into consideration how to mitigate impacts of establishing “zones” that could impact accessibility of services. Utilization of rubric to identify zones within each jurisdiction.	City, Town, Yakama Nation, and County elected officials and administrators, law enforcement leaders, homeless service providers	June 2026	Create rubric considering critical issues such as safety and economic impact.	\$
		July 2026	Define zones based on rubric scores and capacity limitations.	\$

8.1.4 Disseminate zone information to outreach teams, so that they can inform people experiencing homelessness in identified regions that these areas are going to be heavily enforced.	Yakima County Human Services, outreach providers	August 2026-October 2027	Disseminate information and connect individuals experiencing street homelessness in Zero-Tolerance Zones with resources over a three-month period in each jurisdiction. Engage a phased approach in addressing each jurisdiction, in order to ensure outreach resources can be focused adequately on zones across the County.	\$
8.1.5 Create and post permanent signs as appropriate within Zero-Tolerance Zones.	Code Enforcement Agencies	August 2026-October 2027	Post signs to inform community members of changed expectations within a “Zero Tolerance Zone.”	\$
8.1.6 Post Zero-Tolerance Zones for cleanup, conduct cleanup effort.	Code Enforcement Agencies	September 2026-November 2027	Conduct cleanups within Zero Tolerance Zones as needed.	\$
8.1.7 Maintain enforcement within zones.	Law enforcement agencies	October 2026-December 2027, with ongoing presence	Perform enforcements within Zero Tolerance Zones as needed.	\$
8.1.8 In all areas not considered “Zero Tolerance,” deploy maintenance strategies to mitigate negative externalities of unsanctioned encampments.	Yakima County Human Services, code enforcement, law enforcement	July 2027	Pilot Maintenance Zones concept in the City of Yakima, targeting coordinated outreach, cleanup, and enforcement efforts in all other areas not defined as Zero Tolerance Zones.	\$
		December 2027	Expand Maintenance Zones across Yakima County, following the same phased order for the establishment of Zero Tolerance Zones.	\$
8.1.9 Formally integrate Yakima County Human Services into City of Yakima Yak Back system to coordinate outreach responses when appropriate to homeless-related Yak Back submissions.	Yakima County Human Services, City of Yakima Public Works, outreach providers	January 2026	Establish formal integration of Yakima County Human Services into Yak Back system and coordination with outreach teams/internal County outreach staff to begin responding to outreach needs.	\$
		December 2026	Achieve consistent and timely responsiveness to Yak Back submissions referred to Yakima County Human Services.	\$

8.2 Engage the community in volunteer cleanup and outreach efforts.				
8.2.1 Coordinate cleanup activities for religious congregations to participate in.	Local faith leaders (e.g. Yakima Association of Faith Communities)	June 2026	Establishment of a faith group cohort.	\$
		June 2027	At least one community cleanup day led and operated by faith groups in Yakima, Toppenish, Wapato, and Sunnyside.	\$
8.2.2 Organize cleanup activities for non-faith-based community groups.	Local community members and secular community groups, high schools	June 2027	At least one community cleanup day led and operated by secular groups in Yakima, Toppenish, Wapato, and Sunnyside.	\$
8.2.3 Expand City of Yakima Adopt-A-Block program to other jurisdictions.	Cities, Towns, Yakama Nation, code enforcement teams, Yakima County Human Services, community members, Habitat for Humanity	December 2026	Establishment of at least one Adopt-A-Block program in a jurisdiction outside of the City of Yakima.	\$
		December 2027	Establishment of at least two Adopt-A-Block programs in jurisdictions outside of the City of Yakima.	\$
		December 2028	Establishment of at least three Adopt-A-Block programs in jurisdictions outside of the City of Yakima.	\$
		December 2029	Establishment of at least four Adopt-A-Block programs in jurisdictions outside of the City of Yakima.	\$
8.3 Advocate for increased resources to support cleanup and improvement activities that mitigate the physical effects of homelessness on infrastructure, private buildings, and public spaces.				
8.3.1 Advocate/fundraise for funding to support increased resources to support cleanup and improvement activities that mitigate the physical effects of homelessness on infrastructure, private buildings, and public spaces.	Local businesses, local property owners, community members, and local elected officials	April 2026, with ongoing efforts	Consistent advocacy efforts in the 2026 legislative session and beyond.	\$
8.4 Utilize job training programs and local nonprofits to create capacity for cleanup efforts in critical urban areas.				
8.4.1 Establish a pilot project for First Street and Downtown	Yakima County Human Services,	December 2025	Establish pilot program and run it for 10 weeks.	\$

cleanup efforts in the City of Yakima, utilizing People for People subsidized work experience program placements in key local nonprofits focused on beatification and outreach.	Downtown Association of Yakima, Yakima Union Gospel Mission, People for People			
8.4.2 If pilot project is successful, explore continuing it on an ongoing basis – either year-round or seasonally. Review pilot project, consider necessary modifications, and determine whether to continue.	Yakima County Human Services, Downtown Association of Yakima, Yakima Union Gospel Mission, People for People	January 2026	Continue or fold project, based on results of initial pilot.	\$
8.4.3 If pilot project is successful, explore expanding it to other jurisdictions. Identify other potential partners who would be interested in serving as site placements and providing mentors for People for People subsidized work experience program placements.	Yakima County Human Services, People for People, nonprofit providers	January 2027	Expand or terminate project, based on results of initial pilot.	\$
8.5 Increase day shelter, outreach, and behavioral health resources to ensure there are places for people to go during the day and adequate resources to stabilize, engage, and transport those in street homelessness who are not otherwise prepared to engage in daytime services.				
8.5.1 Extend existing shelters operations to be open 24 hours.	Yakima County Human Services	March 2026	Include funds for extending shelter hours in the budget categories for 2026 HHAP RFP.	\$
	Yakima County Board of County Commissioners, shelter providers	July 2026	Extend shelter hours.	\$\$

	Yakima County Human Services	March 2026	Maintain funds for extending shelter hours in the budget categories for 2026 HHAP RFP.	\$
	Yakima County Board of County Commissioners, shelter providers	July 2026	Maintain extended shelter hours.	\$\$
8.5.2 Expand coordinated outreach services to create capacity for more rapid response across the County.	Yakima County Board of County Commissioners, Yakima County Human Services	December 2028	Creation of three additional outreach/case management positions in the Yakima County Human Services Department to expand outreach, street case management, and DOC/Courts recidivism reduction support.	\$\$
8.5.3 Expansion of behavioral health street outreach teams and referrals to drop-in services.	Yakima County Human Services, Behavioral Health service providers	December 2027	Increased street-level complex case management with improved systems navigation support, wrap around services that meet people where they are, and transportation to facility-based services.	\$\$
8.6 Explore moving Union Gospel Mission low-barrier single adult shelter services off of North First Street.				
8.6.1 Develop a report to present to decision-makers that is agreeable to all pertinent stakeholders and contains options for next steps.	Yakima County Board of County Commissioners, Union Gospel Mission leadership, City of Yakima officials, Yakima County Human Services, Yakima County Homeless Coalition Lived Experience Committee, Union Gospel Mission clients, local businesses	March 2026	Schedule a series of structured meetings with Union Gospel Mission leadership, City of Yakima officials, and Yakima County Human Services to explore the operational, financial, and logistical feasibility of relocating low-barrier shelter services.	\$
		July 2026	Identify potential alternative locations for low-barrier shelter services and assess zoning, transportation access, and service accessibility. Simultaneously, review and propose potential policy changes (e.g., loitering ordinances, service access modifications, urban design changes) to reduce visibility without reducing access to critical services.	\$
		December 2026	Compile findings from feasibility discussions and site/policy analysis into a formal report with at least two recommended strategies: one involving relocation and one involving policy-based interventions. Present the report to decision-makers by December 2026 for review and next steps.	\$

Appendix I: Definitions

Absolute Zero

The complete eradication of homelessness within a community.

Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)

Traumatic events that occur in childhood (0-17 years). These experiences can include incidences of violence, abuse, or neglect; witnessing violence in the home; and having a family member attempt or die of suicide. They can also include aspects of a child's environment that undermine their sense of safety, stability, and bonding – such as growing in a household with substance use disorders, mental health issues, or instability (such as parental separation or incarceration).

Affordable Housing

Housing that costs no more than 30% of an individual's income. Housing costs include utilities.

Anchor Community Initiative (ACI)

A project lead by A Way Home Washington dedicated to reducing youth and young adult homelessness to functional zero by the year 2022.

By Name List (BNL)

A real-time, up-to-date list of all people experiencing homelessness which can be filtered by categories and shared across agencies.

Individual experiencing Chronic Homelessness

An unaccompanied individual with a disabling condition, who has either experienced homelessness (sleeping in a place not meant for human habitation and/or in an emergency homeless shelter) continuously for a year or more or has had at least four episodes of homelessness in the past three years.

Continuum of Care (CoC)

A regional or local planning body that coordinates housing and services funding for homeless families and individuals. Yakima County is part of the Washington State Balance of State (BoS) CoC.

Coordinated Entry (CE)/Coordinated Entry System (CES)

A process developed to ensure that all people experiencing a housing crisis have fair and equal access and are quickly identified, assessed for, referred, and connected to housing and assistance based on their strengths and needs.

Day Shelter/Warming Center

A warm, clean, dry place with toilet facilities that is open during the day when night-time shelters are closed. Phones, food, showers, temporary storage, and laundry are sometimes provided. At some centers, nurses or other services are available, and there are optional activities like games and study groups, AA meetings, and other support groups.

Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)

A federal agency dedicated to strengthening and supporting the housing market and homeownership.

Disabling Condition

A diagnosable substance use disorder, a serious mental illness, a developmental disability, a chronic physical illness, or a disability including the co-occurrence of two or more of the previously mentioned

conditions. A disabling condition limits an individual's ability to work or perform one or more activities of daily living.

Domestic Violence (DV) Shelter

A shelter established to provide temporary food and shelter, counseling, and related services to survivors of domestic violence situations, such as sexual assault, stalking, and domestic violence.

Emergency Shelters (ES)

Provides immediate relief from homelessness and the opportunity for service providers to assess the needs of each individual. The length of stay in an emergency shelter is typically 90 days or less.

Encampment

A term used to describe tents, cardboard shacks, and other temporary structures.

Functional Zero

At any point in time, the number of individuals experiencing homelessness in a community will be no greater than that community's average monthly housing placement for individuals experiencing homelessness.

Homeless Management Information System (HMIS)

A local information technology system used to collect client-level data and data on the provision of housing and services to homeless individuals and families and persons at risk of homelessness.

Homeless Response System

Includes (but is not limited to) permanent supportive housing, transitional housing, housing choice vouchers, case management, prevention, diversion, rental and eviction assistance, low-barrier overnight shelters (including cold-weather emergency shelter), domestic violence shelters and emergency services hotlines, day-shelters, drop-in programs, short-term crisis residential programs, respite, drug and alcohol rehabilitation programs, mental health programs, and employment assistance.

Homelessness

The US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) defines four categories of homelessness:

Category 1: Literally Homeless

Individuals and families who live in a place not meant for human habitation (including on the streets or in their car), emergency shelter, transitional housing, and hotels paid for by a government or charitable organization.

Category 2: Imminent Risk of Homelessness

Individuals and families who will lose their primary nighttime residence within 14 days and has no other resources or support networks to obtain permanent housing.

Category 3: Homeless under other Federal statutes

Unaccompanied youth under 25 years of age, or families with children and youth, who do not meet any of the other categories but are homeless under other federal statutes, have not had a lease and have moved 2 or more times in the last 60 days, and are likely to remain unstable due to special needs or barriers.

Category 4: Fleeing/Attempting to Flee DV

Individuals and families who are fleeing, or are attempting to flee, domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, or stalking, and who lack resources or support networks needed to obtain other permanent housing.

Categories of homelessness include experiences of those who:

1. Are trading sex for housing
2. Are staying with friends, but cannot stay there longer than 14 days
3. Are being trafficked
4. Left home because of physical, emotional, or financial abuse or threats of abuse and have no safe, alternative housing

Housing Insecurity

A living situation in which the total cost of housing (including utilities) costs more than 30% of an individual's income.

Housing Inventory Count (HIC)

An inventory of provider-based housing within a CoC, conducted annually during the last ten days in January.

Low-Income Housing

A Permanent Housing option that anyone who has 20% or less of the median income can pay for at no more than 30% of their monthly income. This is the type of Permanent Housing that most people move into out of homelessness.

Permanent Housing (PH)

Permanent housing for individuals and families who are unable to achieve and sustain self-sufficiency. No time limitation is required.

Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH)

Permanent housing for individuals and families with special needs, including physical and mental disabilities. Supportive housing provides on-site services – such as healthcare, job training, and counseling – to help people live independently in their own units.

Point in Time Count (PIT)

A count of sheltered and unsheltered people experiencing homelessness on a single night in January.

Rapid Re-housing (RRH)

An intervention designed to help individuals and families that don't need intensive and ongoing supports to quickly exit homelessness and return to permanent housing.

Respite

Beds provide for people who need bed rest but are not sick or injured enough to be admitted to a hospital. Some are only day respite shelters, with participants returning to a regular night-time shelter at night. Some are 24-hour shelters.

Severe Weather Shelter

A shelter open during the winter months with a policy to accept anyone – drunk or sober. This is a type of shelter open only on nights when the weather is dangerous to the survival of people sleeping outdoors.

Substance Use Disorder (SUD)

A disease that affects a person's brain and behavior and leads to an inability to control the use of a legal or illegal drug or medication.

Transitional Housing (TH)

Shelter with provided with accompanying supportive services and the time needed for a household experiencing homelessness to get stabilized. Designed as a transition between emergency shelter and housing. Amenities usually include a private room, a common kitchen, and laundry facilities. The length of stay is usually limited to 24 months and is usually accompanied by program steps that must be completed, intended to prepare a resident for housing and self-sufficiency.

Vacancy Rate

The percentage of all available units in a rental property that are vacant or unoccupied at a particular time.

Vulnerability Index - Service Prioritization Decision Assistance Tool (VI-SPDAT)

A survey administered both to individuals and families to determine risk and prioritization when providing assistance to homeless and at-risk of homelessness persons.

Youth and Young Adults (YYA)

Anyone under the age of 25.

Appendix II: Notice of Plan Development

The following notice of plan development was published on Yakima County's website at this page:
<https://www.yakimacounty.us/2391/Yakima-County-Homeless-Coalition>

2025 5-Year Plan Update

Yakima County invites stakeholders and community members to participate in the 2025 5-Year Homeless Housing Strategic Plan Development Process. Participants are asked to commit to all three full-day, in-person Strategic Sessions on February 18th, May 13th, and August 11th. Registration for Strategic Sessions can be found [here](#).

Full timeline of the 5-Year Plan Update process is as follows:

Month	Date	Meeting	Purpose
February	2/18/25	Strategic Session #1 (full day)	Developing a shared understanding of the issues and identifying needs, gaps, and opportunities. MANDATORY for those wishing to participate in the strategic plan development process.
March	3/3/25	Community Listening Session (Upper Valley)	Providing an opportunity for community members who were not able to attend the full-day Strategic Sessions to contribute feedback on the Objectives.
March	3/10/25	Data Committee	Creating measurable goals based on the feedback from Session #1.
March	3/12/25	Community Listening Session (Lower Valley)	Providing an opportunity for community members who were not able to attend the full-day Strategic Sessions to contribute feedback on the Objectives.
March	3/14/25	Community Listening Session (Mid Valley)	Providing an opportunity for community members who were not able to attend the full-day Strategic Sessions to contribute feedback on the Objectives.
April	4/14/25	Data Committee	Creating measurable goals based on the feedback from Session #1.
May	5/13/25	Strategic Session #2 (full day)	Reviewing goals developed based on Session 1 input and Data Committee feedback. MANDATORY for those wishing to participate in the strategic plan development process.
June	No meetings – staff developing first draft of Five-Year Plan document		
July	No meetings – staff developing first draft of Five-Year Plan document		
August	8/11/25	Strategic Session #3 (full day)	Reviewing first draft of Five-Year Plan document. MANDATORY for those wishing to participate in the strategic plan development process.
September	No meetings – staff developing second draft of Five-Year Plan document (possible Data Committee meeting)		
October	No meetings – staff developing second draft of Five-Year Plan document		
November	11/18/25	Strategic Session #4 (partial day)	Report-out of final draft of Five-Year Plan document before BOCC approval. Optional to attend.
December	12/9/25	Public Hearing and Plan Adoption	Public Hearing, BOCC approval and adoption of final plan.

Registration for Strategic Sessions can be found [here](#). If you are wishing to participate, please register for Strategic Session #1, #2, and #3.

To participate in Data Committee meetings, please email HumanServices@co.yakima.wa.us to request to be added to the Data Committee distribution list.

Community Listening Session information found below:

Upper Valley

Date and Time: Monday, March 3, 6-7:30 PM
Location: Yakima County Resource Center, 2403 S. 18th St, Union Gap

Mid Valley

Date and Time: TBD, 6-7:30 PM
Location: TBD, Toppenish

Lower Valley

Date and Time: Wednesday, March 12, 6-7:30 PM
Location: Law & Justice Center, 401 Homer St, Sunnyside

Additionally, an email notifying community members of plan development, as well as containing information on how to get involved, was sent out to: the Yakima County Homeless Coalition Distribution List, the Yakima County Behavioral Health and Substance Use Disorder Coalition Distribution List, the Greater Yakima Chamber of Commerce distribution list, and directly to over 100 unique agencies and government departments.

Yakima County does not have a social media account.

Appendix III: Notice of Public Hearing

Notice of Public Hearing was published in both Yakima Herald-Republic and the El Sol de Yakima newspapers on November 4, 2025; 36 days prior to the Public Hearing on December 9, 2025.

Additionally, the following poster was made detailing the Public Hearing information:

YAKIMA COUNTY

FIVE-YEAR HOMELESS HOUSING STRATEGIC PLAN

Public Hearing

You are invited to attend the Public Hearing for the Yakima County Five-Year Homeless Housing Strategic Plan. This plan was developed by community members, including individuals with lived experience in homelessness, in partnership with the Yakima County Human Services Department.

DATE
Tuesday, December 9, 2025

TIME
10:00 AM

LOCATION
BOCC Basement Conference Room, Room 33B
128 N 2nd Street, Yakima, WA 98901

For more information, please contact the Yakima County Human Services Department at: HumanServices@co.yakima.wa.us or (509) 574-1365

This poster was published on the same webpage as the Notice of Plan Development (above), was distributed to local service providers who might be providing services to individuals experiencing homelessness (with a request to print and display it in visible areas), and was distributed to Lived Experience Committee members. An email notifying members of the Public Hearing was also sent to the Homeless Coalition Distribution list.

Appendix IV: Prioritization Criteria of Homeless Housing Capital Projects

Yakima County has two separate RFP processes in which agencies may request capital funding for Homeless Housing projects:

1. The Yakima County HOME Consortium Multi-Family Housing RFP
2. The Yakima County Homeless Housing and Assistance Program RFP (under the Capital category)

For the Yakima County HOME Consortium Multi-Family Housing RFP, the scoring rubric prioritizes the following considerations:

- The Organization has successfully constructed one or more rental housing projects in the past five years for lease to low-income households.
- The organization's staff have the combined education and experience to successfully manage construction, lease units to low-income households, and manage the Organization's finances.
- The Organization has used state and/or federal funds in past projects.
- The Organization has the necessary financing committed to fund the project at proposal.
- The Organization has title to the property on which to build.
- The property is zoned for multi-family housing.
- The proposed project schedule has sufficient detail and shows that construction will begin within 12 months.

HOME Consortium RFPs are scored by the Yakima County HOME Board and awarded by the Yakima County Board of County Commissioners.

For capital projects under the Yakima County Homeless Housing and Assistance Program (HHAP) RFP, the scoring rubric prioritizes the following considerations:

- Applicant describes a strong understanding of the issues they intend to address, the results they are seeking to improve said issues, and the strategies they are implementing to achieve said results.
- Programs are ready to fund, with a clearly established plan of action.
- Strategies are informed by thoughtful reflection and awareness of best practices.
- The project creates additional units of Permanent Supportive Housing.
- Applicant describes a strong understanding of the population(s) they intend to serve, and an understanding of their unique characteristics, experiences, strengths, needs, and concerns.
- Applicant describes how population(s) will be reached and how potential barriers to accessing services will be addressed.
- Program adequately addresses at least one of the Objectives of the 5-Year Plan.
- Description of how the Objective is addressed includes specific Tasks and Subtasks identified for Objectives in the 5-Year Plan.
- Program adequately explains methods of embodiment for each of the identified values of the 5-Year Plan.
- Applicant understands current organizational capacity to collect and manage data.
- Applicant understands current data being collected.
- Applicant understands and can identify current organizational barriers to effective data collection.
- HMIS data to be reviewed for agencies when available:
 - Exits to positive destinations

- Returns to homelessness
- Percent unsheltered served
- Length of time experiencing homelessness
- All necessary forms are submitted.
- Applicant has a fiscal management system which maintains checks and balances and follows Generally Accepted Accounting Principles. If applicant lacks fiscal management capabilities, applicant identifies fiscal sponsor and describes their fiscal management system.
- Organization has proven experience that lends itself to future success with the implementation of the program.
- Staff are provided with the resources needed to be successful in their roles.
- Applicant describes effective partnerships that enhance service quality, minimize duplication, and amplify available resources.
- Applicant describes clear partnership responsibilities in deliveries services, managing data, and reporting.
- Applicant describes ability to oversee and monitor partner agency activities to ensure accountability in shared work.
- Applicant describes how collaboration benefits program participants.
- Applicant submitted signed letters of intent from partners.
- Applicant describes how participants will be referred to other programs and agencies in a proactive, seamless, participant-friendly manner.
- Budget items are reasonable and appropriate given the nature of the service, the priority populations, and the proposed level of service.
- The proposed program is cost effective given the type, quantity, and quality of services.
- Applicant identifies other funds to be used with any funds awarded from this funding opportunity for providing the services described in the proposal and provides evidence that these funds are sustainable.
- Key staff identified in section A. Program Description are all funded.

HHAP RFPs are scored by the Yakima County Homeless Coalition Executive Committee (excepting Executive Committee members with conflicts of interest) and awarded by the Yakima County Board of County Commissioners.

Appendix V: Yakima County Board of County Commissioners Recommendations to the State

The following letter was submitted by the Yakima County Board of County Commissioners to the State, concurrent to the adoption of this plan.

DRAFT

Yakima County



2025 Five-Year Homeless Housing Strategic Plan Session #1 SWOT Analysis Results

May 13, 2025

At our first Strategic Session, our eleven stakeholder groups conducted SWOT Analyses on our community's ability to achieve the five state objectives. Themes pulled from all of the SWOT Analysis feedback has been summarized in this document.

Contents

Objective 1	1
Strengths	1
Weaknesses	1
Opportunities.....	2
Threats	3
Objective 2	4
Strengths	4
Weaknesses	4
Opportunities.....	4
Threats	5
Objective 3	6
Strengths	6
Weaknesses	6
Opportunities.....	7
Threats	7
Objective 4	9
Strengths	9
Weaknesses	9
Opportunities.....	10
Threats	10
Objective 5	12
Strengths	12
Weaknesses	12
Opportunities.....	13
Threats	14
General Homeless Response System SWOT Analysis	15
Community Engagement Sessions	15
Strengths	15
Weaknesses.....	15
Opportunities.....	16
Threats.....	18
ESD 105 Federal Programs Directors and McKinney-Vento Liaison Survey	19

Strengths	19
Weaknesses.....	19
Opportunities.....	19
Threats.....	20
5-Year Plan Example Objectives and Tasks Draft	Error! Bookmark not defined.

DRAFT

Objective 1

Promote an equitable, accountable, and transparent homeless crisis response system.

Strengths

The strengths identified in the SWOT analysis for objective 1 highlight **collaboration, established resources, accountability, and a committed community in addressing homelessness**. Key themes include:

- **Strong Outreach and Stakeholder Engagement** – There is a clear understanding of stakeholders, a community that cares, and efforts to utilize known programs to prevent diversion from services.
- **Effective Networking and Referrals** – Engaged leadership and consistent funding support networking efforts. Communication is recognized as a challenge, but efforts are being made to improve it.
- **Commitment to Collaboration** – Desire to work together across agencies, continuity of services with leadership, and strong partnerships among service providers help ensure a coordinated response.
- **Wraparound Services and Case Management** – Comprehensive support for individuals, including case management, coordinated entry with privacy options, and wraparound services, enhances service effectiveness.
- **Shelter and Housing Resources** – Although not explicitly detailed, the availability of some shelter options and case conferencing for coordinated care are strengths.
- **Communication and Data Collection** – Efforts are being made to improve outreach, data collection for funding, and coordination through Homeless Management Information Systems (HMIS).
- **Inclusion of Lived Experience Staff** – Having staff with lived experience fosters trust and improves service delivery.
- **Accountability and Transparency** – Providers are held accountable, and there is a public process to ensure transparency and project oversight.

Weaknesses

The weaknesses identified in the SWOT analysis for objective 1 highlight **gaps in service accessibility, communication, and funding, as well as inefficiencies in system navigation and prioritization and difficulties in tracking and measuring impact**. Key themes include:

- **Service Gaps and Accessibility Issues** – Our community has a lack of crisis stabilization centers, low-barrier shelters in key areas, and after-hour services, information, and referral options. Distance and staff shortages limit service reach across our geographically large but largely rural community – for example, there is no low-barrier shelter option in Lower/South Valley. Placing someone in housing is only the first step; access to additional services remains a challenge.
- **Inefficiencies in System Navigation and Public Understanding** – The public lacks knowledge of available systems and resources, and both service providers and individuals in need experience difficulties navigating our systems.
- **Communication and Collaboration Barriers** – There is a lack of collaboration among community organizations, and poor communication across providers creates inefficiencies. Referrals between

agencies are overly reliant on individuals seeking service, rather than streamlined processes and professional systems.

- **Funding Limitations and Prioritization** – Homelessness often visibly impacts our community in a way that can negatively affect economic vitality and a sense of safety for residents. These things in turn can be detrimental factors in making Yakima County a vibrant and resilient community and can feed back into the conditions of poverty and blight that can lead to homelessness. There is a lack of funding for cleanups, code enforcement, and maintenance to combat the impacts of homelessness on the broader community. Funding priorities also have to address root causes of homelessness, such as addiction and lack of housing. Finally, many of the services that do exist in our community are resource-intensive operation, that require a considerable amount of financial support.
- **Accountability and Data Tracking Issues** – Effectiveness measures are lacking or outdated, making it difficult to assess progress. Scoring/grading systems for service prioritization need improvements. The HMIS system is not built for accountability.
- **Challenges in Case Management and Workforce Gaps** – Not enough trained staff to meet demand. Case management and trauma-informed care need more prioritization.

Opportunities

The opportunities identified in the SWOT analysis for objective 1 highlight **potential strategies for improving housing, service coordination, and community engagement, such as housing expansion, improved coordination, early intervention, stronger community involvement, data-driven improvements, and workforce development**. Key themes include:

- **Expanding Housing and Service Solutions** – Revamping the jail into housing and services for reentry populations. Exploring new housing models and increasing housing inventory. Adding low-barrier shelters in high-need areas like South Valley. Prioritizing unsheltered homelessness with targeted interventions.
- **Enhancing Service Coordination and Accountability** – Revisiting case conferencing to improve collaboration among providers. Developing an info system to track individual progress (outcomes vs. outputs). Reducing duplication of referrals and ensuring measurable follow-ups. Mapping service systems and resources for better navigation.
- **Early Intervention and Prevention Strategies** – Providing mental health assessments as part of intake. Strengthening trauma-informed care across programs through training. Improving intervention before individuals become homeless.
- **Strengthening Community Engagement and Partnerships** – Involving community members in system evaluation (e.g., secret shopper approach). Fostering interagency cooperation and cross-training. Utilizing private funding and resources to enhance service effectiveness.
- **Data-Driven and Best Practice Approaches** – Learning from best practices in other communities to avoid reinventing the wheel. Leaning into the 5-Year Plan Annual Update as a more involved process, instead of waiting 5 years to convene all the stakeholders and reflect on strategies community-wide. Building a system to track service effectiveness and improve decision-making.

- **Workforce Development and Training** – Expanding K-12 workforce training to address long-term solutions. Hiring community grant workers to strengthen health-housing relationships. Reinforcing diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility (DEIA) in services to ensure that they are accessible to all.

Threats

The opportunities identified in the SWOT analysis for objective 1 highlight **systemic challenges related to funding, coordination, political dynamics, and service accessibility, which could hinder progress in addressing homelessness and housing insecurity**. Key themes include:

- **Housing and Eviction Challenges** – Landlords raising rents and increasing evictions. Renters expecting indefinite financial support. Shift away from "Housing First" toward "Housing Readiness" models, which may reduce accessibility.
- **Lack of Collaboration and Resources** – Partners and service providers not working together effectively. Insufficient caseworkers, programs, and wraparound services (e.g., 24/7 support). Funding cuts at local, state, and federal levels.
- **Barriers to Client Engagement** – Many individuals unwilling or unable to engage in services. No immediate solutions for unsheltered homelessness, leading to frustration and burnout among providers. Legal barriers, such as the need for dedicated attorneys to assist in certain regions.
- **Funding and Political Challenges** – Instability in funding, affecting long-term sustainability. Conflicts of interest in funding allocation and prioritization. Need for a new county system to track success, but challenges in securing necessary funding.
- **Community Resistance and System Complexity** – Neighborhood opposition to housing initiatives. Overlapping services creating inefficiencies. Issues with the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS), including improper data entry and lack of flexibility. The risk of systems becoming too complex, reducing their effectiveness.

Objective 2

Strengthen the homeless service provider workforce.

Strengths

The strengths identified in the SWOT analysis for objective 2 highlight a **well-connected and passionate network of service providers, strong community support, and ongoing efforts to build and sustain a knowledgeable workforce**. Key themes include:

- **Passionate and Committed Workforce** – Many providers have longevity, knowledge, and dedication to serving the homeless community. There are some very committed and knowledgeable leaders at the Executive Director level.
- **Collaboration and Networking** – Connections between social services, public safety, healthcare, and education improve resource-sharing and service delivery.
- **Lived Experience as an Asset** – Peer support and individuals with lived experience enhance the effectiveness of service delivery and improve outcomes. Word of mouth can enhance trust and engagement with providers.
- **Educational and Training Pathways** – Programs like MSW/MHP at Heritage University and career fairs provide pipelines for future professionals. There are tuition reimbursement opportunities in our community as well as credentialing support for professionals.
- **Free Trainings and Community Support** – Commerce provides no-cost training opportunities, and local religious congregations and community organizations contribute resources.

Weaknesses

The weaknesses identified in the SWOT analysis for objective 2 highlight that **low wages, staff burnout, funding shortages, lack of coordination among providers, limited service hours, recruitment challenges, and insufficient transportation and reentry support contribute to high turnover, gaps in care, and inefficiencies in the system**. Key themes include:

- **Workforce Burnout and Retention Issues** – High stress, secondary trauma, and low wages contribute to high turnover rates and staff shortages.
- **Limited Funding and Incentives** – Competitive funding structures and lack of financial incentives make recruitment and retention challenging.
- **Lack of Coordination and Awareness** – Agencies struggle with cross-sector collaboration, data-sharing, and public awareness of available services.
- **Access Barriers for Clients and Providers** – Limited service hours (mostly 9-5), transportation challenges, and inadequate case management follow-through create gaps.
- **Limited Career Growth and Training Support** – Need for professional development, mentorship, and competitive salaries to attract and retain talent.

Opportunities

The opportunities identified in the SWOT analysis for objective 2 highlight that **expanding collaboration, improving workforce training and retention, increasing funding and community support, enhancing service coordination, and leveraging education and mentorship opportunities can strengthen provider capacity, improve service accessibility, and create better outcomes for both staff and individuals in need**. Key themes include:

- **Enhanced Workforce Support and Training** – Expanding case management training, mentorship programs, and professional development for new service providers.
- **Stronger Cross-Sector Collaboration** – Increasing coordination among healthcare, education, government, and behavioral health to create unified support teams.
- **Expanding Funding and Incentives** – Advocating for wage increases, tuition reimbursement, student loan forgiveness, and increased staff benefits.
- **New Service Models and Data Tracking** – Implementing night services, tracking long-term success metrics, and improving program effectiveness.
- **Leveraging Higher Education Partnerships** – Strengthening connections with universities to develop specialized programs in social work, mental health, and case management.

Threats

The opportunities identified in the SWOT analysis for objective 2 highlight that **high staff turnover, burnout, unstable funding, lack of qualified applicants, competitive provider dynamics, and inadequate training pose significant threats to service stability, effectiveness, and long-term impact**. Key themes include:

- **Burnout and Turnover** – The emotional toll, secondary trauma, and financial instability lead to workforce exhaustion and high attrition.
- **Unstable and Insufficient Funding** – Federal, state, and local funding inconsistencies threaten program sustainability.
- **Lack of Qualified Applicants** – Difficulty in recruiting skilled professionals, especially in high-need areas like mental health and case management.
- **Competitive and Fragmented Funding Landscape** – Agencies compete for limited resources, creating inefficiencies and gaps in service coordination.
- **Wages Not Matching Workload** – The passion for the work is there, but low salaries and high expectations lead to dissatisfaction and workforce shortages.

Objective 3

Prevent episodes of homelessness whenever possible.

Strengths

The strengths identified in the SWOT analysis for objective 3 highlight **existing services, collaborative partnerships, preventative efforts that support housing stability and mental health care, and ongoing engagement to address housing and mental health challenges**. Key themes include:

- **Preventative and Supportive Services** – Eviction prevention funds help keep people housed. Investment in prevention (\$1 spent leads to better outcomes) highlights cost-effectiveness. Courts as neutral spaces and paralegal support in therapeutic courts provide legal resources.
- **Collaboration and Partnerships** – CHC/MH partnership at Camp Hope and YUGM New Life strengthens service integration. Domestic Violence (DV) coalition improves coordinated responses. Camp Hope working with police for safe drop-offs.
- **Accessibility and Community Engagement** – Bringing mental health services to shelters and transitional programs ensures outreach to those in need. Yakima coordinated entry program streamlines access to housing and support services. Referral systems with middle/high schools create early intervention opportunities.
- **Service Infrastructure and Housing Solutions** – Multiple service providers and avenues for support increase options, though still not enough. More housing reduces costs over time, reinforcing long-term affordability.
- **Commitment to Improvement** – Capitalizing on existing resources while recognizing gaps shows an adaptable approach. Community engagement ensures stakeholders are involved in solutions.

Weaknesses

The weaknesses identified in the SWOT analysis for objective 3 highlight **gaps in prevention, coordination, funding, and service accessibility, as well as the need for stronger prevention efforts, better coordination, increased funding, and improved accessibility of services for both providers and clients**. Key themes include:

- **Lack of Prevention and Proactive Measures** – Services remain reactionary rather than proactive, making long-term solutions difficult. Limited diversion training and prevention resources lead to crisis-based responses. Lack of trauma-informed mental health support limits assistance beyond immediate housing.
- **Service Gaps and Accessibility Issues** – Difficulties in obtaining information and resources, including mobility barriers (e.g., lack of driver's licenses). Limited access to emergency housing, especially for families and individuals with pets. Gaps in services for middle-aged and aging populations, often overlooked in housing support.
- **Coordination and Communication Challenges** – Lack of unity among service providers prevents comprehensive support. Inconsistent case management and follow-ups leave clients without continued assistance. Limited outreach and education for providers, clients, and the broader community on available resources.
- **Structural and Policy Issues** – Point systems and screening criteria may unintentionally create barriers to accessing services. State-level policies and tenant advocacy processes sometimes

delay housing solutions. Need for clearer job training, role expectations, and website resource requirements (e.g., suicide/overdose prevention).

- **Funding and Resource Allocation** – Insufficient funding for outreach, education, and direct services. Mental health dollars often fail to address trauma-related needs. Need for more wraparound services to identify and support at-risk individuals.
- **Bridging Gaps Between Services and Community** – Lack of clear pathways for providers, educators, and schools to access resources. Need for better connections between skills/resources and community needs, such as through shared platforms (e.g., Facebook groups). Opportunities to share success stories (e.g., Camp Hope) to build community support and awareness.

Opportunities

The opportunities identified in the SWOT analysis for objective 3 highlight **opportunities for improving homelessness services through better funding, education, mental health support, and community engagement**. Key themes include:

- **Increased Funding and Resource Flexibility** – Flexible funding at the county level. State-level rental assistance programs to prevent eviction. Expanding funding sources for emergency and transitional housing.
- **Public Awareness and Education** – Raising awareness of available services. Educating youth on homelessness and prevention. Enhancing training for personnel, including McKinney Liaisons and service providers.
- **Stronger Service Coordination and Accessibility** – One-stop shops integrating behavioral health, workforce, and housing services. Social workers and case managers within the judicial system. 988/211 crisis hotlines for streamlined resource access. Housing and Homelessness Prevention Initiatives.
- **Increasing public housing availability** – Zoning reforms and building conversions for housing solutions. Identifying gaps in available housing units and services. Mental Health and Trauma Support
- **Greater focus on mental health services and early intervention** – Mental health services embedded in schools and community spaces. Immediate follow-up for mental health crises and domestic violence incidents. Stronger Community and Landlord Engagement
- **Improving connections with landlords for housing placement** – Support hubs to connect those in need with community resource. Reducing stigma around seeking assistance. Systematic and Policy Improvements.
- **Clarifying the definition of homelessness to ensure access to services** – More inclusive criteria for housing assistance programs. Transitioning client mentality from "surviving" to "thriving" through structured support.

Threats

The threats identified in the SWOT analysis for objective 3 highlight **financial instability, lack of mental health and crisis services, service access barriers, substance use challenges, and community opposition**. Key themes include:

- **Financial Instability and Housing Insecurity** – Rising rent costs, especially impacting seniors on fixed incomes. Limited eviction prevention funds. Barriers to accessing housing services due to strict definitions of homelessness.
- **Limited Access to Mental Health and Crisis Services** – Long wait times for mental health providers. Lack of crisis stabilization centers and immediate treatment beds. Inadequate funding for emergency counseling services.
- **Barriers to Service Utilization** – Bureaucratic obstacles, red tape, and delays in accessing resources. Stigma, fear, addiction, trauma, and resistance to change preventing individuals from seeking help. Service refusal due to eligibility constraints or personal barriers.
- **Substance Use and Long-Term Dependency Issues** – Challenges in addressing long-term substance use disorders. Limited treatment and rehabilitation options available. Community Resistance and Policy Challenges.
- **"Not In My Backyard" (NIMBY) attitudes opposing housing and support programs** – Need for advocacy at state and national levels to redefine homelessness and expand service eligibility. Political and funding uncertainties impacting long-term support.

Objective 4

Prioritize those with the most significant barriers to housing stability and the greatest risk of harm.

Strengths

The strengths identified in the SWOT analysis for objective 4 highlight a **well-structured, collaborative, and inclusive approach to homelessness prevention and intervention with coordinated services, early intervention, low-barrier housing options, and strong community collaboration as key assets in addressing homelessness**. Key themes include:

- **Coordinated Entry and Accessibility** – Strong Coordinated Entry system for streamlined access to services. 211 as a key resource for connecting individuals to support.
- **Housing and Shelter Solutions** – Availability of low-barrier shelter options. Clean and sober housing programs. Housing projects have been renewed, ensuring continued support.
- **Preventative and Reentry Support** – Youth care coordinators intervene at early signs of struggle. County jail program helps inmates transition to stable housing upon release.
- **Collaboration and Community Partnerships** – Strong network of community partners. Funding is available through programming to sustain efforts.
- **Inclusive and Flexible Approaches** – Programs supporting individuals with pets, reducing barriers to shelter. Offering multiple support programs to meet diverse needs.

Weaknesses

The weaknesses identified in the SWOT analysis for objective 4 highlight **systemic barriers, limited mental health and addiction services, service coordination gaps, social stigma, and funding constraints create significant challenges in addressing homelessness and housing stability**. Key themes include:

- **Barriers to Housing and Stability** – Credit, rental, and work history requirements create challenges. Lack of life skills and difficulty navigating systems. Limited housing options for people with pets, disabilities, or substance use disorders. Inconsistencies in rental assistance and Section 8 housing availability.
- **Mental Health and Addiction Challenges** – Lack of accessible mental health services and stabilization options. Delayed response times for crisis intervention. Insufficient low-barrier solutions for individuals with complex needs. Those in the criminal justice system face additional struggles.
- **Gaps in Service Coordination and Accessibility** – Services often don't reach those outside urban areas. Programs lack individualized pathways and follow-through mechanisms. Ineffective prioritization tools (e.g., Coordinated Entry system). Lack of consequences or incentives for engagement with services.
- **Social Stigma and Systemic Biases** – Biases against people with criminal records, addictions, or non-traditional lifestyles. Public perception issues, including resistance to supportive services (NIMBY, "Not in My Backyard"). Language and translation barriers limit access to assistance.
- **Service Limitations and Funding Constraints** – Insufficient funding for long-term support and special needs populations. Law enforcement interactions can cause trauma instead of providing solutions. Programs often reactive rather than proactive in preventing homelessness. Unintended gaps in services due to funding requirements.

Opportunities

The opportunities identified in the SWOT analysis for objective 4 highlight **an integrated approach, combining education, mental health support, legal and financial assistance, housing solutions, and long-term care to improve outcomes for individuals at risk or facing systemic challenges**. Key themes include:

- **Education and Skills Development** – Focus on providing courses and training to improve financial literacy, life skills, and self-sufficiency. Key programs include legal rights education, rental bootcamps, and self-sufficiency courses to empower individuals and support long-term sustainability.
- **Mental and Behavioral Health** – Emphasizing the expansion of mental health and drug rehabilitation services. Prioritizing behavioral health support and integrating trauma-informed care (TIC) to address underlying issues like mental health, substance use, and trauma.
- **Legal and Financial Support** – Providing resources for legal support, such as landlord-tenant rights education and access to sustainable legal income opportunities. Also, emphasizing financial management and literacy education to assist with long-term stability.
- **Prevention and Early Intervention** – Shifting focus towards prevention through targeted support, prioritizing rapid response systems, and early intervention for at-risk individuals, especially those with behavioral health or substance use disorders. Aiding in crisis intervention and preventing future barriers.
- **Housing and Shelter Solutions** – Advocating for affordable housing initiatives, such as utilizing public land for low-cost housing development and facilitating landlord mediation. There's also an emphasis on comprehensive housing support systems and team-based approaches to resource provision.
- **Support Systems and Case Management** – Establishing a collaborative, multi-provider system to support individuals in need. This includes case management, peer support, and aftercare, as well as creating resources that cater to people's evolving needs, including options for long-term support like camping or other temporary solutions.
- **Community Collaboration** – Creating centralized platforms or websites that aggregate resources, connect providers and clients, and foster collaboration between various service providers to ensure a comprehensive and coordinated approach to assisting those in need.
- **Prioritization of Vulnerable Populations** – Focusing on identifying and supporting the most vulnerable populations, such as those with chronic health conditions, and ensuring targeted intervention for the highest-need individuals.
- **Sustainability and Self-Sufficiency** – Encouraging self-sufficiency and long-term independence by focusing on sustainable income, training opportunities, and mentorship.

Threats

The threats identified in the SWOT analysis for objective 4 highlight **significant challenges related to limited resources, legal barriers, social stigma, and the complexities of addressing addiction, housing instability, and mental health issues within vulnerable populations**. Key themes include:

- **Limited Time and Resources** – Time constraints with clients and limited resources are major challenges in providing adequate services. The lack of sufficient time with clients limits the

effectiveness of interventions, and funding cuts exacerbate the shortage of resources available to address issues.

- **Community Biases and Stigma** – Stigma around mental health, addiction, and homelessness poses a significant threat. There is a societal tendency to judge or stigmatize those in need, including individuals who struggle with addiction or have pets, making it harder for them to access resources. Biases within communities and service providers can also affect the support available to these individuals.
- **Power Imbalances and Enabling** – The power that landlords hold can create barriers for vulnerable populations, particularly in housing and tenancy issues. There's also a recognition that enabling behaviors, where people inadvertently support individuals in a way that doesn't encourage self-sufficiency, can be detrimental to long-term solutions.
- **Geographical and Service Gaps** – The relocation of individuals from rural areas to more urban locations like Yakima can disrupt their support networks. Services are often more limited in rural areas, and people may lose familiar environments, making it harder for them to adapt and access needed resources.
- **Legal and Policy Barriers** – Laws that do not support moving individuals off public lands and into supportive programs create significant obstacles for progress. There is also frustration over strict definitions or eligibility requirements that limit access to services.
- **Mental Health and Addiction Issues** – There is a shortage of mental health professionals and limited funding to address these issues effectively. The unwillingness of some individuals to accept resources—due to addiction or attachment to animals—adds complexity to providing care.
- **Rising Housing Costs and Financial Strain** – The escalating cost of housing is a major threat, exacerbating issues related to homelessness and financial insecurity. Rising costs make it harder for people to access affordable housing, contributing to the cycle of poverty and displacement.
- **Lack of Support for Certain Populations** – Some segments of the population, such as gang members or individuals with complex needs, are viewed as unreachable, making it difficult to provide assistance. This perception can create barriers to effective outreach and intervention.
- **Community Perceptions and Burden** – The perception that "care of the people is a burden of the people" reflects a belief that community members should bear the responsibility for supporting those in need, which can lead to resistance to collective action or funding for social programs.

Objective 5

Seek to house everyone in a stable setting that meets their needs.

Strengths

The strengths identified in the SWOT analysis for objective 5 highlight **a strong foundation in assessment, collaboration, targeted support, and community involvement to enhance housing stability and address homelessness**. Key themes include:

- **Housing Support and Stability** – Efforts to assess housing needs and preferences (housing stability plans, housing strength/needs assessment) help tailor solutions for individuals. Programs like master leasing and multiple housing availabilities offer flexibility in securing housing options.
- **Collaborative Partnerships** – Partnering with other agencies for stability and conducting "By Name List" case conferences enhance coordination and resource-sharing, improving housing outcomes.
- **Barrier Identification and Solutions** – Recognizing and addressing barriers such as crime, fear, and community expectations is crucial for achieving stable housing. Programs like landlord speed dating help mitigate challenges in securing housing.
- **Community Engagement and Awareness** – Churches, faith communities, and DV advocate programs play a role in supporting housing initiatives. Increased awareness about housing issues fosters community-driven solutions.
- **Support Services and Resources** – The availability of services in housing facilities and shelters, along with targeted support for specific populations (LGBTQ+, migrants), ensures that vulnerable individuals receive necessary assistance. Support services and flex funds provide financial and logistical support.
- **Family and Social Support Networks** – Family support systems contribute to housing stability and well-being, reinforcing the importance of social ties in maintaining housing security.
- **Expanding Housing and Shelter Options** – Initiatives like Rod's House expansion and neighborhood integration efforts create more opportunities for stable housing and shelter accommodations.

Weaknesses

The weaknesses identified in the SWOT analysis for objective 5 highlight **systemic barriers in affordability, service availability, accessibility, and community engagement, which hinder effective housing solutions**. Key themes include:

- **Housing Supply and Affordability** – There is a lack of affordable housing options (30% or less of income), inadequate housing inventory, and a shortage of long-term units. Law barriers and high costs make implementing "housing first" models difficult.
- **Support Services Gaps** – Housing alone does not solve all issues—many individuals need additional services such as counseling, drug treatment, legal assistance, and detox programs. There is also a shortage of qualified professionals to help clients navigate housing and support services.
- **Financial Barriers and Sustainability** – Many individuals' housing needs exceed what they can afford, raising concerns about who covers the cost difference. Additionally, sustainable income opportunities are needed to help individuals remain housed.

- **Eligibility and Accessibility Issues** – Strict eligibility requirements prevent some people from accessing housing and services, even if they meet some qualifications. There are also concerns about ADA accessibility and accommodating diverse needs, such as individuals with pets.
- **Individual Challenges and Preferences** – Some individuals struggle with following housing rules or may not want traditional housing arrangements. Unique cases, such as those with multiple pets (e.g., 12 dogs), complicate standard housing models.
- **Lack of Outreach and Community Awareness** – There is insufficient outreach and education within the community about housing challenges. Outreach efforts also lack dedicated funding, especially since some services are not covered by Medicaid.

Opportunities

The opportunities identified in the SWOT analysis for objective 5 highlight **a comprehensive approach to housing solutions—focusing on education, expanded support services, financial sustainability, and innovative housing development to create long-term stability**. Key themes include:

- **Tenant and Landlord Education** – Programs to educate both tenants and landlords on best practices, rights, and responsibilities to create a more stable and cooperative housing environment.
- **Expanded Case Management and Support Services** – Continued case management, aftercare programs, and support systems to help individuals maintain stability and a healthy lifestyle over time. This includes community service providers who work alongside individuals in need.
- **Mental and Behavioral Health Support** – Increasing the number of behavioral health specialists, integrating trauma-informed care, and ensuring better access to mental health and addiction recovery services as part of the housing solution.
- **Affordable and Supportive Housing Development** – Expanding permanent supportive housing (PSH) with standardized guidelines, dedicated funding, and blended funding sources (e.g., mental health tax). Creating zoning reforms and innovative housing solutions, such as faith-based housing and group homes with various levels of support.
- **Strategic Housing Expansion** – Increasing affordable housing availability by 20% through initiatives like selling city/county land for \$1 to developers for affordable housing projects. Exploring successful housing models from other regions to adapt to the local community.
- **Diversified Housing Options** – Developing housing options tailored to different groups, such as families, young adults, or individuals needing supportive environments. Allowing group home models to provide flexible short-, medium-, and long-term solutions.
- **Financial Incentives and Literacy** – Providing financial literacy programs, financial security initiatives, and monetary incentives for landlords (such as state-funded damage coverage) to encourage participation in affordable housing programs.
- **Holistic and Community-Based Solutions** – Integrating housing efforts into broader community spaces, such as schools and doctors' offices, to connect people with services. Improving neighborhood conditions so that all areas of the community provide quality living environments.
- **Innovative Housing Policies and Approaches** – Exploring and implementing innovative housing models, harm reduction strategies, and housing-first approaches while refining policies to ensure accessibility and sustainability.

Threats

The threats identified in the SWOT analysis for objective 5 highlight **critical issues related to funding, mental health, safety, employment, and systemic barriers that hinder long-term housing stability and social reintegration**. Key themes include:

- **Financial and Funding Instability** – Budget cuts, unstable funding, and limited financial resources threaten the sustainability of housing and support programs. The high cost of maintaining housing and services remains a challenge.
- **Limited Housing Availability and Suitability** – Housing attainability remains a concern, as existing housing does not meet everyone's needs. There is a shortage of secure facilities, leading to overreliance on emergency rooms for those in crisis.
- **Mental Health and Relapse Risks** – A lack of proper mental health support increases the risk of relapse, which can impact housing stability. The absence of secure, dedicated facilities for those in need worsens the situation.
- **Crime and Safety Concerns** – Higher crime rates in low-income areas create additional risks for individuals trying to maintain stable housing. Neighborhood resistance to affordable or supportive housing developments further limits options.
- **Employment and Economic Barriers** – Loss of income, lack of job market opportunities, and employment restrictions hinder self-sufficiency. Some state employment mandates may limit creative approaches to helping people find purpose-driven work.
- **Stigma and Social Barriers** – Ongoing stigma around homelessness, mental health, and vulnerable populations (e.g., LGBTQ+ individuals, undocumented migrants) creates additional anxiety and prevents some from seeking help.
- **Lack of Awareness and Resource Access** – Schools and other institutions may not be aware of available resources, limiting outreach and early intervention opportunities.

General Homeless Response System SWOT Analysis

Community Engagement Sessions

While the full-day Strategic Sessions were open to anyone in the community and did have a community member stakeholder workgroup, Yakima County understands that committing a full workday to providing input is not necessarily accessible to many community members. To increase opportunities for feedback, Yakima County hosted 1.5-hour Community Engagement Sessions held after typical workday hours in Upper-Valley, Mid-Valley, and Lower-Valley to conduct SWOT analyses focusing on the homeless response system overall, rather than broken out by specific objectives. The following sections are a summary of those responses.

Strengths

The strengths identified in the SWOT analysis from the Community Engagement Sessions highlight **a well-connected, resourceful, and compassionate community working together to support individuals experiencing homelessness, with a mix of housing programs, outreach efforts, and strong political and financial backing**. Key themes include:

- **Strong Community Support and Collaboration** – Yakima has a generous and giving community, including strong faith-based organizations. Many community members, volunteers, and organizations are committed to addressing homelessness. A network of empathetic service providers works together to support individuals in need. Collaboration exists across multiple levels, including city, county, and town leadership.
- **Established Support Systems and Services** – Multiple services provide food, medical care, clothing, and shelter for those in need. Domestic violence services are available for individuals facing unsafe living situations. Free medical and mental health care options exist in Yakima County. Infrastructure in Toppenish, particularly in healthcare, supports vulnerable populations.
- **Existing Housing and Shelter Programs** – Yakima has increased housing options for individuals experiencing homelessness. Oxford Houses and Rod's House provide housing and case management for specific populations. Village of Hope and Camp Hope play key roles in advocacy and support. There are already homeless shelters in place within the community.
- **Outreach and Advocacy Efforts** – Programs like the HOT Team (Homeless Outreach Team) and police department partnerships help provide assistance. Outreach visits, such as Social Security support at Camp Hope, create direct service connections. Camp Mrjn actively works with landlords to secure housing for those in need.
- **Political and Financial Support** – Elected officials in Yakima County, from city to town levels, are actively engaged in addressing homelessness. Financial resources are available to help tackle the issue, supporting ongoing and future initiatives.
- **Economic and Employment Opportunities** – Yakima has a strong ag industry which provides low-barrier employment opportunities that could support individuals transitioning out of homelessness.

Weaknesses

The weaknesses identified in the SWOT analysis from the Community Engagement Sessions highlight **a complex, multifaceted challenge that requires not only better resource allocation but also changes in policies, attitudes, and systems to create a more supportive environment for those experiencing homelessness**. Key themes include:

- **Legal and Policy Barriers** – Lack of alignment between state and federal laws can contribute to confusion about allowable activities in federally funded housing programs. This can lead to issues for residents who are otherwise successful in a housing program, such as evictions based on cannabis use despite its legality in Washington State. There are also challenges with code enforcement that results in abandoned properties becoming unsafe spaces.
- **Limited Resources and Accessibility** – Insufficient resources for addressing homelessness, including emergency response services (relying on 911 for mental health crises), a lack of affordable housing options, and inadequate resources for libraries and public spaces that could help people without housing. Specific challenges in areas like the Lower Valley and South Valley, where resources, including shelter beds, are scarce. Gaps in extreme weather response, with issues like frostbite injuries among those staying in shelters like Camp Hope during cold weather.
- **Stigma and Public Perception** – Negative societal attitudes and stigma towards individuals experiencing homelessness, leading to social and economic disenfranchisement. Pessimistic attitudes within the community, leading to normalization and acceptance of homelessness as an intractable problem.
- **Systemic and Structural Challenges** – Lack of collaboration and communication among service providers, causing inefficiencies and duplication of efforts. Issues with regulatory guidance creating silos in efforts to address homelessness. Financial limitations, including the high cost of addressing the housing crisis and the insufficient funding from local government, making long-term sustainability difficult. Legal complexities, such as jurisdictional overlap with the Yakama Nation, which complicates local government responses.
- **Barriers to Housing and Employment** – Difficulty in providing housing for individuals with criminal records or lack of rental history, leading to unsafe or inadequate housing options. A shortage of housing units, particularly those that are transitional or supportive, and challenges with providing housing that is both accessible and safe for individuals with diverse needs. Older individuals aging out of work opportunities, contributing to economic instability.
- **Support Services and Life Skills** – The need for more holistic support, including life skills training, mental health services, and physical health resources like gyms, to help individuals transition out of homelessness. The need for more responsive treatment services, which are not always available when individuals are ready for help.
- **Community Engagement and Education** – The importance of educating both the public and individuals experiencing homelessness on available resources, as well as fostering a deeper understanding of the different levels of homelessness. Encouraging younger generations to care about and engage with the issue of homelessness.
- **Transparency and Accountability** – A lack of transparency in service provision, including the need for clearer accountability for service providers and audits of programs to ensure effective use of resources. Concerns around the transparency and effectiveness of long-term planning efforts, like the 5-year plan, and whether they include sufficient accountability measures.

Opportunities

The opportunities identified in the SWOT analysis from the Community Engagement Sessions highlight **the importance of a comprehensive, collaborative approach that includes housing, employment, support services, and community engagement, while also addressing systemic barriers and advocating for better funding and policy changes**. Key themes include:

- **Collaboration and Coordination** – Increased collaboration between agencies, government partners, and community members to reduce silos and improve service delivery. Expanding coordination across different cities and towns in the region, as homelessness is a widespread issue. Stakeholder collaboration to improve service provision and ensure comprehensive support.
- **Support and Retention for Individuals** – Expanding support services for individuals once they are housed, especially in Permanent Supportive Housing, and extending case management as needed. Implementing strategies to ensure people can maintain housing and stabilize their lives, including life skills training, tenant education, and continued support.
- **Economic Stability and Employment** – Opportunities to help individuals achieve economic stability through entry-level job programs, psychiatric help, and housing support. Promoting job opportunities within the community and incentivizing employers to hire individuals facing homelessness or behavioral health issues. Strengthening job training programs and providing resources to help individuals transition into stable employment.
- **Innovative Housing Solutions** – Removing blight and revitalizing abandoned housing to increase the availability of housing. Exploring the potential of tiny home communities as a viable option for housing. Incentivizing builders to create more transitional or permanent housing, including offering perks like waived permitting fees for multi-family housing. Expanding models of housing, like Justice Housing Yakima, to other areas, such as Toppenish.
- **Tailored and Flexible Services** – Providing trauma-informed, individualized services based on the specific needs of each person. Offering contingency management treatment for substance use disorders and expanding treatment services to be more accessible, such as walk-in detox facilities and peer support navigators.
- **Community Education and Stigma Reduction** – Educating the community about homelessness to combat stigma and increase understanding of how homelessness occurs. Increasing awareness of available resources for both individuals experiencing homelessness and the general public. Training community members to be crisis response specialists, empowering them to support those in need.
- **Improved Funding and Policy** – Advocating for greater flexibility in funding for homelessness-related services, removing unnecessary restrictions that limit the effectiveness of resources. Working with state and federal officials to streamline funding processes and reduce red tape. Examining zoning laws and land use policies, such as the potential for rezoning and using subsidized land for housing, to encourage more affordable housing development.
- **Resource and Service Expansion** – Expanding transitional housing options for both youth and adults. Increasing access to treatment centers and ensuring that people have immediate access to services when they seek help. Providing better access to resources outside of Yakima, including peer navigators and resource points for people in rural areas.
- **Accountability and Data-Driven Decisions** – Improving measurable outcomes and ensuring that services are effectively addressing homelessness by tracking success rates and learning from past failures. Increasing transparency and financial accountability in how funds are allocated and spent on homelessness solutions.
- **Legal and Structural Support** – Addressing challenges related to drug-related issues, including increasing penalties for drug dealers and improving support for people in recovery. Reviewing policies like drug testing for new housing and improving access to mental health and substance use treatment programs.

Threats

The threats identified in the SWOT analysis from the Community Engagement Sessions highlight **the complexity of addressing homelessness, as it involves a range of economic, political, social, and individual challenges. Overcoming these threats will require systemic change, increased funding, public education, and a more compassionate and holistic approach to homelessness and related issues.** Key themes include:

- **Economic and Financial Pressures** – Potential reductions in funding, particularly Medicaid, under new federal administration, which could impact services for homelessness and behavioral health. The looming threat of an economic recession, which could worsen homelessness by reducing funding and job opportunities. The high cost of building government-subsidized affordable housing, making it difficult to meet demand. Lack of financial resources for activities beyond basic services, such as cleanup efforts after homelessness-related encampments.
- **Political and Regulatory Barriers** – Changes in federal or state policies that may reduce funding for homelessness programs or alter Medicaid funding guidelines, potentially limiting access to essential services. Bureaucratic inefficiencies and the inability of government systems to effectively address the issue or adapt to new needs. Legal constraints like involuntary treatment laws and court decisions that could destabilize efforts to address homelessness and behavioral health needs. Exclusionary zoning laws that prevent the development of affordable housing and shelters, limiting housing availability in certain areas.
- **Stigma and Public Attitudes** – Stigma surrounding homelessness, including the belief that individuals "choose to be homeless," which can hinder public support for solutions and perpetuate negative attitudes. The "Not In My Back Yard" (NIMBY) mentality, where communities resist the placement of shelters or supportive housing in their areas, exacerbating housing shortages and social divisions. Community reluctance to engage with homelessness solutions, despite widespread complaints about the issue, limiting collective action.
- **Substance Use and Addiction** – The prevalence of drug use, particularly in the homeless population, which complicates efforts to stabilize individuals and connect them with housing or services. Limited access to detox services, particularly outside of Yakima, creating gaps in care for those with substance use issues.
- **Challenges in Service Engagement and Effectiveness** – Individuals experiencing homelessness may refuse or choose not to engage with available services, making it harder to address their needs. Criminal behavior among homeless individuals, which can lead to negative perceptions and further criminalization of homelessness, reducing opportunities for support and assistance. The criminalization of homelessness itself, where people are penalized for behaviors directly tied to their lack of housing (e.g., panhandling, sleeping in public spaces).
- **Barriers to Trauma-Informed Care** – Failure to address trauma when it happens, leading to prolonged mental health challenges and difficulties in stabilizing individuals experiencing homelessness. Trauma-informed practices are needed, but these are often missing or underdeveloped in some service systems, exacerbating the struggle of individuals in crisis.
- **Barriers to Housing and Employment** – Lack of affordable housing remains a persistent issue, further complicating efforts to provide stable housing options for those experiencing homelessness. The lack of a permanent address makes it difficult for individuals to access employment, further trapping them in the cycle of homelessness. Assumptions that individuals can

"lift themselves up" from homelessness without adequate support, ignoring the complex realities of trauma, addiction, and systemic barriers.

- **Special Populations and Unique Needs** – The need for specialized services for veterans, particularly those dealing with PTSD, who may not be able to engage with traditional shelter systems that require being in enclosed spaces. Limited options for individuals with different needs, such as those who are homeless by choice or who have varying levels of need for support.

[ESD 105 Federal Programs Directors and McKinney-Vento Liaison Survey](#)

In the first Strategic Session Yakima County staff observed that there was not a robust turnout from the education stakeholder sector. Assuming that educators might also have daytime commitments which could not be adjusted due to the inflexibility of a school schedule, Yakima County also created a general homeless response system SWOT survey, which was distributed to the ESD 105 Federal Programs Directors, who were asked both to provide feedback and to share it on to McKinney-Vento Liaisons and other partners within their organizations who they identified as having insight into issues related to homelessness. The following sections are the responses we received from that survey.

Strengths

- I love how much Yakima County cares about the student homeless youth population and are trying to support our school districts as best as you can. I also appreciate the communication you guys provide us, and the willingness to help and support.
- UGM, Camp Hope (option for immediate housing).
- Our school leans heavily on OIC for food/housing supports, Neighborhood Health and YVFWC for health resources, as well as UGM mission stores for clothing.
- The Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction support liaisons with PD and networking opportunities that help improve our practice.
- School House Connection has been a great resource for the liaison as well.

Weaknesses

- I do wish there were more services and housing opportunities for unaccompanied homeless youth in our valley. I know the county is working hard, and it has improved tremendously with RODS house as a huge resource. Our district does have quite a few homeless unaccompanied youth, and finding housing for them is difficult at times.
- Unaccompanied Youth housing.
- Services for bilingual families. We spend many hours accompanying families to provide translation for families.
- Options for undocumented families.

Opportunities

- I would love the opportunity to partner more with your agency to help students in our district succeed.
- Immediate housing prior to Section 8 Housing - Schools don't always have the funds to provide this even though it is an allowable cost.
- Housing for families with pets - Hotel is our only option and the cost increases with pet deposits.
- Access to Higher Education.

Threats

- Given the uncertainty of what our current president is planning with the department of education- I do worry that funding for McKinney-Vento students will be limited or gone. This presents a lot of issues for not only our district, but the valley.
- Federal funding.
- Dismantling of Department of Ed - equal access to education and supports for vulnerable populations.

DRAFT

Yakima County



Data: Factors Impacting Homelessness

May 13, 2025

Created by Esther Magasis
Director of Human Services
Yakima County

Contents

What is Homelessness?	1
What Causes Homelessness?	2
Local Data	3
National Data.....	4
Population	5
Mental Health/Substance Use Disorder.....	7
Weather.....	9
Availability of Services	10
“Progressive” Policies	10
Law Enforcement Assisted Diversion (LEAD).....	11
Poverty.....	14
Housing Costs for Low-Income Households	14
Additional Affordable Housing Units Needed by 2029	16

What is Homelessness?

There are four categories of homelessness as defined by the Federal Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD):

1. Category 1: Literally Homeless

Individual or family who lacks a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence, meaning:

- a. Has a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not meant for human habitation; **or**
- b. Is living in a publicly or privately operated shelter designated to provide temporary living arrangements (including congregate shelters, transitional housing, and hotels and motels paid for by charitable organizations or by federal, state and local government programs); **or**
- c. Is exiting an institution where (s)he has resided for 90 days or less and who resided in an emergency shelter or place not meant for human habitation immediately before entering that institution.

2. Category 2: Imminent Risk of Homelessness

An individual or family who will imminently lose their primary nighttime residence, provided that:

- a. Residence will be lost within 14 days of the date of application for homeless assistance;
- b. No subsequent residence has been identified; and
- c. The individual or family lacks the resources or support networks needed to obtain other permanent housing.

3. Category 3: Homeless Under Other Federal Statutes

Unaccompanied youth under 25 years of age, or families with Category 3 children and youth, who do not otherwise qualify as homeless under this definition, but who:

- a. Are defined as homeless under the other listed federal statutes;
- b. Have not had a lease, ownership interest in permanent housing during the 60 days prior to the homeless assistance application;
- c. Have experienced persistent instability as measured by two moves or more during in the preceding 60 days; and
- d. Can be expected to continue in such status for an extended period of time due to special needs or barriers.

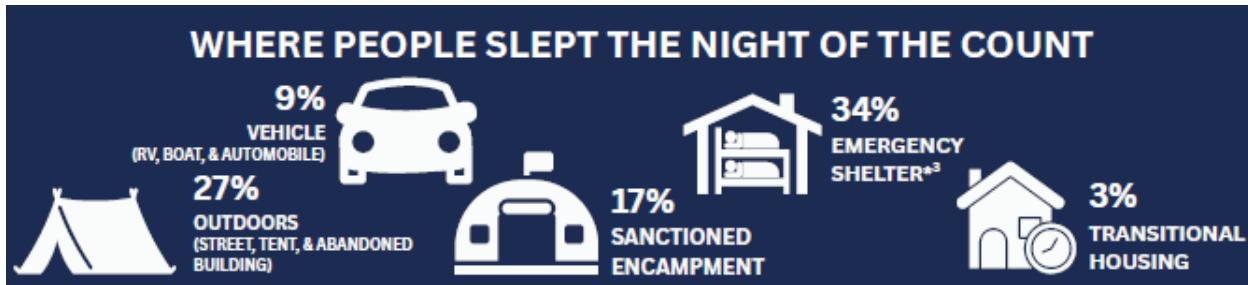
4. Category 4: Fleeing/Attempting to Flee Domestic Violence

Unaccompanied youth under 25 years of age, or families with Category 3 children and youth, who do not otherwise qualify as homeless under this definition, but who:

- a. Are defined as homeless under the other listed federal statutes;
- b. Have not had a lease, ownership interest in permanent housing during the 60 days prior to the homeless assistance application;
- c. Have experienced persistent instability as measured by two moves or more during in the preceding 60 days; and
- d. Can be expected to continue in such status for an extended period of time due to special needs or barriers.

In our community, though, as with many others, the primary thing people think about when they think about homelessness is the most visible form of homelessness: **unsheltered homelessness**. This is category 1.a. in the above list of types of homelessness: an individual or family that has a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not meant for human habitation.

In the 2025 Point in Time Count, 36% of individuals surveyed slept outdoors or in a vehicle the night of the count:



Source: Yakima County Point in Time data (2025)

Homelessness and the transitions out of homelessness often fall along a spectrum, though – and **you cannot effectively solve for one type of homelessness without solving for all types of homelessness**. Individuals in street homelessness one night can get the opportunity to enter into transitional housing the next. Individuals in shelter one night can decide they’re dissatisfied with that setting, and try their luck sleeping on the street the next. **An effective homeless response system creates many pathways out of homelessness, and focuses ultimately on getting individuals into housing at a rate comparable to the rate at which people enter into homelessness within the community.** This matching of inflow to outflow in the homeless response system is referred to as **functional zero**. The best way for a community to effectively reduce homelessness is for the components of the homeless response system – treatment, detox, outreach, shelter, and more – to serve the purpose of stabilizing individuals and getting them out of homelessness. In that same vein, having access to housing can often serve the goal of creating a baseline sense of stabilization that prepares individuals to meet other needs and goals in their life, such as sobriety and employment.

What Causes Homelessness?

This is the question we are all trying to answer – at a local level, a state level, and a national level. What is it that causes homelessness? How can we solve it?

These are questions that have been the subject of endless speculation, research, grandstanding, and frustration. In order to identify real and lasting solutions to this complex issue, we need to not be enticed by the appeal of oversimplified answers merely because they sound easy to execute, or unvalidated answers that seem intuitively correct because they appeal to our existing biases.

This doesn’t mean we need to resign ourselves to hopelessness or desperation – we have access to data and existing models that can inform our thinking. We have local resources: experienced service providers, community members who care, and electeds who see this issue as a priority. And we have the ability to work together to seek solutions to difficult problems. Our community can do hard things.

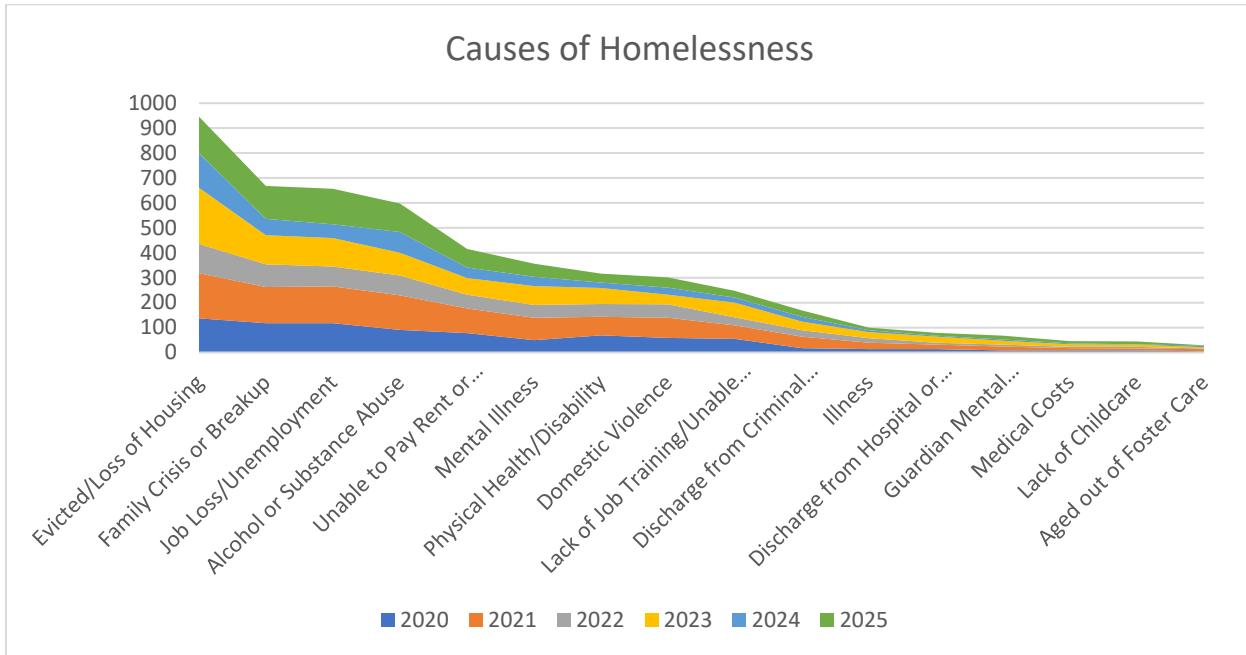
We seldom admit the seductive comfort of hopelessness. It saves us from ambiguity. It has an answer for every question: "There's just no point." Hope, on the other hand, is messy. If it might all work out, then we have things to do.

Jarod K. Anderson

So, where do we start? What does the data tell us?

Local Data

Locally, our Point in Time count gives us an annual opportunity to survey for data not usually collected through our data systems. This includes asking for self-reported causes of homelessness:

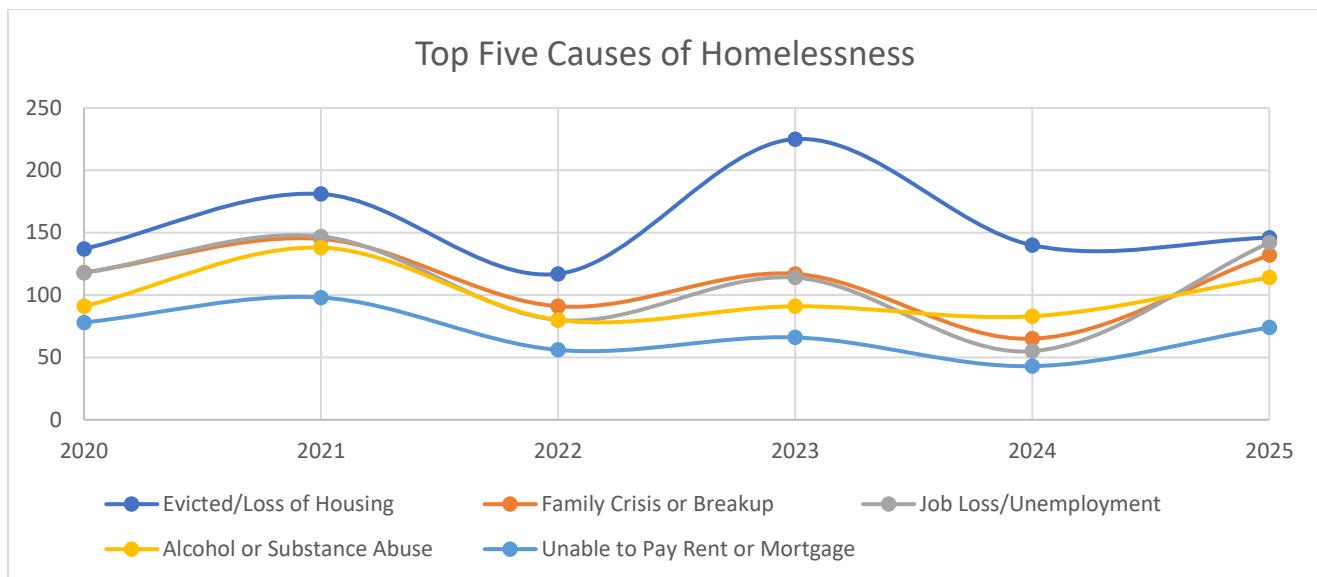


Source: Yakima County Point in Time Data (2020-2025)

While there are many reasons for losing housing, and the prevalence of each varies year to year, the top five causes of homelessness identified are consistently the same:

1. Evicted/Loss of Housing
2. Family Crisis or Breakup
3. Job Loss/Unemployment
4. Alcohol or Substance Abuse
5. Unable to Pay Rent or Mortgage

With the number one reason always being eviction and loss of housing.



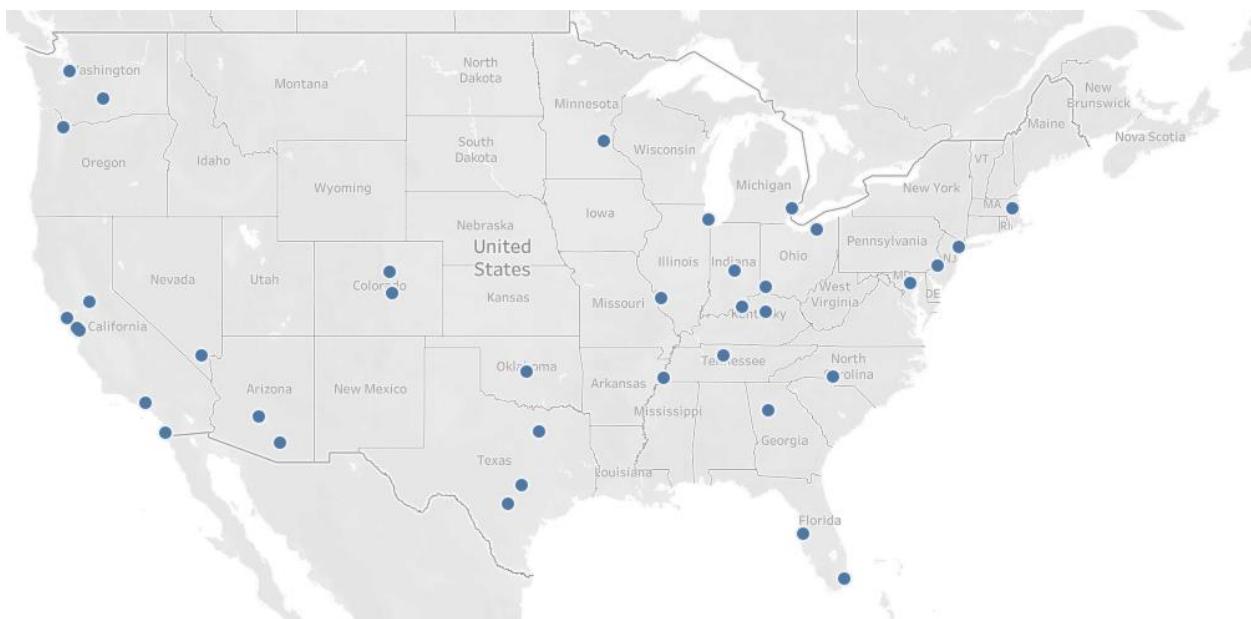
Source: Yakima County Point in Time data (2020-2025)

National Data

For a national dataset, we focused on the following thirty-six cities and counties:

	Continuum of Care (CoC)	State
Cities	Atlanta	Georgia
	Baltimore	Maryland
	Boston	Massachusetts
	Chicago	Illinois
	Denver	Colorado
	Detroit	Michigan
	Indianapolis	Indiana
	New York City	New York
	Oklahoma City	Oklahoma
	Philadelphia	Pennsylvania
	San Francisco	California
	St. Louis	Missouri
Counties	Bexar County (San Antonio)	Texas
	Clark County (Las Vegas)	Nevada
	Cuyahoga County (Cleveland)	Ohio
	Dallas County (Dallas)	Texas
	Davidson County (Nashville)	Tennessee
	El Paso County (Colorado Springs)	Colorado
	Fayette County (Lexington)	Kentucky
	Hamilton County (Cincinnati)	Ohio
	Hennepin County (Minneapolis)	Minnesota
	Hillsborough County (Tampa)	Florida
	Jefferson County (Louisville)	Kentucky
	King County (Seattle)	Washington
	Los Angeles County (Los Angeles)	California

Maricopa County (Phoenix)	Arizona
Mecklenburg County (Charlotte)	North Carolina
Miami-Dade County (Miami)	Florida
Multnomah County (Portland)	Oregon
Pima County (Tucson)	Arizona
Sacramento County (Sacramento)	California
San Diego County (San Diego)	California
Santa Clara County (San Jose, Santa Clara)	California
Shelby County (Memphis)	Tennessee
Travis County (Austin)	Texas
Yakima County	Washington



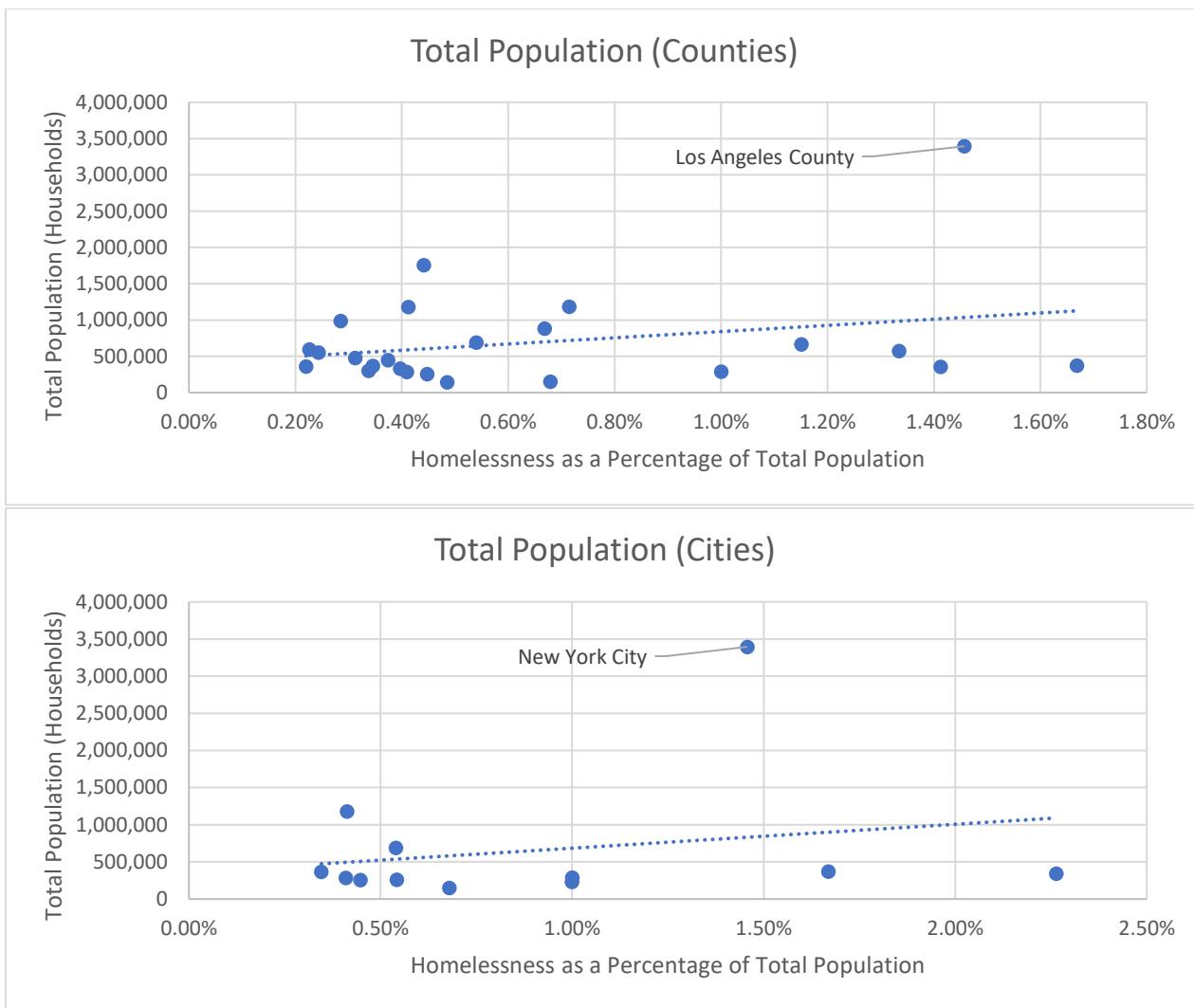
Whether a jurisdiction was selected for review as a city or county was dependent on whether their community's homeless data was available at a city or county level.

Below, we will explore some commonly speculated causes of homelessness, and what the data tells us about their correlation to rates of homelessness.

Population

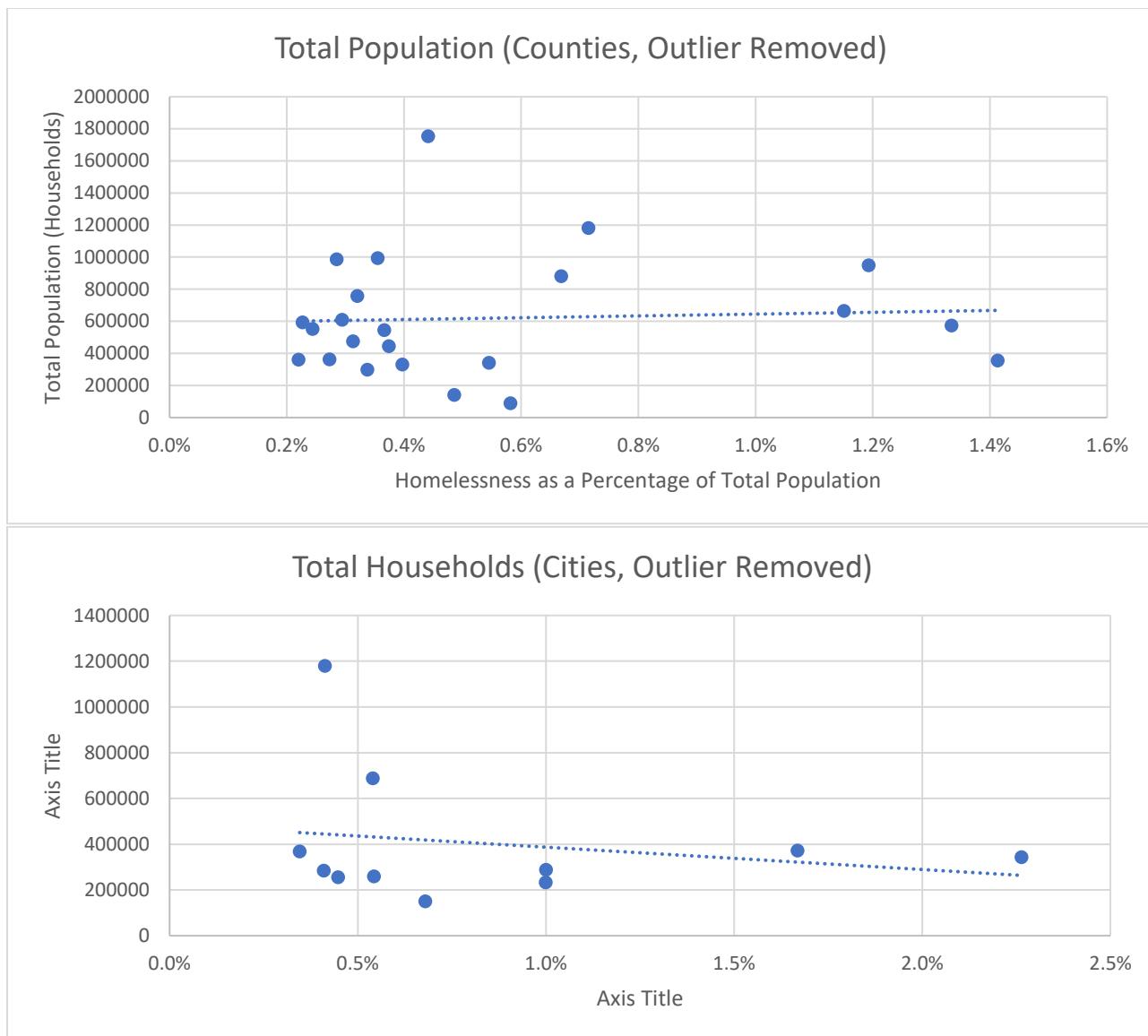
There is sometimes a sense that homelessness is a “big city” problem – that only dense population centers have issues with homelessness. While larger urban areas certainly do experience homelessness in larger quantities – the way they experience any group of people in larger quantities – the *proportion* of homelessness is not tied directly to population size.

Because this data is intended to show population scale, it is helpful to review it in the context of cities and counties separately:



Source: Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Point in Time data (2023), United States Census Bureau American Community Survey data (2023)

The data here shows an upward trend between homelessness rates and population, but also contains two significant outliers (Los Angeles County and New York City). With these outliers removed, we can see **there is not a consistent correlation between population size and rates of homelessness**:



Source: Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Point in Time data (2023), United States Census Bureau American Community Survey data (2023)

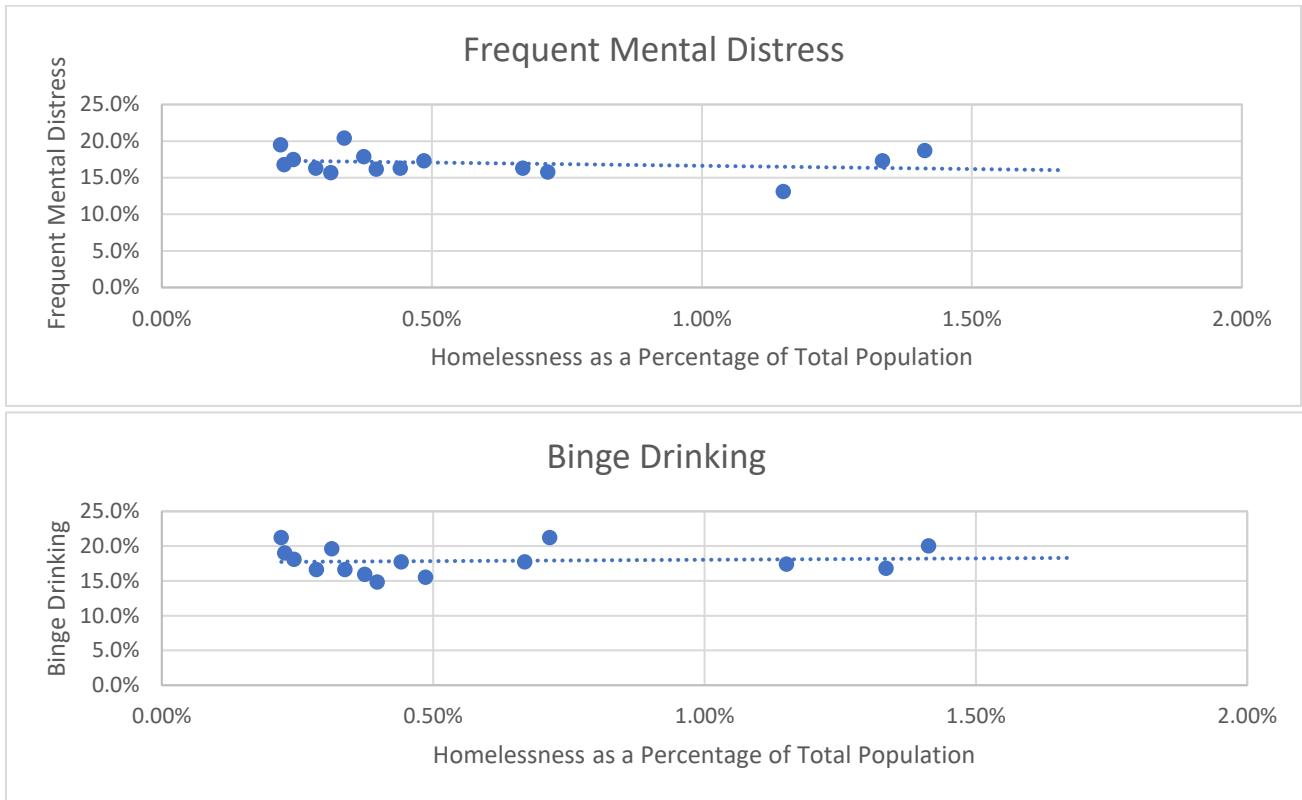
The rates of homelessness within the outliers can likely be better explained by the other factors we are considering below.

Mental Health/Substance Use Disorder

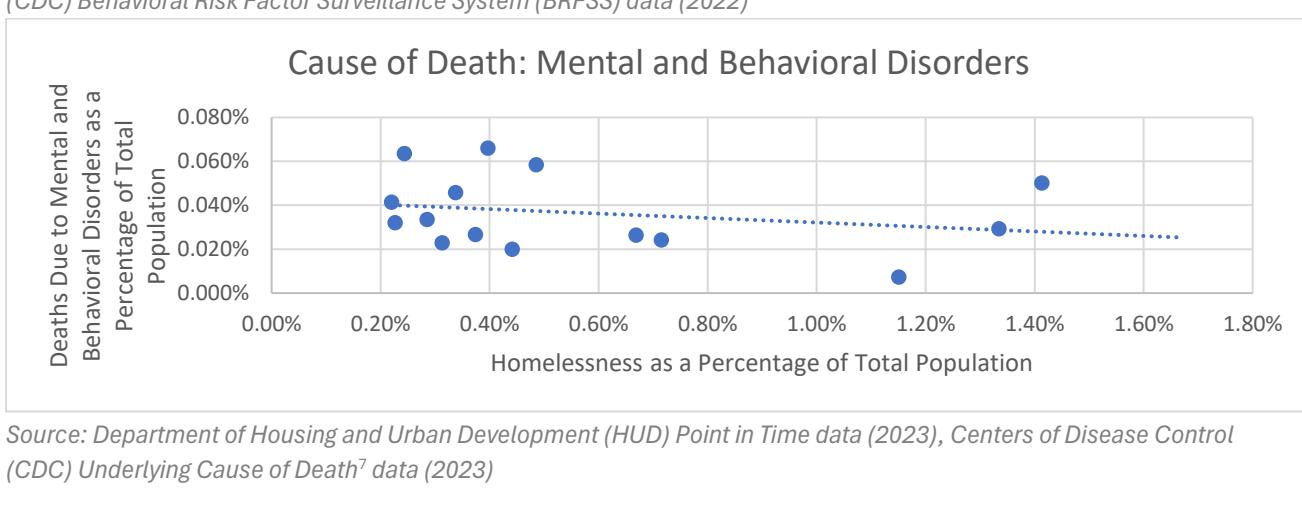
Mental Illness and Substance Abuse are routinely among the most common reasons identified in the local Point in Time survey data for having lost housing – but while it is pertinent to some, it is important to keep in mind that not *all* individuals experiencing homelessness are also experiencing a mental illness and/or substance use disorder.

Current data for this section was only available at a county level, which means that several cities which have been included in other data sets were not compared in this section. That being said, with the data available to us, we can compare a few indicators that track along with mental health and substance use

disorder to see whether there is correlation between high rates of these issues in a community, and high rates of homelessness:



Source: Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Point in Time data (2023), Centers of Disease Control (CDC) Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS) data (2022)



This data shows us that there is not a significant or there is even a negative relationship between overall rates of mental distress, binge drinking, deaths due to mental and behavioral disorders, and rates of homelessness within a community.

It is also important to note that for those who are experiencing homelessness and substance use disorder simultaneously, the substance use disorder may have been a result of homelessness, not the other way around. A 2023 study conducted by the University of California San Francisco⁸ found that 65% of survey respondents reported having ever used amphetamines, cocaine, or non-prescribed opioids regularly; but of that 65%, **36% reported that they had not started doing so prior to their first episode of homelessness.**

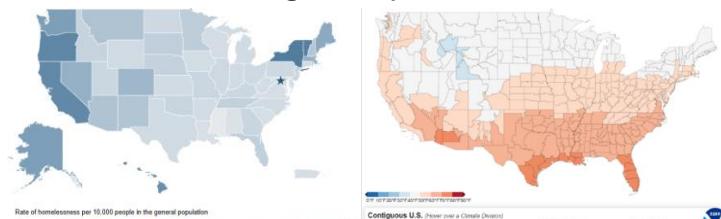
Providing accessible resources for mental health and substance use disorders is still an important component of addressing homelessness – and is a critical component for addressing the needs of those experiencing visible, high-needs unsheltered homelessness. **Mental health and substance use disorder can absolutely be an issue that at an individual level leads to homelessness.** For unsheltered homeless populations especially, a literature review conducted in 2022 identified that unsheltered populations experience high rates of serious mental illness and substance use disorder compared to sheltered populations⁹. Unsheltered homelessness is strongly associated with chronic homelessness that exacerbates serious mental illness and substance use disorder issues, which are often co-occurring. However, **the data does not indicate that overwhelmingly homelessness is a function of the prevalence of behavioral health or substance use disorder issues within a community.**

Weather

It is often speculated that homelessness in our beautiful community is a consequence of our temperate springs and falls. “Who wouldn’t want to be outside in this weather?” In fact, West Coast cities in general are often perceived as hot spots for homelessness due to their easy, livable climates compared to the harsh winters of the Midwest, or the stifling summers of the South. So, is it the weather making it “easy” and “attractive” to be homeless?

To explore this, it’s simplest to take a macro view on homelessness and weather nationwide:

Homelessness and Average Temperatures in the United States



Source: Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Annual Homeless Assessment Report to Congress (AHAR) (2023), United States Census Bureau Population Estimates (2023), National Centers for Environmental Information Divisional Mapping (2023)

While many of the West Coast cities do certainly fall into a temperate weather range *and* have some of the highest rates of individuals experiencing homelessness in the country, other areas with high rates of individuals experiencing homelessness are in extremely cold climates; one would assume not conducive to outdoor living. Additionally, large swaths of the country where there are balmy and pleasant temperatures

⁸ Source: Toward a New Understanding, UCSF Benioff Homeless and Housing Initiative, June 2023

⁹ Source: Unsheltered Homelessness and Health: A Literature Review, AJPM Focus, October 2022

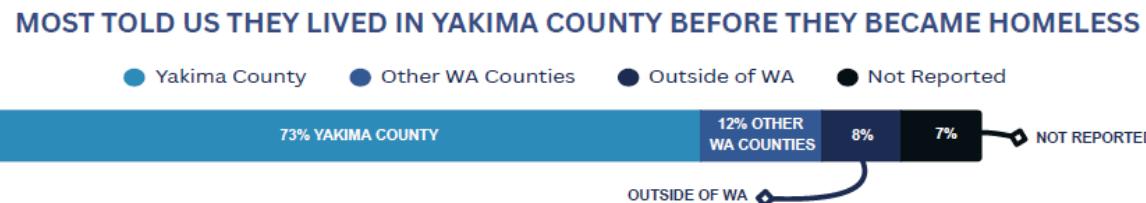
experience relatively little homelessness. If homelessness was a function of the pleasantness of weather in each region, we might expect to see much higher rates of homelessness in the center and lower righthand quadrant of the country, where rates of homelessness are the lowest. As such, **the data leads us to conclude that weather conditions are not a primary driver of homelessness.**

Availability of Services

Another common speculation when it comes to drivers of homelessness is that the availability of services makes an area more attractive to those without housing. The reasoning goes that if communities do not provide services, then people experiencing homelessness within that community will choose to leave or to self-resolve their homelessness due to lack of resources. This belief is often substantiated by identifying the correlation between vast arrays of homeless services in some communities and their large homeless populations – however, that inference likely has the causational relationship between those two variables reversed.

It is more reasonable to assume that communities with high rates of homelessness are more likely to prioritize investments into homeless services in order to combat a pressing issue than to assume that communities with low rates of homeless services would invest into unnecessary homeless services, and that homelessness would then increase as a result. If we believe this, then it should lead us to believe that homelessness is not caused by the presence services – rather, the presence of services are the result of homelessness.

Our most recent PIT data shows us that 73% of individuals experiencing homelessness last had housing in Yakima County:

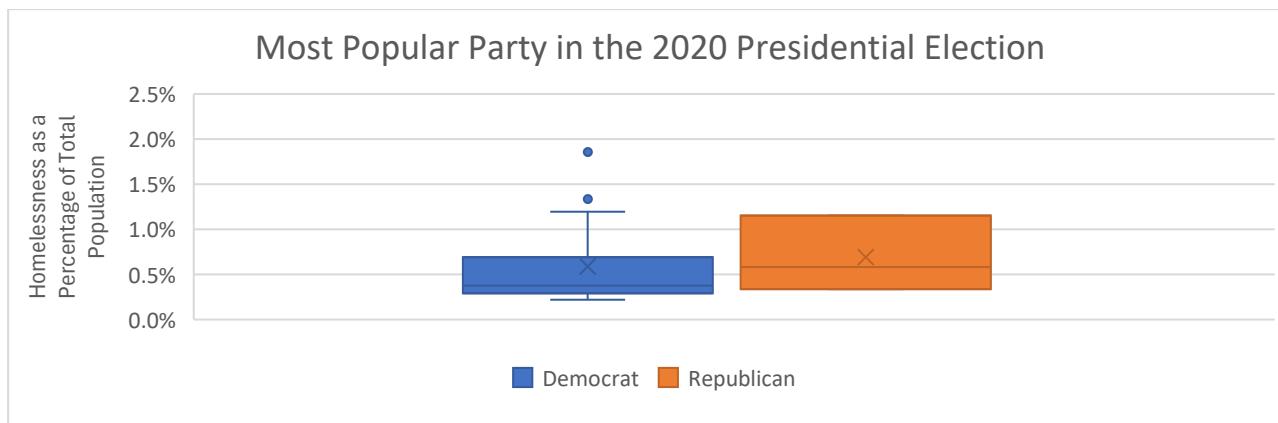


Source: Yakima County Point in Time data (2025)

This demonstrates that when people lose housing, the majority of people stay where they were last housed. Their decision of where to live without housing is more heavily influenced by factors outside of availability of services – factors such as familiarity with a community, ties to family or friends in the area, lack of resources to relocate – the kinds of factors that might keep anyone, housed or otherwise, in the same place even after a disruption.

“Progressive” Policies

In a similar vein to the theory regarding the availability of services, there are often broad statements made about “progressive” policies being the cause of homelessness, with the belief that homelessness is something that happens in communities where the democratic party is politically dominant. This is a difficult claim to address, because it is very vague. While policy decisions can certainly impact homelessness, do generally left-leaning jurisdictions experience higher rates of homelessness when compared against the generally right-leaning jurisdictions in our dataset? To explore this, we utilized the available data on presidential election outcomes by County to determine whether a County could be considered “red” or “blue.” Here again we only had access to county-level data, so cities present in other datasets have been omitted:



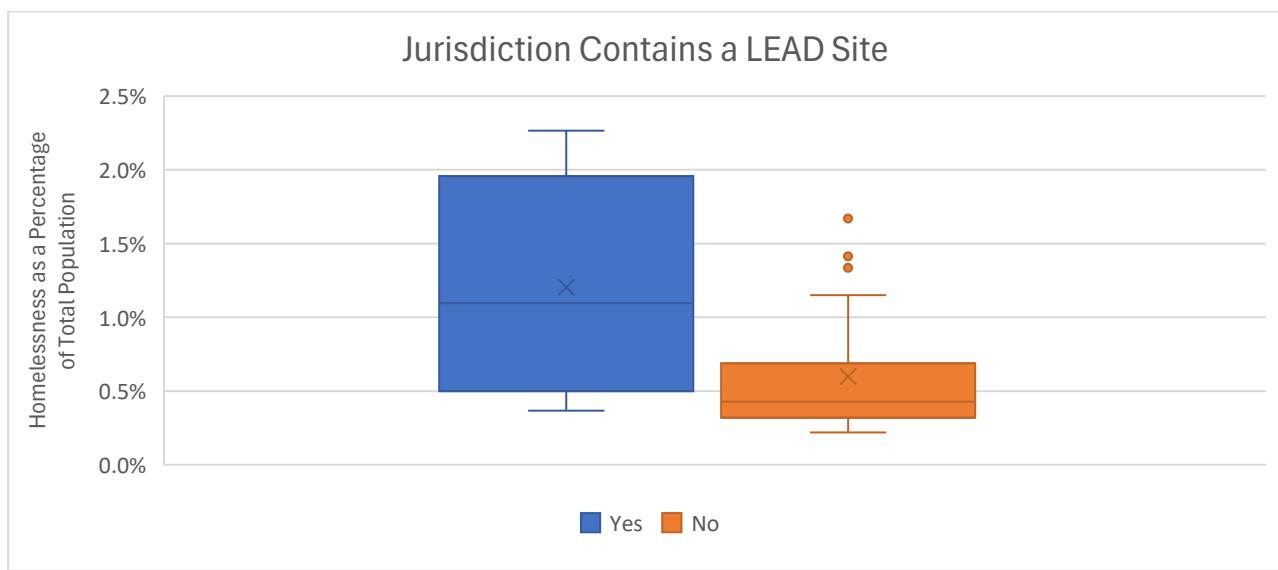
Source: Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Point in Time data (2023), MIT Election Data + Science Lab US Presidential Elections (2020)

While there is still tremendous value in considering the impact of individual policies on rates of homelessness, **this data shows that there does not appear to be a significant difference in rates of homelessness in counties within our dataset that leaned blue vs. red in the 2020 presidential election.** This section is not meant to endorse one political party over another, or to undermine the impact of policy decisions on homelessness, just to demonstrate that general political preference of a region does not correspond with a clear or consistent difference in rates of homelessness within our dataset.

Law Enforcement Assisted Diversion (LEAD)

The first pre-arrest diversion program in the country started in Seattle in 2011. Since then, the Law Enforcement Assisted Diversion (LEAD) based on Seattle's project has expanded across the country, with the aim of building a community-based alternative to jail and prosecution for individuals whose unlawful behavior stems from unmet needs related to substance use, mental health challenges, or extreme poverty.

While this is a powerful harm-reduction program with compelling outcomes, does the presence of a LEAD site in a community predict lower rates of homelessness compared to those communities without LEAD?



Source: LEAD Support Bureau Lead Community Toolkit (2025)

While LEAD programs are innovative and valuable, their implementation within a jurisdiction does not lead to lower rates of homelessness compared to other communities. In fact, rates of homelessness are higher in communities that have LEAD programs; although this is likely explained by communities with higher rates of homelessness being more likely to adopt LEAD, as opposed to LEAD causing higher rates of homelessness.

That being said, we do not know what the rates of homelessness may have otherwise been in those communities that have adopted LEAD programs. It should not be inferred from this dataset that LEAD is ineffective in reducing homelessness – the communities in which it is being implemented may or may not have had higher rates of homelessness without it. Our data does not tell us about the effectiveness of LEAD within any given jurisdiction, only that the utilization of LEAD within a given community is not correlated to lower rates of homelessness within that community compared to communities that do not implement LEAD.

As a caveat to the discussion about LEAD, it is worth noting that **individuals experiencing homelessness should not be assumed to also be engaging in criminal activity simply by virtue of their housing status.**

Reviewing local Yakima Police Department data from 2024, we can see there were 6,107 unique incidents that YPD responded to which were considered “homeless issues.” Of those 6,107 incidents, just over two-thirds were coded as either “suspicious circumstances” or “unwanted guest” – meaning that the vast majority of even law enforcement encounters with individuals experiencing homelessness were not linked to any criminal activity. It is also worth bearing in mind that not all individuals experiencing homelessness have any cause at all to interact with law enforcement, meaning that even this dataset represents only a subset of the population experiencing homelessness.

Nature	Counts	Percentage
SUSPICIOUS CIRC	2765	45.28%
UNWANTED GUEST	1344	22.01%
TRESPASSING	318	5.21%
WANTED PERSON	257	4.21%
THEFT	205	3.36%
DRUGS	141	2.31%
PARKING PROBLEM	108	1.77%
INFORMATION	92	1.51%
TRAFFIC HAZARD	91	1.49%
ASSAULT	82	1.34%
WELFARE CHECK	80	1.31%
MAL MISCHIEF	61	1.00%
AGENCY ASSIST	60	0.98%
CITIZEN ASSIST	56	0.92%
DOMESTIC-IPV	43	0.70%

MENTAL SUBJECT	35	0.57%
BURGLARY	34	0.56%
LEWD CONDUCT	28	0.46%
ANIMAL PROBLEM	24	0.39%
OVERDOSE	21	0.34%
ATMT TO LOCATE	21	0.34%
Vehicle Prowl	20	0.33%
DOMESTIC	19	0.31%
THREATS	18	0.29%
MISSING PERSON	15	0.25%
DEATH INVEST	13	0.21%
CIVIL MATTER	13	0.21%
RECOVRD STOLEN	12	0.20%
WEAPON OFFENSE	12	0.20%
ILLEGAL BURNING	11	0.18%
TRAFFIC STOP	10	0.16%
CITIZEN DISPUTE	10	0.16%
ASSAULT WEAPON	9	0.15%
HARASSMENT	9	0.15%
ROBBERY	7	0.11%
Alarm Business	6	0.10%
ARSON	5	0.08%
SEX CRIME	5	0.08%
SUICIDAL PERSON	5	0.08%
THEFT-VEHICLE	5	0.08%
DISORDERLY	4	0.07%
RECOVERED JUV	4	0.07%
NOISE COMPLAINT	4	0.07%
ACCIDENT INJURY	2	0.03%
OBSTRUCTING	2	0.03%
ABANDONED VEHIC	2	0.03%
DUI	2	0.03%
FRAUD	2	0.03%
PROWLER	2	0.03%
COURT ORDER SER	1	0.02%
ILLEGAL DUMPING	1	0.02%
COURT ORDER VIO	1	0.02%
ELUDING	1	0.02%

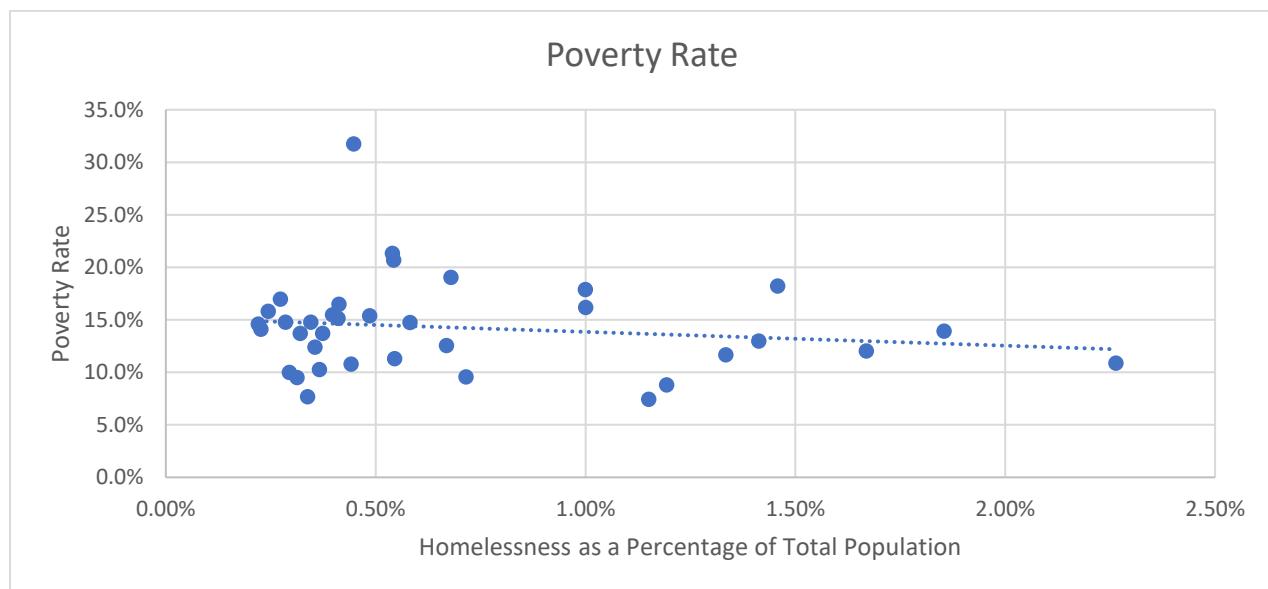
FIRE INVEST	1	0.02%
SHOTS FIRED	1	0.02%
LOST PROPERTY	1	0.02%
HOMICIDE	1	0.02%
ANIMAL BITE	1	0.02%
Offer & Agree	1	0.02%
ACCIDENT UNKNOW	1	0.02%
FOUND PROPERTY	1	0.02%
FIRE OTHER	1	0.02%

Source: Yakima Police Department, Homeless Issue Incidents (2024)

This is not meant to minimize the very real and felt harm that might be caused by a crime committed by an individual experiencing homelessness – just to demonstrate that criminal activity is committed by a minority segment of the general population experiencing homelessness.

Poverty

Like substance use disorder, poverty can and does play a role in the individual journeys to homelessness. However, is the overall rate of poverty in a community causally linked to the rate of homelessness?



Source: Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Point in Time data (2023), United States Census Bureau American Community Survey data (2023)

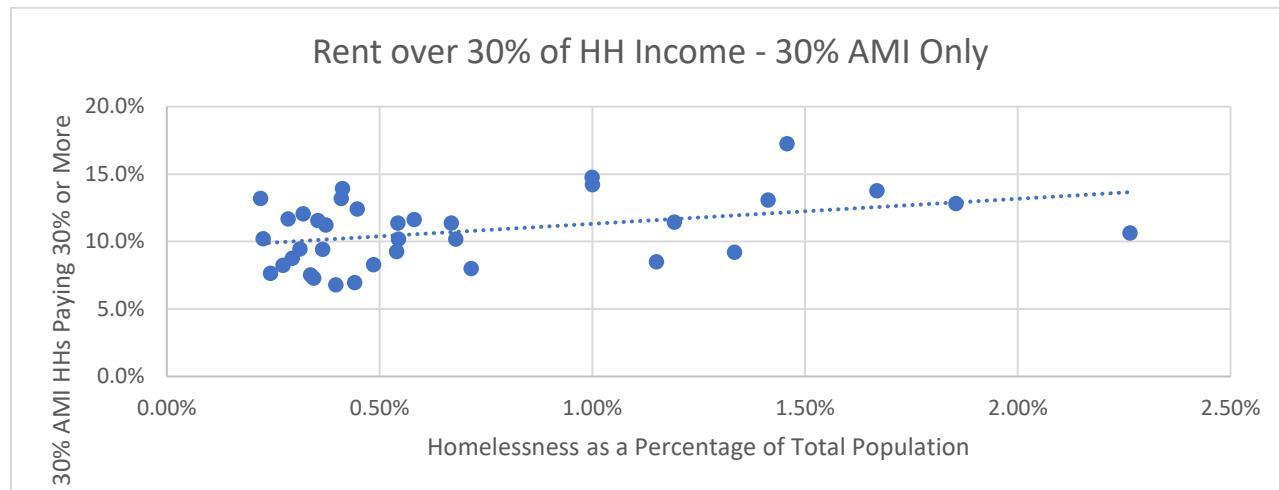
The data shows us that **poverty rates alone do not cause homelessness** – in fact, **communities with the highest rates of homelessness often also have the lowest rates of poverty, and visa versa**. While this data may at first appear unintuitive, it gets us closer to the most compelling answer indicated by the data...

Housing Costs for Low-Income Households

Finally, we arrive at our strongest correlative data: housing costs for low-income households.

There is a segment of housing that the market does not tend to naturally solve for, and that is those below 30% and sometimes even 50% of the Area Median Income (AMI). Here, the levels of rent it is possible to collect do not meet the revenues needed to make a compelling business case for the private sector to provide housing. This is also the income level at which the margins for error are incredibly slim. A household making \$400,000 a year can pay 50% of their household income towards housing costs and still be left with \$200,000 left for savings and other expenses. A household in the bottom range of the income bracket is left with much fewer resources once basic reoccurring costs like housing, food, and utilities are taken into account.

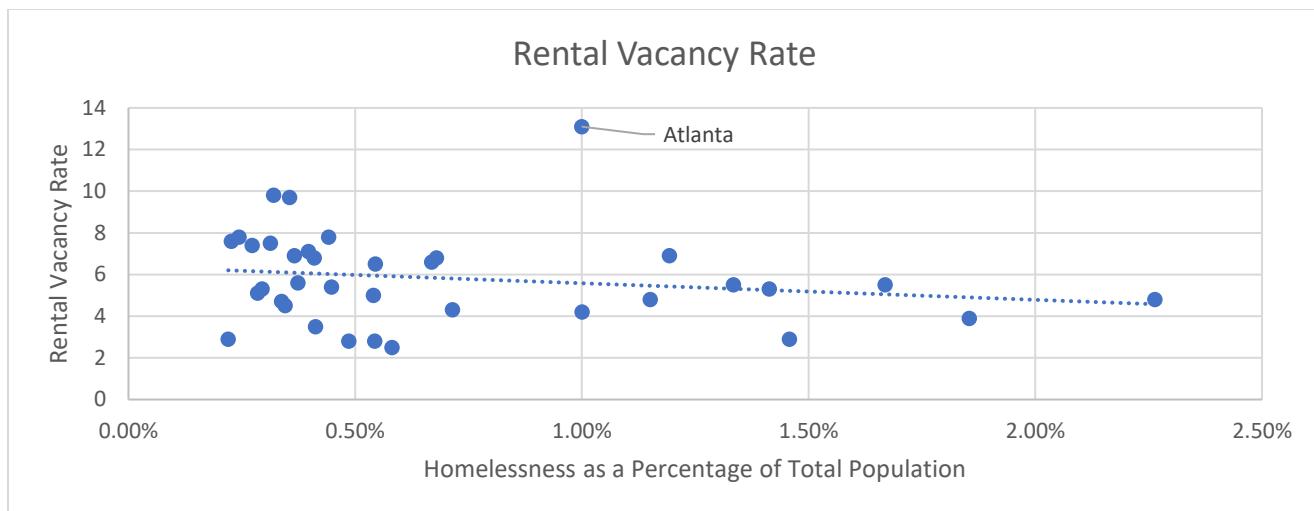
While we have observed in the previous section that high poverty rates on their own do not increase homelessness within a community, where household income *does* have a strong correlation to homelessness is when poverty intersects with housing costs:



Source: Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Point in Time data (2023), United States Census Bureau American Community Survey data (2023)

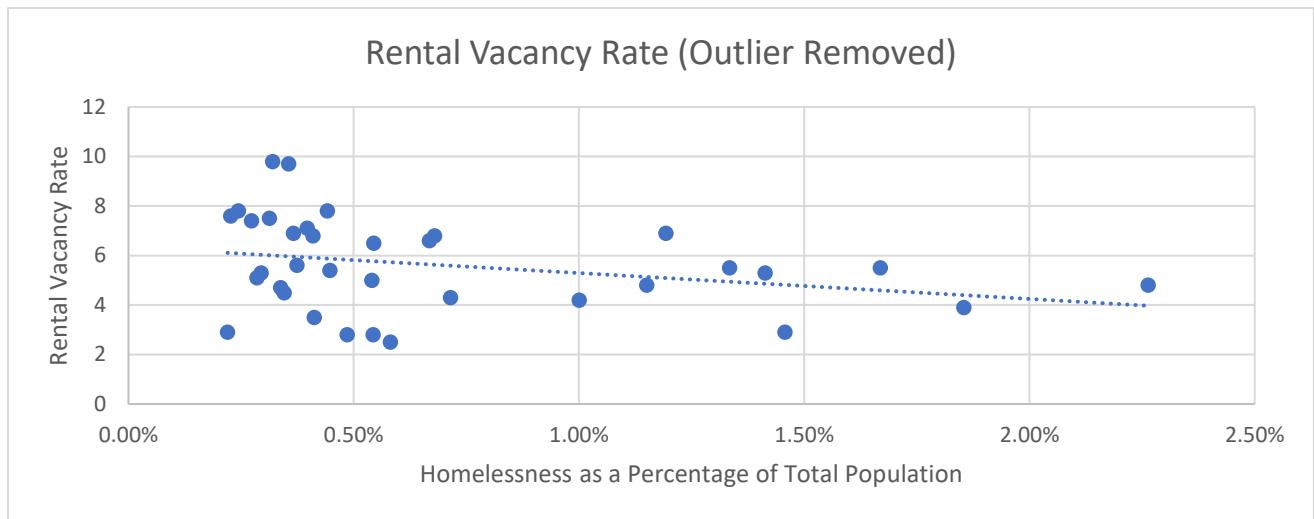
Here we can see that **for renters making 30% or less of AMI, there is a strong correlation between the rate of homelessness and rate of low-income households paying 30% or more of their income to rent.**

In a similar vein, the rental vacancy rate also demonstrates a correlation with the rate of homelessness, with lower availability of vacant rentals in a community corresponding to higher rates of homelessness. This can likely be explained by a tighter rental housing market leading to less competitive pricing in even lower-income units, bringing us back to the effect viewed in the graph above.



Source: Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Point in Time data (2023), United States Census Bureau American Community Survey data (2023)

We can see in the above graph that there is once again a significant outlier (Atlanta), but in this instance even with the outlier removed, the trendline remains relatively unchanged:



Source: Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Point in Time data (2023), United States Census Bureau American Community Survey data (2023)

Additional Affordable Housing Units Needed by 2029

Understanding the importance of housing units available to those in the 30% AMI range or below, we can utilize the Washington State Housing for All Planning Tool (HAPT) to project housing needs in that range within Yakima County from 2020 through 2029:

	Permanent Housing Needs by Income Level (% of Area Median Income)							
	0-30% Non-PSH	0-30% PSH	>30-50%	>50-80%	>80-100%	>100-120%	>120%	Emergency Housing Needs (Temporary)
Grandview	120	131	168	87	52	35	129	42

Granger	46	50	65	34	20	14	50	16
Harrah	1	1	1	1	0	0	1	0
Mabton	-15	-16	-20	-11	-6	-4	-16	-5
Moxee	154	168	215	111	66	45	165	54
Naches	27	30	38	20	12	8	29	10
Selah	149	163	209	108	64	43	160	53
Sunnyside	114	125	160	83	49	33	123	40
Tieton	44	48	62	32	19	13	47	16
Toppenish	15	16	21	11	6	4	16	5
Union Gap	59	64	82	43	25	17	63	21
Wapato	11	12	16	8	5	3	12	4
Yakima	612	668	856	444	262	178	658	216
Zillah	17	18	23	12	7	5	18	6
Unincorporated	0	0	0	64	38	26	404	0
TOTAL	1,354	1,478	1,896	1,047	619	420	1,859	478