

Housing First ends Homelessness

The **Housing First** approach recognizes that a safe and stable home is the highest priority need for people experiencing homelessness. Once a safe and stable home is in place, support services are offered to help maintain housing and address underlying issues. Focusing on helping people stay housed increases stability and reduces homelessness.

Housing First units offer homes to people who have been homeless for long periods of time (“chronic homelessness”) and who have struggled with breaking the cycle of homelessness. Housing First residents frequently have long-term physical health, mental health, and addiction disorders, which have made other housing programs and housing stability difficult.

Housing First restores dignity and provides a platform for a return to healthy community participation. Over the course of 2015, more than 100 people experiencing chronic homelessness in Kitsap sought assistance — unfortunately, many were turned away because there were no Housing First units available. Many others, frustrated by current barriers, have given up on seeking housing.

Housing First + Support Services Ends Homelessness



Housing First matters

Because Kitsap does not have **Housing First** beds for singles, and an insufficient number for families, the social and health care needs of chronically homeless individuals are often met piecemeal through emergency responders, emergency departments, law enforcement, and the court system. Our current system results in:

- ◇ High cost to taxpayers for emergency services
- ◇ Low quality of physical and mental health
- ◇ People remain homeless for longer periods of time — often indefinitely

Housing First works

Housing First has been demonstrated to be highly effective in helping chronically homeless families and individuals move more quickly off the streets or out of the shelter system.

Housing First is designed to prevent recurrence of homelessness through crisis intervention, rapid access to housing, follow-up case management and intensive support services.

Study after study affirms the economic, social and health value of Housing First:

- ◇ **Housing First** expands and works to maintain housing stability.
- ◇ **Housing First** decreases taxpayer emergency services costs.
- ◇ **Housing First** improves the health and mental health status of participants.

The Housing First Model

Housing First is a proven strategy to address homelessness that offers permanent supportive housing to people without homes. Housing First recognizes that the most acute need of chronically homeless individuals with disabilities is housing. After a person is stably housed, other services are offered to help to maintain housing stability and improve health and functioning. The housing is designed to be permanent with ongoing engagement and support and to have low requirements for staying housed.

◇ **Housing First** improves the overall quality of life of the community, as chronically homeless individuals move from the streets into housing of their own where they become more healthy and stable.

Housing First is cost effective

Around the country, communities that have created **Housing First** units have found that it is actually less expensive to house individuals in Housing First units than the cost of the emergency services used while living on the street.

For example, a study of a Housing First program for homeless alcoholics in Seattle found that the **Housing First** program was successful in both reducing costs to taxpayers as well as reducing substance use by participants. ***The program saved taxpayers more than four million dollars over the first year of operation.***

During the first six months, even after considering the cost of the housing and services, the study reported an average cost savings of 53% — nearly \$2,500 per month per person in health and social services.

Other studies of **Housing First** programs across the US have found similar savings.

Housing First successful in other communities

Increasingly, communities across the country are implementing **Housing First** programs as an integral part of their homelessness strategies. After rigorous studies showing the effectiveness of the **Housing First** model, it has been endorsed by the U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness, the U.S. Conference of Mayors, the U.S.

Housing First Principles



- ◇ **Minimize barriers to obtaining housing**
- ◇ **Prioritize housing stability**
- ◇ **Embrace a “harm-reduction” approach**
- ◇ **Provide connections to individualized services and resources**
- ◇ **Support health and social well-being**



Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), as well as the Washington State Department of Commerce.

Housing First units piloted in Kitsap

Two Housing First programs have been piloted in Kitsap County: **Forward Bound**, a program through West Sound Treatment Center served fourteen homeless families from 2011—2016. Many of the families graduated from the program into their own stable permanent housing.

Home Safe, a YWCA Kitsap County program, is built on the success of its earlier Home Plus Program which was funded through a Gates Foundation grant. Home Safe currently provides housing and support services for four families who are survivors of domestic violence. Morrow Manor, currently under development, will add eight more units by 2018.

When you are homeless, there is no time to think about anything but survival and what you have to face the next day. Having a home - it changes everything.

~ Paul H.

Housing First Task Force

A coalition of social service and housing agencies in Kitsap has convened a Housing First Task Force to:

- ◇ Promote community awareness for the need for **Housing First** in Kitsap.
- ◇ Secure **Housing First** units as soon as possible to meet immediate need.
- ◇ Promote development of additional **Housing First** units in the next few years.

For more information about Housing First:
www.kitsapgov.com/hs/housing/resources.htm