

High Desert Home: Central Oregon Strategic Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness

An Update to the Central Oregon 10 Year Plan to End Homelessness, 2011

October 2015

Introduction

“Homelessness is a complex problem that will take all of us working together to solve.” It is not only a moral imperative, it is also an economic issue. No one in Central Oregon should be without a safe, stable place to call home.

On one night in January 2015, more than 2,000 people in Central Oregon experienced homelessness. More than 40% of those people were children. And nearly one of every five people were unsheltered - living in a car, squatting, or camping. While significant efforts are made each day by service providers, advocates and people experiencing homelessness to secure stable and affordable housing, the overall reality in Central Oregon remains deeply concerning: trends indicate an increase in people living unsheltered and an extreme scarcity of affordable housing.

Developed in 2011, the “Central Oregon 10 Year Plan to End Homelessness” laid out the goals and strategies needed to address these issues. Now, after nearly four years of implementation, the Homeless Leadership Coalition is issuing *High Desert Home*, an update to that Plan. This update is intended to re-focus the goals of the Plan to account for changes over the past several years, and does not seek to replace the original Plan of 2011, but build on it.

Over the past four years, many programs and resources have been created or expanded, adding critical tools to the region to help prevent and end homelessness. Among these are Social Security benefits advocate services, new units and vouchers for affordable and supportive housing, a new clinic bringing together health care and behavioral health services, and many, many more (see “Accomplishments”, p. 6). In addition, several key developments are impacting the Plan’s implementation: a strengthened Homeless Leadership Coalition, changes in federal and state policies and funding requirements, broad re-alignment with federal strategic goals, a changing local economic environment and an extremely tight rental housing market (currently a 1.5% vacancy rate) in Central Oregon.

As originally outlined, Phase II of the Plan’s implementation is intended to “focus on the deeper systemic changes, filling in critical gaps and making adjustments to our plan based on ... a better understanding of the system.” Through new coordinated processes and data collection, we are now poised to better understand the system, the needs of people experiencing or at risk of homelessness in our communities, the resource and program gaps, and the evidenced-based solutions. This in turn will enable a clearer articulation of the needed funding, policy changes, and resources to truly create a system where people either never become homeless or, if they do, where they can quickly turn to get help and return to safe, stable and affordable housing. In this way, Central Oregon can *prevent and end homelessness*.

High Desert Home: Phase II

In alignment with the vision and goals of the Federal Strategic Plan, *Opening Doors*, the Central Oregon Plan envisions a region where, **“No one should experience homelessness - no one should be without a safe, stable place to call home.”**

In order to achieve this, Central Oregon has outlined 6 goals and 27 strategies to create the conditions and supports that prevent homelessness from occurring, and, if someone does become homeless, help them quickly move into safe and stable housing. With these 6 goals, we can achieve the federal goals of:

- Ending chronic homelessness;
- Preventing and ending homelessness among Veterans;
- Preventing and ending homelessness for families, youth, and children;
- Setting a path to ending all types of homelessness.

This document highlights and builds upon the original Central Oregon Plan and incorporates the themes and strategies of *Opening Doors*. It also incorporates the feedback from a survey of providers on the goals of the Plan. The survey, conducted in late 2014, collected information from 26 respondents representing homeless services in Bend, Redmond, La Pine, Prineville and Sisters. *High Desert Home* also recognizes the key accomplishments of the past 4 years, changes in the environment including the housing crisis, economic conditions, and government funding shifts. And, ultimately, it sets a path toward using data, targeted and proven strategies, and measurable outcomes to prevent and end homelessness in Central Oregon.

Goals and Strategies

Goal 1 - Homelessness Prevention

Prevent and divert people from becoming homeless by working with them directly to maintain their housing or obtain safe, stable housing.

- *Develop and implement a coordinated prevention/diversion process for the region that utilizes best practice strategies, cross-agency and cross-system collaboration, and flexible funding to help people maintain stable housing*
- *Create a flexible funding stream from a variety of sources to be utilized for creative strategies to prevent and divert people at risk of homelessness*
- *Coordinate rental/utility assistance programs, foreclosure prevention assistance and other housing-related funds to provide additional resources (or reduce expenses) so people most at risk of homelessness can continue to pay for their housing*
- *Assist low income families to remove barriers to housing and improve housing stability through targeted programs such as classes on budgeting/managing household finances for adults and youth, and legal assistance*
- *Provide landlord-tenant mediation and assistance through the prevention/diversion process*

- *Improve discharge planning and procedures through system integration and collaboration so people are not discharged from the corrections system, hospitals/ERs, or the foster care system directly into homelessness*

Goal 2 - Affordable Housing

Increase access to stable and affordable housing by expanding, developing, and coordinating the supply of affordable housing to prevent and end homelessness.

- *Utilizing a Coordinated Entry process, create projections based on data for the capacity and types of housing needed across the region to prevent and end homelessness*
- *Develop additional units and types of affordable housing, including rapid re-housing, service-enriched housing, cooperative housing and other creative, affordable and flexible housing models with appropriate support services to meet the needs of people experiencing or most at risk of homelessness in each of Central Oregon's communities*
- *Develop permanent supportive housing (PSH) units using the "Housing First" model to meet the need based on data and housing projections to prevent and end chronic homelessness*
- *Support the collaboration between area housing and service providers and the local Housing Authority to create additional units, and explore strategies such as a homeless preference and/or new partnerships to provide appropriate support services in newly developed projects, among others*
- *Improve collaboration across systems and funding sources to integrate housing solutions, and develop new funding sources through advocacy and outreach*

Goal 3 - Appropriate Support Services

Cultivate the strengths of people experiencing or at risk of homelessness to expand their capacity for self-support in housing through strategies that promote economic security, health and housing stability.

- *Improve access to education and job training and increase meaningful and sustainable employment for people experiencing or most at risk of homelessness*
- *Improve access to mainstream programs and services to reduce people's financial vulnerability to homelessness, including continued support for social security benefit advocate services, access to health care, and improved access to other programs through the Coordinated Entry process*
- *Continue to integrate primary and behavioral health care services with homeless assistance programs and housing to reduce people's vulnerability to and the impacts of homelessness*

Goal 4 - System Improvements

Improve system coordination, communication and collaboration among agencies and organizations at the funding and service delivery level to move toward a "housing first" system, improve discharge procedures and prevent and end homelessness.

- *Develop and implement a Coordinated Entry process for the homeless service system that prevents homelessness and rapidly returns people who do experience homelessness to stable housing*
- *Identify system gaps and implement best practice solutions to address those gaps*

- *Advocate for policies that remove barriers and promote the creation or preservation of safe, affordable housing in all Central Oregon communities*
- *Develop “housing navigator” skills, through training and technical assistance, within agencies as the housing market improves for low-income households. Housing Navigators work to increase opportunities for households at-risk by developing tailored plans for services, making the best use of available resources, and bridging the gaps between relevant programs and systems*

Goal 5 - Education and Outreach

Increase leadership, collaboration, and civic engagement across all sectors to promote collaborative solutions and commitment to preventing and ending homelessness.

- *Implement education and public awareness strategies to remove societal stigma about homelessness and to build community capacity and support for coordinated responses*
- *Develop information materials and training on community resources for law enforcement, health care providers and other stakeholders, especially regarding the Coordinated Entry process*
- *Continue the McKinney-Vento Homeless Liaison and Family Access Network (FAN) advocacy in local schools and improve collaboration across agencies to better support children and families experiencing or at risk of homelessness*
- *Establish and support ongoing advocacy efforts in all communities to remove barriers to developing affordable and supportive housing, while ensuring increased collaboration and accountability*
- *Develop a system performance reporting mechanism to regularly report data and show progress*

Goal 6 - Better Data

Expand and improve data collection, technology and methodology to better track homeless program demographics and outcomes, improve collaboration, identify gaps and target solutions.

- *Implement a Coordinated Entry process and standard assessment across the region*
- *Increase the percentage of homeless assistance programs using HMIS*
- *Use the Point in Time Count and Homeless Liaison data to continue to improve regional and community-specific information on homelessness*
- *Use data to identify system gaps - including both within the homeless housing and service system, as well as in the corrections, hospitals, foster care and other systems - and develop implementation plans for new models or best practice strategies to address gaps*

Key Strategic Objectives for Phase II: 2015 – 2017 *

Objective	Timeline	Lead / Partners
Implement first phase of the Coordinated Entry process, including the prevention/diversion program, across the tri-county region.	<i>July 2015</i>	<i>NeighborImpact, Coordinated Entry Point Agencies</i>
Convene stakeholders across systems, including corrections, behavioral health, health care, foster care, aging, public schools, faith communities, homeless service providers and others, to coordinate housing-related funds, improve collaboration in discharge planning processes, and identify cost-savings and improved outcomes.	<i>Monthly, beginning October 2015</i>	<i>Homeless Leadership Coalition, NeighborImpact, Coordinated Entry Lead, all partners</i>
Convene a working group and produce a report to be presented to the HLC that analyzes data, identifies gaps in housing and services and prioritizes strategies that address existing and emerging needs in alignment with the goals of <i>High Desert Home</i> .	<i>Quarterly, beginning October 2015</i>	<i>Homeless Leadership Coalition Committees</i>
Create preliminary housing inventory projections based on available data and establish a process to review and update the projections quarterly.	<i>December 2015</i>	<i>Homeless Leadership Coalition Housing Committee</i>
Begin conversations with Homeless Leadership Coalition participants and convene regional roundtables in each of the three counties to assess resources and plan strategies for meeting the housing projections.	<i>January 2016</i>	<i>Homeless Leadership Coalition, Housing Works, all public and private partners</i>
Develop an advocacy strategy to support the funding and policies needed to create the number of units and the types of housing needed as outlined in the housing projections. Mobilize the Homeless Leadership Coalition as a powerful unified voice.	<i>March 2016</i>	<i>Homeless Leadership Coalition, all public and private partners</i>
All homeless service providers in the tri-county region are using HMIS	<i>July 2016</i>	<i>NeighborImpact, all homeless service providers</i>

** To be evaluated and updated annually by the Homeless Leadership Coalition*

Essential Measures to Track Progress towards *High Desert Home's* Goals

Population Measures:

- change in the number of people experiencing homelessness, sheltered and unsheltered
- change in the number of individuals experiencing chronic homelessness
- change in the number of Veterans experiencing homelessness
- change in the number of people in families experiencing homelessness
- change in the number of unaccompanied youth experiencing homelessness

Critical Strategy Measures:

- change in the number of permanent supportive housing units, rapid re-housing units and other housing types in relation to the projected housing units needed
- change in the length of time that a household remains in the system, whether in a shelter bed and/or on a waiting list for stable affordable housing
- change in the number of persons who become homeless for the first time
- change in the number of households enrolled in or exiting homeless assistance programs with earned income and/or mainstream benefits
- change in the number of households exiting to or retaining permanent housing
- change in the number of households (including individuals, families or youth) exiting homeless assistance programs to permanent housing solutions, including prevention and diversion programs, that do not seek homeless assistance again within 6 to 12 months and within 2 years

Accomplishments of Phase I: 2011-2015

- New health clinic collaboration between Mosaic Medical and Deschutes County Behavioral Health in downtown Bend
- Social Security benefit advocate services available through an established relationship with a local attorney
- Legal assistance and mediation, including Reasonable Accommodation advocacy and training, provided through Legal Aid Services of Oregon
- 81 new HUD-VASH (Veterans supportive housing) vouchers allocated to the region
- Cascade Youth and Family added a new employment support program in February 2014
- Area providers, including especially Jericho Road, expanded prevention services including rent and utility assistance, funds and in-kind donations to assist in moving costs and emergency assistance such as food programs, bike transportation programs, a backpack program and others.
- Redemption Ministries' 8 bed shelter for women and children opened in Prineville
- Deschutes County Behavioral Health added 13 new full-time positions related to housing services
- Social Worker in the Library (SWITL) program began in Fall 2014
- NeighborImpact provided a range of services including: family reunification program, lending and weatherization program, reverse mortgage assistance, foreclosure mediation, financial coaching, and others

- New cross-system collaborations began including: School District liaisons bridging with families in shelters; Department of Human Services diversion planning with hospitals/nursing facilities; Deschutes County Behavioral Health outreach to people within the legal system, including corrections facilities; Cascade Youth and Family partnering with WEBCO to provide in-house mental health services
- Bend-LaPine School District holds an annual Homeless Youth Summit
- 'Health thru Housing' pilot program serving two households
- "Welcome Home" HUD funded PSH, serving a veteran and his children.
- Expansion of Mosaic Medical's mobile clinic and partnership with COVO
- Health Care for Homeless Veterans (HCHV) collaboration between the V.A, COVO and Bethlehem Inn providing housing, health care and case management to help people move to permanent or transitional housing
- Icon City works with HLC to bring mobile shower truck to various locations weekly
- Partnership between Mosaic Medical and Housing Works creating a new health clinic at Ariel Glen Apartments
- Housing Works completed development of 40 new affordable housing units in Bend at Eastlake Village II
- Bend City Council approved a critical SDC fee exemption for affordable housing developers with the goal of helping to spur construction of up to 100 housing units

Looking Ahead: Central Oregon homeless service providers reported in a December 2014 survey on their future program goals, each in various stages of development.

- Develop a "cottage cluster" higher density neighborhood
- Develop a "Phase II" housing project, post-program graduation, for formerly homeless youth/young adults
- Develop "Homeless Courts" that can resolve issues quickly, in a single day event
- Medical respite project for people who are homeless
- Create a drop-in center for homeless youth
- Expand behavioral health related resolution training in Redmond
- Fully support current transitional housing programs and potentially create multiple transitional housing programs in Redmond
- Maintain warming shelter capacity throughout the region
- Expand housing services to homeless veterans
- Better utilize resources for rental assistance using the coordinated entry and diversion process
- Complete and fully support financially both a men's shelter with treatment and a women's residential drug treatment program in Prineville
- Develop 50 new units of affordable housing for seniors in Redmond
- Develop 50 new affordable townhomes in Bend

Population Measures (Data from the annual Point in Time Count. An urgent goal of the CoC is to improve participation in HMIS. Comprehensive and high quality data is critical to securing funding and achieving the goals of High Desert Home.)

	2013	2014	2015	% Change
Total Households	1045	1217	1051	> 1%
Total Individuals	1990	2410	2087	5%
> Under age 18 (Children and Unaccompanied Youth)	866	972	892	3%
> Chronically Homeless	256	522	392	53%
Veterans				
> Households	99	99	74	-25%
> Individuals	100	116	90	-10%
> Chronically Homeless	50	80	50	--

Note: 2011 and 2012 data are not included because the definitions of homelessness, as defined by HUD, changed, and therefore the numbers cannot be compared with more recent data. Sheltered/Unsheltered data also not available for all years.

High Desert Home: Beyond 2017

By the end of 2017, Central Oregon will complete the initial Strategic Objectives, which lay a critical foundation for continuing and, in some cases, beginning the work of implementing each of the 27 strategies to prevent and end homelessness.

Through a more complex and data-driven understanding of the system, the needs of people experiencing or at risk of homelessness in our communities, and the resource and program gaps, Central Oregon can then work to create a more strategic and effective system for individuals and families.

Ultimately, each community, and Central Oregon as a whole, will be able to more effectively articulate the needed funding, policy changes, and resources to truly create a system where people either never become homeless or, if they do, where they can quickly turn to get help and return to safe, stable and affordable housing. In this way, working together, Central Oregon will prevent and end homelessness, reaching our ultimate goal: *a Central Oregon where everyone has a safe, stable place to call home.*

Appendix A

Homeless Leadership Coalition Committee Descriptions October 2, 2015

In service of fulfilling the mission, principles, and responsibilities of the Homeless Leadership Coalition as outlined in the Governance Charter, three standing working committees will meet monthly to review and evaluate relevant data, produce reports and/or action steps to engage stakeholders in system and program improvements, and develop new initiatives including resources, advocacy efforts, or funding and education campaigns. The goals of the committees will align to advance the goals outlined in *High Desert Home: Central Oregon's Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness*. The committees will provide a report each December to the HLC, as well as update the HLC monthly on the work of the committee. Each voting member of the HLC will participate in at least one committee. All committees are open to membership and participation from others interested, and each committee will strive to include broad representation from region, specialty, population served, and include people who are currently or have formerly experienced homelessness.

Homelessness Prevention and Services

Goal: Prevent and divert people from becoming homeless by working with them directly to maintain their housing or obtain safe, stable housing.

- Develop an inventory of the current prevention services.
- Develop a funding analysis for prevention services that summarizes the current funding, identifies gaps, and suggests new sources of funding and partnerships.
- Identify service gaps based on data and research and evaluate those gaps in relation to the goals and strategies of *High Desert Home*.
- Assist in the creation of, and provide support for, the prevention/diversion program of the Coordinated Entry process.
- Identify issues related to discharge planning from key systems and develop a strategy to engage partners and create solutions.
- Assist in the process of convening stakeholders from across systems to coordinate prevention and housing retention related services and improve collaboration in discharge planning processes.
- Make recommendations to the HLC for key areas of advocacy needed to advance the goals of preventing and ending homelessness.

Affordable Housing and Housing Services

Goal: Increase access to stable and affordable housing by expanding, developing and coordinating the supply of affordable housing to prevent and end homelessness. Through housing related services, cultivate the strengths of people experiencing or at-risk of homelessness to expand their capacity for self-support in housing through strategies that promote economic security, health and housing stability.

- Develop a comprehensive inventory of the current housing types available to people who have experienced homelessness, including homeless-dedicated housing, as well as other types of housing, housing services, subsidies and units utilized.
- Develop a funding analysis for housing-related activities (development, rent assistance, housing retention services, etc) that summarizes the current funding, identifies gaps and suggests new sources of funding and partnerships.
- Identify housing gaps based on data and research and evaluate those gaps in relation to the goals and strategies of *High Desert Home*.
- Create preliminary housing inventory projections - the types/models and quantity of housing options needed across the tri-county region to ensure safe stable housing for everyone - based on available data and establish a process to review and update the projections quarterly.
- Research new evidence-based housing models to fill gaps and begin conversations with partners to explore options for the tri-county region.
- Make recommendations to the HLC for key areas of advocacy needed to advance the goals of preventing and ending homelessness.

Systems Integration, Education and Outreach

Goal: Improve communication and coordination among agencies and organizations at the funding and service delivery level to move toward a “housing first” system, improve discharge procedures and prevent and end homelessness. Increase leadership, collaboration, and civic engagement across all sectors to promote collaborative solutions and commitment to preventing and ending homelessness.

- Building on the inventories created by the prevention and housing committees, develop a comprehensive list of all the agencies, systems, departments, and key contact persons connecting in some way with people who are either at-risk or currently experiencing homelessness.
- Develop a process, such as one through the Coordinated Entry prevention/diversion process or a regional roundtable model, to convene stakeholders to review system gaps and recommendations and work to implement best practice strategies to address those gaps, specifically to assess resources in each county and plan strategies for meeting the housing projections.
- Develop a system performance reporting mechanism to regularly report data and show progress.
- Develop new - and support ongoing - advocacy efforts to remove barriers and promote the creation or preservation of safe, affordable housing in all Central Oregon communities.

High Desert Home: Central Oregon Strategic Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness was adopted by the Homeless Leadership Coalition at its Annual Meeting, October 2, 2015