

A Home for Hope

A 10-year plan to end homelessness in Oregon

Executive Summary



A recommendation to Governor Kulongoski from the
Ending Homelessness Advisory Council
June 2008



THEODORE R. KULONGOSKI
OREGON

Dear Oregonians:

Oregon is a beautiful and blessed state and provides an exceptional quality of life for most of the people who live here. But homeless Oregonians cannot take advantage of all that this state has to offer – and the rest of us are robbed of the potential contributions that our homeless neighbors could make.

The number of homeless people counted during the state's one night count has grown from 7,433 in 2002 to 13,020 in 2007. That's a 75 percent increase, and an unacceptable reality.

I charged the Ending Homelessness Advisory Council with charting a course to end the devastating cycle of homelessness. The council has worked hard to bring together a better understanding of the problem of homelessness and proven strategies to combat the problem.

This ambitious ten-year plan to end homelessness will require new ways of thinking and working at the state and local level. Existing partnerships must be strengthened and new ones forged. The plan focuses on prevention and intervention, permanent housing with supportive services, and system improvements to address the institutional barriers to ending homelessness.

When Oregonians see a problem and focus their efforts on solving it, they can achieve great results. Please join us in creating an Oregon in which everyone has a home.

Sincerely,

THEODORE R. KULONGOSKI
Governor

June 2008

Who is homeless?

People experiencing homelessness, under the broad Ending Homelessness Advisory Council definition, include more than people living on the street. They include those who:

- share the housing of other persons due to loss of housing, economic hardship, personal safety, or a similar reason
- live in motels, hotels, trailer parks, or camping grounds because they lack adequate alternative housing;
- live in emergency or transitional shelters
- have been abandoned in hospitals
- await foster care placement
- sleep in a public or private place not designed for or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping place for human beings
- live in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations, or similar settings
- face impending eviction from a private dwelling unit and have not found a subsequent residence and the person lacks the resources and support networks needed to obtain housing
- face discharge within a week from an institution in which the person has been a resident for 30 or more consecutive days and for whom no subsequent residence has been identified and s/he lacks the resources and support networks needed to obtain housing



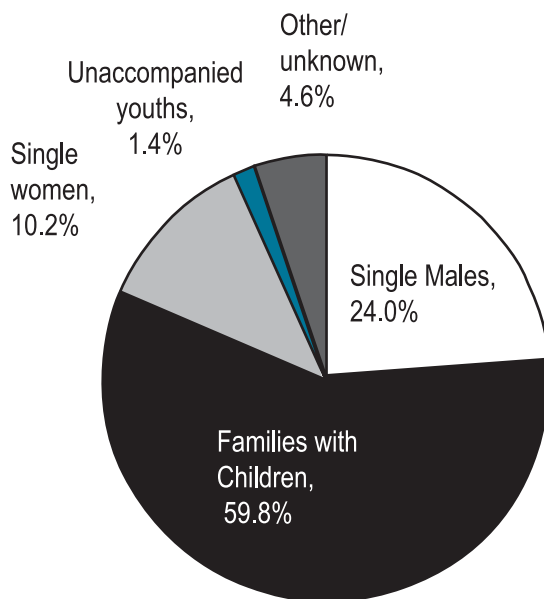
Migrant children between the ages of 3 and 21¹ qualify as homeless when they live in the circumstances described above.

¹ As defined under No Child Left Behind Title IC - Migrant Education

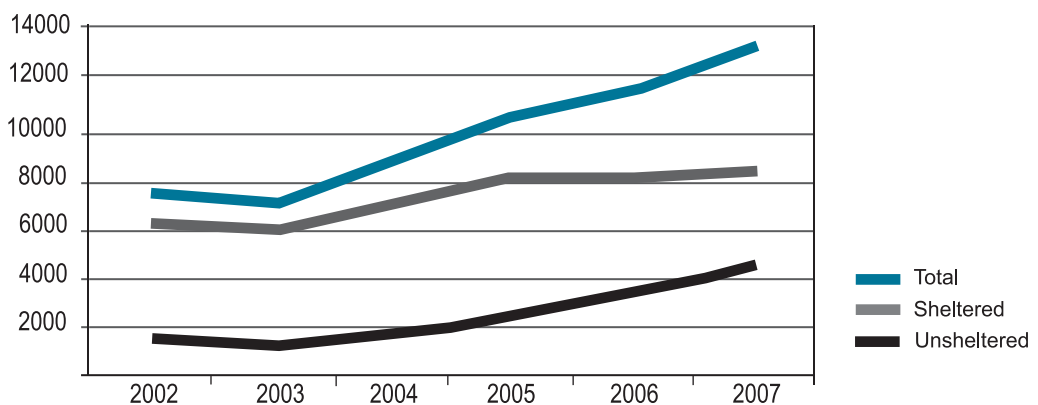
Who experiences homelessness?

Each year, Oregon's homeless services network conducts a one-night count in an effort to understand the scope of homelessness in the state.

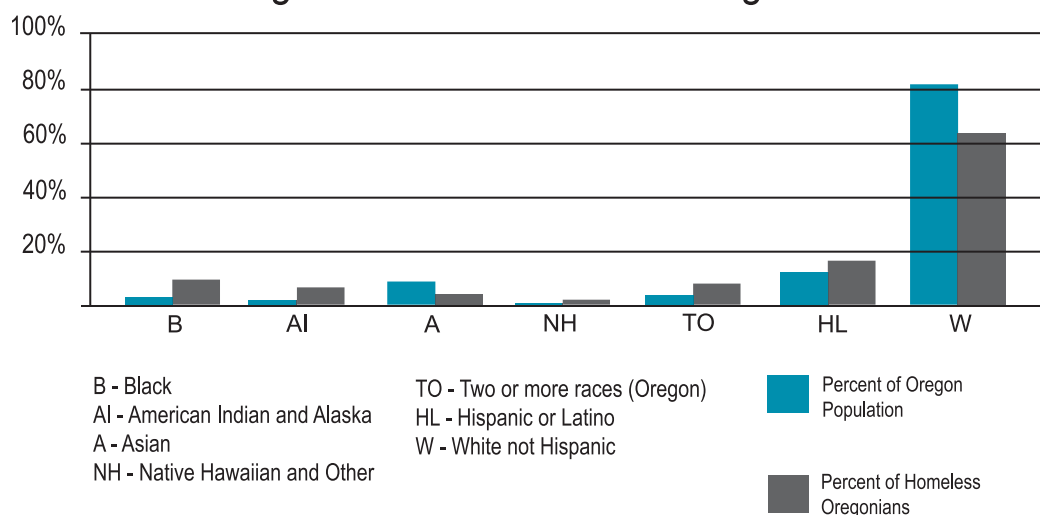
The data reflect many ways of identifying people experiencing homelessness, including counts at shelters, people turned away from shelters and—in some areas— street counts.



Five-year one-night count trend

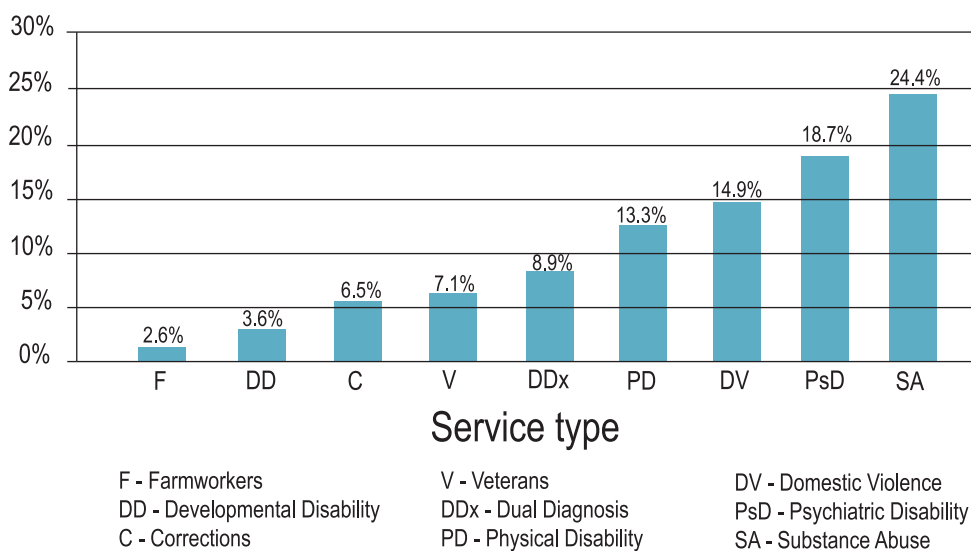


Racial and ethnic composition Oregonians and homeless Oregonians



Source: US Census Bureau for Oregon population (<http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/41000.html>), and One-Night Shelter Count, Oregon Housing and Community Services, 2005

One-night count service eligibility



Source: One-night-shelter count, January 2007, Oregon Housing and Community Services

What drives homelessness?

Insufficient income and low-paying jobs - In Oregon, the gap between the rich and the poor has grown steadily since the 1970s. Twice as many full-time working families with children are poor today compared to 1979 to 1981.²

Housing burden - The percentage of renters in Oregon paying more than 30 percent of their income for housing increased from 45.5 percent in 2000 to 54.9 percent in 2005.

The National Low Income Housing Coalition calculated a weighted ranking using the following parameters: median gross rent, the ability of a renter at median renter income to afford a median-priced rental apartment, and the proportion of renters paying more than 50 percent of their income on rent. The coalition ranked Oregon the third most unaffordable rental market among the states in 2003.³

Lack of affordable housing - During the 1990s, low-income Oregonians faced a growing shortage of affordable housing units. While the need for affordable housing grew, the number of affordable units per 100 extremely low-income renters dropped by four units—from 68 to 64 units per 100 extremely low-income households.⁴

Federal assistance for low-income renters continues to lag behind the need. In 2004, approximately five million households across the nation received rental assistance while nearly eight million households paid more than 50 percent of their income on housing.



² Oregon Center for Public Policy analysis of Oregon Department of Revenue data, *Snapshots of growing income inequality in Oregon*, October 2007.

³ National Low Income Housing Coalition, "Ranking the Most and the Least Unaffordable States for Renter Families," *Up Against a Wall: Housing Affordability for Renters, An Analysis of the 2003 American Community Survey*, November 2004.

⁴ Oregon Housing and Community Services, *Report on Poverty* 2004.

Discontinuity or lack of services - Many federal, state, and local programs target homeless individuals or those at risk of becoming homeless. More often than not, each of these programs has its own objectives and client base, and lack connections to other programs serving similar populations.

Despite the best efforts of many at the local level, the “system” lacks a client focus. As a result, it perpetuates poverty and homelessness by being difficult to navigate, fragmented, and/or restrictive.

Providers serving the homeless population expend much effort and energy to create structures for networking, referral, coordination, and collaboration to address the lack of integration among the systems.

Budget reductions - During the state’s economic recessions, the Legislature trimmed human services budgets to bring spending within available revenues.

During the special sessions of 2001 and 2002, many programs saw cuts that devastated systems serving people with mental health problems, developmental disabilities, and addictions. These cuts affected the very populations at greatest risk of homelessness.



Our Goals

Oregon's 10-year plan lays a foundation for a reconstructed state system to support local efforts and eliminate barriers that hinder efforts to end homeless. It contemplates strong action on three fronts: prevention and intervention, permanent housing with supportive services, and system improvements.

The Plan seeks to end all homelessness. It does not target any specific population, because no person should experience homelessness.

Prevention and intervention. These strategies limit the number of adults, youth and families that fall into homelessness. They include:

- programs that help people stay housed
- approaches that divert people from institutional facilities
- policies that assure people have affordable housing and necessary support in place when released from institutional systems of care
- approaches that identify people at risk of homelessness while assessing their needs and reducing barriers for accessing needed support

The plan identifies specific action steps to move prevention and intervention efforts. A stronger partnership between Oregon Housing and Community Services and the state Department of Human Services – the primary state agencies responsible for serving people experiencing, or at risk of, homelessness – will serve as the cornerstone of the state's prevention and intervention activities.

Permanent housing with supportive services. EHAC's philosophy and recommendation for state and local policy, supported by research, is that stable, permanent housing is the foundation other services need to succeed. Moving people into housing first is both a value and the impetus to continue expanding affordable housing in Oregon. This will require the expansion of the affordable housing inventory and strong action to preserve existing affordable housing stock.

Other activities to provide helpful permanent housing alternatives:

- Encourage the use of Housing First and Rapid Re-housing models and strategies that have succeeded elsewhere.
- Expand and preserve the supply of housing choices and opportunities across the continuum, including appropriate service models for groups with special needs such as alcohol and substance abuse treatment and mental health care.
- Identify and assist individuals with the greatest risk of homelessness and those groups who are over-represented in the homeless population to target and focus resources.
- Build on existing efforts to assist released offenders with no housing to access needed services and housing.

System improvements. The institutions and systems that have addressed homelessness for so long must change. Instead of disjointed and isolated service systems for homeless persons, Oregon's 10-year Plan to End Homelessness calls for a better alignment of services, funding, policies at the state level, and between the state and local communities.

To overcome the historical lack of integration in programs, the plan calls for the establishment of a shared framework for supportive services. The framework will emphasize collaboration with the individual or family and includes assessment, plan development, connections to services and supports, coordination across systems, monitoring and personal advocacy.

The plan also envisions a system that provides comprehensive supports so that a family can achieve long-term self-sufficiency. This means aligning or re-orienting housing and service programs to meet the needs of homeless persons, including supportive employment and vocational stability.

Oregon's Goals and Strategies to End Homelessness

Goal 1. Prevent and divert people from becoming homeless by working with them to obtain and keep their housing.

- Identify, create, and expand successful programs that prevent homelessness.
- Coordinate policies and programs, and consolidate funding for housing and services.
- Identify and remove practice and policy barriers to decrease the incidence of homelessness.

Goal 2. Expand, develop, and coordinate the supply of affordable housing and supportive services to prevent and end homelessness, and shorten stays in shelter.

- Expand and preserve the supply of housing choices and opportunities across the continuum including appropriate service models.
- Re-house and move people into permanent housing as quickly as possible.

Goal 3. Build the capacity of homeless persons for self-support through strategies that identify their risk of homelessness, their needs, and access appropriate housing with appropriate supportive services.

- Identify and assist individuals with the greatest risk of homelessness and those groups that are over-represented in the homeless population to target and focus resources and programs.
- Provide access to services essential to stability, and remove barriers to make them more navigable, comprehensive, and seamless.

Goal 4. Identify and implement system improvements for coordination at the program funding and delivery levels leading to measurable results.

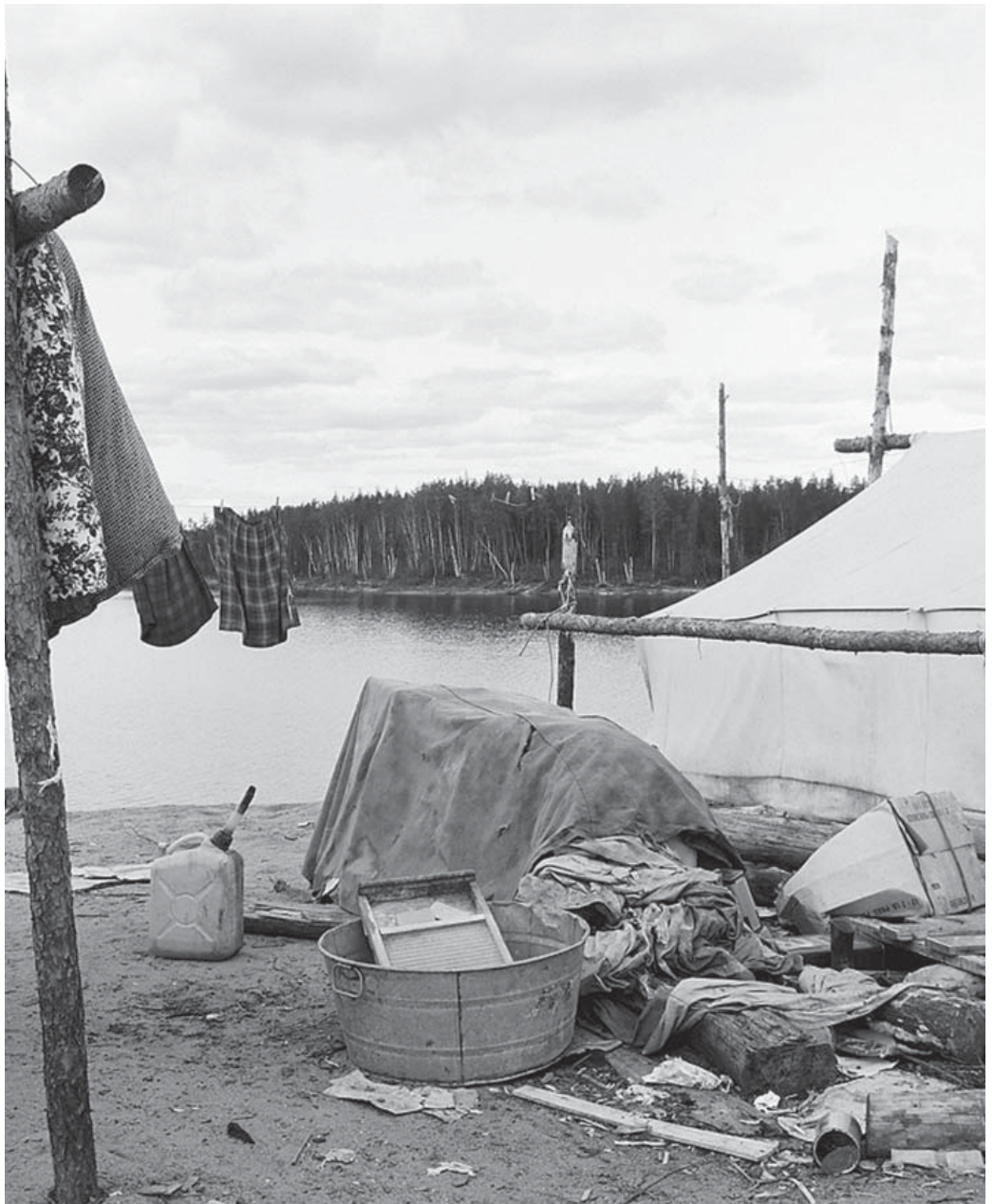
- Meet the needs of homeless persons by aligning or re-orienting housing and service programs, including supportive employment and vocational stability.
- Develop and recommend ways to improve the effectiveness of emergency response programs to serve all people and to move them into permanent housing.
- Encourage and support local efforts to end homelessness, including local planning efforts.

Goal 5. Implement education and public awareness campaigns to remove societal stigma about homelessness and to build community support and coordinated responses.

- Develop an education and advocacy campaign to end homelessness.

Goal 6. Improve data collection technology and methodology to better account for homeless program outcomes.

- Apply a consistent standard for collecting data statewide to help build a reliable picture of the scope of homelessness over time.



The Process

The Governor established his Ending Homelessness Advisory Council in April of 2006. Members represent key state agencies, local government leaders, the faith-based community, legislators, local providers, and homeless or previously homeless persons.

The council researched the nature of homelessness in Oregon, identified system barriers, began to measure the costs of homelessness, and catalogued best practices.

The adopted plan went to Governor Kulongoski for approval and will be implemented under the oversight of the state Interagency Council on Hunger and Homelessness.

The council adopted the following principles to guide its planning efforts:

- support local community efforts that respectfully empower individuals and families
- prevent and reduce homelessness across all homeless groups
- provide choice for affordable, temporary and permanent housing with minimum standards for human habitation
- heighten public awareness and understanding of the relevance of homelessness issues
- keep people in their homes by using support packages and find the right home the first time
- deliver evidence and outcome-based services through partnership and collaboration
- consult with service providers and users
- listen, learn, and improve



Ending Homelessness Advisory Council

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