

# Thurston County Homeless Census Report

# 2019

## Learning who is homeless and why?



A report produced by a  
Countywide partnership in  
conjunction with a 5-year  
Homeless Housing Plan.



# Thurston County 2019 Point in Time Homeless Census Report

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# 2019 Thurston County Homeless Census Report

## Preface

The 2019 Thurston County Homeless Census Report presents the results of the annual “Point in Time Count of Homeless Persons” coordinated statewide by the Washington State Department of Commerce. These results, along with the results from other Washington Counties can also be found on the Department of Commerce website located at: <http://www.commerce.wa.gov/serving-communities/homelessness/annual-point-time-count/>

This report was produced on behalf of the Thurston County Board of Commissioners and by the City of Olympia as contracted to complete the annual Point in Time Count and Thurston County Homeless Census Report on behalf of the County. Copies may be found online at the following websites:

<http://www.co.thurston.wa.us/health/sscp/index.html>

<http://olympiawa.gov/homelessness>

**Note on photographs:** Unless otherwise noted, this report contains stock photographs in order to protect the identity of local homeless people who did not want their photographs to be published.

**For questions, comments, or to request a digital copy of this report:**

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## Acknowledgements

It is important to acknowledge that the Point in Time Count and this report would not be possible without the tireless efforts of those in the community who volunteered their time, offered up space, and donated generously. The 2019 census was staffed by volunteers from faith-based organizations, nonprofits, the local business community, and State, County and City officials and staff.

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## Facility Partners

The following facilities hosted Homeless Connect Events or Homeless Census Activities in conjunction with the Homeless Census:

- ✧ Providence Community Care Center & Sidewalk
- ✧ Interfaith Works
- ✧ Rochester Organization of Families (ROOF)
- ✧ Rosie's Place Youth Drop-in Center (CYS)
- ✧ Family Support Center of South Sound
- ✧ Lacey Veteran's Services Hub
- ✧ Yelm Community Service Center
- ✧ Billy Frank Jr. Place & the Low Income Housing Institute

## Partners in Services

- ✧ Capitol Recovery Center & PATH Program
- ✧ City of Lacey & staff
- ✧ City of Olympia & staff
- ✧ City of Tumwater & staff
- ✧ Community Youth Services & Rosie's Place staff
- ✧ Covenant Creature & Leanne Johnson
- ✧ Family Support Center & staff
- ✧ Hair by Jesse
- ✧ Interfaith Works & staff
- ✧ Jamie Lee & Company Salon
- ✧ Lacey Veterans Hub
- ✧ Providence St. Peter Community Care Center
- ✧ Olympia Barber School & Maria Ferris
- ✧ Rochester Organization of Families (ROOF) staff
- ✧ Salvation Army
- ✧ Senior Services of South Sound
- ✧ Sidewalk staff & volunteers
- ✧ Terrence Lockwood, barber
- ✧ Thurston County Food Bank
- ✧ Thurston County Public Health & Social Services
- ✧ Union Gospel Mission of Olympia
- ✧ Washington Clippers Foot Care
- ✧ YWCA of Olympia's Other Bank

## Volunteers

Board of County Commissioners:

- ✧ John Hutchings, Commission Chair
- ✧ Gary Edwards, Commission Vice Chair
- ✧ Tye Menser, Commissioner

#### Thurston County Staff:

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- ✧ Gary Aden, Program Manager, Housing and Community Renewal
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#### City of Olympia Elected Officials

- ✧ Cheryl Selby, Mayor
- ✧ Clark Gilman, Council Member
- ✧ Renata Rollins, Council Member
- ✧ Jessica Bateman, Mayor Pro-Tem

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- ✧ Tom Oliva, Tumwater City Council Member
- ✧ David LaGarde, Volunteer Programs Coordinator
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- ✧ Ann Cook, Interim Communications Director
- ✧ Mike Matlock, Community Development Director
- ✧ John Doan, City Administrator
- ✧ Karen Kirkpatrick, City Attorney
- ✧ Brad Morrill-Pastor, South Sound Foursquare Church
- ✧ Heidi Cerniway, Assistant City Administrator
- ✧ Brad Medrud, Planning Manager

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Graham, Bonnie	Madrone, Dani	Roice, Colleen	Webster, Tom
Grasser, Aaron	Martinez, Marlo	Ross, Megan	

**Donations:**

Anna Schlecht  
 Big Tom’s Eastside Drive-In  
 City of Olympia Employees  
 Harbor Freight  
 Keith Stahley  
 Olive Garden  
 Salvation Army  
 Thurston County Employees  
 Thurston County Food Bank  
 YWCA of Olympia.



*Figure 1 2019 PIT Homeless Census  
 Volunteers conduct the survey to collect information*





# Chapter 1: Citizen Summary

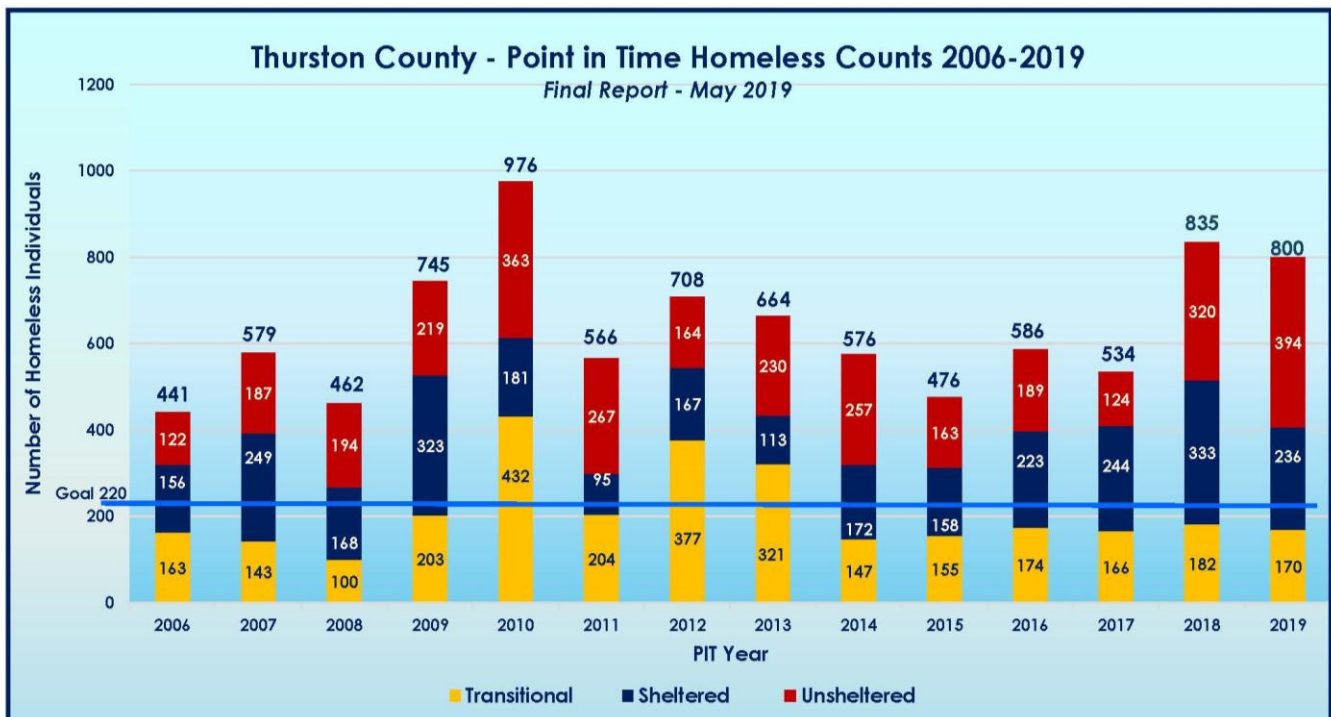
## Overview

The annual Thurston County Homeless Census tells us who is homeless and why. On January 24, 2019 Thurston County participated in the 14<sup>th</sup> annual statewide “Point in Time Count of Homeless Persons”, referred to as the Homeless Census or PIT Census. This census is required by the State Homeless Housing and Assistance Act as well as the Federal Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) as a way to accurately count those Americans who are without permanent housing. Census results help governments to ensure a proportionate level of public funding for local shelters, transitional housing, and related supportive services. These numbers also help to create the most accurate picture of homelessness throughout our state and across our nation.

Locally, census results are examined by many community stakeholders – policy makers, funders, service providers, concerned citizens and homeless people themselves. Together, we can look at who is homeless, why they are homeless, and what resources we have available. Effective responses to homelessness require accurate data and solid analysis to identify and create data-driven solutions.

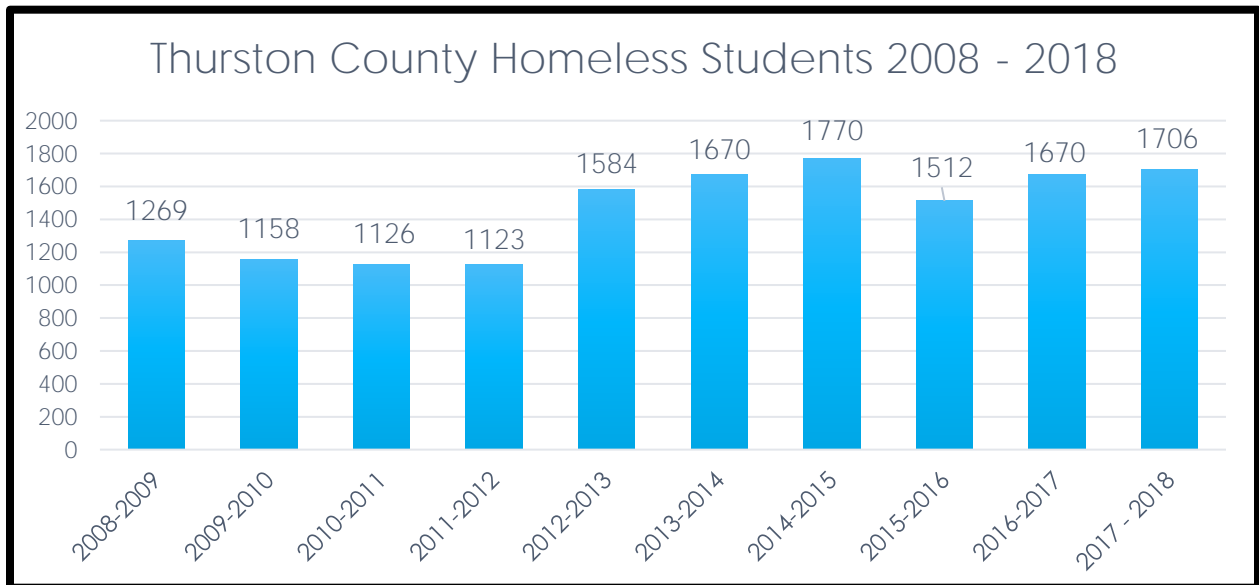
## PIT Homeless Census Counts: 2006 – 2019

The primary source for this report is the Thurston County PIT Homeless Census. The chart below presents 14 years of data. In 2019 there were 800 homeless people -4% or 35 less people since 2018, representing an increase of last year and an 81.4% increase from the 2006 baseline number of 441 homeless people. The numbers follow the broad economic trends of the past decade -- the rise of the recession, a drop during the recovery and most recently a rise that appears to correlate with sharp rent increases in Thurston County (*2017 Thurston County Assessment of Fair Housing Report*), mirroring trends on the entire West Coast.



## Homeless Students in Public Schools

The second source of homeless data is a parallel census, conducted by all eight (8) of Thurston County's school districts, which found 1,706 homeless public school students (Kindergarten through 12th grade) in data available from the most recent school year of 2017–2018. This represents a slight 2% or a 36 student increase over last year, and 1,052 more students and a 161% increase since the 2006 baseline of 654 students. As explained later in this report, these data are compiled from a year-long census that includes students staying with friends and family—a demographic not included in the County Census.



## Accomplishments in Context of 2019 PIT Homeless Census

Homelessness in Thurston County is rising, and it appears that while many people are finding housing and other resources, new people are falling into homelessness.

Following is an overview of the accomplishments of Thurston County and City of Olympia in responding to homelessness:

- 1) **Continued Regional Leadership:** Thurston County continues to work across the region with all jurisdictions through the Thurston Thrives network and its Housing Action Team. The County Commission held several study sessions, inviting each jurisdiction to present its plans and accomplishments; and, the Five Year Homeless Housing Plan is serving as the vehicle for developing a more authentically regional homeless response plan.
- 2) **Homeless Coordinators Hired – County & Municipal:** Both Thurston County and City of Olympia hired Homeless Coordinators (in January, 2019 and March 2018 respectively) to provide strengthen all levels of the regional homeless response effort.
- 3) **Strengthened Partnerships:** Local governments continue to work closely with Faith Communities, including the Evergreen Christian Center donation of \$300,000 for Olympia’s Homeless Coordination Plan and Union Gospel Mission’s partnership with the County’s Extreme Weather Shelter program. Thurston County has explored options to expertise of private sector developers and other stakeholders in the ad hoc group, “Incentivize Housing”.
- 4) **Expanded Service Models and Networks:** In the past year, the City of Olympia has worked with the County and other jurisdictions to expand the continuum of homeless accommodations in the following ways:
  - a. **Tiny House Village(s):** Creation of a tiny house village on City-owned property with on-site case management and public sanitation (portable restrooms and solid waste);
  - b. **Mitigation Site(s):** Creation of a sanctioned and lightly managed camp on City-owned property with case management and public sanitation (portable restrooms and solid waste);
  - c. **Unsanctioned Camps:** Allowance for un-sanctioned camps on public property with public safety conditions (violations subject to camp clearance) and public sanitation (portable restrooms and solid waste);

Together, these four elements are helping to maximize our homeless response in Thurston County. Following is a brief summary of County and City of Olympia actions to respond to homelessness and the need for affordable housing.

## Countywide Actions to Reduce Homelessness

Since 2006, Thurston County has invested over \$40 million dollars (Includes \$3.5 M each for 2016 & 2017) to support many successful projects and programs to reduce homelessness. These funds have been invested in providing affordable housing, rental assistance and other essential services to reduce homelessness throughout the county. The funding for these projects and programs is managed by the Thurston County in consultation with the Thurston Thrives Housing Action Team, the Community Investment Partnership (CIP), and all seven (7) jurisdictions in Thurston County – Bucoda, Lacey, Olympia, Rainier Tenino, Tumwater and Yelm. The funding sources include: the federal HOME Program, the federal Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Program and the two state-funded programs

called the Homeless Housing Program and the Affordable Housing Program, which are funded by document recording fee dollars which are collected by Thurston County. Notable accomplishments include:



Figure 2 Thurston County funded Habitat for Humanity of South Sound to build five more houses for low-income first-time home-buyers in their Deyoe Vista Sub-division in Lacey. (Photo credit: Shanna Paxton Photography)

**Rapid Re-housing:** This past year, an estimated 510 households received rental assistance through contracts with a number of housing providers.

**New Housing Production:** The Thurston County Housing Authority is completing six (6) new housing units in Olympia this year and Habitat for Humanity is completing five more houses in their Deyoe Vista sub-division in Lacey.

**Housing Improvement:** approximately 12 total units of housing rehabilitation were completed: Homes First acquired and rehabilitated six (6) housing units; Housing

**Emergency Shelter:** Provided 242 year-round shelter beds with another 108 Extreme (cold) weather beds for a total of 350 shelter beds. The County also fund case management for 115 encampment “beds” in homeless camps.

**Social & Supportive Services:** 13 Social service agencies received support for operations and maintenance costs, ultimately benefitting an estimate of over 1,400 low and moderate income people.

**County Homeless Coordination:** In January 2019, the County filled a long-vacant Homeless Coordinator position to strengthen our regional homeless response plan. Key accomplishments to date include:

- Strengthen the Hazard Weather Shelter System (emergency shelter in hazardous weather conditions)
- Revision of the Five-Year Homeless Housing Plan
- Support efforts to expand the regional homeless outreach efforts

## City of Olympia Actions to Respond to Unsheltered Homelessness

As part of a regional partnership, the City of Olympia is working to provide safe and legal shelter options, while we manage City property for its intended use and balance the needs of the unsheltered with the impacts on the community. Following are recent actions taken by the City to respond to unsheltered homelessness:

**Homeless Coordination:** The City hired a Homeless Coordinator in March 2018 to develop and implement a homeless response plan in conjunction with a broad inter-departmental team of city Staff. Activities include several of the actions listed below.

**Mitigation Site(s):** In early 2019 the City opened the first of several mitigation sites intended to serve as temporary, legal camping sites that provide a level of order, safety, dignity and cleanliness to reduce human suffering and the impacts of unmanaged camping on the community. While the first site is located in downtown Olympia on a City-owned parking lot, the City hopes to partner with another jurisdiction to open another mitigation site outside of the urban hub.

**Plum Street Village:** The Plum Street Tiny House Village was opened as a temporary site to provide stable, managed shelter for 40-50 people experiencing homelessness in Olympia. The City is leasing the property to the Low Income Housing Institute (LIHI) to provide approximately 30 tiny houses for 40+ single adults and couples without children. On-site amenities include a security house, a communal kitchen, meeting space, bathrooms, showers, laundry, a case management office, and 24/7 staff providing security and management.



*Figure 3 City of Olympia worked with Low Income Housing Institute to create a 30-structure tiny house village for up to 50 people, offering social services & referrals for permanent housing.*

**City & Faith Community Pilot Partnership:** The City and Faith Community Pilot Partnership enables faith communities and non-profits to establish and manage tiny house and transitional shelter facilities on their property to temporarily house homeless individuals. The 2019 pilot program provides for three sites that will offer: a) Two small sites with 1-6 houses each; and, b) One medium size site with 10-20 houses, and communal facilities. The City will provide funding and staff support for three local faith organizations to set up and manage the tiny house/shelter facilities on their property.

**24/7 Shelter & Storage Programs:** The City is providing funding to two existing shelters – Community Youth Services and Salvation Army so that they may move to 24/7 operations. Additionally, the City is partnering with Union Gospel Mission to host the first secure storage site on their property. The Port of Olympia has donated and will fabricate the locked storage container. Users will have access twice a day, seven days a week.

**Expanded Street Outreach: Crisis Response Unit & Familiar Faces:** The Crisis Response Unit is a partnership between Olympia Police Department and Recovery Innovations International to provide free, confidential, voluntary crisis response assistance. The CRU increases the City's ability to provide

outreach services to those in crisis, identify each individual's circumstances and needs, and help identify individuals with chronic mental health disorders, substance abuse and co-occurring disorders. The **Familiar Faces** program uses peer navigators to help identify and assist individuals with complex health and behavioral problems who have frequent and persistent contact with the Olympia Police Department's Walking Patrol. These individuals are 15-20 of the most vulnerable in Downtown and the most resistant to services and resources. Different from traditional service providers, peer navigators offer a shared life experience and non-judgmental and unconditional support to those they are assisting.

**Olympia Community Development Block Grant (CDBG):** In the past year, the City CDBG program provided \$400,000 in land acquisition funds to Family Support Center to support the development of 88 housing units for formerly homeless families; \$300,000 for the Salvation Army's expanded Day Center & Community Kitchen; \$55,000 for the Downtown Ambassadors Street Outreach Program; and \$56,000 for a displaced tenant assistance program to help up to 29 households displaced by re-development.

**New Resource - Olympia Home Fund:** In 2017, Olympia voters passed a levy to fund this new resource dedicated to developing and sustain supportive and affordable housing. In 2019, the Olympia Council approved the first award of 1.3 million to Low Income Housing Institute for the construction of a mixed use project that incorporates 60 units of housing with 60 shelter beds to be operated in partnership with Interfaith Works.

### **Summary of Accomplishments:**

Together these projects and programs provided housing, shelter and essential services that helped hundreds of households across Thurston County. These accomplishments show that a significant number of homeless and at-risk people were assisted, likely preventing them from becoming homeless. If not for the County funding provided, the rate of homelessness in Thurston County would be significantly higher.



# Chapter 2: Overview of the Homeless Census

## Overview

Each year at the end of January, Thurston County participates in a statewide effort to conduct a census of homeless people and then produces a report examining the results. As a “Point in Time” census, this represents a finite count of people from a specific 24-hour period near the end of January, selected as the end of the coldest month of the year. The results are presented in this homeless census report which serves to:

- 1) **Examine ‘Who’s Homeless and Why’** by obtaining the most accurate census of homeless people, the causes of their homelessness, and other useful demographic information;
- 2) **Quantify Needs** by reporting the number and demographics of homeless people, which in turn brings in federal and state dollars to provide homeless shelter, transitional housing, and other services;
- 3) **Assess Resources** by tracking currently available housing and service resources; and
- 4) **Analyze Data and Refine Strategies** by examining needs and resources and supporting the development of better strategies for local responses to homelessness.

## Definitions of Homelessness

This census report is primarily based on the State’s definition of homelessness, which includes people living in the following accommodations:

- **Unsheltered** - places not meant for human habitation such as cars, tents, parks, sidewalks, abandoned buildings, on the street); and,
- **Substandard Housing** - defined as a dwelling lacking drinking water, restroom, heat, ability to cook hot food, or ability to bathe.
- **Emergency Shelter** - also termed homeless shelters, provides emergency housing for up to 90 days;
- **Transitional Housing** - a form of temporary housing assistance lasting for less than two years;



This definition derives from the federal definition of homelessness, which comes from the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD).

*Figure 4 The PIT Street Outreach Team, composed of Olympia Downtown Ambassadors, the Crisis Response Unit and the Familiar Faces Program prepares to head out to survey unsheltered people*

HUD defines homelessness as (1) an individual who lacks a fixed, regular and adequate nighttime residence; and (2) an individual who has a primary nighttime residence that is:

- A supervised publicly or privately operated shelter designed to provide temporary living accommodations (including welfare hotels, congregate shelters, and transitional housing);
- An institution that provides a temporary residence for individuals intended to be institutionalized; or
- A public or private place not designed for, or ordinarily used as, a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings.

For the purposes of this count, transitional housing refers to housing with a 2-year stay limit where being homeless is a prerequisite for eligibility. Transitional housing also typically offers case-management services that are required as part of the program. Persons in transitional housing programs that allow them to continue living permanently in housing after a transition period (“transition in place”) are not considered homeless if participation in case management is not a condition of residency.

## Other People without Permanent Housing

While the State definition of homelessness is limited to those listed above, the Homeless Census also collects information on other people without permanent homes in order to capture a more comprehensive count of people who impact social and shelter services, including:

- People staying with friends and family (also known as “couch-surfing”).
- People held in jails or medical institutions who will be released to homelessness.

These numbers are useful for understanding the impact of people in jails or institutions who will be released to homelessness. It is also helpful in looking at the people who temporarily stay with friends or family, many of whom may cycle to living in their cars or homeless shelters. This standard was used to produce the numbers referred to as the “county census” count of homeless individuals. All data presented herein will cite the standard as either “state count” or “full count.”

## 2019 Census Data Accuracy

Nationwide, the annual Homeless Census provides the single best measure of how effective our homeless response efforts have been in a particular region. In Thurston County, the PIT results are only year over year assessment of work to reduce homelessness. However, there is significant critique on the effectiveness of the PIT methodology and estimates that unsheltered populations are under-counted by half or more. Here in Thurston County, there were conditions that may have compromised the accuracy, sometimes referred to as the statistical validity of the Homeless Census, listed as follows:

**Critique of HUD’s PIT Count Methodology:** National estimates of undercounts resulting from PIT rules seem applicable here in Thurston County. Organizations including the Nation Law Center (*Don’t Count on it; How the HUD Point-in-Time Count Underestimates the Homeless Crisis in America, 2017*) and the Coalition for the Homeless (*Briefing Paper: Undercounting the Homeless 2010*) cite numerous flaws in the HUD mandated methodology. These flaws include: 1) exclusion of people staying with friends and family; 2) missing people in non-visible places; and, 3) limiting the count to a single day, rather than multiple days that would allow for a more comprehensive census. Locally, many service providers and



advocates believe the inclusion of identifying information (name, etc.) deters those who may be fleeing warrants or simply not trust governmental data bases.

**Reduced Shelter Count:** This year, there was a 97 person reduction in the shelter count – 236 shelter residents were counted in 2019 vs. 333 shelter residents counted in 2018. Part of this was due to a reduction in the number of shelter beds – Salvation Army had reduced their capacity to 35 beds of cold weather shelter only (available November 1 – April 30<sup>th</sup>) in order to accommodate a renovation project. A further reduction was the result of Union Gospel Mission not submitting their shelter data for inclusion. The latter reduction underscores the failure of the PIT Census methodology to capture unhoused people who are not part of a publicly funded shelter program and therefore not compelled to report their occupancy.

**Non-cooperation by Some Unsheltered Homeless Populations:** Numerous unhoused people report their concern that participation in the Homeless Census might lead to camp clearances or police harassment. Some homeless people harbor a general distrust of government and do not want their names in a data base. Service providers and homeless advocates confirm that this perception is prevalent among unsheltered people. These concerns stem from the fact that most unsheltered people must break either laws or rules to sleep in cars, abandoned buildings or to camp in the woods. Unsheltered parents are often reluctant to self-identify as homeless for fear of losing their children. Additionally, those with outstanding criminal warrants may fear any contact with government related activities such as a census.

**Rural Homeless - Hard to Find:** Rural homeless people remain elusive. Rural officials estimate there are a significant number of people living in substandard housing (lacking in heating, cooking or sanitation facilities) that would meet the definition of homeless.

Many rurally-based homeless people tend to exist “off the grid” of homeless services, where fewer services exist, which makes it difficult to locate them via service providers. Methodologies used in urban areas – such as using homeless outreach events or field census teams – are less effective in areas with scattered-site camp locations.

**Consistent Methodology vs. Continual Improvement:** A government-conducted census effort runs into two conflicting standards. First, standard practices in social research requires consistent methodology in order to achieve accurate and comparable data, year over year. However, standard government practices dictate the need for continual improvement in public services, seeking critical feedback to enhance the methodology as a continual feedback/improvement loop.

Some critics have cited the change in methodology as a threat to census validity. Still other critics have challenged the scope of methodology in given years as having insufficient reach. In preparation for the 2019 Homeless Census, outreach was done to look at best practices across Washington State and the nation. Conversations were held with State, County, and City officials, as well as with providers of homeless services and local stakeholders. Based on these consultations, the PIT methodologies were enhanced in 2019 to reach more unsheltered people.



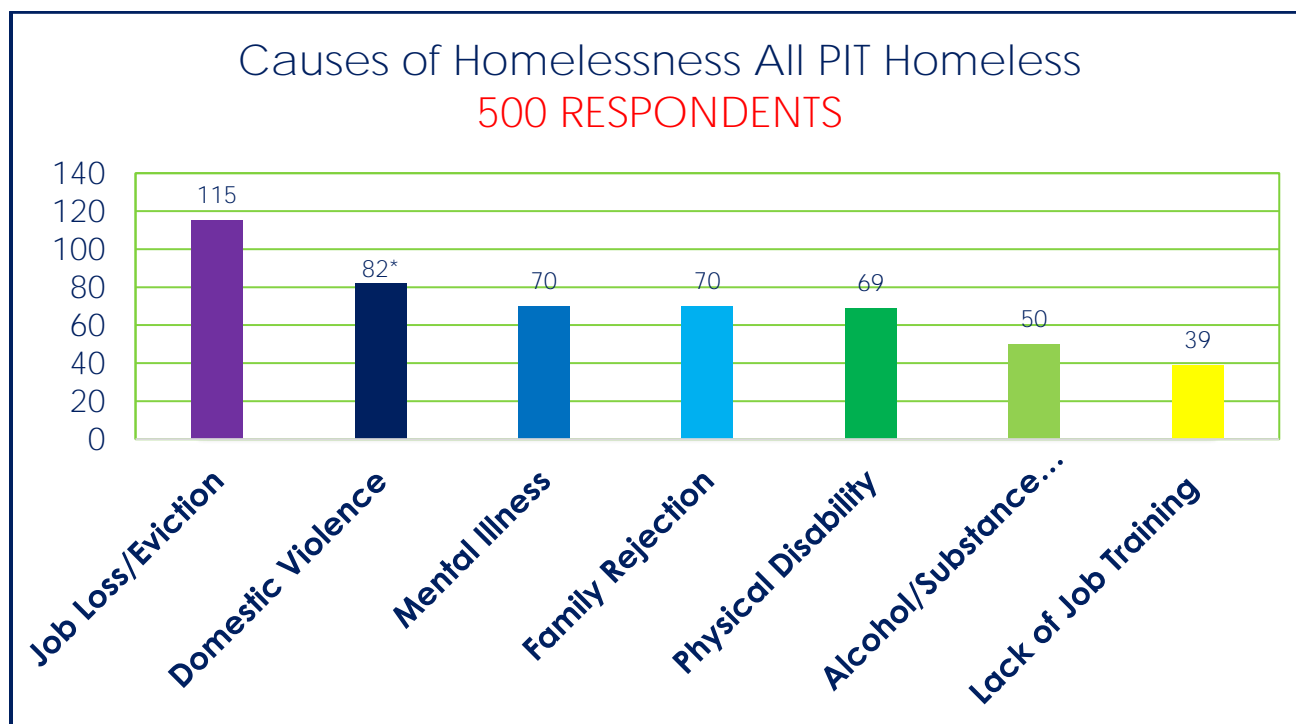
# Chapter 3: Examining the Numbers

## Overview

The following series of charts present the results of the 2019 PIT Homeless Census, primarily using the state definition of homelessness. Additional information is available in the Appendix C. Titled, “**Thurston County 2019 PIT – Full Census Data at a Glance**”. **Please Note:** Some respondents only answered the threshold PIT questions of name, gender and where did you stay in order to be included in the formal PIT Census. As a result, some questions show the smaller, actual number of respondents for each question. Additionally, this report presents some charts and information on people living with friends or families and people in jail or medical facilities who will be released to homelessness. Although these homeless people do not meet the HUD definition of homelessness, they clearly present a significant impact on local services and the community at large. Please note that due to technical issues with the state’s database, some of the totals and subtotals may be off by 5 persons or less from chart to chart.

## Causes of Homelessness

Understanding the root or precipitating causes of homelessness is key to identifying the most appropriate resources. The chart below presents the self-reported causes of homelessness by respondents in the county census. Each respondent was asked to report all situations that applied, recognizing that causes of homelessness may have a multiplier effect.



\*out of 800 respondents

The chart shows that the two largest reported causes of homelessness are job loss (115 or 23% of respondents) and eviction for non-payment (116 or 23% of respondents). The next two causes were mental illness and family break-up, both cited by 70 or 14% of respondents.

These statistics may be problematic given the conflicting directives of the WA State Department of Commerce to collect names of all respondents and the federal HIPAA law (the “Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act” of 1996) that protects the medical privacy of mentally ill people and other respondents with medical conditions covered by HIPAA.

In general, service providers are prohibited from releasing medical information with the names of their clients.

On a different question regarding self-reported disabilities, 98, or 56% of respondents, self-disclosed mental illness, and 174 or 43% of respondents cited permanent disability, which may have been a contributing factor in their homelessness.

## Where the Homeless Find Refuge

To be included in this homeless census, respondents had to meet the definition for homelessness on the night of January 24, 2019, when the census was conducted.

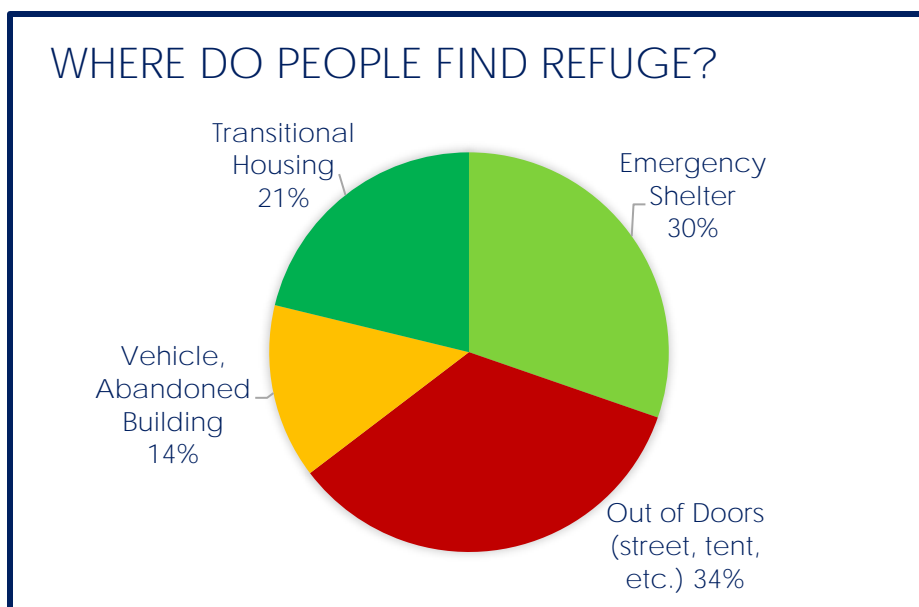
The results present a snapshot of where the homeless take shelter, which includes a broad array of formal and informal accommodations.

The graph to the right represents the range of those answers. Nearly half of all homeless people reported they were unsheltered, 394 people, or 49% respondents.

Of this number, there were 273 of the people living out of doors, 115 people living in vehicles or RV’s and 2 people were living in abandoned buildings.

Another 30% of all local homeless or 236 people spent the night in emergency homeless shelters, which was down from 333 in 2018 (Salvation Army was undergoing renovations and Union Gospel Mission

does not report out to the PIT Census). The remaining 170 people, or 21% of all homeless households, were living in transitional housing, defined as housing designed to facilitate the movement of homeless individuals or families to permanent housing within a reasonable amount of time, usually 24 months or less.



## Other People without Homes

Beyond the HUD-defined number of homeless people, the census also collected information on individuals who “lack a fixed, regular and adequate nighttime residence” (HUD definition).

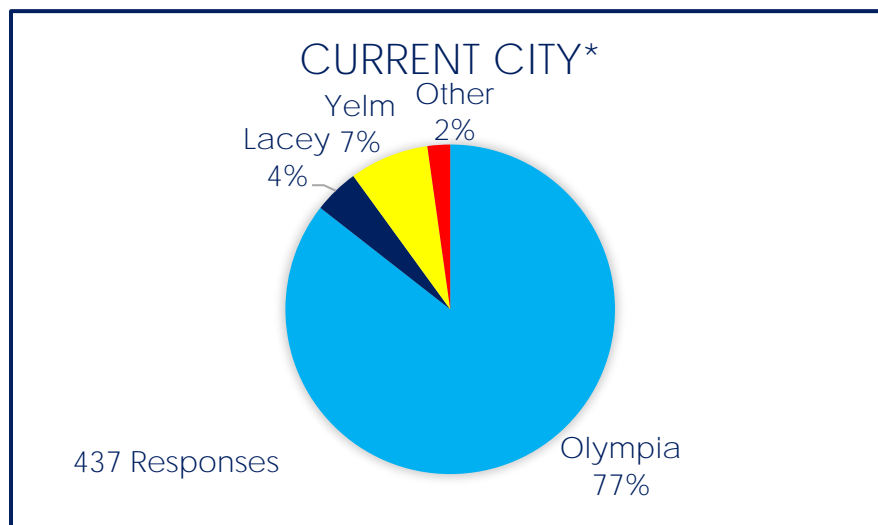
This included an estimated 149 or 38% of people in jails will be released to homelessness (Please note: Nisqually Jail does not participate in the PIT Census). The United States Interagency Council on Homelessness (USCIH) estimate that at least 15% of incarcerated people will be released to homelessness (*“Reducing Criminal Justice System Involvement among People Experiencing Homelessness”*, the U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness, August 2016).

There were 102 people in medical facilities who will be released to homelessness. It also includes 93 people temporarily staying with friends or families. While these numbers are not included in the state-defined total of 800 (page 14, “Definitions of Homelessness”), these homeless people typically have a significant impact on local services such as food banks, soup kitchens and other services. Many report that they “run out of” friends and family and ultimately end up in homeless shelters.

Among this number of “other homeless people” are the unaccompanied minors who are not living with parents or guardians. These youth typically cycle from staying with friends, sometimes termed “couch surfing,” and living on the streets. Providing shelter for unaccompanied minors presents a significant challenge, because many avoid going into “the system” being returned to their parents or guardians as a result of Washington State’s “Becca Laws”, which are intended to keep families together.

## Geography of Homelessness

The geography of homelessness shows where homeless people go to find survival resources. For the purposes of the PIT, this data takes the form of two discreet sets. People were asked both where their last permanent address was, and what their current City of residence was. By comparing these two sets of information, the movement of homeless persons in Thurston County can be tracked.



### Current City

The vast majority of homeless respondents called Olympia their current home. Information on Transitional and Emergency Shelter client data is garnered from the location of their respective service facilities, the majority of respondents – 337 or 77% were found in Olympia. The unsheltered population, however, was interviewed

throughout Thurston County on the day of the count, and more accurately reflects demographics. There is still a level of difficulty in capturing rural homeless, as people experiencing this struggle in rural

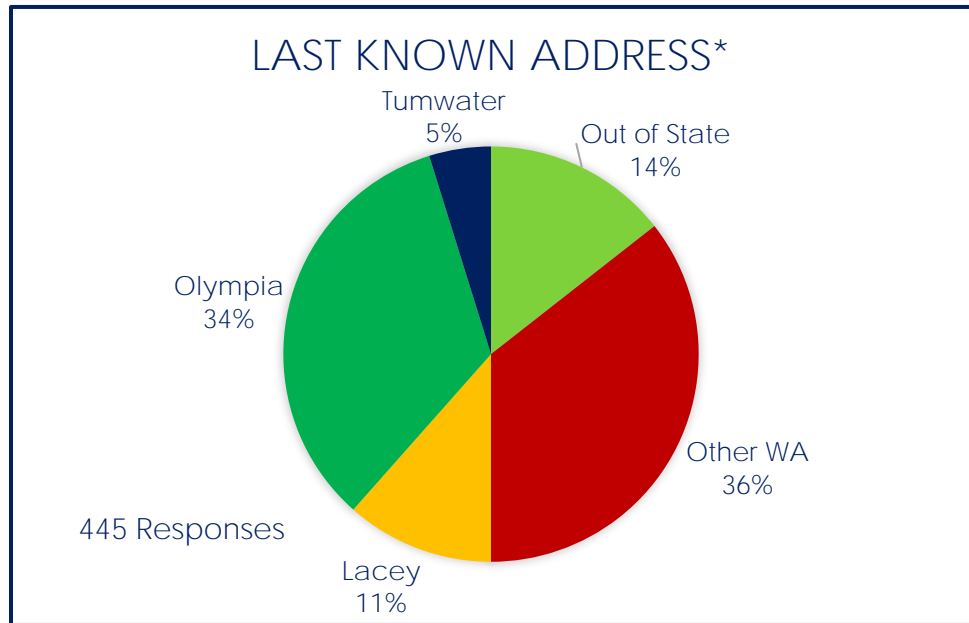
communities are far less likely to be found in centralized location, or be willing to answer the PIT survey questions.

The chart above shows that for the unsheltered population, the vast majority of surveys were conducted in Olympia, and people identified Olympia as their current home in 336 of 437 survey respondents (77%). The next most common answers were 31 people or 7% found in Yelm, followed by 18 or 4% in Lacey.

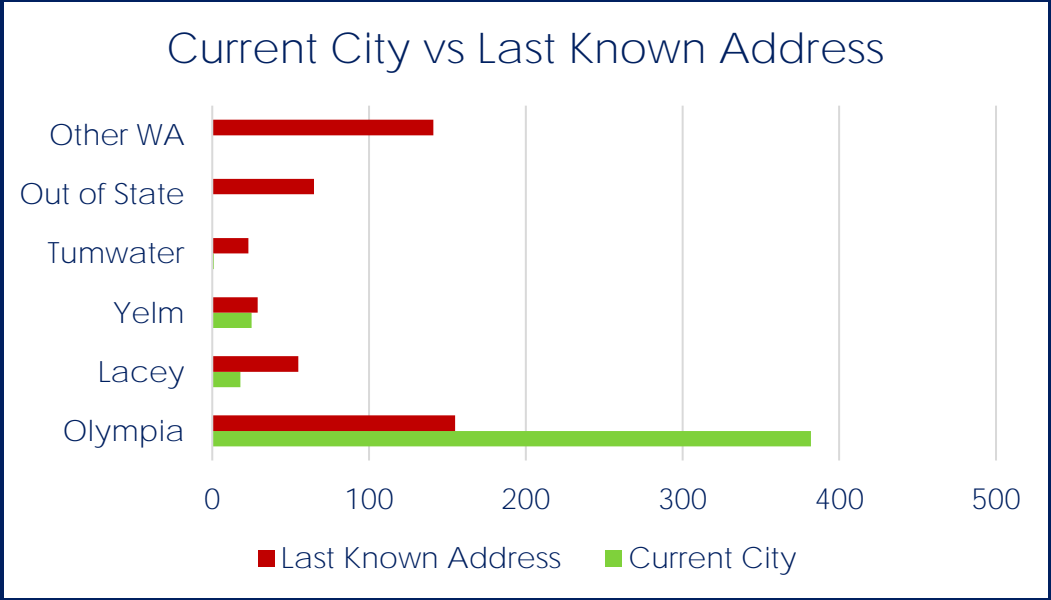
### Last Permanent Residence

A very different geography is presented by the answers of where the respondents had their last permanent residence, meaning a home with an address. Of a total of 445 respondents, only 151 or 34% of the total respondents (down from 36% in 2018) stated that Olympia was the location of their last permanent residence. Another 49 or 11% said they had lived in Lacey (significant increase from 3% in 2018) and 22 or 4%, stated that they had lived in Tumwater (down from 11% in 2018). The remaining 62 or 14%, said they were from other states (down from 28% in 2018). These results show that the number of people originally from Thurston County decreased 5% since 2018 and the number of people from outside Washington State decreased from 28% in 2018. **The most significant change was that the number of homeless people from other parts of Washington nearly tripled to 36% (only 13% in 2018).** It is important to note that the vast majority of those who replied to this questions were unsheltered along with some responses from emergency shelters. Because of state reporting limitations, last permanent residence data was not available at all for the 170 persons listed as staying in Transitional Housing.

This data suggests that limited choices for services in rural areas can drive homeless people into areas with more available help in a concentrated area. In a dynamic repeated across the country, homeless people from small towns and rural areas are forced to migrate to areas with higher concentrations of services, shelter and transitional housing.

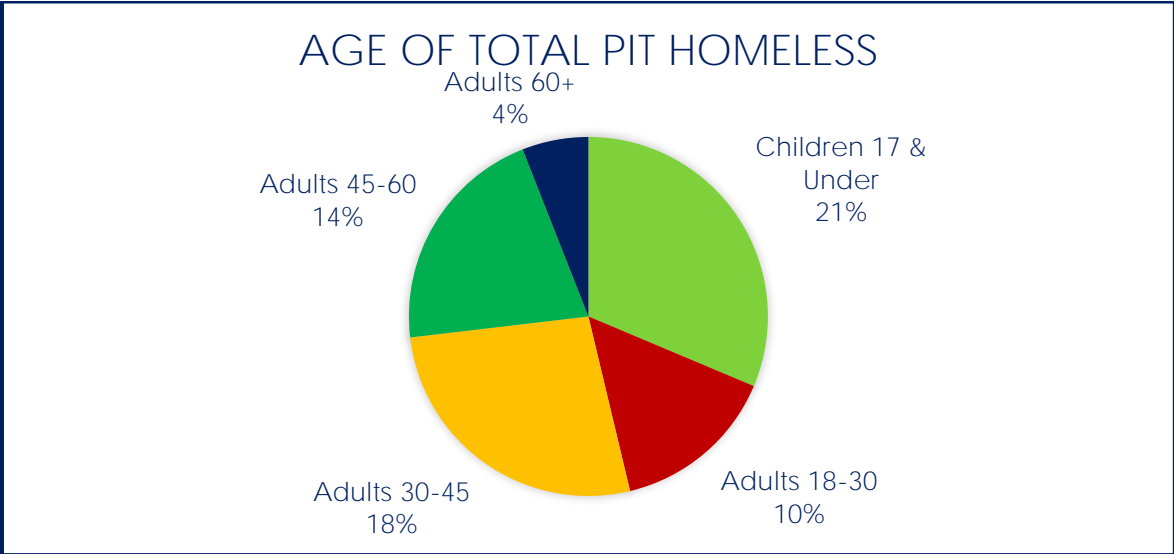


\* Includes both unsheltered & some sheltered respondents



The chart above shows a comparison between the last permanent address of residence and current City of refuge answers for the homeless population. While there is some inconsistency in the data because Transitional Housing providers do not capture information on the last known address. However, this chart clearly shows that where ever they came from, the vast majority of Thurston County’s homeless citizens are now in Olympia – more than double the number of people whose last permanent address was in Olympia (see above). This concentration is result of where the services, shelter beds and other resources are located.

**Ages of the Homeless**

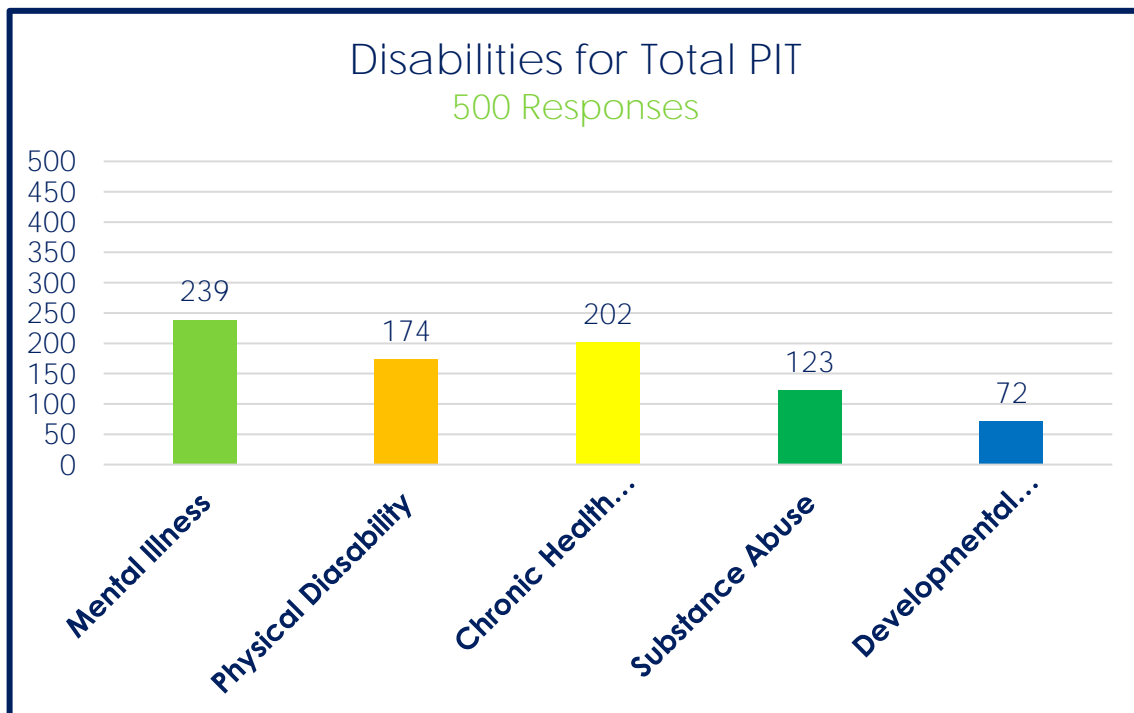


Homelessness affects persons of all ages: families with small children, youth, single adults, and elderly are all represented in the Point-in-Time count. Indeed, the largest single demographic falls in the under 17 and under age group, where 21% of Thurston County’s homeless population are children. A separate data set from the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction shows there are 1706 homeless school age children in Thurston County. (See the section on OSPI data for more on homeless students.) The PIT Census found 142 or 18% of respondents were between the ages of 30-45, and 114 or 14% were between the ages of 45-60. There were 81 or 10% who were adults between 18 - 30 years of age. Only 30 people or 4% of homeless persons were over 60 years of age.

### Disabilities for the Homeless

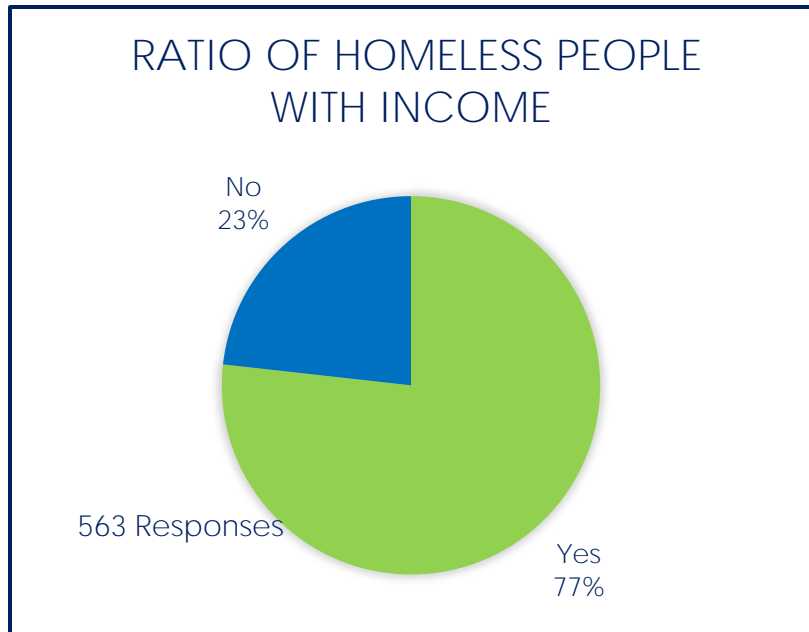
Many people who experience homelessness self-report that they live with disabilities. These can impact their ability to successfully access social services, find work, and stay housed. In 2019, the largest reported disability was mental health issues, with 239 persons or 56% of respondents reporting that their health was a major factor in their lives. Another 174 people or 43%, reported a permanent physical disability.

Chronic substance/alcohol abuse continue to be relevant factors in the homeless population as well, with 123 people or 33% of respondents. A similar number of people - 202 or 33% reported having a chronic health problem. A lesser number of people, 72 (12%) reported living with a developmental disability in 2019. Overall, the data this year suggests that access to adequate health care is a significant issue for homeless people in Thurston County.

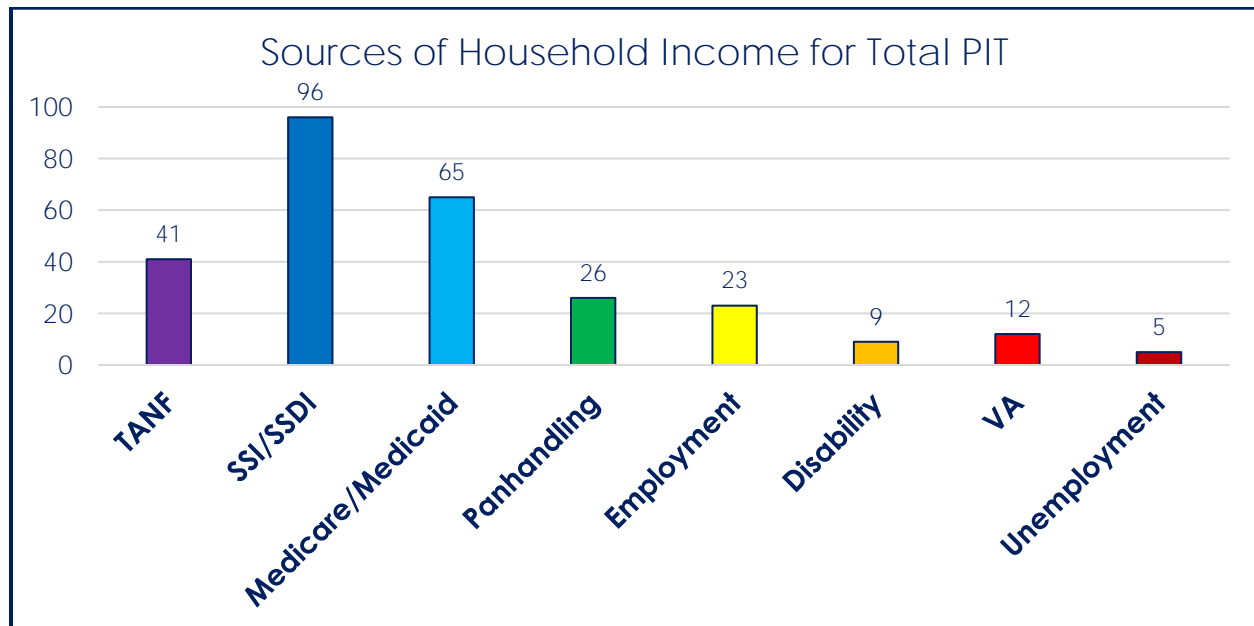


## Sources of Income for Homeless People

Using data to ascertain the sources of income which are a resource for homeless persons in Thurston County helps to alleviate misconceptions. While people often see homeless persons panhandling, the PIT data shows that a relatively small number of homeless persons reported panhandling as a source of income. Of those who responded, about 400 of the respondents or 50% reported they had some form of income. Only 31%, reported “no income.” The form of income varied, but the majority of reported income came in the form of public assistance programs. The largest reported source of income was Social Security for 96 or 26% of respondents. Medicaid or Medicare was cited as the second most common source of funding for 65 or 18% of respondents. The third highest sources was TANF, or Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, with 41 or 11% of the total count reporting using this resource. Another 23 people, or 6% reported receiving income from work, being employed either part time, full time, or as a seasonal worker.



The remainder reported a variety of income sources. Information for this question is limited by the lack of data in the State database from people living in Transitional housing or staying at shelters. The chart below presents the breakdown of sources of income.





## How Long Have They Been Homeless

HUD Defines Chronic Homelessness as someone with a disability who has also: 1) been homeless for over one year; or, 2) has been homeless at least four times in three years.

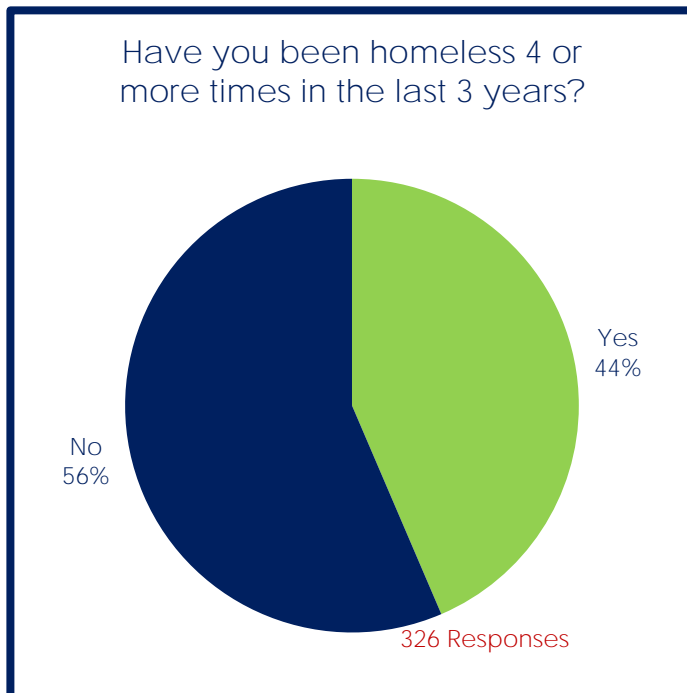
According to the National Alliance to End Homelessness, people who are chronically homeless are among the most vulnerable in the homeless population, tending to have

high rates of behavioral health problems that are often exacerbated by physical illness, injury or trauma.

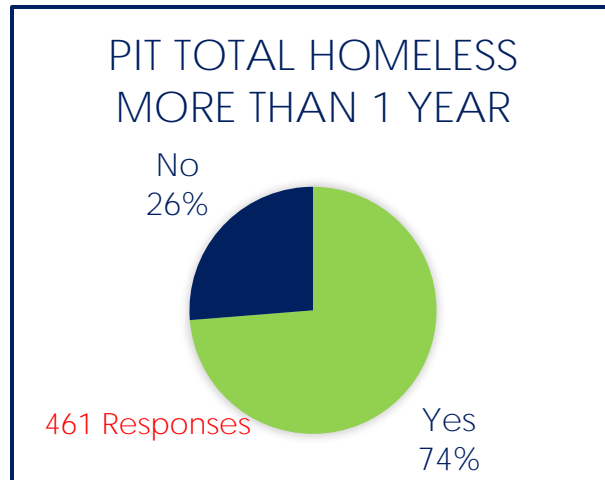
To determine the number of chronically homeless people, the census examined data on three questions.

One of the census questions asked how long people were homeless. Nearly three quarters or 335 of the respondents or 74% of respondents said they had been homeless for more than a year, which is one qualifier for being chronically homeless. This represents a significant increase over last year when only 62% reported having been homeless for over a year.

To capture the second indicator of chronic homelessness, another question asked if the respondents lived with a disability and comparing that against the number of persons who have been homeless more than one year, and/or have been homeless 4 or more times in the last 3 years, the Washington State



Department of Commerce's chronic homeless calculator estimates that 264, or 33% of people in Thurston County's homeless population qualify as chronically homeless. Of that number, 247 or 63 % of the total 394 unsheltered people were chronically homeless. Only 17 or 7% of the 236 people in emergency shelters were identified as chronically homeless.



## Trends in Thurston County Homelessness

Fourteen years of PIT Census data reveals who's homeless in a given year as well as the trends of who is homeless over time. The chart on this page presents 13 years of data on who the homeless are, where they were accommodated, and some of the issues they face. The questions that emerge in examining this data include: (1) How many people remain homeless year after year? 2) How many leave homelessness and find permanent housing? 3) How many are newly homeless each year? 4) How do we measure progress more accurately, i.e. compare the ratio of newly homeless to housed people?

### Trends in Thurston County Homelessness 2006 – 2019

***	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
<b>Out of Doors</b>	122	187	154	219	363	269	171	237	263	163	189	166	320	394
<b>Shelters</b>	156	167	118	123	181	141	171	180	155	158	223	242	333	236
<b>Transitional Housing</b>	163	143	100	203	432	260	382	269	181	155	174	171	182	170
<b>Subtotal – HUD Defined Homeless</b>	441	579	462	745	976	568	724	686	599	476	586	579	<b>835</b>	<b>800</b>
<b>Jails &amp; Medical Institutions</b> <i>(Will be released to homelessness)</i>	55	38	17	109	146	98	122	175	214	74	ND	ND	154	251*
<b>Staying with Friends &amp; Family</b>	104	103	150	159	162	74	156	145	113	71	47	ND	64	93
<b>Total</b>	<b>600</b>	<b>720</b>	<b>629</b>	<b>1013</b>	<b>1284</b>	<b>740</b>	<b>1110</b>	<b>1006</b>	<b>926</b>	<b>621</b>	<b>633**</b>	<b>579**</b>	<b>1,053</b>	<b>1,144</b>
<b>Youth - Total Sheltered &amp; Unsheltered</b>	115	111	187	228	420	144	188	157	106	100	3	68	190	164
<b>Families with Children - Total</b>	151	196	151	275	289	162	121	277	195	161	209	77	320	281
<b>Single Men &amp; Women - Total</b>	290	383	311	470	663	387	603	409	404	306	377	231	505	519
<b>Elderly – Total Sheltered &amp; Unsheltered (65 &amp; over)</b>	4	3	11	7	16	3	10	7	11	8	13	6	42	55
<b>Veterans – Sub-Total</b>	75	6	76	18	68	42	63	38	45	39	50	56	39	55
<b>Mental Illness (self-reported disability)</b>	156	292	288	356	407	249	153	222	141	132	119	58	98	239
<b>Drug and Alcohol Addicted</b>	122	149	125	164	168	41	37	80	60	56	30	12	98	123
<b>Chronically Homeless (Homeless for a year or more with a disabling condition)</b>	103	210	84	98	99	78	151	209	257	89	158	106	229	264

ND = No Data

\* Reported by Olympia and Thurston County Jails, Nisqually Jail does not participate in the PIT Homeless Census.

\*\*Totals do not contain missing data elements

\*\*\* Years 2006-2008 and 2016-2017 presented limited data.

The first five years show that the total number of homeless people appears to trend upward, following the broad economic trends of the Recession. The total numbers begin to drop off radically by 2011 as a

result of emergency funding for housing provided by the State and Federal governments, yet it also follows the broad economic trend of the recovery. Then the numbers begin to climb again in 2016, mirroring trends along the entire West Coast related to rent increases. The 2016 PIT Census results were affected by a limited staff capacity.

Until recently, the chronically homeless population was fairly static, with an average of 144 people barring one outlier year of 84 in 2008. However, chronic homelessness appears to be spiking sharply upward with 229 in 2018 and now 264 this year in 2019. The number of homeless veterans also seem to remain fairly static at an average of 45 with one outlier year of 6 homeless veterans in 2007.

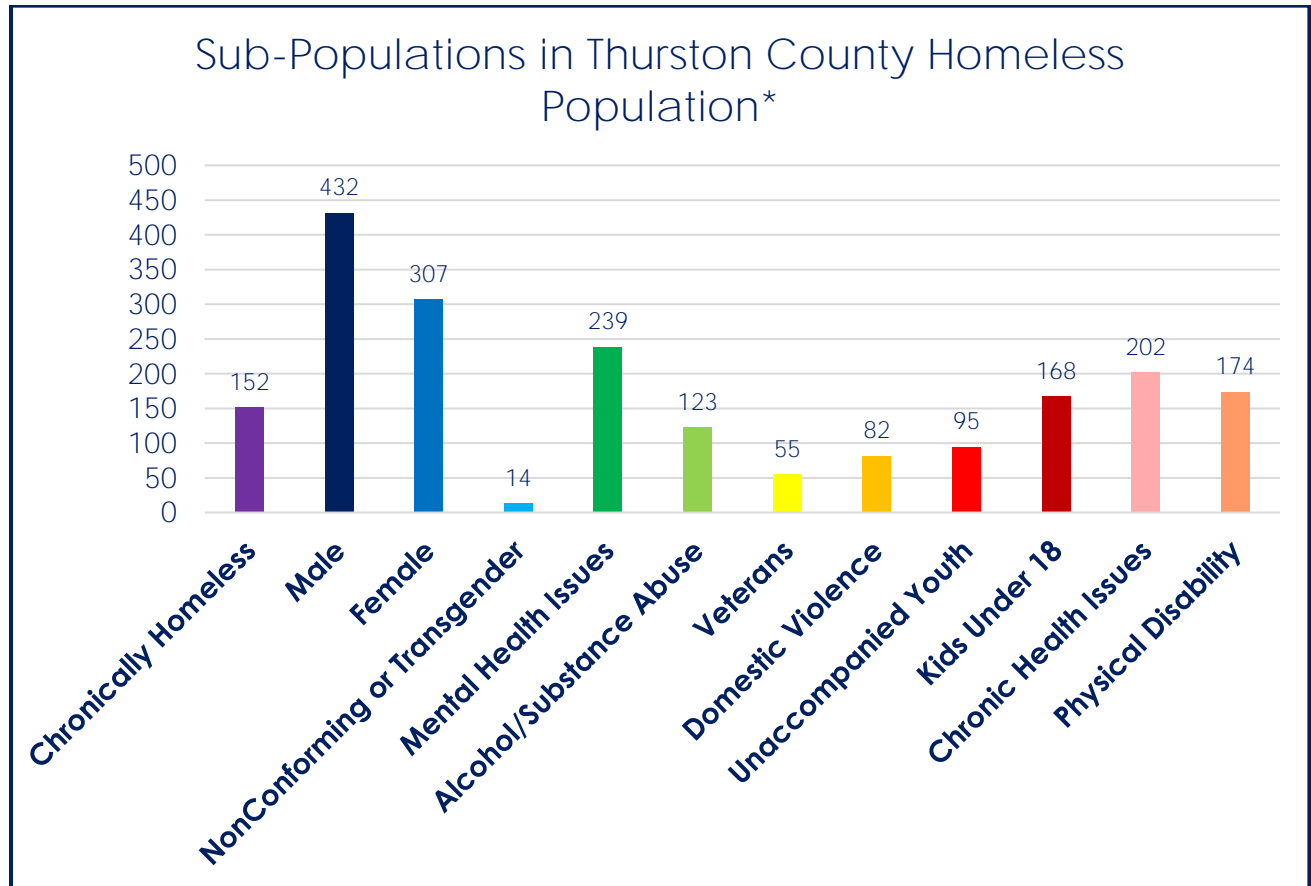
The number of respondents who self-reported substance and alcohol use in 2019 is 123, or 15% of the total population, a significant rise from the years of 2016 and 2017, where the numbers were likely under-reported. The 2019 number is more in line with overall trends. Still, these statistics are contrary to the anecdotal reports of street outreach workers, emergency service providers and other public employees, who report a much higher percentage of their clients with substance abuse issues.



# Chapter 4: Who are our Homeless Neighbors?

## Overview

Homeless citizens are as diverse as any group of people, and they have arrived at homelessness via many different pathways. Because successful service and shelter programs are designed to meet the unique needs of specific subpopulations, it is essential to understand the diverse characteristics of homeless people as individuals in order to develop meaningful responses. The chart below breaks out some of these distinct sub-populations, and is followed by a brief overview of some of the unique characteristics of the primary sub-groups of homeless persons in Thurston County. Included in this chapter is also a short description of current best practices for responding to the needs of unique populations.



\* More than one answer allowed, not a percentage representation.

## Gender Identity and Homelessness

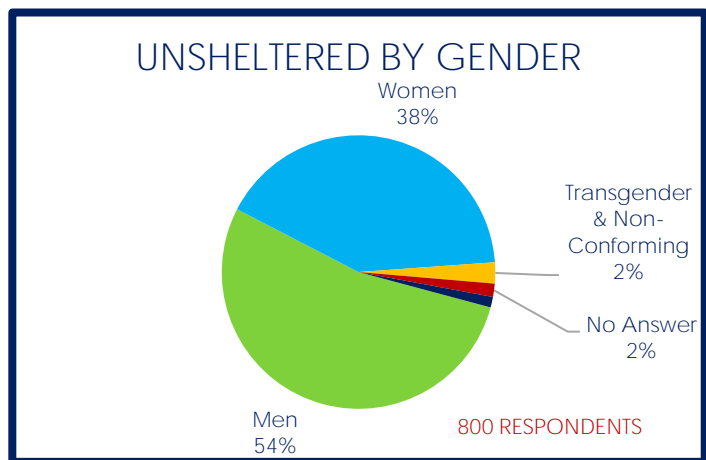
One of the key questions for inclusion in the census was gender, offering respondents five options: 1) Male; 2) Female; 3) Transgender / Gender Non-Conforming.

Respondents for the full census, (which included the unsheltered, sheltered and transitionally housed) found that a majority of the homeless are male, with 432 (54%). The remaining population identified as female, 307 or 38%, and 13 people identified as non-conforming or transgender (2%). The issue of gender identity is critical in that homeless shelters are not protected under the state Fair Housing laws, given that shelters do not provide a “place of regular domicile” which leaves transgender people vulnerable to discrimination by faith-based shelters.

**Gender Identity and the Unsheltered** Among the unsheltered—people who are literally homeless outside the shelter or transitional housing system—the gender breakdown was more than half male (54%) and a lesser number who were female (38%).

These statistics suggest the percentages of need among the unsheltered populations are shifting as well, and highlight a need for more shelter beds and programs for women.

While there appears to be only 13 self-reported transgendered or gender non-conforming homeless people, anecdotal reports suggest there may be more, perhaps among people who refused to respond to the question. While transgendered people are a protected class in the state Fair Housing law, the State Human Rights Commission does not have clear jurisdiction in homeless shelters. This means that some local shelters can and do discriminate against transgendered and gender non-conforming homeless people.



**HUD Policy Change on Transgender Equal Access** HUD is considering a change from the 2016 “Equal Access Rule” which has provided equal access to all persons in accordance with their gender identity. The new proposed rule would allow “recipients, sub-recipients, owners, operators, managers, and providers (Shelter Providers) under HUD programs which permit single-sex or sex-segregated facilities (such as bathrooms or temporary, emergency shelters and other buildings and facilities with physical limitations or configurations that require and are permitted to have shared sleeping quarters or bathing facilities) may establish a policy, consistent with state and local law, by which such Shelter Provider considers an individual’s sex for the purposes of determining accommodation within such shelters and for purposes of determining sex for admission to any facility or portion thereof.” Excerpt from RIN #2506-AC53 (Regulation Identifier Number).

**Strategic Response:** There is a need to respond to the HUD proposed rule change, which would allow discrimination on the basis of gender identity. And there remains a need to address the discrepancy between the State’s Non-discrimination laws, which include Gender Identity as a protected class and the

jurisdiction of the State Human Right's Commission, which is not legally able to address discrimination of any form in emergency shelters because they do not fall under the definition of "regular place of domicile".

## **Mental Illness and Homelessness**

Mental illness is typically among the top three causes of homelessness, according to the National Coalition for the Homeless. Severe mental illness often impedes the ability to maintain employment or to manage expenses, which in turn makes it difficult to maintain stable housing. Once homeless, people with mental illnesses can find it difficult to understand or cooperate with the rules of emergency shelters. Those who are unsheltered and mentally ill may find it difficult to access services that would help them to stabilize.

In Thurston County, the numbers of people living with mental illness have decreased from a high of 407 in 2010 down to 239 in 2019. However, the percentages of total respondents reporting mental health issues had increased from 42% in 2010 to 56% now in 2019. Many people who are mentally ill are eligible for some form of benefits related to their mental illness. Chronically mentally ill people tend to have symptom escalation on a cyclical basis, and sometimes hospitalization may be necessary to re-establish stability. Once hospitalized, people may lose their benefits due to nonpayment or abandonment.

If jailed, mentally ill people may lose their housing subsidies with supportive services. Upon release from incarceration, many mentally ill people must re-establish their housing and service subsidies, a process that can take several weeks. During periods of hospitalization, landlords may evict them for non-payment and dispose of their belongings as abandoned. After several episodes of homelessness, it can be difficult to find a new landlord to accept their rental history.

**Strategic Response:** The primary strategy for chronically mentally ill homeless people is to provide Permanent Supportive Housing, or what is often referred to as "service enriched" housing, typically owned and staffed by non-profit organizations. Currently, Thurston County has 121 beds of permanent supportive housing available for those with disabilities, including mental illness, plus 50 beds for veterans who also may have mental health issues. More beds are needed.

Housing alone, or "Housing First" may succeed in helping to establish initial stability, but without immediate and ongoing treatment and services, many mentally ill homeless people will fail to keep their housing.

## Homeless Victims of Domestic Violence



Figure 5 The Census found 82 Victims of Domestic Violence, yet only 29 DV shelter beds.

According to the “National Law Center on Homelessness and Poverty,” domestic violence is one of the leading causes of homelessness for women and children. According to multiple studies cited by the Families and Youth Services Division of the US Department of Health and Human Services, domestic violence is the leading cause of homelessness for women and children.

Locally, there were 82 people or 10% of homeless respondents (800 who answered this question) who were victims of domestic violence. However, there are only 29 DV shelter beds, which are usually full if not over-full. There is also a population (15, or 24% of those listed in this demographic) of persons fleeing DV among those who are staying with family/friends, who are not

counted for the purposes of PIT. Victims of domestic violence often have fewer options to seek temporary shelter with friends and family because their abusers would then be able to find them. As a result, they are disproportionately dependent on shelters, typically operated in confidential locations.

Safespace, the local domestic violence shelter, offers beds that are configured into family rooms rather than being offered in a dormitory style. This means smaller families may occupy rooms without using all the beds, which can appear to be an under-utilization of the capacity. Other local homeless shelters and transitional housing facilities also provide shelter for domestic violence victims. The numbers clearly indicate a significant need for increased domestic violence shelter capacity along with training for other shelter providers.

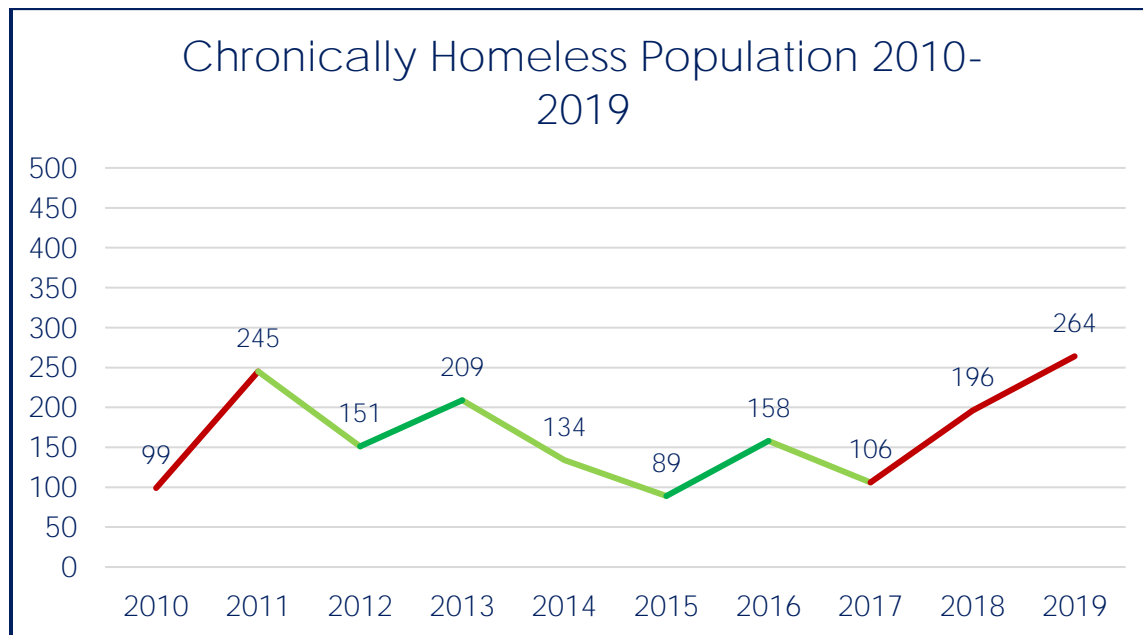
**Strategic Response:** Homeless victims of domestic violence often require a “Continuum of Care” response. Initially, they are best served by domestic violence shelters, either formal or informal, or through friend networks that can ensure protection from abusers. Many domestic violence shelters seek to expand into providing service-enriched transitional housing to provide a secure stepping-stone from shelter to independence. Housing First is not always the best option in that it may reveal a survivor’s whereabouts to abusers.

## Chronically Homeless

One third of the homeless are “chronically homeless,” with 264 or 33%, who meet the HUD definition as “either (1) an unaccompanied homeless individual with a disabling condition who has been continuously homeless for a year or more, OR (2) an unaccompanied individual with a disabling condition who has had at least four episodes of homelessness in the past three years.” This represents a 167% increase from the 103 chronically homeless people who were identified in the 2010 homeless census as shown below.

The definition above derives from the recognition that when persistent homelessness is compounded by disabling conditions, it becomes exponentially difficult to overcome homelessness. Typically, people without those disabling conditions are more successful at getting the services, jobs or other support necessary to get back into permanent housing.

Stereotypes of homelessness are based on the most visible people, which is often chronically homeless and street-dependent people. The number of chronically homeless people nearly doubled in the past year, and many are dependent on the concentration of services in downtown Olympia.



As shown on the above chart, the number of chronically homeless people has fluctuated between 89 and 264 people identified as chronically homeless.

According to the **National Alliance to End Homelessness**, chronically homeless people comprise only 16% of the total homeless population but use nearly half of all available shelter and homeless services along with other public services such as police and emergency medical response. Chronically homeless people typically cycle between shelters, hospitals, jails and other facilities. However, in Thurston County, 33% of all 800 homeless people meet the definition of chronically homeless.

**Strategic Response:** Given the compounding effect of homelessness with disabilities, Chronically Homeless people typically need Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH). While PSH is more expensive than lighter subsidies such as Rapid Re-housing, Chronically Homeless people often rack up more expenses by cycling through emergency services as illustrated in the 2006 New Yorker article titled, **“Million Dollar Murray”**.



## Homeless Veterans

In Thurston County, there were 55, or 7%, of the homeless self-identified as veterans. Nationwide, about one-third of the adult homeless population are veterans. Unfortunately, numerous studies show that veterans are the least likely among the homeless sub-populations to be willing to work with government or other institutional services.

According to the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), homeless veterans are predominantly male, with roughly five percent being female. The majority of homeless veterans are single, come from urban areas, and suffer from mental illness, alcohol and/or substance abuse, or other co-occurring disorders. America's homeless veterans have served in World War II, the Korean War, Cold War, Vietnam War, Grenada, Panama, Lebanon, Afghanistan, and Iraq. Nearly half of homeless veterans served during the Vietnam era. Two-thirds served our country for at least three years, and one-third were stationed in a war zone.

**Strategic Response:** The most effective response to homeless veterans is to ensure they are linked to all possible VA benefits, including housing, mental health care, drug and alcohol treatment, employment assistance, and other services. This linkage will ensure that a community makes the best use of these distinct revenue streams. Like most homeless subpopulations, veterans benefit from the Housing First model followed up with supportive services. The Lacey Veterans Services Hub provides a safe and veteran centered space for vets to access services. Sidewalk, a rapid re-housing agency has a veteran services representative available at the Community Care Center one day per week.

For individuals unwilling or unable to cooperate with a government or non-profit housing program, the next best solution is to offer survival resources, such as outdoor clothing, camping gear, food and other supplies.

## Homeless Individuals

Homeless individuals, i.e. single people without dependent children are the largest sub-population of homeless people. The PIT Census found 511 single adults, comprising 64% of the total 800 respondents. Homeless single adults who are not mentally ill, veterans or victims of domestic violence are generally excluded from many forms of public assistance, including housing. As a result, it can be difficult to find resources to serve them. Many chronically homeless individuals are typically in single-person households.

**Strategic Response:** Homeless individuals should be screened to identify their needs and eligibility for potential resources. While most homeless individuals benefit from the Housing First model, case managers may recommend lighter forms of assistance such as temporary emergency shelter, shallow rental subsidies, or job referrals to help stabilize them and facilitate their return to independence. For



Figure 6 Homeless Veterans are best served with referrals to VA resources

individuals unable or unwilling to cooperate with a government or non-profit housing program, the next best solution is to offer survival resources, such as outdoor clothing, camping gear, food and other supplies.

## Homeless Families



Figure 7 The Census found 168 youth younger than 18

The PIT Census found 275 total people in homeless families where there was at least one child and one adult, accounting for 34% of the homeless population. However, there appears to be a much larger number of homeless families who find shelter by living with friends or family members or in their vehicles, thereby eluding the census methodology and being excluded from the census count. Homeless families often cite job loss or the loss of their housing related to the economy as the cause of homelessness.

In addition, many homeless families avoid shelters or the streets because parents fear losing their children as the result of potential intervention by child welfare agencies. Families also avoid the forced separation of family

members in order to fit into shelter regulations that can be restrictive about the number and gender configuration of families in their facilities.

**Strategic Response:** Strategies for homeless families include “Rapid Re-housing” or quickly dispersed rental assistance to stabilize them. Other responses include emergency shelters specifically for families with separate family suites that preserve family cohesion. Shelter case management should be followed by rental subsidies to allow them to secure housing as quickly as possible. It is also important to encourage families to access all potential school-based resources for their school age children.

Other useful resources are the informal networks of friends, school-based or faith community ties. These networks are often the first options pursued by homeless families. Efforts to strengthen informal networks through school associations, faith communities or neighborhood associations could be highly effective.

## Homeless Youth

There were 168 homeless children aged 17 and below, 21% of the total homeless population in the PIT Census. 11 of these children were unaccompanied homeless youth 17 or under in the census, comprising 1% of the total population.

The State Department of Commerce, which administers the statewide Homeless Census, considers youth homeless only when they meet the state definition of “individuals who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence.” The state definition includes youth who are living in shelters, transitional housing, out of doors in vehicles or in abandoned buildings. However, a significant number

of homeless youth do not fit this state definition but they do fit the federal McKinney Vento definition because they are “migratory” and live temporarily in hotels or motels or with a succession of friends or family. As a result, the School Census presents much higher numbers deriving from a different methodology.

The PIT Census found 111 young people ages 18 to 24 considered to be “Transition-age Youth”. While those under 18 can’t stay in adult shelters, those who are between 18 and 24 are at high risk for victimization when placed in general population emergency shelters. Homeless youth and young adults present a significant challenge to Housing First programs in that those under 18 can’t legally sign leases and don’t fit into the adult homeless housing model.

Without appropriately focused interventions, they are likely to become part of the chronically homeless adult population. Adolescents and young adults have different biological, psychological, social, and developmental cognitive needs than adults, and may be more responsive to a structured transitional housing program.

Best practice service models are designed to focus on prevention/intervention strategies that are geared to a young person’s developmental stages. These models utilize multiple “best practice” interventions within a harm reduction model, recognizing that one size will not fit all.

**Strategic Response:** Priority strategies for Runaway and Homeless Youth (RHY) focus on preventing and ending homelessness, trafficking, sexual abuse and exploitation of young people by providing supportive services that help decrease vulnerability and increase self-esteem. Local strategies are drawn from the “Core Outcomes for Youth” published by the United States Interagency Council on Homelessness (USICH): 1) Provide stable housing and safety; 2) Build permanent connections; 3) Foster self-sufficiency through employment and education; and, 4) Foster social and emotional well-being.

“Youth Bridge” is a current best practice service model that incorporates both shelter and transitional housing into a hybrid program that provides system entry for young people, allowing them to move from street dependence to affordable permanent housing at their own pace, assisted by supportive services. Youth Bridge and other effective shelter and housing programs recognize the need to serve both youth who are 17 and younger, as well as “transition-age youth” ages 17 to 22 who are essentially young adults. Absent shelter or housing resources, the primary service models are street outreach and drop-in centers that offer survival goods, service referrals, and general case management that emphasizes “harm reduction”.



*Figure 8 State law makes it difficult to shelter youth under 17 without contacting parents or guardians who may have caused their homelessness*

## Homeless Sex Offenders

**Homeless Sex Offenders** Of the 232 total number of sex offenders who were registered in Thurston County at the time of the 2019 PIT Census, all 66 transient sex offenders are registered in Olympia. Much like other homeless people, transient sex offenders are dependent upon the services that are concentrated in Olympia.

Many states have enacted some variation of a sex offender registry as a way to track sex offenders for public safety purposes. In Washington State, the law requires public notification for level two (moderate risk of repeat offenses) and level three (high risk of repeat offenses) sex offenders. Thurston County uses the “Offender Watch” trademarked program to “manage and monitor the whereabouts, conduct and compliance of all registered sex offenders” (excerpt from Thurston County Sheriff’s website) in the county. This online registry presents online photos, descriptions of the crime, designations of their threat level, and maps of where they live.

Supporters of housing restrictions believe that public safety is strengthened by monitoring sex offenders and restricting them from residing close to schools, playgrounds or other places that children congregate. Critics believe that such laws have unintended consequences that increase the number of transient sex offenders unable to secure permanent housing. These critics challenge the public safety value of not knowing where sex offenders reside.

Information on homeless sex offenders is not included as a sub-population of the formal PIT Census Report because the PIT Survey did not specifically seek information on sex offender status. As a result, the Sheriff Department’s data is presented here is likely to represent overlapping homeless people in Thurston County.

**Strategic Response:** Most studies show that stable housing allows for better public safety through better tracking of registered sex offenders as well as lower recidivism. Absent resources to provide permanent housing, transitional housing, group homes and/or shelters that accept sex offenders, the public will not know where unsheltered sex offenders are.



*Figure 9 Homeless Sex Offenders have high barriers with housing, yet communities are safer when Sex Offenders have registered addresses.*



# Chapter 5: Homelessness in Public Schools

## Overview

One of the related data sources on homelessness comes from the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction. Because the methodology differs from the PIT Homeless Census, these numbers cannot be added together. However, viewed together they present a broader and arguably more accurate picture of family homelessness in Thurston County.

## Homeless School Children and the McKinney Act

The McKinney-Vento Education of Homeless Children and Youth Assistance Act, referred to as the McKinney-Vento Act, is a federal law that ensures access to public school enrollment and educational stability for all children in kindergarten through 12<sup>th</sup> grade.

In 2016, Washington State passed complimentary legislation, the Homeless Student Stability and Opportunity Gap Act (HSSA). Through the HSSA, the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) provides \$785,000 in competitive grants to school districts for services like tutoring, early childhood education programs and other school supports. Additionally, the Department of Commerce provides \$1 million through the HSSA for school-housing partnerships. These funds provide help to families with rental assistance, emergency shelters, and case management. These grants are in high demand. In the 2015-16 school year the Department of Commerce received 18 applications with a total request of \$5,170,905 (<https://schoolhousewa.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/HSSAbrief.pdf>).



As a part of the McKinney-Vento Act, states are required report on the number of students experiencing homelessness. In Washington this reporting occurs at the school level, and is reported to the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) by school districts. The McKinney-Vento Act defines homeless children as “individuals who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence.” According to the Act, this includes:

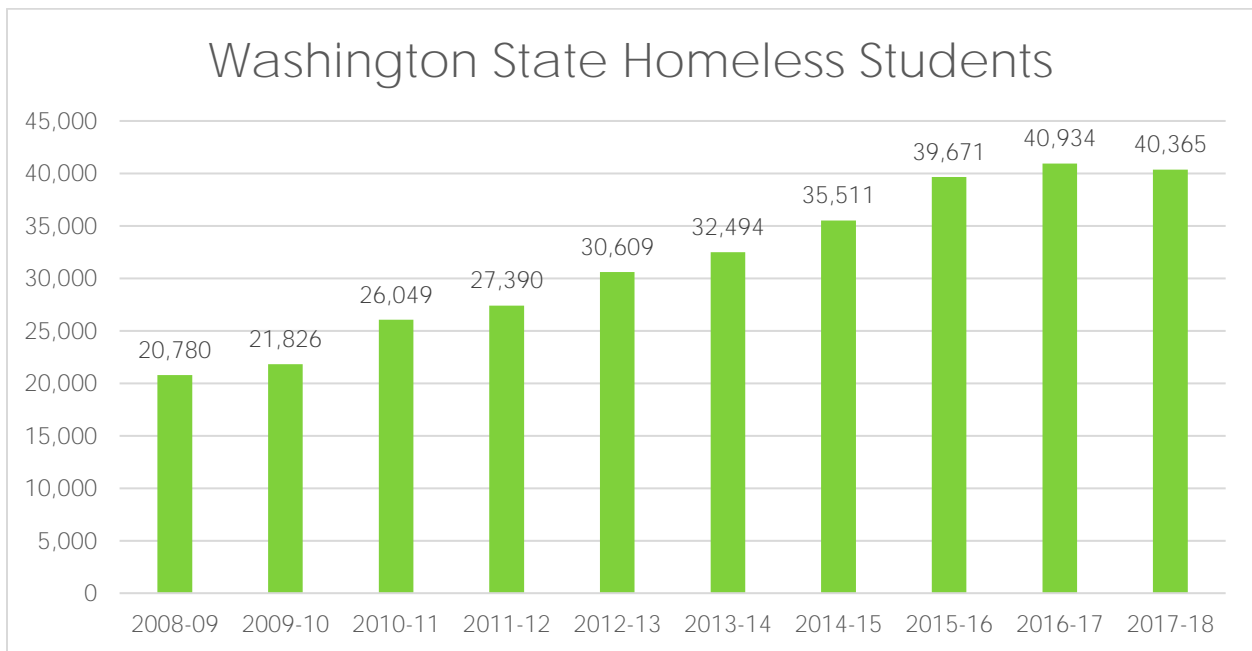
- Children **sharing housing** due to economic hardship or loss of housing;
- Children living in “**motels, hotels, trailer parks, or camp grounds** due to lack of alternative accommodations;”
- Children living in “**emergency or transitional shelters;**”
- Children “**awaiting foster care placement;**”

- Children whose primary nighttime residence is **not ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodations**, i.e cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, or bus or train stations”

## Student Homelessness in Washington State

Each year, the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) works with local school districts throughout the state to identify children and youth attending school who are experiencing homelessness. The purpose of this effort is to offer appropriate services to the family, child, or youth and to report the number of homeless students to federal, state, and local governments. This count does not include school-age children who are not attending school.

The below chart provides a year-over-year comparison of student homelessness in Washington State using data provided by OSPI. The number of homeless students has been increasing since the 2010-11 school year, with a slight decrease between the 2016-17 and 2017-18 school years. The number of reported homeless students has nearly doubled in the last 8 years.

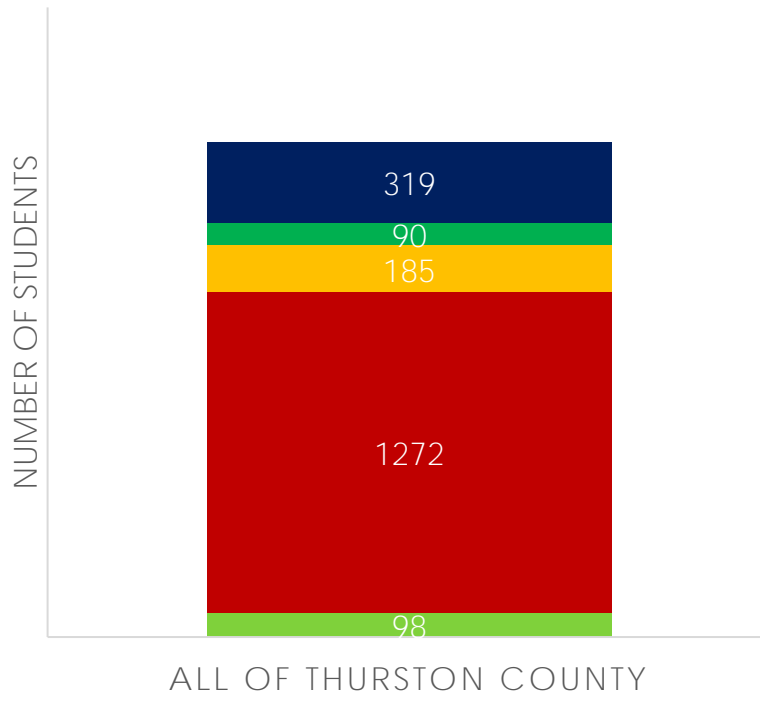


## Student Homelessness in Thurston County

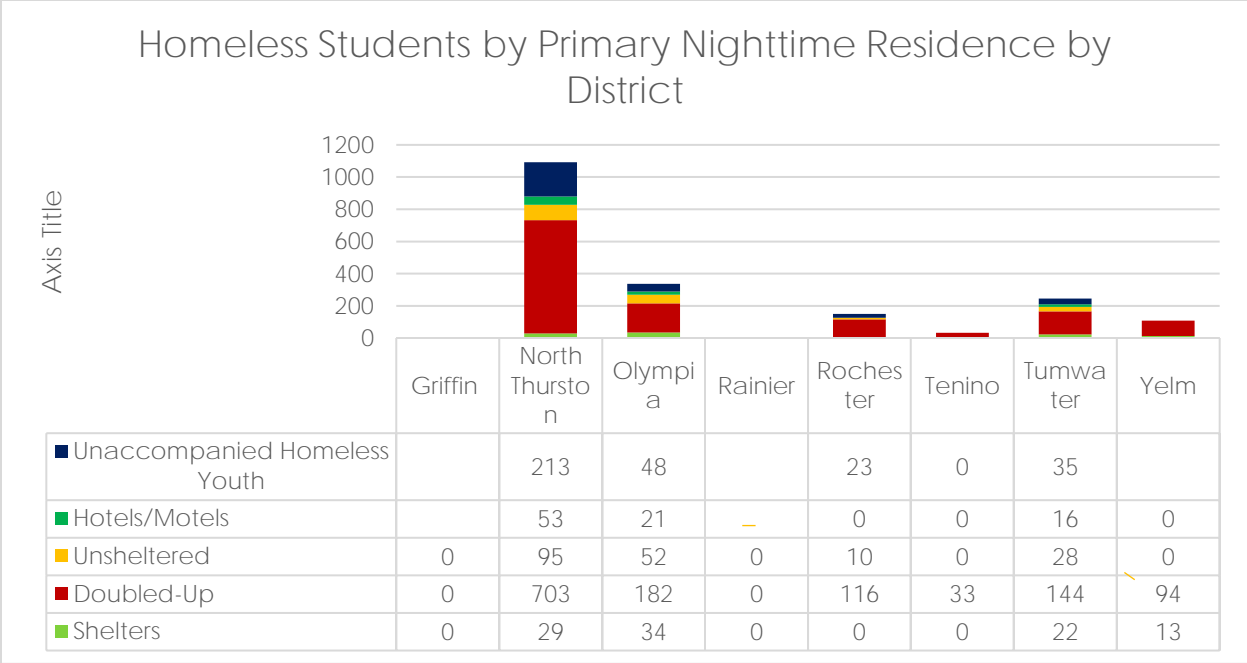
The below diagram, which draws upon data provided by OSPI, provides a breakdown of student homelessness in all of Thurston County by nighttime residence.

## HOMELESS STUDENTS BY PRIMARY NIGHTTIME RESIDENCE - ALL OF THURSTON COUNTY

- Unaccompanied Homeless Youth
- Hotels/Motels
- Unsheltered
- Doubled-Up
- Shelters



In the below chart students experiencing homelessness in Thurston County are displayed by school district. The data shows the number of students who were unsheltered, sheltered, doubled up, or staying in a hotel/motel.

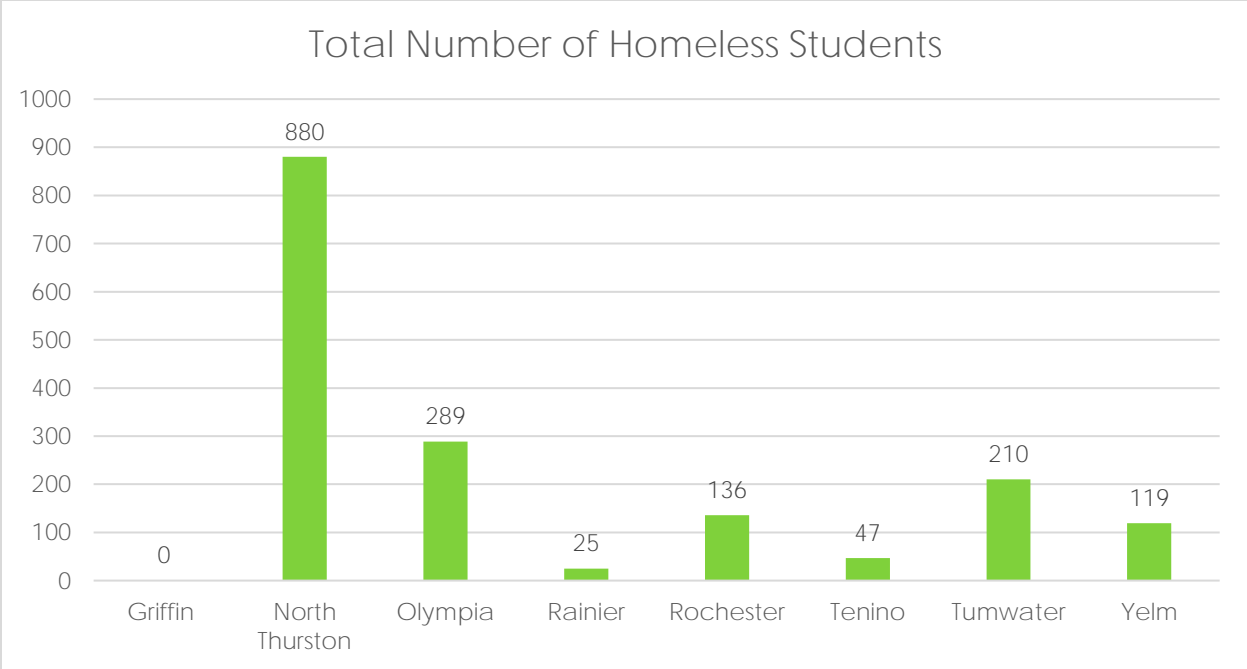


\*Rainier School District reported 25 total homeless students but did not report their primary nighttime residence.

This data paints a clearer picture of student homelessness in Thurston County, as the numbers of students doubled up or in motels would not be counted in the Point-in-Time Census data. A deeper understanding of the struggles for children and families will help build more accurate interventions.

The below chart shows the total number of students experiencing homelessness in Thurston County by school district. North Thurston School District has more than triple the number of homeless students than any other school district in Thurston County.





North Thurston had about 15,416 students enrolled in kindergarten through 12<sup>th</sup> grade. By contrast, Olympia School District has 10,412 students enrolled in kindergarten through 12<sup>th</sup> grade.

**Ten-Year Plan to Reduce Homelessness in Public Schools**

In Thurston County, the 10-year plan set the goal to reduce homelessness in public schools by 50%, to 327 students by 2015. The reality however is that student homelessness has risen 47% since 2011. In Thurston County, about 4% of all students are homeless, and 33% are enrolled in the Free & Reduced lunch program, indicating more than a third of Thurston County students are living at or below the poverty line.

Prior to 2015, it appeared that school homelessness mirrored the rise and fall of the County’s Homeless Census, with a steady rise to 2010, followed by a slight decline to 1,123. However, in 2014 the number spiked radically up by 41%. Public officials attribute some of this increase to better school reporting.

Comparatively, Washington State as a whole has seen student homelessness rise 94%, from 20,780 homeless students during the 2008-09 school year to 40,365 in the 2017-18 school year.

**Correlation of School District Numbers with County Homeless Census Numbers**

While the two sets of homeless statistics come from different sources—the Homeless Census and the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI)—they offer a composite view of homelessness. Together, they mirror a general trend of homelessness in Thurston County rising to an all-time high in 2010 and since then drop until 2014, when the numbers shot up 41%. This year, the number is the second highest since beginning this methodology.

The statistics on the number of students experiencing homelessness collected by the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction, are collection over the previous school year—in this case 2018-

18—which ended seven months before the January 2019 census. A further difference is that some of the county’s census numbers include homeless students who were also counted by the school districts.

Student homelessness statistics collected by OSPI include students who live with friends or family, an accommodation not included in the county numbers. This difference in methodologies means that these figures cannot be directly added together or be directly compared statistically.

Lastly, OSPI’s student homelessness statistics only students enrolled during the 2017-18 school year. They do not include student family members—particularly absent siblings or siblings that are not school age. On the other hand, the “Point in Time” homeless census is a one-day snapshot of homelessness in Thurston County, which includes many students staying with their families in shelters, transitional housing, or out of doors.

While derived from different methodologies and timelines, these two sets of numbers clearly show that the number of homeless individuals has consistently been increasing since the baseline year of 2006, with a slight decrease in this year’s data.

## **Poverty Measurement: Free & Reduced Lunch Rates**

Another useful source of information on poverty among public school age children is the “Free and Reduced Meal” data published by the State Office of Public Instruction (OSPI) on an annual basis.

Poverty is clearly an indicator for being at risk of homeless for families with children, so this data provides a useful perspective on how Thurston County schools are doing. Unfortunately, across the board, all seven districts show a deepening of poverty in public schools.

The eligibility of students to participate in the state’s free and reduced-price school lunch program is determined by federal income guidelines according to family size and regionally adjusted poverty line of household income.

The Free and Reduced lunch program serves as an index of poverty for families with children in each of the districts. Nationally, it is estimated that 12.7% (40.6 million) of the population has an income at or below the federal poverty line.

In 2019, the federal poverty level annual income for a household size of three was \$21,330. To participate in the reduced meals program, a household size of three’s annual income cannot be more than 185% of the federal poverty annual income, or \$39,460 annually.

To qualify for free meals, a household of three cannot make more than 130% of the federal poverty annual income, or \$27,729 annually. Statewide, 478,550 or 43% of the total 1,103,400 students enrolled in Washington State public schools (K-12) participated in the Free and Reduced lunch program during the 2017-18 school year.

The “Free and Reduced Meal” program is funded jointly by the federal Department of Agriculture and Washington state public school system to ensure that hunger is not a deterrent to a quality education. All households with income levels below certain amounts are encouraged to apply for any or all of the following programs:

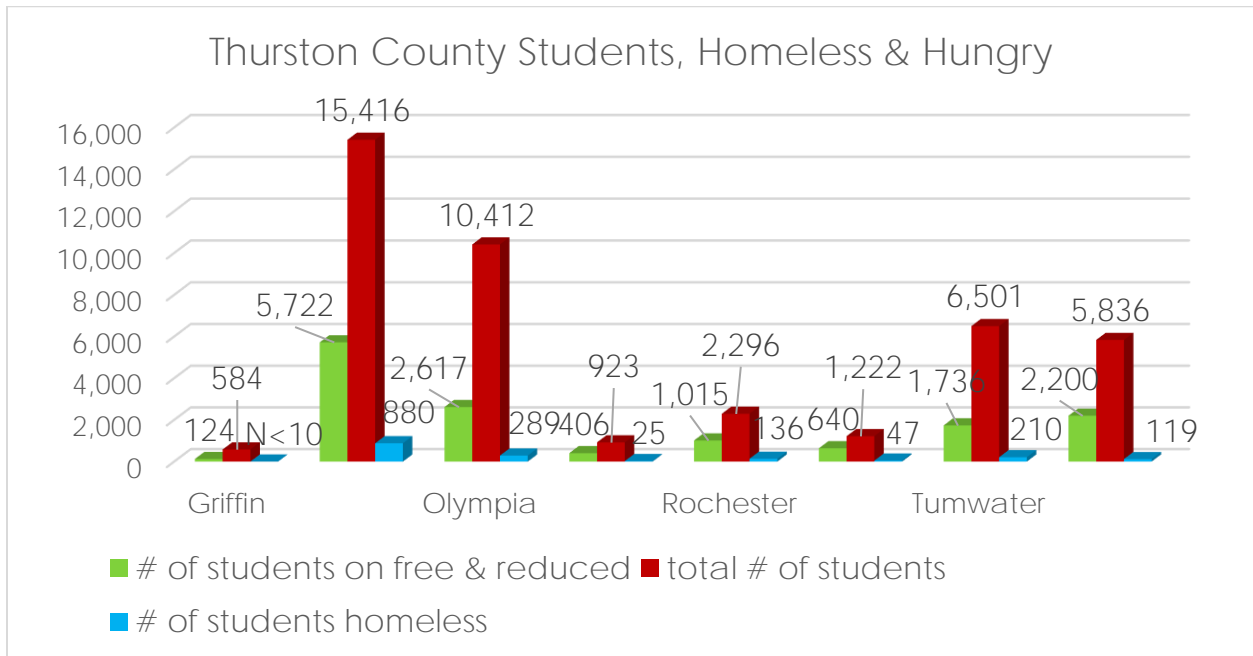
- National School Lunch Program

- School Breakfast Program
- Special Milk Program

This data is included in the OSPI “Report Card”, an online database that presents statewide and district level information on K-12 students. The OSPI website also presents other information, including the number of homeless students by district.

Please note: as with the homeless student data, this information is collected for school years that straddle a biennium, which falls seven months prior to the Homeless Census.

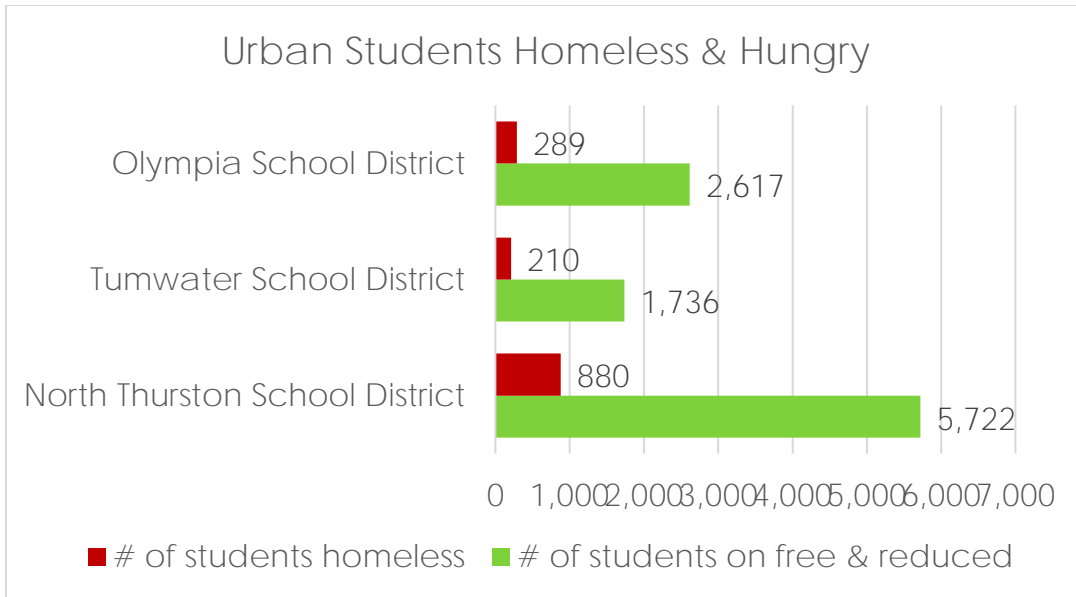
The below tables compares the total number of students with the number of students experiencing homelessness and the number of students on the free and reduced lunch program.



### Comparing School Districts in Thurston County

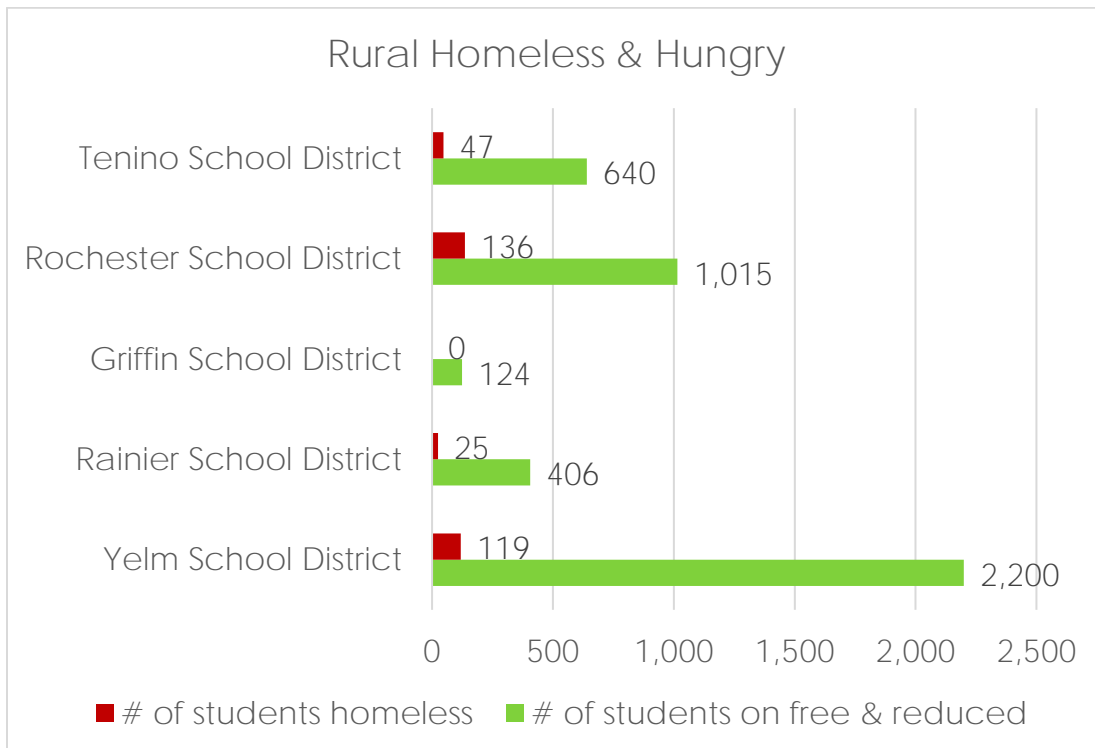
Thurston County school districts range in size from the tiny rural Griffin school district with 584 students to the sprawling North Thurston School District with 15,416 students. However, raw numbers do not tell the whole story. For example, while the Rochester School District is one of the smaller districts with only 2,296 or 5.32% of the County’s students, nearly 50% of their student body is on free and reduced lunch.

The urban school districts have the high concentration of students, with 32,329, or almost 75% of the population compared to 10,861 or about 25% of students in the rural school districts.



However, 4,385 or 30% of the students on free and reduced lunch are enrolled in the rural school districts. The number of homeless students is less, with 327 or 19% of the County’s homeless students in the rural districts.

Yelm School District continues to grow, and now has 5,836 students Kindergarten thru 12<sup>th</sup> grade. This number is nearly as many as Tumwater, and Yelm has 2,200 or about 37% of its students participating in the Free and Reduced lunch program.



The Tumwater District, which has 6,501 students, has 1,736 or about 26% of the students enrolled in the Free and Reduced lunch program.

### More Homeless Pre-School Children at Home

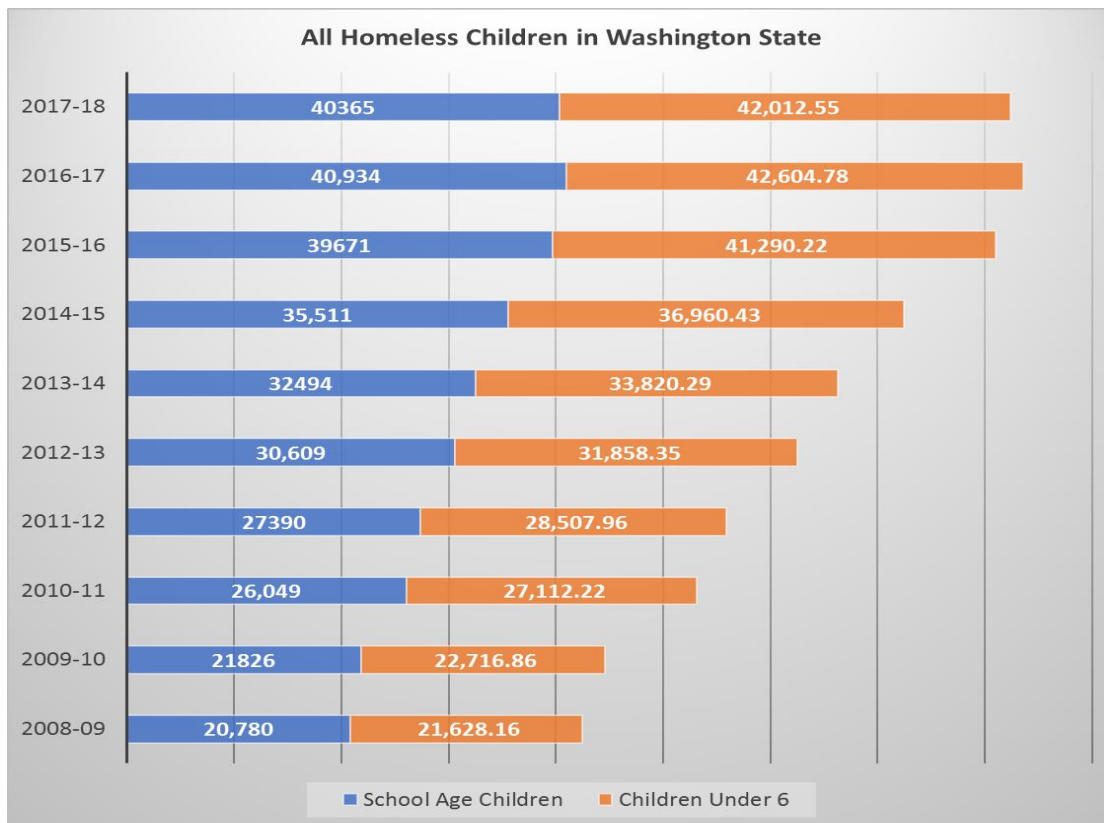
According to the National Center on Family Homelessness, 49% of the total homeless children are estimated to be under the age of six, and thus not counted in the public school homeless census.

Another way of looking at that number is that school age children are only 51% of the larger total number of homeless children, ages 0-18. Taking that into consideration, it could be calculated that the OSPI total for homeless students is capturing only slightly more than half the total number of homeless children.

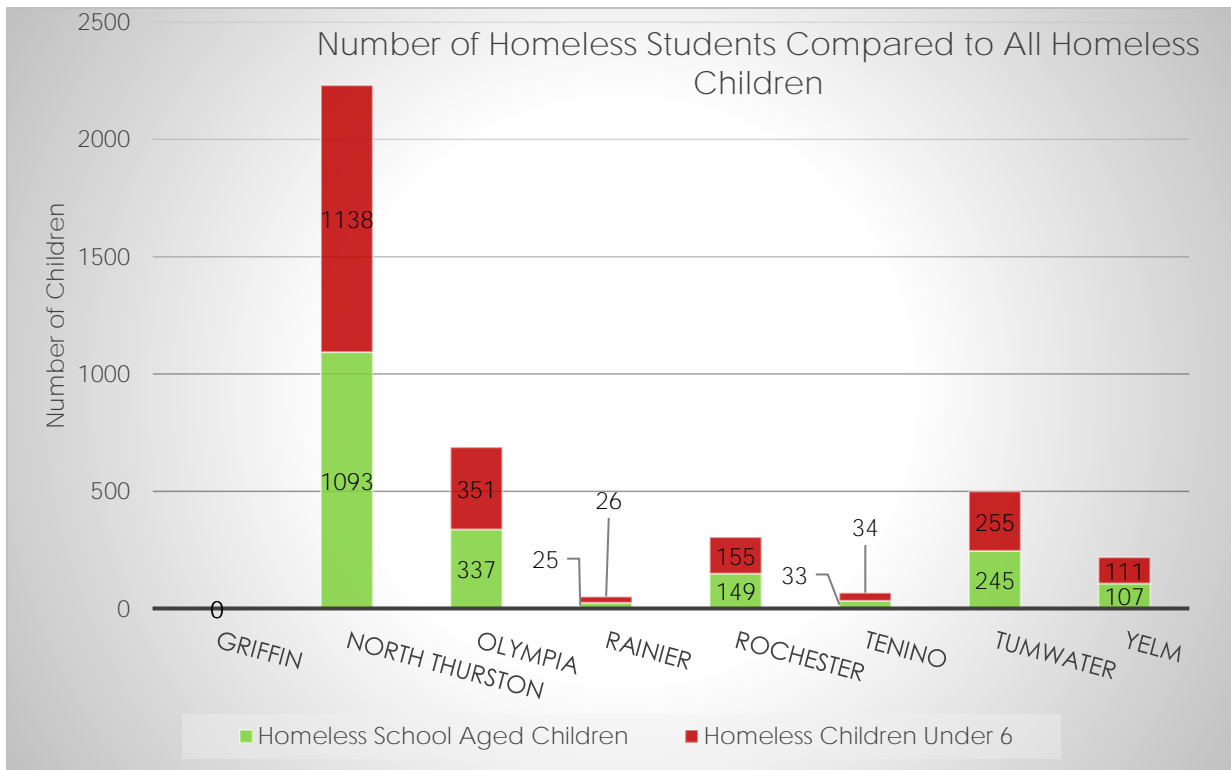
$$\frac{\# \text{ SCHOOL AGE HOMELESS CHILDREN} \times 100}{\text{TOTAL \# OF HOMELESS CHILDREN}}$$

49

The below chart depicts the total number of k-12 children experiencing homelessness in Washington State, as reported by OSPI, as well as the estimated number of children under the age of 6 experiencing homelessness in Washington. The number of homeless children under the age of 6 was estimated using the above methodology.



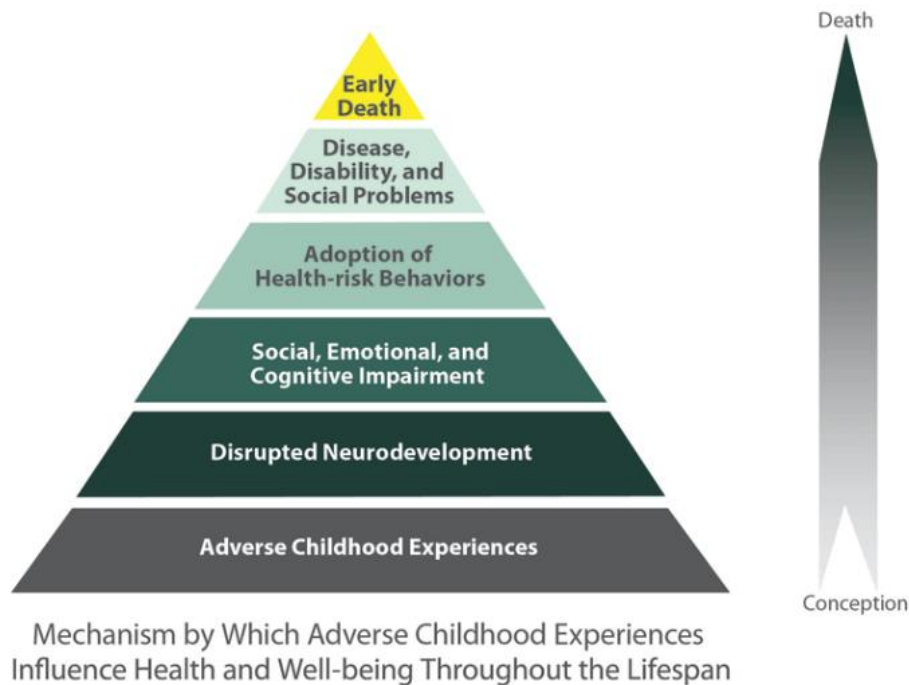
The numbers for Thurston County are depicted below.



### Consequences of childhood homelessness

The brain grows more rapidly in early childhood than it does at any other time during a lifespan. Research shows that the neural pathways created during early childhood form the foundation for all future learning, behavior and health (Tierney & Nelson, 2009; Center on the Developing Child, n.d. a). As a result, a child's experiences with people and the world during this time have a greater impact than they would later in life.

A seminal study conducted by the Centers for Disease Control and Kaiser Permanente identified a correlation between adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) and negative lifetime outcomes (Felitti et al, 1998). According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (n.d. a), ACEs cause toxic stress. Toxic stress is defined as high levels of prolonged stress. When children experience toxic stress it can impair the development of neural connections, especially in parts of the brain that are responsible for higher-order thinking (Center on the Development of the Child, n.d. a). The below visualization, taken from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (n.d. a), illustrates how ACEs affects the health and wellbeing of an individual throughout their lifetime.



(Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, n.d.)

Adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) include neglect, abuse, and family/household challenges – including family economic hardship (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, n.d.; Center on the Developing Child, n.d. b). According to the Centers for Disease Control (n.d. a), as the level of ACEs increases, so does the risk of health and behavioral issues, including early death, heart disease, liver disease, substance abuse, depression, suicide attempts, risk for sexual violence and poor academic achievement.

Although the original adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) study did not define childhood homelessness as an ACE, a growing body of research is emerging that links childhood homelessness to ACEs (Belcher, Greene, McAlpine & Ball, 2001; Roman & Wolfe, 1995). Homelessness experienced as a child has a profound negative impact on the development and health of the child. Research links childhood homelessness to an assortment of negative health, developmental and social outcomes. A recent study by the Center for Housing Policy and Children’s HealthWatch indicates that greater negative health outcomes are associated with children who experience homelessness for greater periods of time and at younger ages (Sandel, Sheward & Sturtevant, 2015). According to statistics from the National Center for Homeless Education at SERVE and the National Association for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth (2013):

- Homeless newborns are four times more likely than other newborns to need special care immediately following birth.
- Homeless babies develop at a significantly slower rate than other babies.
- Homeless children experience significantly higher rates of acute illness.

- 1 out of 5 homeless children ages 3-6 experience emotional issues that require professional care.

Other studies have linked childhood homelessness to:

- Higher rates of physical disabilities, developmental delays, and behavioral issues (Massuk, Murphy, Thompson, Kenney, and Beach, 2011; Coker et al, 2009).
- Social emotional delays (Haskett, Armstrong & Tisdale, 2016).
- Underdeveloped social skills in elementary school (Brumley, Fantuzzo, Perlman & Zager, 2015).
- Limited positive interactions with adults due to the stressed experienced by parents facing homelessness (Massuk, Murphy, Thompson, Kenney & Beach, 2011).
- Poor academic achievement and engagement (Fantuzzo, LeBoeuf, Brumley & Perlman, 2013).

These findings are compounded by research that indicates that adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) increase the likelihood for adult homelessness (Montgomery et al, 2013; Roos et al, 2013; Herman et al, 1997). According to a study conducted in Washington State, funded by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, adult homelessness increased by 40% for each additional type of childhood adversity experiences (Cutuli, Montgomery, Evans-Chase, & Culhane, 2013). Additionally, the study found that childhood adversity increased the risk of repeated homelessness. This research adds credence to the likelihood of a cyclical pattern in children who experience adversity as a result of homelessness will be more likely to experience homelessness as adults. If those same individuals have children while they are experiencing adult homelessness, and those children have the same adverse childhood experiences they are now in an intergenerational cycle of homelessness. This finding further exemplifies the urgent need to address the causes of childhood homelessness and to enact policies that provide assistance to families and children before they become homeless.



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# Chapter 6: Homelessness Statewide

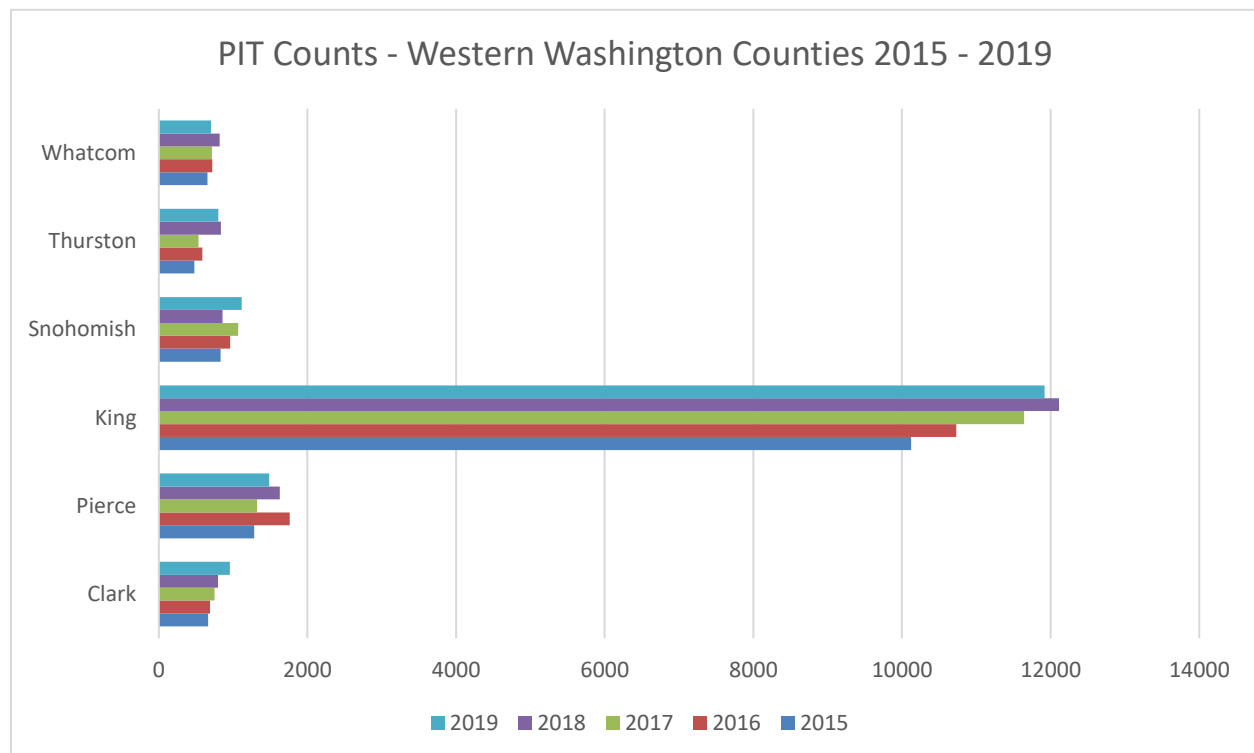
## Overview

While homelessness is experienced most profoundly at the local level, it is useful to examine homeless trends across Washington State. Since 2006, homelessness statewide has increased by 2% from 21,962 in 2006 to 22,416, which fell significantly short of the Ten-Year Plan goal to reduce homelessness by 50% to 10,981 by 2015. Since that time, homelessness continues to increase.

Each year, the state has combined the homeless census numbers of all the counties. While each county has worked diligently to reduce homelessness, it appears that the total statewide population has remained fairly static, rising and falling from year to year by approximately 10%.

## Snapshot of Six Counties – Five Years of Census Results

The following chart presents six years of homeless census data, 2014 through 2019, from the six most urban counties in Western Washington. The area known as the “I-5 Corridor” is the most densely populated region of Washington State, and is a good indicator of State-wide trends.



**Chart Legend – PIT Counts – Western Washington Counties 2015 - 2019:**

<b>Washington County &amp; Major City</b>	<b>2015</b>	<b>2016</b>	<b>2017</b>	<b>2018</b>	<b>2019</b>
Clark County (Vancouver)	662	688	749	795	958
Pierce County (Tacoma)	1283	1762	1321	1628	1486
King County (Seattle)	10122	10730	11643	12112	11919
Snohomish County (Everett)	829	960	1066	858	1116
Thurston County (Olympia)	476	586	534	835	800
Whatcom County (Bellingham)	653	720	713	816	701

In mid-2011, Thurston County began a coordinated point of intake for single adults, a new practice that is designed to maximize the utilization of services, shelter and housing resources. In early 2012, the County hired a Homeless Coordinator to analyze and improve the entire homeless resource system. The proximity of these six urban counties presents the opportunity for migration toward areas that may offer more comprehensive services, or potentially a more welcoming environment.



# Chapter 7: Examining the Resources

## Overview

The first five chapters of this report present a composite picture of homeless needs; the next portion of the report presents an assessment of the existing resources. This data will be directly used by the Thurston County Continuum of Care to implement the soon to be released **2019 Five-Year Homeless Housing Plan**. It will also be used by the emerging network of Homeless Coordinators (County, City of Olympia and City of Tumwater) to develop homeless response plans. These respective plans will also address other strategies and resources, for example Thurston County has been exploring strategies to expand housing inventory through the ad hoc group called Incentivize Housing and the City of Olympia is currently planning the first publicly sanctioned camp. For the purposes of this report, the information that follows presents shelter and housing resources.

## Thurston County Shelter and Homeless Housing Capacity

The following charts provide an overview of the current capacities of our January 2019 network of shelter network in Thurston County. This includes the Year-Round Capacity; the Cold Weather Capacity (November 1<sup>st</sup> – April 30<sup>th</sup>); and, the Hazard Weather Capacity (only utilized during periods of life-threatening extreme weather):

Shelter Program Name & Host Agency	Population Served	Location of Shelter	Year-round Capacity # (%)*	Cold Weather Capacity # (%)**	EXTREME Weather Capacity # (%)***
Catholic Community Services – Drexel House	Single adult men	604 Devoe St, Olympia	16 (7% of total)	16 (5% of total)	16 (4% of total)
Community Youth Services – Rosie’s	Transition Age Youth, All genders, ages: 18 – 24	520 Pear St SE, Olympia	12 (5% of total)	+ 5 = 17 (5% of total)	+ 18 = 35 (8% of total)
Family Support Center – Pear Blossom Place	Families with children, all genders, all ages.	837 7 <sup>th</sup> Ave SE, Olympia	36 (16% of total)	+ 20 = 56 (18% of total)	+10 = 66 (15% of total)
Interfaith Works / 1 <sup>st</sup> Christian Church	Single, childless adults, all genders, 18 & over.	701 Franklin St SE, Olympia Main Floor	42 (19% of total)	+ 0 = 42 (14% of total)	42 (10% of total)
St Michael’s Church	Single adult male-identified people, 18 & over.	1208 11 Ave SE, Olympia	0	15 (5% of total)	+ 15 = 32 (7% of total)
Olympia Union Gospel	Single, childless adults, all genders. 18 & over, occasional families	413 Franklin NE, Olympia	50 (22% of total)	+ 24 = 74 (24% of total)	+ 10 = 84 (19% of total)
Safepace DV Shelter	Domestic violence survivors	C/O 521 Legion Way SE, Olympia	28 & Infants (12% of total)	28 & Infants (9% of total )	28 & Infants (6% of total)
Salvation Army Shelter (2 locations)	Single, childless adults, all genders, 18 & over	808 5 <sup>th</sup> Ave SE, Olympia 1505 4 <sup>th</sup> Ave E., Olympia (NEW)	37 (16% of total) (Opens 12/15/18)	+ 26 = 63 (20% of total)	+ 70 = 133 (30% of total)
Yelm Community Services Center Shelter	Families with children, all genders, all ages	624 Crystal Springs Rd NW, Yelm, WA 98597	0 - CLOSED (2% of total)	0 - CLOSED (2% of total)	0 - CLOSED (1% of total)
<b>TOTALS</b>			221 Total Year-round Beds (100%)	306 Total Cold Weather Beds (100%)	441 Total Code Blue Beds (100%)

## January 2019 Shelter Resources

Please note that the above listed capacity listings are subject to frequent change based on funding, staffing levels, volunteer availability and the condition of the facilities. In January of 2019, Yelm Community Service Center closed their shelter, effectively ending the only shelter capacity outside the urban hub.

**Please note:** the above listed inventory of shelter and homeless housing resources is supplemented with supportive services to help stabilize people and support them in becoming more independent.

## Shelter & Housing Capacity Costs (2018 Data)

**The Costs of Shelter** In order to evaluate the current shelter system, this report offers a “Cost-Benefit Analysis” of selected shelter resources to provide a side by side comparison of costs of shelter. **PLEASE NOTE:** *Data presented dates from 2018, new data will be presented soon.* The following chart presents a simple comparison of programs, citing the staff structure (volunteer vs. professional staff), type of facility (tent, single-family residence, or multi-story facility), along with the operational costs per year and number of clients accommodated.

The apparent tiers present the range of costs of providing shelter. Some of the cost variables include the difference between programs with volunteers vs. professional staff. Other cost variables reflect the differences in utilizing a converted residential structure vs. a dedicated multi-story facility. One outlier tier is the high cost of running a homeless youth shelter, which is subject to stringent operating regulations. However, the greatest difference is between all homeless shelters and the county jail, which is included given the high number of homeless inmates included in the expanded homeless census numbers—an estimated total of 38 people who will be released to homelessness when they leave incarceration. This number is based on the total combined Thurston County Jails population of 768 multiplied by the USICH estimate of 5% of incarcerated people being released to homelessness, in turn cited by the 2013 HUD Annual Homeless Assessment Report: Part 2 – Estimates of Homelessness in the U.S.

However, costs are not the only factor to consider in the value of shelter. Volunteer-staffed shelters typically cost less than \$10 per night compared to the minimum \$30 per bed night for professionally-staffed shelters. Volunteers typically do not have the same capacity that trained and credentialed professional case managers and service providers.

Following is an overview of costs per bed night as reported by the host agencies:

### Cost / Benefit Comparison of Shelter Beds (2018 Data):

The following chart presents some rudimentary comparisons of shelter costs *taken from 2018 data* by calculating the cost of a single bed night by dividing the total shelter operating budget by the total available number of beds:

Facility	2018 Annual Budget (operating at capacity)	Beds Available	Bed Night Cost
FSC Pear Blossom Place	\$470,120	56	\$23
Interfaith Works	\$499,685	42	\$32.60
CYS Rosie's Place	\$289,445	17	\$46.65
Salvation Army	\$473,405	69	\$18.80
Drexel House	\$251,120	16	\$43
Union Gospel Mission	\$60,955	50	\$3.34
St. Michael's	\$86,870	12	\$19.81
SafePlace*	Unk.	29	Unk.
TOTALS	Average \$304,514	291	Average Bed Night \$27

\*Shelter and bed night information not provided

### Community Costs of Unsheltered Homelessness (2018 Data)

As illustrated in the 2006 New Yorker article titled, “**Million Dollar Murray**” by Michael Gladwell, chronically homeless people often cost more per bed night than the default options of County jails or emergency services. **PLEASE NOTE:** Data presented dates from 2018, new data will be presented soon. The locally estimated “*default accommodation*” costs per bed night listed below:

Provider	Description	2018 Cost per person Per day
County Jail	1 day incarceration	\$111.28
State Prison	1 day incarceration	\$111
City Jail	1 day incarceration	\$45
Thurston Telecare	1 day overnight	\$1000
Emergency Room	8 hours @ facility	\$2200*
Medic One	Emergency Response	\$338
OPD	2 OPD Officers respond to call	\$97.38





# Chapter 8: Background of the Homeless Census

## History of Thurston County's Census

Thurston County pioneered the concept of the “point-in-time” homeless census now practiced statewide. This innovation arose from over 25 years of collaborative efforts between non-profits, local governments, and faith communities.

In the early 1990's, there were initial efforts by John Walsh of the Community Action Council and other local service providers to enumerate the number of local homeless people. In 2002, Selena Kilmoyer, of the Thurston County Housing Task Force, recognized the problem of serving an undefined population. The solution to this problem was to find out how many homeless people there were by counting them. Kilmoyer presented this idea to the Thurston County Housing Task Force, and proposed that Task Force members conduct a homeless census to determine how large the homeless population was. Theresa Slusher of the Thurston County Housing Authority, now the County Housing Stability Manager with the State Department of Health and Human Services (DSHS), further developed this idea into a viable work plan. Drawing on representatives from all local service and shelter providers, the Task Force launched the first comprehensive census of homeless people in the county in 2003.



This approach was recognized as a valuable way to evaluate efforts to end homelessness and apportion funding. The 2005 state “Homeless Housing and Assistance Act” codified this practice, and created a mandate for all counties that received state and federal homeless and housing funds to use the census as a way to measure performance and document needs for continued future funding.

Aside from the highly valuable data produced by the statewide “Point-in -Time Count of Homeless Persons”, the process of developing the census

underscored the value of collaboration between faith-based communities, non-profits and governmental agencies. The problem of homelessness affects all parts of the community; linking these diverse stakeholders to coordinate effort is essential to making progress. This collaboration between government, non -profits, and faith-based communities was a guiding principle in making the homeless census successful.

## The Roles of Government: Federal, State, County & City of Olympia



**Federal Government's Role in Census** The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) reports to Congress on the number of homeless people in the United States. HUD directs federal McKinney grant recipients to perform a point-in-time count of homeless persons during the last full week of January.

In order to avoid duplication of efforts, the state-mandated count is conducted on the fourth Thursday in January. This year the count occurred on January 24, 2019. HUD uses the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) to track data and locally implemented homeless counts to arrive at the number of sheltered and unsheltered homeless people and the characteristics of homeless people living in shelters.

The report offers a baseline for reports that explore patterns of homelessness over time. Homeless service providers across the country, such as emergency shelters and transitional and supportive housing programs, collect information about their clients to match it with information from other providers to get accurate counts of homeless clients and the services they need.



**Washington State's Role in Census** The 2005 Washington State "Homeless Housing and Assistance Act" requires an annual count of homeless persons in Washington State. The purpose of these guidelines is to define the common elements required of all local counts, to ensure that data is comparable between counties, and to ensure that confidentiality is protected. Communities are encouraged to adapt this basic framework for the annual census to the specific conditions and infrastructure of their community.

Local government is directed to make every effort to count all homeless individuals living outdoors, in shelters, and in transitional housing, coordinated, when reasonably feasible, with already existing homeless census projects including those funded in part by HUD under the McKinney-Vento homeless assistance program. The department determines, in consultation with local governments, the data to be collected. All personal information collected in the census is confidential, and the department and each local government is to take all necessary steps to protect the identity and confidentiality of each person counted.



**Thurston County's Role in Census** Thurston County is the local unit of government mandated (RCW 43.185C) to count the county's homeless population annually. The County is also the lead jurisdiction in administering federal HOME Program dollars along with the state recording fee dollars intended to fund homeless and housing projects.

The results of this count are reported to both the state and federal governments. Additionally, the county's census report includes an expanded definition to include people living with friends or family, people in jail and mental or other health facilities that will be released to homelessness. This information helps local governments, non-profits, faith communities,

and others to understand the extent of homelessness, its impact on local resources, and helps to develop strategies to reduce the number of people without permanent homes.

The County plays a crucial role in ensuring a comprehensive census that identifies all local homeless people, including rural areas surrounding Rochester, Tenino and Yelm.

Homeless people from beyond the urban core often find refuge “off the grid” of traditional shelter and services, which can limit the usefulness of urban-oriented census methodologies.



**City of Olympia’s Role in Census** Thurston County contracts with the City of Olympia to coordinate the annual homeless census, analyze the results, and to produce a final report. New this year, the City provided additional resources to fund two parallel homeless counts in the urban hub.

Olympia has a unique role related to Thurston County’s homeless population. While homelessness is a regional problem, its locus is concentrated in Olympia because it is the urban core of the county. Federal, state, and local funds support a vibrant continuum of services, shelter and housing, most of which are located within Olympia.

This means that homeless people from more rural areas like Rochester and Yelm gravitate towards the urban core where 90% of the shelter, housing and service resources are located. As shown in this report, the number of homeless people exceeds the number of shelter beds and transitional housing units, which means that unsheltered homeless people must resort to car camping on the streets, sleeping in public parks, using libraries as warming centers, and other areas not primarily intended to serve as de facto homeless facilities. As a result, Olympia becomes a focal point in addressing many local homeless policies and strategies.



# Chapter 9: Methodology

## 2019 Census Methodology

The PIT Census utilized three primary methodologies:

- 1) **Homeless Management Information System (HMIS)** data collection for people living at formally recognized homeless shelters or transitional housing facilities;
- 2) **Homeless Connect Events** PIT Census workers were stationed at four (4) regional Homeless Connect Events intended to draw homeless people together for meals, services and other resources;
- 3) **Homeless PIT Census Rovers** PIT Census workers were deployed in teams to conduct a “street census” in the urban hub areas that included sidewalks, alcoves, under bridges and public facilities known to be welcoming to homeless people.

## HMIS Data

The primary source of PIT data was the State Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) in which all funded service providers must enter their data. PIT Census workers worked closely with State Commerce and various service providers to confirm data on people living in homeless shelters and transitional housing facilities. This included work to “de-duplicate” the records for people counted twice and efforts to ensure that agencies provided the most comprehensive information on their residents. As noted elsewhere in the report, significant parts of the PIT requested information is not routinely collected by Transitional Housing providers and so that data was missing.

## Homeless Connect Events

In order to connect with unsheltered people, the PIT Census held four (4) Homeless Connect Events on Thursday, January 24, 2019 at seven different locations. In cooperation with local service providers, Connect Events were held at:

- **Community Care Center**
- **Family Support Center**
- **Rochester Organization of Families (ROOF)**
- **Rosie’s Place Youth Drop-In Center**
- **Senior Services for South Sound**
- **Veterans Hub of Lacey**
- **Union Gospel Mission of Olympia**



*Figure 11 Maria Ferris, owner of the Olympia Barber School brings her students to provide free haircuts, featured here at the 2015 Homeless Connect Event*

The intent of these Events is two-fold: 1) to provide needed goods and services to the homeless in our community; and, 2) to create welcoming places for homeless citizens to have meals and obtain services and other resources while allowing Census Workers to administer the PIT Census surveys.

**Camp Census** The second methodology involved sending out teams into homeless camps throughout the urban hub of Olympia and the nearby parts of Lacey and Tumwater. In Olympia, these teams went out with Homeless Guides. In Lacey and Tumwater these teams went out with City staff who were knowledgeable about the location of camps. These teams found a very limited number of people willing to participate in the 2019 PIT Census.

**Street Outreach** In both Yelm and Olympia, there were PIT Street Outreach teams that conducted the PIT Census in high density areas. In Olympia, those teams focused on the existing camps in and around downtown Olympia. Additionally, there were “Rover PIT Teams” in Olympia that focused on high traffic commercial areas where presumed homeless people either panhandled or held signs asking for money at intersections. In Yelm, the teams focused on known areas where homeless people can come indoors or seek services.

### **Volunteers and Outreach**

This year, the PIT Census was conducted by a small City of Olympia staff via contract with Thurston County. This staff was expanded with three academic interns and over 136 total volunteers (Please note: not all volunteers wanted to be credited in the “Acknowledgements” section. These volunteers participated in the Point in Time Census, either as census takers, donators of services, Homeless Connect assistants, or clean up/ set up crews. Volunteers worked at Family Support Center, Community Care Center, Rosie’s Place, ROOF, Lacey Veteran’s Hub, Yelm Community Services, Tenino Food Bank, Union Gospel Mission, and in roving teams both in downtown Olympia and across Thurston County.





# Chapter 10: Strengthening the Regional Homeless Response

## History of Regional Homeless Response Planning

In Chapter 3, “Examining the Numbers”, the 2019 PIT data revealed that one third or 34% of the homeless respondents reported that their last permanent residence was in Olympia. Yet over three quarters of all the homeless people in Thurston County, 77% were found in Olympia. The most logical reason for this population transfer is that over 95% of the meal programs, shelter beds and camp accommodations are concentrated in Olympia. Most of those resources have historically been located in the urban hub, benefitting from decades of development, property acquisition and shared facility use agreements to support them. This geographic dissonance between the place of last residence and the destination where homeless people are forced to migrate for their survival needs is seen all across the nation; urban hubs serve as the host for the region’s homeless citizens.

Since the early 2000’s, there have been efforts to develop a more regionalized approach to homelessness.

- **Interjurisdictional Forum on Homelessness** Beginning in 2002, local officials convened the first effort to regionalize efforts by founding the Inter-Jurisdictional Forum on Homelessness (IFH) as an inter-governmental body with representatives from Lacey, Olympia, Tumwater and Thurston County to respond to what former County Commissioner Kathy Wolfe identified as a less than balanced approach, “*While homelessness is a regional issue, its locus is in Olympia (Former Commissioner Cathy Wolfe, 2008)*”.
- **Thurston County HOME Consortium** The IFH also worked with community partners to submit the first application to Housing & Urban Development (HUD) for the federal HOME Program. Federal regulations which the formation of a representational body called the **County HOME Consortium** founded in 2004 and now
- **Thurston Thrives** The Home Consortium was replaced in 2015 by a regional body that invited both elected officials, service providers and other community stakeholders to develop public policy on homelessness and affordable housing. There have been a series of ongoing efforts to forge a regional response to homelessness.
- **Five Year Homeless Housing Plan Revision** the current effort to update the Five Year Homeless Housing Plan is now serving as the vehicle for developing a regional homeless and housing response plan. The first draft will be due by August 2019 and will detail a regional approach to expanding resources for services, shelter and housing throughout Thurston County.

In spite of these efforts over the past 18 years, the service network of homeless resources remains concentrated in the urban hub.

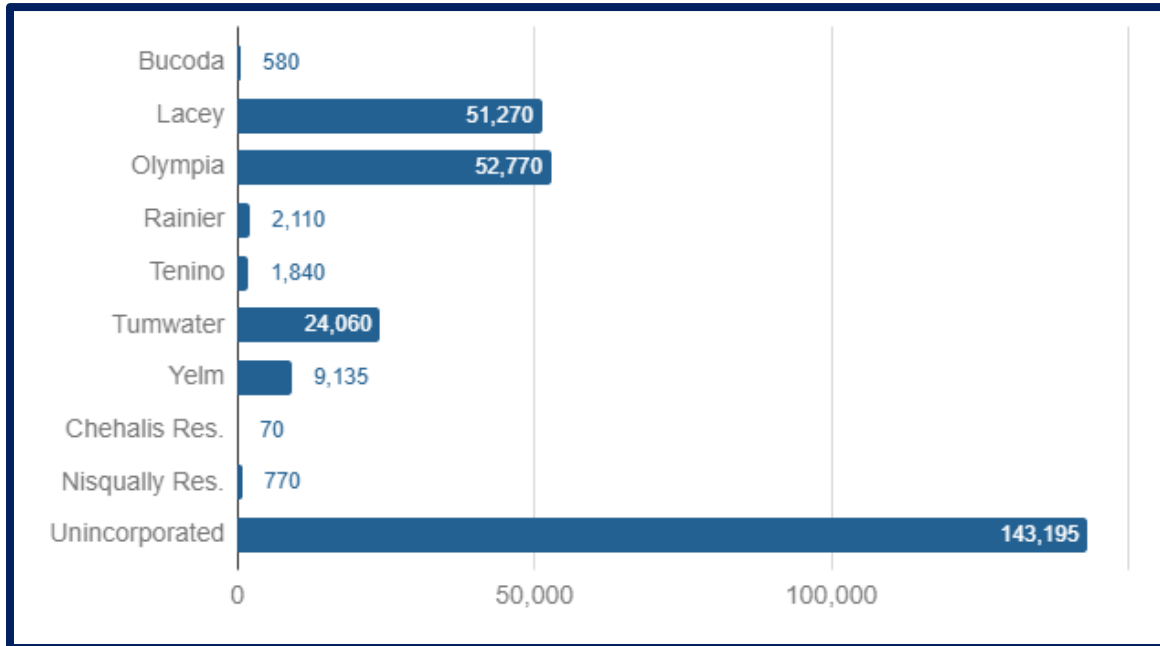
## Thurston County Overall Demographics

It is useful to understand this PIT data in the context of Thurston County as a whole. As of the 2010 census, its population was 252,264. Current population estimates by Thurston Regional Planning Council (TRPC) estimates the total population in Thurston County to be 285,220, distributed across the seven (7)

cities and towns as listed below. The county seat and largest city is Olympia, which also the state capital. Thurston County has 722 square miles of land, and is also home to Lacey, Tumwater, Bucoda, Tenino, Rainier, Rochester and Yelm along with a large number of rural inhabitants and two tribal reservations.

## 2019 Thurston County Population

*Thurston Regional Planning Estimates*



In the 2010 Census, the racial makeup of the county was 82.4% white, 5.2% Asian, 2.7% black or African American, 1.4% American Indian, 0.8% Pacific Islander, 2.2% from other races, and 5.3% from two or more races. Those of Hispanic or Latino origin made up 7.1% of the population. By later 2019, efforts to plan for the 2020 US Census will commence and will provide another means of conducting a count of our homeless citizens.



# Appendices

- A. Point in Time Count Survey Forms – January 2019
- B. 2019 Thurston County Point-in-Time Homelessness Snapshot
- C. Thurston County 2019 PIT – Full 2019 PIT Census Data at a Glance
- D. Thurston County 5-Year Homeless Housing Plan Summary
- E. 2019 PIT Homeless Census Glossary



Survey Location: \_\_\_\_\_

**UNSHeltered/LIVING WITH FAMILY OR FRIENDS**

Current City: \_\_\_\_\_

**ARE YOU ACTIVELY FLEEING DOMESTIC VIOLENCE, if yes, STOP!**

**Use CONSENT REFUSED form or use this form without name or signature.**

**WHERE DID YOU STAY LAST NIGHT? (choose one - applies to entire household)**

<input type="radio"/> Out of Doors (street, tent, etc.)	<input type="radio"/> RV/Boat Lacking Any of the Following Amenities Drinking water, restroom, heat, ability to cook hot food, ability to bathe
<input type="radio"/> Vehicle	<input type="radio"/> Temp. Living w/ Family or Friends †
<input type="radio"/> Abandoned Building	† Not considered homeless for PIT by HUD; Optional

**WHERE WERE YOU LAST HOUSED? LAST ON A LEASE OR MORTGAGE? LAST RECEIVED MAIL?**

Last known permanent City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

**HOW LONG HAVE YOU LIVED WITHOUT STABLE HOUSING?**

1. Have you or anyone in the household been continuously without housing for a year or more?  
 Yes (skip to Household Information section)  No
2. Have you or anyone in the household been without housing 4 or more times in the last 3 years?  
 Yes  No (skip to Household Information Section)
3. Do these times without housing, added together, amount to a year or more?  Yes  No
4. Does any person who answered yes for either i. or iii. have a disability?  Yes  No

1

**PLEASE TELL ME ABOUT YOURSELF & YOUR HOUSEHOLD?**

(Please enter each Household or Street Family member below. Use additional form if household has more than four members)

Household without Kids _____		Household with Adults & Kids _____		Households with only Children _____								
Relation to Head of Household Spouse/ Partner/ Child/Etc. <i>i.e.</i> – "Self"	Name or Initials	Birth Date or Birth Year	Demographic Information				Disabilities Check all that apply					
			Gender <sup>1</sup>	Race <sup>2</sup> <i>(enter all that apply)</i>	Ethnicity (Hispanic (H) or Non-Hispanic (N))	Veteran (ever served in the military)	Chronic Substance Abuse	Physical Disability (Permanent)	Developmental Disability	Mental Health (Substantial & Long-Term)	Chronic Health Condition (Permanently Disabling)	

<sup>1</sup> GENDER: Male (M), Female (F), Transgender (T), Gender Non-Conforming (G), Queer (Q) Refused (R)

<sup>2</sup> RACE: White (W), Black or African-American (B), Asian (A), American Indian or Alaska Native (I), Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander (H), Multi-Racial (M), Refused (R)

WHAT CAUSED YOUR HOMELESSNESS? Check all that apply			<input type="checkbox"/> Refused <input type="checkbox"/> Don't Know
Housing & Economic	System & Legal	Health Issues	Family Conflict
<input type="checkbox"/> Job Loss/unemployment	<input type="checkbox"/> Discharged from hospital or other medical facility	<input type="checkbox"/> Mental Illness	
<input type="checkbox"/> Eviction/Loss of housing	<input type="checkbox"/> Discharged from criminal/juvenile justice system	<input type="checkbox"/> Physical health/disability	<input type="checkbox"/> Guardian mental health/substance abuse

<input type="checkbox"/> Lack of job training/ unable to work	<input type="checkbox"/> Aged out of foster care	<input type="checkbox"/> Alcohol/substance abuse	<input type="checkbox"/> Family Rejection/Kicked out
<input type="checkbox"/> Lack of childcare	<input type="checkbox"/> Medical costs	<input type="checkbox"/> Illness	<input type="checkbox"/> Abuse/Neglect

<b>WHAT IS YOUR SOURCE(S) OF INCOME &amp; BENEFITS</b> <i>(check all that apply)</i>		<input type="checkbox"/> Refused	<input type="checkbox"/> Don't Know
<b>Public Assistance/Benefits</b>		<b>Employment</b>	<b>Other</b>
<input type="checkbox"/> Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF)	<input type="checkbox"/> Veterans Benefits (VA)	<input type="checkbox"/> Part time	<input type="checkbox"/> None
<input type="checkbox"/> Social Security (SSI) Social Security Disability (SSDI)	<input type="checkbox"/> Unemployment	<input type="checkbox"/> Full time	<input type="checkbox"/> Panhandling
<input type="checkbox"/> Temporary Disability/ABD	<input type="checkbox"/> Medicare/Medicaid	<input type="checkbox"/> Farm/seasonal	<input type="checkbox"/> Relative/friends
<input type="checkbox"/> Housing & Essential Needs (HEN)	<input type="checkbox"/> Food Stamps	<input type="checkbox"/> Self-employed	<input type="checkbox"/> Selling stuff

### Client Release of Information and Informed Consent

**IMPORTANT: Do not enter personally identifying information into HMIS for clients who are: 1) in DV agencies or; 2) currently fleeing or in danger from a domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault or stalking situation; 3) are being served in a program that requires disclosure of HIV/AIDS status (i.e.; HOPWA); or 4) under 13 with no parent or guardian available to consent to enter the minor's information in HMIS.**

*If this applies to you, **STOP- Do not sign this form.***

This agency participates in the Washington State Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) by collecting information, over time, about the characteristics and service needs of people facing homelessness. **RCW 43.185C.180 and RCW 43.185C.030**

- To provide the most effective services in moving people from homelessness to permanent housing, we need an accurate count of all people experiencing homelessness in Washington State. In order to insure that clients are not counted twice, we need to collect four pieces of personally identifying information. Specifically, we collect: **name, birth date, and race/ethnicity**. You may also choose to provide your social security number. However, signing this form does not require you to do so. Your information will be stored in our database for 7 years after the last date of service. If you have questions about collection of data or your rights regarding your personally identifying information, contact the HMIS System Administrator at: (360) 725-3028
- We use strict security policies designed to protect your privacy. Our computer system is highly secure and uses up-to-date protection features such as data encryption, passwords, and two-factor authentication required for each system user. There is a small risk of a security breach, and someone might obtain and use your information inappropriately. If you ever suspect the data in HMIS has been misused, immediately contact the HMIS System Administrator at: (360) 725-3028
- The data you provide may be combined with data from the Washington State Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) and Education Research and Data Center for the purpose of further analysis. Your name and other identifying information will not be included in any reports or publications. Only a limited number of staff members, who have signed confidentiality agreements, will be able to see this information. Your information will not be used to determine eligibility for DSHS programs. Washington State HMIS system administrators have full access to all information in HMIS. This includes the Department of Commerce staff, designated HMIS system administrators, and the software vendor.
- By signing this form, you acknowledge and allow Department of Commerce staff to obtain additional records of information from other state agencies with which there is a data sharing agreement (DSA) on file between Commerce and the other agency. Our DSA guides data transfer and storage security protocols. If DSAs are in place, Commerce is authorized by you to obtain, add to HMIS, and use for evaluation purposes any other data you have provided to other Washington state agencies.
- Your decision to participate in the HMIS will not affect the quality or quantity of services you are eligible to receive from this agency, and will not be used to deny outreach, assistance, shelter or housing. However, if you do choose to participate, services in the region may improve if we have accurate information about homeless individuals and the services they need. Furthermore, some funders MAY require that you consent to provide your personally identifying information in HMIS in order for you to receive services from that funding source.

**SIGNATURE PLEASE!** I understand the above statements and consent to the inclusion of personally identifying information in HMIS about me and any dependents listed below, and authorize information collected to be shared with partner agencies. I understand that my personally identifying information will not be made public and will only be used with strict confidentiality. I also understand that I may

Survey Location: \_\_\_\_\_

**UNSHELTERED/LIVING WITH FAMILY OR FRIENDS**

Current City: \_\_\_\_\_

**ARE YOU ACTIVELY FLEEING DOMESTICE VIOLENCE, if yes, STOP!**

**Use CONSENT REFUSED form or use this form without name or signature.**

withdraw my consent at any time by filing a 'Client Revocation of Consent' form with this agency. I understand that I may obtain a copy of my signed consent form from this Agency (including forms signed electronically).

Dependent children under 18 in household, if any (Please print first and last names):

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**RESPONDENT SIGNATURE (Parent/Guardian)    DATE**



--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

<b>WHAT CAUSED YOUR HOMELESSNESS?</b> <i>Check all that apply</i>				<input type="checkbox"/> Refused	<input type="checkbox"/> Don't Know
<b>Housing &amp; Economic</b>	<b>System &amp; Legal</b>	<b>Health Issues</b>	<b>Family Conflict</b>		
<input type="checkbox"/> Job Loss/unemployment	<input type="checkbox"/> Discharged from hospital or other medical facility	<input type="checkbox"/> Mental Illness			
<input type="checkbox"/> Eviction/Loss of housing	<input type="checkbox"/> Discharged from criminal/juvenile justice system	<input type="checkbox"/> Physical health/disability	<input type="checkbox"/> Guardian mental health/substance abuse		
<input type="checkbox"/> Lack of job training/ unable to work	<input type="checkbox"/> Aged out of foster care	<input type="checkbox"/> Alcohol/substance abuse	<input type="checkbox"/> Family Rejection/Kicked out		
<input type="checkbox"/> Lack of childcare	<input type="checkbox"/> Medical costs	<input type="checkbox"/> Illness	<input type="checkbox"/> Abuse/Neglect		

<b>WHAT IS YOUR SOURCE(S) OF INCOME &amp; BENEFITS</b> <i>(check all that apply)</i>		<input type="checkbox"/> Refused	<input type="checkbox"/> Don't Know
<b>Public Assistance/Benefits</b>		<b>Employment</b>	<b>Other</b>
<input type="checkbox"/> Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF)	<input type="checkbox"/> Veterans Benefits (VA)	<input type="checkbox"/> Part time	<input type="checkbox"/> None
<input type="checkbox"/> Social Security (SSI) Social Security Disability (SSDI)	<input type="checkbox"/> Unemployment	<input type="checkbox"/> Full time	<input type="checkbox"/> Panhandling
<input type="checkbox"/> Temporary Disability/ABD	<input type="checkbox"/> Medicare/Medicaid	<input type="checkbox"/> Farm/seasonal	<input type="checkbox"/> Relative/friends
<input type="checkbox"/> Housing & Essential Needs (HEN)	<input type="checkbox"/> Food Stamps	<input type="checkbox"/> Self-employed	<input type="checkbox"/> Selling stuff

\* Denotes data that HUD requires for the PIT Count. All answers from the individuals surveyed are voluntary.

**This form is only to be used at Domestic Violence agencies. Please use the regular 2019 PIT Survey Form (with signature line and release of information) for other locations in order to avoid duplication.**

**THANK YOU!**

Your responses will help us improve services to people with unstable housing

# Point-in-Time Homeless Snapshot for Thurston County

2019

## 2019 Point-In-Time Count Results

Each January, Thurston County conducts a “point-in-time count” to capture the number and characteristics of people living without a home.



**12%**

Unaccompanied youth 17 and under



**42%**

Female



**7%**

Veterans



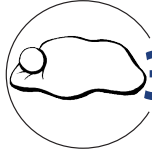
**10%**

Victims of domestic violence



**32%**

People of color\* \*People of color make up 18% of the Thurston County population.



**31%**

Chronically homeless



**34%**

Households with children

### The main causes of homelessness are related to economic & family stability

1. Job loss/eviction
2. Mental/health/family rejection
3. Physical health/disability
4. Domestic violence/alcohol or substance abuse

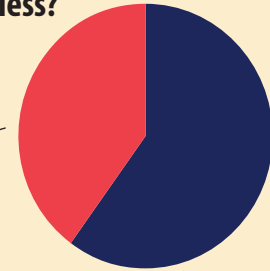
**800**

**Homeless people counted in Thurston County**

### How long have people been homeless?

**30%**

Less than one year



**70%**

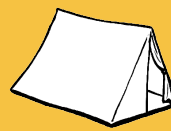
More than one year

### Not all people experiencing homelessness sleep outside



**30%**

Emergency shelter



**34%**

Out of doors (street, tent, etc.)



**14%**

Vehicle, abandoned building, other



**21%**

Transitional housing

### Most said they lived in Thurston County before becoming homeless

54% Thurston County

35% Other WA Counties

11% Outside WA

### Physical health is the most commonly reported disability

Here is the breakdown of the most commonly reported disabilities. Some people reported having multiple disabilities.

Mental illness

**55%**

Physical disability

**54%**

Chronic health condition

**33%**

Substance use

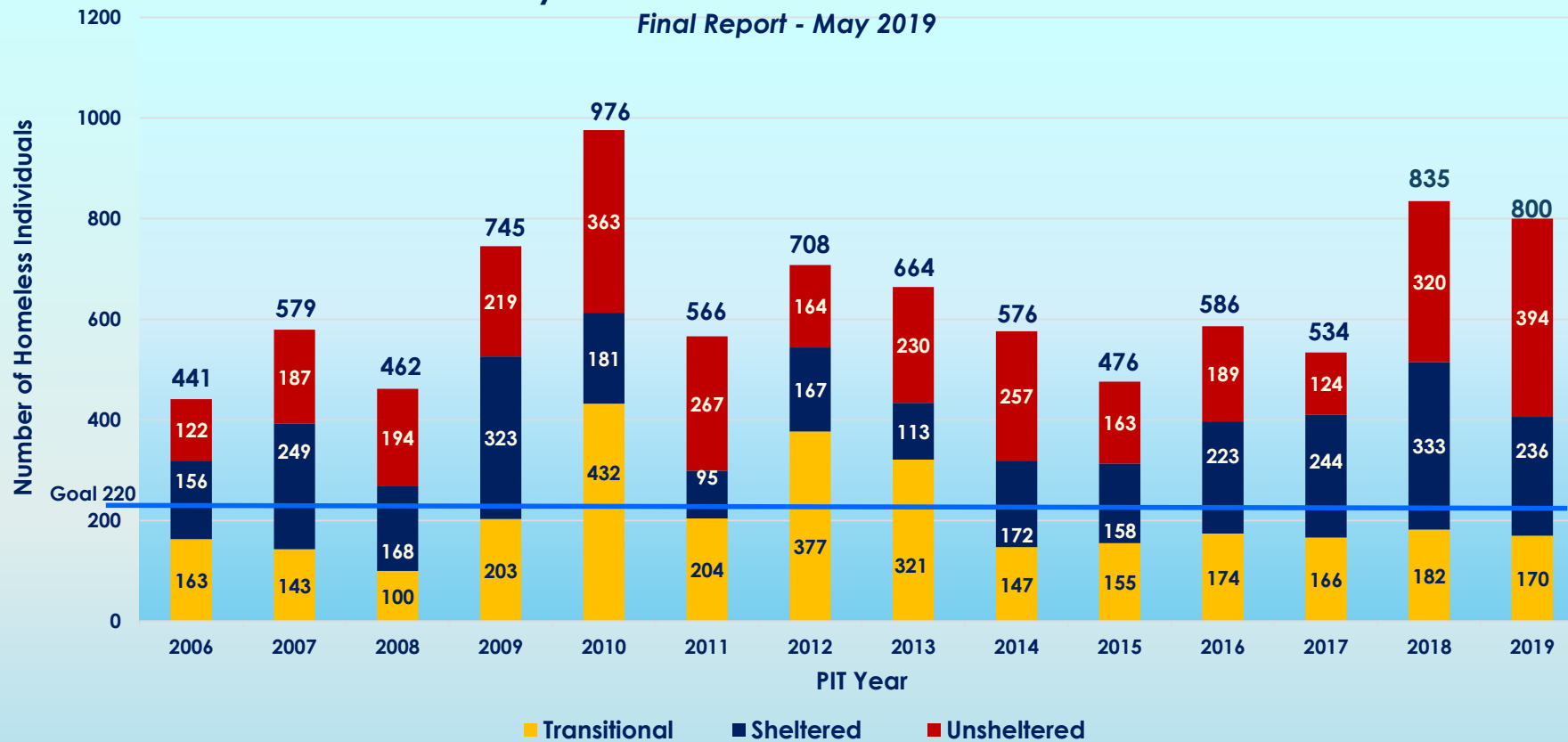
**33%**

Developmental disability

**5%**

# Thurston County - Point in Time Homeless Counts 2006-2019

Final Report - May 2019



## Thurston County PIT Progress Chart – Explanatory Notes by Year

**2006:** 1<sup>st</sup> year base line of 441 – Reduction goal = 222

**2008:** Decrease due to large inventory of new housing

**2010:** Increase correlates with Recession high point

**2011:** Transitional Housing Stock converted to Permanent  
Another did not report occupancy, unsheltered count

**2015:** Homelessness drops with Recession recovery

**2017:** Decrease due to limited staff capacity

**2018:** Homeless increase correlates with rent increase

**2019:** One shelter lost 40 beds, another didn't report  
Many unsheltered people declined to participate

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Thurston County – Full 2019 PIT Homeless Census – Data at a Glance					
Individuals	800		Children 17 & under	168	21%
Males	432	54%	Adults 18-30	81	10%
Females	307	38%	Adults 30 - 45	142	18%
Transgendered	13	2%	Adults 45 - 60	114	14%
Unaccompanied Minors	103	13%	Adults 60+	30	4%
Veterans	55	7%			
Disabilities as Indicated by Individual* (500 Responses)					
Physical (permanent)	174		43%	Developmental Disability	72 12%
Mental Health***	239		56%	Alcohol or drug addiction	123 33%
Chronic Health Problem	202		33%	No Reply/Refused	300
Current Living Status by Individual (800 Respondents)					
Emergency Shelter/ Motel Voucher Program	237	30%		Out of Doors	275 34%
Transitional Housing	170	21%		Vehicle / RV /Boat	117 15%
Jail or Medical Facility (Estimates)				Abandoned Building	2 0.003%
Situations that caused Homelessness for Households* (500 Responses)					
Domestic Violence *Out of 800 Respondents	82		10%	Alcohol or Drug Use	50 10%
Job Lost	115		23%	Family Break-up	70 14%
Evicted-Non-payment	116		23%	Out of Home Youth	11 2%
Lack of Job Skills	38		8%	Discharged Institution/Jail	19 4%
Mental Illness	70		14%	Discharged from Hospital	11 2%
All Sources of Household Income** (400 Responses)					
TANF	41	11%		Disability Benefits	9 3.0%
Social Security	96	26%		Relatives, Partners, Friends	0 0%
Unemployment Insurance	5	1%		VA Benefits	12 3%
Part-time Work	23	6%		Panhandling	26 7%
Medicaid/Medicare	65	18%		No Reply/Refused	400
Length of Time Households Have Been Homeless (461 Responses)					
More than 1 year*	335	73%		Less than 1 year	126 27%
Episodes of Homelessness in Past 3 Years (599 Responses)					
More than 4 episodes of * homelessness in 3 years				Less than 4 episodes of homelessness in 3 years	
Race (720 Responses)					
White / Caucasian	555	77.0%		Asian	3 0.04%
Black / African American	70	9.7%		Hawaiian / Asian Pacific Islander	13 1.8%
American Indian	26	3.6%		Multiple Races	53 7%



# Thurston County 5-Year Homeless Housing Plan Summary

**Thurston County** adopted this draft Five-Year Homeless Housing Plan in 2017 with the intent to ensure that homelessness is rare, brief and a one-time occurrence. Local homeless housing plans are required by RCW 43.185c.050 which provides guidance centered on 10-year plans to end homelessness. The 10 year mark has passed and the State is providing further guidance on developing local homeless plans for all state and local recording fees, federal Continuum of Care (CoC) and Emergency Shelter Grant (ESG) funded counties. State Consolidated Homeless Grant (CHG) guidelines also require that counties must update and approve local plans to address homelessness at least every five years.

These plans and updates must be submitted to State Department of Commerce annually to assess performance. This detailed plan outlines three strategy areas and details the specific activities, timeline and the lead entity responsible for facilitation progress and reporting, summarized as follows:

## Expand Housing Resources and Safety Net

- **Housing Resources:** Increase housing solutions for all target populations (*single adults, families with children, unaccompanied youth and transition age youth*)
- **Diversion:** Increase family reunification and diversion
- **Shelter Resources:** Strengthen existing shelter capacity

## Standardize Best Practices

- **Prioritization of Housing:** Prioritize placements based on vulnerability (*using a standardized "Vulnerability Index" assessment tool*)
- **Supportive Services:** Integrate housing services with behavioral health
- **Strengthen Coordinated Entry:** Continue to develop the Coordinated Entry (CE) System
- **Data Entry Enhancement:** Improve and enhance system reporting (*i.e. synchronize and standardize all related homeless and housing reporting systems*)
- **Data Enhancement:** Improve Homeless Management Information Systems (HMIS) reporting

## Regionalize Public Homeless Policy

- **Alignment of Plans:** Develop closer alignment of Regional Comprehensive Plans, housing development standards and related government plans
- **Other Local Resources:** Explore other municipal resources and funding sources
- **Housing Inventory:** Develop a comprehensive list of affordable and low-cost housing resources
- **Synchronize Planning Efforts:** Clarify the roles and relationships of all regional planning groups

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## 2019 Homeless Census Glossary

[Adapted from Pierce County Affordable Housing Consortium website (affordablehousingconsortium.org), which was adapted from HDC, Seattle]

<b>Affordable Housing</b>	Housing should cost no more than 30% of your total income, including utilities. Affordable rental housing usually has a maximum income limit of 60% of median income. In Thurston County, this equates to an annual income of \$29,580 for one person or \$38,040 for three persons. Homeownership programs generally allow up to 80% of median or \$39,400 for one person or \$50,700 for a three-person household.
<b>Chronically Homeless</b>	Chronically homeless people are defined as "an unaccompanied homeless individual with a disabling condition who have either been continuously homeless for a year or more, or have had at least four episodes of homelessness in the past three years.
<b>CHG</b>	Consolidated Homeless Grant Program, state funding administered by the County to support a variety of activities, including: operation of homeless shelter and transitional housing units, rental assistance, data collection and reporting.
<b>Continuum of Care</b>	The Continuum of Care (CoC) Program is designed to promote communitywide commitment to the goal of ending homelessness; provide funding for efforts by nonprofit providers, and State and local governments to quickly rehouse homeless individuals and families while minimizing the trauma and dislocation caused to homeless individuals, families, and communities by homelessness; promote access to and effect utilization of mainstream programs by homeless individuals and families; and optimize self-sufficiency among individuals and families experiencing homelessness.
<b>Coordinated Entry System (CES)</b>	Coordinated entry is process required by State and Federal funders through which people experiencing or at risk of experiencing homelessness can access the crisis response system in a streamlined way, have their strengths and needs quickly assessed, and quickly connect to appropriate, tailored housing and mainstream services within the community or designated region. Standardized assessment tools and practices used within local coordinated assessment processes take into account the unique needs of children and their families as well as youth. When possible, the assessment provides the ability for households to gain access to the best options to address their needs, incorporating participants' choice, rather than being evaluated for a single program within the system. The most intensive interventions are prioritized for those with the highest needs.
<b>ESG</b>	Emergency Shelter Grant Program, federal funding administered by the County for homeless prevention assistance to households who would otherwise become homeless and to provide assistance to rapidly re-house persons who

are experiencing homelessness. The funds are intended to target individuals and families who would be homeless but for this assistance.

<b>HEN</b>	Housing and Essential Needs Grants Program, state funding administered by the County that are limited to providing rental assistance, utility assistance and essential needs for medical service recipients whose eligibility is determined by the State Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS).
<b>HMIS</b>	Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) is the Washington State data system managed by the State Department of Commerce and is used by homeless and housing services providers to collect and manage data gathered during the course of providing housing assistance to people experiencing homelessness. HMIS is used to manage all PIT Homeless Census data for counties in the Balance of State who are not managing their own data with independent data systems.
<b>HUD</b>	Abbreviation for the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.
<b>Harm Reduction</b>	Harm Reduction is a service model that refers to policies, programs and practices that aim to reduce the harms associated with the use of drugs or other destructive and self-harming behavior in people unable or unwilling to stop. The defining features are the focus on the prevention of harmful behavior, rather than on the prevention of drug use itself or other harmful behaviors, and the focus on people who continue to use drugs or engage in harmful behavior.
<b>High Barrier Shelter</b>	High-Barrier shelter or High Barrier Entry refers to a service model that operates with rules dictating behavior standards on drugs or alcohol, separates residents by gender or other behavioral issues.
<b>HOME Consortium</b>	The Thurston County HOME Consortium was an inter-jurisdictional body that governs the use of federal HOME funds and the two state funded programs called the Homeless Housing Program and the Affordable Housing Program. PLEASE NOTE: The Thurston County HOME Consortium is now defunct, although HUD funded program regulations refer to this body.
<b>Housing Action Team of Thurston Thrives</b>	The Housing Action Team (HAT) is one of eight action teams within Thurston with the goal to establish and implement community health improvement targets related to affordable housing and homelessness. The HAT works together to achieve goals on the “Housing for Health Strategy Map” in three key areas: Affordable Housing/New Construction; Homeless and Crisis Response (aka Homeless Housing Hub); and, Green and Healthy Homes/Safe and Affordable Rentals. This group combines efforts of HOME Consortium (former), Home Citizens Advisory Committee (former), Housing Task Force (former), Continuum of Care, Housing Pipeline, Hazardous Weather Task Force, and Incentivized Housing and the Coordinated Entry group.

**Homeless**

The federal definition of homelessness, which comes from United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). HUD defines homeless as (1) an individual who lacks a fixed, regular and adequate nighttime residence; and (2) an individual who has a primary nighttime residence that is:

- A supervised publicly or privately operated shelter designed to provide temporary living accommodations (including welfare hotels, congregate shelters, and transitional housing for the mentally ill).
- An institution that provides a temporary residence for individuals intended to be institutionalized; or a public or private place not designed for, or ordinarily used as, a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings.

**Homeless  
Coordinator**

Local governments now have staff or consultant positions charged with coordinating their respective homeless response plans. Key goals for Homeless Coordination include; 1) Assessment of the current system of services, shelter and housing resources, 2) Homeless Housing Plan Updates and Implementation, 3) Enhanced Data Management; and, 4) Public education. City of Olympia has hired a Homeless Response Coordinator, Thurston County is in the process of hiring their third Homeless Coordinator, and City of Tumwater has retained a consultant to provide homeless coordination.

**Homeless  
Housing Hub**

The Homeless Housing Hub (HHH) is one of three committees of the Thurston Thrives Housing Action Team . The HHH is charged with hosting the Continuum of Care planning; drafting the 5-Year Homeless Housing Plan; continual improvement of the Coordinated Entry System; Continual improvement of the HMIS data collection system and other coordination of homeless housing and services; and, alignment between local, state and federal goals to end homelessness.

**Housing Authority**

Housing authorities are public corporations with boards appointed by the local government. Their mission is to provide affordable housing to low- and moderate-income people. In addition to public housing, housing authorities also provide other types of subsidized housing such as the federal HUD- subsidized Section 8 program.

**Housing First**

Housing First is an approach to quickly and successfully connect individuals and families experiencing homelessness to permanent housing without preconditions and barriers to entry, such as sobriety, treatment or service participation requirements. Supportive services are offered to maximize housing stability and prevent returns to homelessness as opposed to addressing predetermined treatment goals prior to permanent housing entry. Housing First is a recent innovation in human service programs and social policy in responding to homelessness. It is an alternative to the a system of emergency shelter/transitional housing progressions known as the Continuum of Care, whereby each level moves them closer to "independent housing" (for example: from the streets to a public shelter, and from a public shelter to a transitional

housing program, and from there to their own apartment in the community) Housing First moves the homeless individual or household immediately from the streets or homeless shelters into their own apartments.

<b>Housing Task Force</b>	<b>PLEASE NOTE: Now defunct</b> The Thurston County Housing Task Force was an ad hoc association formed in 1988 to address issues of affordable housing and homelessness in Thurston County. For many years this body managed the “Continuum of Care” for Thurston County. It was originally composed of service providers, advocates, government housing program staff and elected officials and served as a networking and advocacy group to promote local housing policy. In recent years it has become a coalition of homeless shelter, housing and service providers who meet monthly to network homeless services and address current issues.
<b>Income Limits</b>	Income limits for households to qualify for subsidized housing opportunities are based on the Area Median Income (AMI) for a family of four. In Thurston County the 2010 AMI is \$68,100. Specific household sizes are used to determine eligibility for each household. Low-income: 80% or less of AMI = \$61,050 for household of 4 Very-low-income: 50% or less of AMI = \$38,150 for household of 4 Extremely-low-income: 30% or less of AMI = \$24,100 for household of 4
<b>Low Barrier Shelter</b>	Low-barrier shelter is a service model that offers safe housing where a minimum number of expectations are placed on people who wish to stay there, allowing more people access to shelter and services. Specific definitions of how “low” those barriers are vary between providers, but include non-segregation by gender, no requirement for sobriety, in and out privileges, etc.
<b>Low Income Housing Tax Credit</b>	Government authorized tax credits issued to both for-profit and nonprofit-developed rental properties to develop affordable housing. The Washington State Housing Finance Commission allocates these credits to developers to build or fix up low-income housing. Large corporations, institutions, pension funds, and insurance companies invest in the housing as a method to gain the tax credits and reduce their income tax obligations. These apartments must serve residents below 60% of median income and must accept Section 8 vouchers.
<b>Market Rate Rent</b>	The prevailing monthly cost for rental housing based on some combination of what the rental market will bear and 30% of the Average Median Income (AMI). Sometimes called “street rents”, market rent rates are set by landlords without government restrictions unless public subsidies require a defined level or period of affordability.
<b>Median Income</b>	This is a statistical number set at the level where half of all households have income above it and half below it. The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development Regional Economist calculates and publishes this median income data annually in the Federal Register. See the Washington State Median Income

and Income Limit figures for 2017 at  
[https://www.huduser.gov/portal/elist/2018-apr\\_10.html](https://www.huduser.gov/portal/elist/2018-apr_10.html)

<b>Mitigation Site</b>	A government sanctioned site intended to serve as temporary, legal camping sites that provide a level of order, safety, dignity and cleanliness to reduce human suffering and the impacts of unmanaged camping on the community. Accommodations typically include tents on platforms; portable restrooms; potable water supply; some level of security for residents and case management.
<b>Mixed-Income Housing</b>	A multi-family housing property that contains both market-rate units for people with incomes at or above the median family income along with subsidized units for lower income residents.
<b>Nonprofit Housing</b>	Non-profit housing is developed by nonprofit corporations with a community board of directors and mission. Most housing developed by nonprofit developers is affordable with rents or prices below market-rate. Income generated from the housing is put back into the mission of the organization, rather than being distributed to stockholders or individual investors.
<b>Nonprofit Housing Developer</b>	A nonprofit organization with a not-for profit mission that involves the creation, preservation, renovation, operation or maintenance of affordable housing.
<b>Overflow Shelters</b>	Overflow shelters are informal emergency shelters operated by non-profit organizations or faith communities inside their facilities to accommodate the “overflow” of homeless people who are turned away from traditional emergency shelters. Typically, overflow shelters rotate on a cyclical basis in order to be compliant with local zoning and building codes. Staffing is typically offered by trained volunteers along with other community volunteers.
<b>Permanent Housing</b>	Rental apartments or ownership homes that provide individuals and families with a fixed street address and residence. While leases may have rental term limits set by the rental property owner, those limits are not tied to a rental assistance program.
<b>Permanent Supportive Housing</b>	Rental apartments or single family homes that provide individuals and families with a fixed street address and residence along with a set of supportive services and case management. Permanent Supportive (or Supported) Housing (PSH) combines rental or housing assistance with individualized, flexible and voluntary support services for people with high needs related to physical or mental health, developmental disabilities or substance use.
<b>People Experiencing Homelessness</b>	The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development defines people experiencing homelessness as “an individual who lacks a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence; as well an individual who has a primary

nighttime residence that is a supervised publicly or privately operated shelter designed to provide temporary living accommodations, an institution that provides a temporary residence for individuals intended to be institutionalized; or a public or private place not designed for, or ordinarily used as, a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings.”

**Privately Developed  
or For-Profit Housing**

Housing rents or sells at market-rate and is developed and owned by for-profit individuals, partnerships, or corporations. Also called “Market-Rate Housing”, this housing is typically affordable to people at or above the median family income.

**Project-Based  
Section 8 Housing**

A federal HUD program that provides site-based rental subsidies, initially based on 20-year commitments of rent subsidy to developers of privately owned rental housing stock in the community to encourage them to build affordable housing.

Many Section 8 contracts have expired or will expire soon, and the property owners must now decide whether to renew their contract or leave the program ("opt out"). Most of these contracts are now renewed on a one-year basis. Projects with high risk of opting out typically have rents set by the Section 8 contract below the prevailing market rents for comparable units. Owners thus have an incentive to leave the program and convert their property to private market rentals.

**Public Housing**

Public housing is housing owned and run by a local housing authority under the oldest federal housing program—the Housing Act of 1937. To be eligible to live in public housing, you must be low income and meet certain other requirements. In most cases, rent including utilities can comprise no more than 30% of your income.

**Rapid Re-housing**

Rapid Re-housing is a housing strategy is based on the "housing first" philosophy of “rapidly” providing housing resources to people who are newly homeless or on the verge of homelessness. Rapid Re-housing differs from other housing models by having an immediate and primary focus on helping families access and sustain permanent housing as quickly as possible. Rapid re-housing is funded by a HUD initiative called “Homelessness Prevention and Rapid Re-Housing Program (HPRP)”.

Rapid re-housing is a solution to homelessness designed to help individuals and families to quickly exit homelessness and return to permanent housing. It is offered without preconditions (such as employment, income, absence of criminal record, or sobriety) and the resources and services provided are typically tailored to the unique needs of the household.

**Encampment**

Open spaces where one or more individuals experiencing homelessness have set up unsanctioned camping arrangements along with other forms of

makeshift sleeping and living areas. These areas are often unsafe and unsanitary.

<b>PATH Team</b>	Projects for Assistance in Transition from Homelessness (PATH), is a federally funded grant program that provides outreach and assistance to individuals who are homeless or at risk of homelessness and have serious mental illnesses.
<b>Section 8 Vouchers</b>	This federal HUD program that is administered by the local Housing Authority of Thurston County. Eligible tenants receive vouchers they can use to help them pay for apartments in the private market. Vouchers pay that portion of the low income tenants rent that is above 30% of their monthly income.
<b>Shared Housing</b>	A housing intervention that offers individuals and families innovative and affordable solutions to prevent homelessness and foster independence through home sharing and transitional housing programs that include case management services and connections to vital community resources.
<b>Shelters</b>	Also called emergency shelters, provides temporary overnight living accommodations for homeless people. Shelters are typically dedicated to specific populations, i.e. single males, families or domestic violence victims. Shelters are operated by both non-profit organizations or faith communities, with each shelter being administered under a unique set of rules. Generally, shelter guests must leave the facility during the day.
<b>SRO</b>	Single room occupancy units. The traditional SRO unit is a single room, usually less than 100 square feet, designed to accommodate one person. Amenities such as a bathroom, kitchen or common areas are located outside the unit and are shared with other residents. Many SROs can be found in renovated hotels. SRO housing serves a variety of people by providing three types of settings: 1) Emergency housing for homeless people, including the elderly. Occupancy is usually on a nightly or weekly basis. 2) Transitional housing for previously homeless or marginally housed persons, including older people, who are progressing to permanent housing. 3) Permanent housing for older people who will move to this setting and often live here until their death or until their increasing frailty forces them to move to a more supportive setting.
<b>Subsidized Housing</b>	A generic term covering all federal, state or local government programs that reduce the cost of housing for low- and moderate-income residents. Housing can be subsidized in numerous ways— giving tenants a rent voucher, helping homebuyers with down payment assistance, reducing the interest on a mortgage, providing deferred loans to help developers acquire and develop property, giving tax credits to encourage investment in low- and moderate-income housing, authorizing tax- exempt bond authority to finance the housing, providing ongoing assistance to reduce the operating costs of housing, and others.
<b>Supportive Housing</b>	Also referred to as “Permanent Supportive Housing”, this combines affordable housing with individualized health, counseling and employment services for



persons with mental illness, chemical dependency, chronic health problems, or other challenges. Generally it is transitional housing, but it can be permanent housing in cases such as a group home for persons with mental illness or developmental disabilities. Supportive housing is a solution to homelessness because it addresses its root causes by providing a proven, effective means of re-integrating families and individuals into the community by addressing their basic needs for housing and on-going support.

**Tiny House Village** Tiny House Villages are intended to serve as temporary sites that provide stable, managed shelter in the form of tiny houses (100 – 200 square feet max) for 40-50 people experiencing homelessness in Olympia. Typically intended to house single adults and couples without children. On-site amenities may include: include a security house; a communal kitchen; meeting space; bathrooms; showers; laundry; case management; and, 24/7 staff providing security and management.

**Transitional Housing** This housing provides stability for residents for a limited time period, usually two weeks to 24 months, to allow them to recover from a crisis such as homelessness or domestic violence before transitioning into permanent housing. Transitional housing often offers supportive services, which enable a person to transition to an independent living situation.

**Trauma Informed Care** Trauma Informed Care is a service model that emphasizes understanding, compassion and responding to the effects of all types of trauma experienced by service clients. By recognizing the intersectionality of multiple traumatic events in the lives of homeless people, service providers can avoid re-traumatizing clients who need support and individually-conscious care.

**Tent City** A term used to describe a variety of temporary outdoor shelter facilities that often use tents. Authorized and unauthorized tent cities, created by and for individuals and families experiencing homelessness, are now found across the country.

“Tent City” is a term for a long standing practice where homeless people develop informal communities composed of tents and other temporary structures. During the Great Depression, these communities were derisively termed, “Hoovervilles” after then President Hoover in a negative reference to the failed federal efforts to revive the economy.

Present day tent cities are often created by homeless people for needed shelter on public or under-utilized lands. Sometimes tent cities are created by homeless advocates as a form of protest. In recent years, local governments have struggled to find ways to balance regulatory compliance with

**Vulnerability Index** A Vulnerability Index is an analytic tool to measure of the exposure of a population to defined hazards and to develop a prioritization of care based on the score(s). Typically, the index is a composite of multiple quantitative indicators that via some formula, delivers a single numerical result which can

then be used to compare the levels of need. The use of vulnerability indexes originated in the United Nations Environmental Program. The term and methodology was then adapted by Dr. James O'Connell of Boston Healthcare for use in assessing the needs of homeless people. HUD requires funding recipients to prioritize assistance the most vulnerable homeless people at greatest risk of death or the need for shelter and community provided by Tent Cities.

# Thurston County Homeless Census

## For More Information

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