



# A HOME for HOPE

A 10-Year Plan to End Homelessness  
Status Report: Year One

A report to the Governor and the Oregon Legislature from the  
Ending Homelessness Advisory Council  
November 2009

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Cover Photo: Celilo Garden Apartments. The Dalles, Oregon.  
Developed and owned by Columbia Cascade Housing Corporation.  
Six units of permanent supportive housing for homeless individuals  
with serious mental illness. The project includes four studios and  
two one-bedroom units.



## A Message from the Chair

Rick Crager, Chair

Dear Partners:

The Ending Homelessness Advisory Council (EHAC) is pleased to offer the Year One Status Report on the state's 10-year plan to end homelessness, A Home for Hope.

Since the adoption of the state's plan in 2008, much has happened in our state. Oregon still suffers from the effects of the nation's economic crisis. The 2009 homeless count reported a 37 percent increase in the number of people experiencing homelessness from the previous year. Demand for assistance more than doubled across all of human services sectors. According to one federal report, Oregon has the highest per capita rate of homelessness in the nation.

Amid this increasing trend of homelessness, members of EHAC and ICHH began to put the 10-year plan in action with significant results:

- Legislative passage of a state policy on homelessness;
- Created more than 200 units of permanent supportive housing; and
- Preserved subsidized housing for very low-income households.

More important, we began the hard work of better aligning services, policies, and funding with the goal of creating a comprehensive and systematic response to homelessness.

The progress to date demonstrates that it is possible to end and prevent the cycle of homelessness affecting families, children and youth, and single adults.

We also commend the generosity and altruistic spirit of people working on this challenge in their communities. We are all called to contribute because homelessness affects us all. The activities described in this report represent our contribution.

A handwritten signature in brown ink that reads "Rick Crager". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

# A Home for Hope: A 10-Year Plan to End Homelessness Status Report: Year One

Since the June 2008 release of *A Home for Hope: A 10-year plan to end homelessness in Oregon*, much has changed. While advocates and policy makers have made strides in addressing the causes and complications of homelessness, the economy has taken a nosedive; Oregon's unemployment reached 12.2 percent, the second highest in the nation. And the state has the misfortune of leading the nation in percent of the population experiencing homelessness.<sup>1</sup>

In January 2009, Oregon Housing and Community Services' partners counted 37 percent more people. The largest proportion of the increase is among people turned away from shelter services and those in the street count.

Some troubling findings from the 2009 count:

- 17,122 people identified as homeless
- 43 percent of people identified as homeless were in families with children
- nearly 50 percent were single adults
- more than 25 percent (4,313) children of those counted were younger than 18 years

The top three stated causes of homelessness in 2009:

- Couldn't afford rent – 29 percent
- Unemployed – 29 percent
- Drug/Alcohol (self) – 17 percent

The number of veterans counted has nearly doubled to 1,425 households.

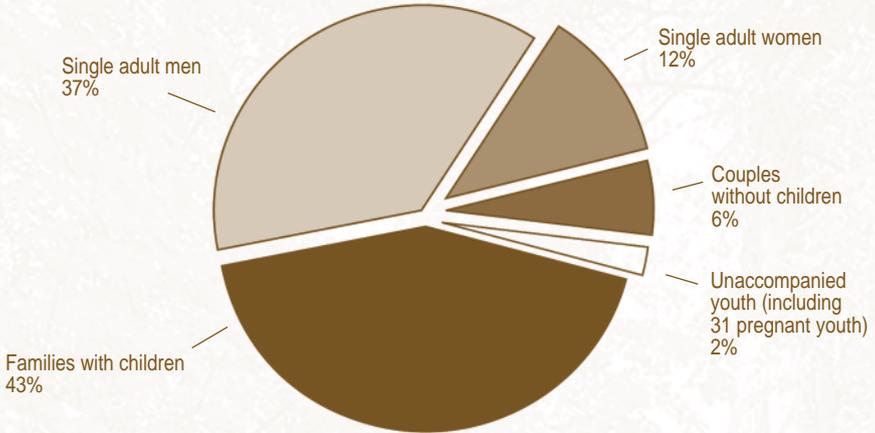
Nearly 59 percent of households counted had a member with an emotional, mental, or substance abuse issue (6,846 households).

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<sup>1</sup> US Department of Housing and Urban Development, Office of Community Planning and Development, The 2008 Annual Homeless Assessment Report, July 2009, page 12.

## 2009 One-Night Homeless Count

Total = 17,122 people



Source: 2009 One-night Homeless Count, January 2009, statewide report

## Living Situation of Households in the 2009 One Night Street Count

Households = 6,775

	Total	% of all	Change from 2008
Car	409	6%	493%
Hospital	13	0%	-41%
Street	2,047	30%	1,439%
Squatting	90	1%	429%
Motel/Hotel	221	3%	333%
Staying with Friends or Family	2,010	30%	334%
Camping	912	13%	2,180%
Other	1,073	16%	-53%

### Other Homelessness Indicators:

The Oregon Department of Education conducts annual counts of enrolled homeless students in public schools. In the 2008-09 school year, 18,051 homeless students were identified by school district liaisons, an increase of 14 percent over the previous year. Within that number, over half were in rural areas, where per capita homelessness is higher than in urban area schools. Of the total, 3,041 were “Unaccompanied Minors” who were on their own as runaway or abandoned youths: an increase of more than 120 percent in enrolled homeless students since the 2003-04 school year.

Anecdotally, in the six months after the 2009 One Night Count, emergency service programs have seen an overflow of requests. The Community Action Agency in Washington County received more than 100 calls in a five-minute period at its emergency rental assistance hotline which crashed the organization’s phone system. ACCESS, Inc. in Medford, reports that during the months of July and August they received over 600 calls for housing assistance which is four times the normal call volume. Lincoln County’s only shelter for homeless families has seen an increase of shelter requests of more than 50 percent in recent months.



## Manzanita



Photo: Manzanita. An acquisition and rehabilitation project in Grants Pass, Oregon. Developed and owned by Options for Southern Oregon, Inc. Seven units of permanent supportive housing for homeless individuals with persistent mental illness, alcohol and drug issues and/or acquired brain injury.

## Barbara's Place



Architect's Rendering: Barbara's Place. Located in southwest Redmond. The six-unit housing site will serve individuals experiencing chronic homelessness.

# Goals and Strategies to End Homelessness

The Ending Homelessness Advisory Council (EHAC) presented to the Governor in 2008 the following goals and strategies to end and prevent 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 programs and consolidate funding for housing and services.
- Identify, and remove practices, policies and system barriers that increase the likelihood 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.
- Provide access to appropriate services, 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.

- Align or re-orient the housing and services programs to better meet the needs of homeless persons, including supportive employment and vocational stability.
- Review the publicly funded shelter system to improve its effectiveness in services, operations, ability to move people into permanent housing, and to serve all populations.
- Encourage and support local efforts to end homelessness including local planning efforts.

## Goal 5

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

- Develop an education and advocacy campaign on homelessness.

## Goal 6

Improve data collection technology and methodology to better account for unsheltered and sheltered homeless persons.

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



# Action 1

Define the scope of prevention as primary (preventing the first instance of homelessness), and secondary (preventing recurrence for individuals who once experienced homelessness and are now housed).

During a period of significant budget reductions, the Legislature maintained level-funding for homeless programs by limiting General Fund reductions and passing House Bill 2436, the Housing Opportunity Bill. It increases the existing state-imposed Document Recording Fee (ORS 205.323) by \$15 per document.

This increase will generate an estimated \$15.1 million in revenue during the 2009-11 biennium to support increasing housing opportunities for hard working families, seniors, people with disabilities, and others affected by the boom and bust cycles of the housing market.

Revenues from the \$15 increase in the document-recording fee will be distributed as follows:

- Development and preservation of multifamily housing (\$10.6 million).
- Supporting the health of the community-based housing providers whose mission is to meet the housing needs of low-income Oregonians (\$900,000).
- Fund efforts to prevent and end homelessness through local community action agencies (\$1.5 million).
- Expand homeownership opportunities, homebuyer education, down payment assistance and other efforts to make homeownership possible, particularly for the state's minority populations (\$2.1 million).

Under the American Reinvestment and Recovery Act, Oregon received approximately \$15 million for Homeless Prevention and Rapid Rehousing activities. The three-year program provides short and mid-term rental assistance to keep people at risk of homelessness in their homes, and to rapidly put homeless people back into housing. The cities of Eugene, Portland, Salem, and Clackamas and Washington counties received their own allocations. OHCS administers funds for the remainder of the state.

OHCS's application to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's **Neighborhood Stabilization Program (2)** proposes targeting (re)development of foreclosed housing to house people experiencing homelessness. OHCS proposed the use of \$5 million for this purpose.

The Oregon Department of Education receives approximately \$500,000 annually to serve homeless students in public schools from the federal McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Program at the U.S. Department of Education. For the 2009-2010 school year, these funds were supplemented with over \$1 million in federal Stimulus Funds which were distributed to the 99 Oregon school districts (out of 197) with homeless student counts of 20 or more. Over \$80,000 went to Portland Public Schools, whose count was more 1,700 homeless students in grades K-12.

## Action 2

Strengthen partnership between OHCS and DHS to serve people experiencing or at risk of homelessness.

Senate Bill 200, passed by the 2009 Legislature, calls for a comprehensive and collaborative system of support and housing as vital for any success in ending and preventing homelessness. This comprehensive system should include:

- A focus on permanent housing, rather than temporary solutions;
- Enhanced collaboration between county and state agencies that deliver integrated and cost-effective programs in a seamless and timely manner;
- Measurable outcomes – focused on housing stability – for increased accountability; and
- Recognition that each person experiencing homelessness faces unique barriers and possesses personal strengths, requiring an individualized approach.

The bill reorients state agency policy, because a more effective response will also be more efficient, and ultimately reduce costs across systems such as human services, child welfare, education, juvenile justice, corrections, mental healthcare and addiction treatment.

SB 200 will guide the work of program administrators and policymakers. It clarifies the roles of OHCS, the Department of Human Services and the Interagency Council on Hunger and Homelessness in alleviating the causes and conditions of poverty in Oregon.

OHCS and DHS have agreed in concept to provide permanent supportive housing opportunities for homeless persons with addictions and mental illness. Advancing on this agreement depends on obtaining funds from a second application under the Neighborhood Stabilization Program. The application sets aside \$5 million specifically for homeless populations earning less than 50 percent of area median income.

## Action 3

Create a statewide funders committee to coordinate assistance programs and maximize resources.

In the midst of budget hearings and state agency budget cuts, the Subcommittee representatives felt uncertain about the programs and resources that would remain. The Subcommittee will reconvene to discuss how best to establish a funders committee.

## Action 4

Track the gain and loss of affordable and supportive housing, including public housing.

Developed the Oregon Housing Inventory of publicly funded housing for use in establishing the state's affordable housing needs. The inventory includes information from multiple property database sources: OHCS, METRO, local Housing Authorities and Rural Development.

[www.ohcs.oregon.gov/OHCS/ISD/PPR/docs/Inventory\\_By\\_County.xls](http://www.ohcs.oregon.gov/OHCS/ISD/PPR/docs/Inventory_By_County.xls)

In addition, OHCS and its partners have maintained and tracked affordable housing at risk of losing federal subsidies. [www.preserveoregonhousing.org](http://www.preserveoregonhousing.org)



## Action 5

Expand permanent supportive housing throughout Oregon: 150 units in the 07-09 biennium.

Created and implemented Housing PLUS (Permanent Living Utilizing Services) model.

- Investment in 2007 of \$16 million in lottery-backed bonds financed permanent supportive housing for individuals and families experiencing chronic homelessness.
- OHCS exceeded the legislative target of 150 units by awarding funding for 215 units in 21 developments, 13 communities, with another four units in one development pending final review and approval.
- Funded developments address both urban and rural homelessness, with a broad definition of homelessness that includes families, single adults, and homeless and run away youth.

Applied for competitive American Recovery and Reinvestment Act Neighborhood Stabilization Program(2) grant funding for the development of more Housing PLUS units.

Works closely with Addictions and Mental Health Division of DHS in the creation and development of permanent supportive housing and housing resources for persons at risk of homelessness, who have a mental illness.



Celilo Garden Apartments. The Dalles, Oregon.

## Action 6

Identify resources to preserve current affordable and supportive housing.

Goal: Preserve 1,598 units in 09-11

In partnership with the Network for Oregon Affordable Housing (NOAH), OHCS created a statewide preservation strategy, as well as a technical assistance team, to address expiring use properties.

Developed a comprehensive database that identifies all expiring use projects, including tax credits. [www.preserveoregonhousing.org/database.php](http://www.preserveoregonhousing.org/database.php)

Preserved 786 units of housing with expiring federal subsidies in 2008. We have helped preserve 3,052 units since the state began the preservation program in 2004. More units remained to be funded in 2009.

Created, in partnership with NOAH, the Oregon Housing Acquisition Fund (OHAF) to preserve, in the short-term, expiring projects. Capitalized at \$32.7 million.

Made a successful grant application to the MacArthur Foundation for \$5 million in resources to support OHAF efforts.

Succeeded in obtaining \$19.4 million in lottery-backed bonds to finance preservation of federally subsidized affordable housing and manufactured dwelling parks. (SB 5535)

OHCS estimates that the \$16.3 million targeted to preservation of existing subsidized housing will preserve 1,598 units. Rates paid by equity investors for tax credits will determine the actual number of units preserved.

Preservation prevents homelessness for those persons already housed in these units, most of whom would have no affordable housing alternatives and avoids increased service costs for displaced residents experiencing homelessness. These preservation funds also generate various economic benefits by leveraging other investments, by saving on new construction, by creating jobs to re-develop and rehabilitate these units, and by retaining the federal subsidies over the next 20 years.

The Legislature did not pass Senate Bill 199 which would have increased the Oregon Affordable Housing Tax Credit cap by \$4 million.

Another \$3.1 million in lottery-backed bonds will preserve one manufactured dwelling park. (SB 5535)

The department and CASA of Oregon preserved the state's first manufactured dwelling park through co-operative purchase (Horizon, aka Victor Manor), including financing, tenant cooperative agreements, project administration, follow-up and assessment.

## Action 7

Encourage the use of Housing First and Rapid Re-housing models and strategies.

SB 200 establishes permanent housing as the preferred response to homelessness.

The new federal Homelessness Prevention and Rapid Rehousing program, although designed to address the homelessness effects of the current economic crisis, is steering efforts to see housing as the foundation for human service interventions to produce lasting results.

## Action 8

Increase collaboration between the Oregon Department of Veteran's Affairs and community-based agencies to ensure full utilization of federal resources.

Working with the Community Action Partnership of Oregon to expand the number of people who are qualified to assist veterans.

## Action 9

Establish closer links between housing, food and nutrition programs.

Oregon Hunger Relief Task Force and OHCS published a brochure to inform housing developers about providing meal sites. It has established meal distribution sites at various housing projects in various metro and less urban communities. It helped housing owners to become sponsors for a summer food program.

Working with the Community Action Partnership of Oregon to expand the number of people who are qualified to assist veterans.

## Action 10

Provide financial and technical assistance to help develop and implement 10-year plans to end homelessness in Oregon.

An EHAC work group identified barriers, which include resources, political champions, training and technical assistance and identified strategies to overcome those barriers. Group will identify a status report on every county's 10-year planning efforts and develop a technical assistance team to support local planning efforts. The group will coordinate a day of training focused on developing and implementing local 10-year plans.

State Department of Education encouraged School District Homeless Liaisons to participate in local planning efforts, and to create collaboration between housing, service providers, and the McKinney Vento Homeless Assistance programs.

## Action 11

Standardize and allow access to state and county homeless population and services data.

Redesigned and improved the presentation of data from the One Night Homeless Count.

Housing PLUS projects, the state's initiative on permanent supportive housing for homeless populations, now participate in the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS).

## Action 12

Create state and local communication strategies to destigmatize homelessness and gain public support for ending homelessness.

Began work on messaging after legislature adjourned.

## Action 13

Develop and forward a proposal to attract federal resources to implement the critical housing and poverty issues addressed by the 10-year plan.

Many new resources have become available to Oregon through the federal government's stimulus efforts. OHCS expects to receive at least \$112.75 million in such resources. Programs include:

- Neighborhood Stabilization Program (foreclosed properties for affordable housing)
- Tax Credit Assistance Program (multifamily affordable housing)
- Tax Credit Exchange Program (multifamily affordable housing)
- Homelessness Prevention and Rapid Re-housing Program
- Community Services Block Grant (anti-poverty)
- Commodity Assistance (food)
- Community service programs (AmeriCorps members)

For more information, see:

[www.ohcs.oregon.gov/OHCS/Recovery/ARRA\\_Oregon\\_OHCS\\_Programs.shtml](http://www.ohcs.oregon.gov/OHCS/Recovery/ARRA_Oregon_OHCS_Programs.shtml)

## Action 14

Develop and recommend the adoption of state discharge planning policy statements to prevent homelessness.

Initiated conversations between Department of Corrections, Department of Human Services Children Adults and Families Division, and the Oregon State Hospital to develop guiding principles on discharge and reentry with the goal of preventing discharges/aging out into homelessness.

## Action 15

Support Project Homeless Connect initiatives to provide immediate services to homeless persons.

Linked to Action 10 (above). Many local 10-year plans include Project Homeless Connect events as an immediate response. A subcommittee will seek to change statutory barriers to encourage volunteer participation in these events.

# Ending Homelessness Requires Multiple Players: A Success Story

The most immediate help a person experiencing homelessness hopes for is finding housing. Housing enables service providers to stabilize a life and a household. The feature story shows that when the various systems interplay their service delivery they are effective in assisting a person and a family end the cycle of homelessness. Grape Street is an OHCS Housing PLUS site.

## Dad, daughter among those helped by program

*By Damian Mann, Mail Tribune, August 19, 2009*

Inside a bright, clean townhouse at Grape and 11th streets in Medford, 4-year-old Damita Walls dances almost nonstop in her nice new living room.

“We were one of the lucky people, one of the blessed ones to get this place,” said her father, Louis Walls, who is more than two years sober from alcohol and is receiving counseling for a domestic dispute with his former wife.

From the street, the eight new townhouses don’t give any indication of the help their residents receive as they struggle to pull themselves out of homelessness or recover from drug and alcohol problems.

The units opened Aug. 1 and are owned by Rogue Retreat, a Medford-based nonprofit that provides transitional housing to help the homeless get back on their feet. Rogue Retreat bought the property for almost \$1 million on July 10.

Walls said he spent time at Hope House and the Rescue Mission, and is receiving support from local organizations such as OnTrack Inc.

Walls said he wants to volunteer locally and has other plans to better himself, but his main goal is raising Damita.

“I plan on being a single dad to be the best parent I can,” said Walls.

Chad McComas, board chairman for Rogue Retreat, said the townhouses are carefully monitored with weekly inspections to make sure they are clean and drug-free.

“They can stay as long as they want as long as they follow the rules,” he said. But most residents eventually want to leave after they’ve put their lives back together, said McComas. “They will tell you that this is just another step on the road to recovery in their life,” he said.

McComas said he didn't want people to get the wrong idea about the kind of homeless people staying in the townhouses.

"We want to dispel the rumor that we grab people from under a bridge and just put them there," he said.

Some Rogue Retreat clients have lost their jobs or were ill for an extended time. Others have been living in a motel or couch-surfing. Still others are recovering from domestic violence.

The program doesn't tolerate drugs or alcohol on the premises, and McComas said the inside of the townhouses must be properly maintained.

The houses at the intersection of 11th and Grape streets had been vacant for more than a year after Rogue Valley Community Development Corp. failed to find qualified low-income buyers.

A \$45,000 city grant meant to provide affordable housing helped pay for the construction of the houses.

In November, the Medford City Council changed the terms of the grant to allow the houses to be rented instead of sold.

At the time, Medford nonprofit Interfaith Care Community had intended to buy the houses using a state grant and turn them into subsidized rentals for veterans and their families.

Interfaith had been awarded an \$870,000 grant from Oregon Housing and Community Services to help buy the townhouses and provide support services, but the sale fell through.

Rogue Retreat already operates long-term housing for the homeless at 525 N. Riverside Ave. The 11 units are undergoing remodeling.

Walls said he hopes eventually to move out of the house so that others who have struggled like he has can get the same kind of opportunity.

"You don't want to be here for the rest of your life," he said.

*Reach reporter Damian Mann at 541-776-4476 or [dmann@mailtribune.com](mailto:dmann@mailtribune.com).*

# Council Members

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