

**2007 Point-in-Time Homeless Census Report for Thurston County  
Conducted by the Housing Authority of Thurston County  
On behalf of the Thurston County HOME Consortium**

**Standout Census Data**

- 54% of homeless households cited poverty-related issues as reasons they became homeless
- 63% of homeless individuals reported having a disability
- 25% of homeless households became homeless since our last census one year ago
- 16% of those homeless were under the age of 18.
- Less than 8% of homeless households last resided outside of Thurston County.
- 44% of homeless individuals reported having a mental illness
- 19% of homeless individuals reported having alcohol or substance abuse problem
- 18% of homeless individuals reported having a permanent, physical disability
- Out of the 38 persons surveyed in jail:
  - 71% reported having a mental illness
  - 53% reported having a substance abuse problem

**Transition of Homeless Planning**

**History** - For the past 4 years an annual point-in-time homeless census was conducted by the Thurston County Housing Task Force and the Housing Authority of Thurston County in cooperation with the Washington State Department of Community, Trade and Economic Development (CTED). The census was conducted to gather local homeless information required in applications submitted to HUD for McKinney Homeless Grant funding.

**New Legislation** - In 2005, the passage of HB 2163, the Homeless Housing Assistance Act, gave all 39 counties in Washington State the responsibility for reducing homelessness in their communities and called for local 10-year homeless housing planning.

**HOME Consortium** - The Thurston County HOME Consortium has taken on this responsibility and has formed the Homeless Planning Workgroup to conduct planning activities which include an annual homeless census as required by the new legislation.

**2007 Homeless Census** - This census was conducted by the Housing Authority as contracted by Thurston County. The Housing Authority partnered with local non-profits providers and received support from several community volunteers and business donors.

**Census Methodology**

**Point-in Time** - The census is limited in the ability to depict an accurate picture of homelessness in Thurston County because it is only a one day snapshot of those who are faced with homelessness day after day, year after year. Homeless people are not a stationary population. This year's census revealed that of those who indicated the length of time they were homeless, 25% became homeless since our last census one year ago.

**Multi-jurisdictional Approach** - The January 25, 2007 census was a great community endeavor and every effort was made to include all homeless persons in Thurston County. Eight (8) teams were identified representing the 8 jurisdictions within Thurston County. Each team had an identified lead who would coordinate mapping of possible homeless encampments, develop a strategy for canvassing the jurisdiction and solicit the cooperation of parks departments and law enforcement. This effort included a day long search of homeless encampments across the county including an intense outreach effort in the downtown Olympia business core.

**Signature Required** – HB 2163 required that we collect signatures from those we survey if we collect identifying information such as birthdate, initials, etc. In the 5 years of conducting a homeless census, this was the first time we were required to ask for a signature from those we surveyed. This new requirement impacted the census in several ways:

- The census was awkward to perform. Asking people to provide us with personal information while not collecting identifying information, assuring them the information will not be shared and will be kept confidential, then asking for their signature was a hard sell. It is HATC's

opinion that the impacts of this new requirement should be shared with Representative Miloscia and the Department of Community, Trade and Economic Development (CTED) in a future 10-Year Plan update.

- Less reliability in total number of homeless counted. Initials, gender and complete birthdate are the unique identifiers necessary for the database to use to ensure an unduplicated count when queried. Because signatures were needed to collect information beyond birth year and gender, we were not able to collect and enter initials and full birthdate in order to ensure an unduplicated result in our total number of homeless.
- Less household data collected. In the past, agencies with many clients, especially those in transitional housing who case managers might not see every day, would complete surveys for their participants using data already collected and available from program files. This again was altered by the signature requirement.

**School Districts** – Privacy and confidentiality concerns served once again as barriers in compiling school information with our point-in-time effort. The largest problem was not being able to compile full family information for children in a one day census. Since the school districts receive HUD McKinney money for providing services to the homeless children enrolled in their schools, we decided to gather the data they report annually to HUD and include a summary of that data along side of our point-in-time data. This data is reported in the same manner as the 2006 Point-in-Time Homeless Census Report so that an accurate comparison can be made from one year to the next.

### **2005-2006 School Year Homeless Student Counts by District**

*(provided by the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction)*

North Thurston	Olympia*	Tenino	Rainier	Yelm	Tumwater	Griffin	Rochester	Total
191	266	9	7	24	157	12	5	671

*\*Olympia School District's high number is in part due to the fact that they serve children staying in local shelters*

**Permanent Supportive Housing** – For the 2006 Point-in-Time Homeless Census, the Homeless Planning Workgroup wanted to collect surveys on those who reside in PSH units that require homelessness as eligibility criteria. The Workgroup decided that understanding the circumstances of those in PSH was valuable to meeting their ongoing needs. Many who have been homeless for a long time and who live with disabilities, the chronically homeless, experience crisis off and on and may cycle back into homelessness as a result. For planning purposes this information may prove helpful. In 2006 the Workgroup also tracked and compared housing capacity with homeless census data. The Workgroup thought that as we add to our PSH capacity in Thurston County, we will also want to track the population that is served with that housing. Please see discussion on page 4 recommending the study of data collection options.

**Definition of Homelessness** – In 2005, the Homeless Planning Workgroup, in developing the 10-Year Homeless Housing Plan for Thurston County, adopted the following definition of “homeless” from the federal Department of Housing and Urban Development. The term “homeless” or “homeless individual” or “homeless person” includes: (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) 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);

(B) an institution that provides a temporary residence for individuals intended to be institutionalized; or

(C) a public or private place not designed for, or ordinarily used as, a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings.<sup>1</sup>

The Workgroup decided, however, to continue to analyze the needs of people who are marginally housed or at risk of becoming homeless. For the purposes of the Point-in-Time Homeless Census Thurston County allowed people surveyed to be counted as homeless if they identified as “lacking a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence.” CTED, in the development of the HMIS system and in coordinating the census statewide, narrow the definition to exclude those couch-surfing or staying with family or friends.

### **CTED Numbers and Local Data Collected**

<sup>1</sup> [http://www4.law.cornell.edu/uscode/html/uscode42/usc\\_sec\\_42\\_00011302----000-.html#FN-1](http://www4.law.cornell.edu/uscode/html/uscode42/usc_sec_42_00011302----000-.html#FN-1)

The Washington State Department of Community, Trade and Economic Development (CTED) is charged with coordinating homeless census data from all 39 counties across the state. In developing the template for the homeless survey CTED decided not to collect data that the Homeless Planning Workgroup considered important data to Thurston County. The Workgroup decided to conduct surveys with:

- people in jail whose sentences were affected by homelessness
- people who lived in permanent supportive housing (PSH) for homeless people
- people who identified themselves as lacking a regular, adequate nighttime residence as indicated in the HUD definition of homeless

CTED has collected and will use a subset of our Thurston County data for their statewide reporting purposes. This data is reported in the following manner:

<b>Thurston County</b>				
Part 1: Homeless Population	Sheltered		Unsheltered	Living with Family or Friends
	Emergency	Transitional		
1. Homeless Individuals	112	99	157	82
2. Homeless Families with Children	21	44	12	6
2 a. Persons in Homeless Families with Children	55	126	31	21
<b>Total ( lines 1 +2a)</b>	<b>167</b>	<b>225</b>	<b>187 (168)</b>	<b>102</b>
Part 2: Homeless Subpopulations	Sheltered		Unsheltered	
1. Chronically Homeless	62		78	
2. Mental Health	149		143	
3. Substance Abuse	55		73	
4. Veterans	30		43	
5. Persons with HIV/AIDS	1		5	
6. Victims of Domestic Violence	91		38	
7. Youth	111		22	

### **Future of Data Management**

**HMIS** - Thurston County has served as the pilot area for CTED’s development of a Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) for the past 5 years. The system will allow homeless housing and services providers to enter information on the homeless people they serve into a database that is secure and protects client confidentiality. The HMIS system is intended to not only provide accurate data on homelessness in each county, but is designed to generate reports on services and housing provided to local, state and federal funders. Building a local HMIS capacity is an identified strategy in the 2005 10-Year Homeless Housing Plan for Thurston County and is required by HB 2163.

**Future Considerations for Census Data** – Housing Authority staff recommends the HOME Consortium and/or its Homeless Planning Workgroup further study and discuss the type of data tracked and reported in future Point-in-Time Census efforts. There is debate and differing opinions on whether those in transitional and permanent supportive housing should be tracked as part of the annual census and as part of 10-year Planning. There are compelling arguments for both sides with the best answer for Thurston County likely falling somewhere in between.

### **Understanding Homeless Shelter and Housing Capacity**

At first glance, the chart below describing the community’s ability to meet the shelter and housing needs of homeless people indicates we have just about closed the gap on housing the homeless in Thurston County. **The chart indicates an increase in the number of homeless individuals and a loss of countywide capacity.** This chart alone does not tell the complete story.

Census Information	Date Census Completed	Individuals Identified	Countywide Capacity	Percentage of Need Met
Census 5	January 25, 2007	798	610	76%
Census 4	January 26, 2006	672	631	94%
Census 3	January 26, 2005	697	607	87%
Census 2	October 22, 2003	740	575	78%
Census 1	February 24, 2003	604	348	58%

Census Information	Date Census Completed	Individuals Identified	Projected Countywide Capacity	Projected Percentage of Need Met
Census 5	January 25, 2007	798	729	91%

The next chart is a comparison of the current housing capacity and those who were surveyed that accessed that capacity on January 25, 2007. This information indicates that either:

- a. all people in shelter and housing aren’t being surveyed, or
- b. that shelter and housing programs are not operating at full capacity, or
- c. people who become homeless are choosing to not access available capacity, or
- d. all of the above

Homeless Housing Type	Capacity by Households	Homeless Surveyed by Households	Percent of Capacity Used and Surveyed
Emergency Shelter	118	132*	112%*
Transitional	178	143	81%
Permanent Supportive	61	71*	116%*

*\* the census relies upon self-reporting in many cases and these numbers indicate there were those who either did not answer the question correctly or did not understand the question about where they were staying..*

### **Observations and Recommendations**

- **Maximize and Maintain Existing Capacity** – It is important for a community to maintain a base level of crisis response to those who enter homelessness and to ensure the base level of capacity is maximized and that shelters and housing are utilized to capacity. Certain barriers exist which keep use at levels below capacity such as family rooms that can hold larger families being used by smaller families, eligibility criteria, credit, criminal and eviction histories getting in the way of people using the TBRA assistance and the like.
- **Secure Appropriate Capacity** – Capacity for certain homeless subpopulations may not be available or appropriate, thereby leaving a certain group of homeless persons unserved. Youth shelter, family shelter and housing for offenders are examples of the need for appropriate housing capacity to be developed.
- **Develop Permanent Housing Capacity** – It is widely held that nothing can be done to prevent people from entering into homelessness altogether. A certain amount of crisis response has to be available. At the same time, adequate capacity at the other end of homelessness needs to be developed in increasing numbers to ensure that people don’t cycle back into homelessness.
- **Study Data Collection Options**- Housing Authority staff recommends the HOME Consortium and/or its Homeless Planning Workgroup further study and discuss the type of data tracked and reported in future Point-in-Time Census efforts. There is debate and differing opinions on whether those in transitional and permanent supportive housing should be tracked as part of the annual census and as part of 10-year Planning. There are compelling arguments for both sides with the best answer for Thurston County likely falling somewhere in between.
- **Signature Requirement Impacts Shared with Legislature and CTED** - The impacts of the new signature requirement should be shared with Representative Miloscia and the Department of Community, Trade and Economic Development (CTED) in a future 10-Year Plan update.

- **Percentage of Need Met** – The bottom line in analyzing data to discern whether the Consortium is making progress in ending homelessness is to look at the percentage of the need for homeless housing that is being met by the existing system.
  - Percentage of need met dropped in 2007. The 2007 numbers indicate an increase in the number of homeless individuals and a loss of countywide capacity. This has reduced the percentage of need met from 94% in 2006 to 76% in 2007.
  - Capacity Lost. Although SafePlace increased their shelter capacity since 2006, the loss of capacity from the closure of the Devoe Street Shelter and the loss in the Out of the Woods capacity has led to a net decrease in capacity.
  - New Capacity Coming Online. The capacity will be increased over the calendar year 2007 with the opening of Drexel House, Tumwater Gardens, 10 units for homeless families at Evergreen Vista Phase II and the Pear Street Apartments.
  - Need to Prevent Future Capacity Loss. Several homeless shelter and/or services providers lost Human Services Review Council (HSRC) funding for calendar year 2007. If funding is not replaced those providers have indicated they will have to reduce their capacities within the coming year.

### **Further Information**

#### **The Thurston County HOME Consortium**

Is a group of elected officials from the eight (8) jurisdictions within Thurston County:

Thurston – Cathy Wolfe, County Commissioner, HOME Consortium Chair  
 Olympia – TJ Johnson, Councilmember  
 Tumwater – Neil McClanahan, Councilmember  
 Lacey – Mary Dean, Councilmember  
 Yelm – Mike McGowan, Councilmember  
 Rainier – Nancy Decker, Mayor  
 Tenino – Dawna Kelly-Donohue, Councilmember  
 Bucoda – Kathy Martin, Mayor

The Consortium meets the 2<sup>nd</sup> Tuesday of each month. For more information or to contact members of the HOME Consortium, please contact Connie Rivera at Thurston County at 360.709.3065.

#### **The Homeless Planning Workgroup**

For more information please contact Dwight Edwards at Thurston County at 360.709.3003.

**Thurston County Capacity for Homeless Persons & Families  
January 25, 2007 and Projected for end of Calendar Year 2007**

<b>Emergency Shelter Capacity*</b>		
<b>Individuals - Men</b>	<b>Current/Projected Beds</b>	<b>Current/Projected Households</b>
Salvation Army - Men	42	42
Saint Michael's/Sacred Heart (currently operating 5 nights per week)	10	10
Drexel House	0/15	0/15
<b>Individuals - Women</b>	<b>Beds</b>	<b>Households</b>
Salvation Army	12	12
<b>Families with Children</b>	<b>Beds</b>	<b>Households</b>
Housing Authority of Thurston County	16	4
Safeplace	28	10
Salvation Army	24	7
Yelm Community Services	9	3
Emergency Shelter Network - Interfaith Works	20	20
Emergency Shelter Network - Out of the Woods	6	2
<b>Youth</b>	<b>Beds</b>	<b>Households</b>
Community Youth Services	10	10
<b>Totals</b>	<b>177/192</b>	<b>118/133</b>

<b>Transitional Capacity</b>		
<b>Individuals - Men &amp; Women</b>	<b>Current/Projected Beds</b>	<b>Current/Projected Households</b>
Bread & Roses - Duplex	12	12
Salvation Army - Men	5	5
Salvation Army - Women	1	1
Olympia Union Gospel Mission - Men in Recovery	10	10
Olympia Union Gospel Mission - Women in Recovery	3	3
BHR - HOME TBRA	60	40
Drexel House - Single Men and Women	0/25	0/25
<b>Families with Children</b>	<b>Beds</b>	<b>Households</b>
Housing Authority of Thurston County	176	44
Olympia Union Gospel Mission	16	5
Arbor Manor	12	6
<b>Youth</b>	<b>Beds</b>	<b>Households</b>
Community Youth Services	46	46
<b>Totals</b>	<b>341/366</b>	<b>172/197</b>

<b>Permanent Supportive Capacity (units only available for homeless households)</b>		
<b>Individuals - Men &amp; Women</b>	<b>Current/Projected Beds</b>	<b>Current/Projected Households</b>
Fleetwood	43	43
Drexel House	0/10	0/10
The Gardens	0/34	0/34
<b>Families with Children</b>	<b>Beds</b>	<b>Households</b>
Trails End	24	8
Washington Families - Supporting Family Self-Sufficiency Program	30	10
Evergreen Vista Phase II	0/30	0/10
<b>Total</b>	<b>97/171</b>	<b>61/115</b>

<b>Total Thurston County Capacity</b>		
	<b>Current/Projected Beds</b>	<b>Current/Projected Households</b>
Emergency Shelter	177/192	118/131
Transitional	341/366	172/197
Permanent Supportive	97/171	61/115
<b>Total</b>	<b>615/729</b>	<b>351/443</b>

\* Do not include capacity for emergency shelters that only open during dangerous weather conditions.

**Thurston County Homeless Census Data for January 25, 2007**

<b>Total Count Numbers by Individual</b>					
Individuals	798		Children 5 & under	57	7%
Households	640		Children 6-12	39	5%
Children under 18	142	18%	Children 13-17	35	4%
Males	456	57%	Adults 18-21	94	12%
Females	342	43%	Adults 22-35	193	24%
Individuals with a Disability	506	63%	Adults 36-54	323	40%
Individuals who are Veterans	78	9%	Adults 55-65	54	7%
Veterans receiving VA Assistance	18	23%	Adults 66-75	3	<1%

<b>Disabilities as Indicated by Individual*</b>					
Physical/Medical (permanent)	144	18%	Alcohol or drug abuse	149	19%
Physical (temporary)	46	6%	Literacy	37	5%
Mental Health	350	44%	Untreated Dental Needs	98	12%
Developmental	36	5%	Mental Health & Substance Abuse	86	11%
Visual (Uncorrected)	62	8%	Other	21	3%
HIV/AIDS	6	1%			

<b>Current Living Status by Household</b>					
Emergency Shelter	132	21%	Out of Doors (street/camping)	118	18%
Transitional Housing	143	22%	Vehicle	42	7%
Other wise lacking a fixed & adequate nighttime residence	88	14%	Abandoned Building	8	1%
Jail	38	6%	Permanent Supportive Housing	71	11%

<b>Situations that caused Homelessness for the Household*</b>					
1. Unable to pay Rent/Mortgage	132	21%	11. Domestic Violence Victim	85	13%
2. Job Lost	109	17%	12. Drug or Alcohol Use	128	27%
3. Poor Credit Rating	71	11%	13. Failed Job Drug Screen	3	<1%
4. Evicted-Non-payment	36	6%	14. Convicted-Felony	57	9%
5. Lack of Job Skills	71	11%	15. Convicted-Misdemeanor	27	4%
6. Lack of Child Care	18	3%	16. Discharged Institution/Jail	30	5%
7. Medical Costs	22	3%	17. Evicted-Other Reasons	44	7%
8. Mental Illness	249	39%	18. Temp Living Situation	78	12%
9. Medical Problems	76	12%	19. Language Barrier	11	2%
10. Family Break-up	103	16%	20. Other	60	9%

<b>Percentages of Situations that Caused Homelessness Grouped by Category</b>					
Poverty Related Issues (1-7)	347	54%	Medical Related issues (7-9)	293	46%
Family Dysfunction Issues (10-11)	157	25%	Drug & Alcohol Issues(12-13)	128	20%

<b>All Sources of Household Income*</b>					
None	157	25%	Employed at low wage job	46	7%
Social Security	157	25%	Relatives, Partners, Friends	16	3%
Unemployment Insurance	3	<1%	Day Labor	26	4%
Part-time Work	46	7%	L & I Payments	2	<1%
Public Assistance	189	30%	Other	28	4%

<b>Zip Where Household Last Resided for 6 Consecutive Months or More</b>					
98501	232	36%	98530	0	%
98502	33	5%	98579	11	2%
98503	89	14%	98589	5	1%
98506	33	5%	98597	16	3%
98512	17	3%	Outside of Thurston-In WA	35	4%
98513	7	1%	Outside of WA	38	4%
98516	2	<1%	No answer	280	35%

<b>Length of Time Households Have Been Homeless</b>					
1 year of less	158	25%	4 to 5 years	11	2%
1 to 2 years	48	8%	5 to 10 years	35	5%
2 to 3 years	29	5%	10 or more years	14	2%
3 to 4 years	10	2%	No answer	335	52%

<b>Number of Times Households Have Been Homeless in Past 3 Years</b>					
1	118	18%	4	7	1%
2	41	6%	More than 4	9	1%
3	16	3%	No answer	449	70%

\* More than one answer is possible. Summation of percentages will not equal 100%.