

MOVING LONG TERM SHELTER STAYERS INTO HOUSING PROGRESS REPORT, APRIL 2014

SUMMARY

The Long Term Stayers (LTS) Work Group was formed in 2013 to implement a recommendation of the CEH Single Adult Shelter Task Force to *focus outreach and resources to reduce long term stays* in order to increase capacity in shelters. The LTS Work Group focused on a cohort of 277 individuals with some of the longest stays (the LTS Priority Group), and set a goal to move 100 of them into housing in 2013. The placements were anticipated to be in existing homeless housing units as they became available and in three new buildings scheduled to come on line in 2013. At the end of 2013, approximately 60 people were housed; the shortfall was due to delay in construction and lease up of two developments. This report covers outcomes as of March 2014, including moves to the three new housing developments.

Outcomes for LTS Priority Group, 277 Individuals, as of 3/28/14

- Of the total 277 people: 85 (31%) moved from shelter to permanent housing, 143 (52%) continue to be served in shelter, and 49 (18%) were not moved to housing and are no longer utilizing a shelter program participating in Safe Harbors.
- Of the 85 people who moved to housing: 74 (87%) moved to permanent supportive housing for formerly homeless people, 7 (9%) rented other housing with an ongoing housing subsidy, 2 (2%) Safe Haven, and 2 (2%) moved in with family permanently.
- Of the 74 people who moved to permanent supportive housing: 38 moved into three new nonprofit housing developments and 19 moved to existing nonprofit homeless housing. Locations for the remaining 17 were not identifiable via Safe Harbors HMIS, but providers report that nine moved to new housing.

Characteristics of LTS Priority Group

- Long term shelter stayers tend to be older, male, and extremely low income. More than half report a disability. They have barriers to housing that include documentation issues, poor rental and credit histories and, in some cases, criminal records.
- Generally they are not high utilizers of public systems such as emergency room, jail and sobering center; 75% used only emergency shelter.
- Many LTS clients had not received vulnerability assessments when the effort began in 2013. Of those who had, a small number (14%) were assessed as highly vulnerable and were eligible for Client Care Coordination dedicated units in supportive housing.

- Client characteristics vary among the shelter providers. For example, nearly half of DESC's LTS clients are female and a high proportion (66%) had high vulnerability ratings.

Recommendations

The LTS Work Group recommends that CEH continue its focus on placing long-term stayers in housing. The 2014 LTS Priority Group would include 293 individuals with more than 540 days in shelter in 2012-2013. Strategies to expand housing placements include:

- Continue to prioritize the LTS population for new homeless housing development and as existing homeless housing units become available.
- Expand this effort by creating opportunities to move LTS to subsidized public and nonprofit housing that is not set-aside for the homeless, and to access rental assistance for housing that is otherwise unaffordable for extremely low income individuals. This would include both individuals with limited service needs and individuals who will be receiving behavioral health or other services to help them live independently.
- Identify opportunities in new subsidized housing coming on line, including senior housing and housing for people with mental illness.
- Increase case management resources to support transition of LTS into housing and onto mainstream services. Transition can be enhanced by increasing case management capacity within shelter and by providing navigation services.

In addition, continued evaluation could help expand or improve housing strategies for LTS, including:

- Assess outcomes of the people who were placed into housing in 2013 to inform future capital and service needs.
- Explore intervention options for people residing in shelter between 5 and 10 months, which research suggests could prevent or reduce long-term shelter stays. This should not replace the emphasis on people who are already long-term stayers, but may provide a way to help some people from becoming stuck.

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PROGRESS REPORT, APRIL 2014

Background: Single Adult Shelter Taskforce

The Single Adult Shelter Taskforce was convened in 2012 by the Committee to End Homelessness to assess the role of shelter for single adults in Seattle/King County. A group of providers, funders and advocates met monthly to assess the shelter system and make policy and funding recommendations. One recommendation was to increase capacity in Seattle shelters by moving individuals that had been staying for 180 days or more into housing. In its analysis of a cohort of shelter stayers, the Task Force had found that 26% of shelter users staying the longest consumed 74% of total bed nights over the study period.

Long Term Stayer (LTS) Work Group

The Seattle Office of Housing convened a small group of shelter and housing providers to develop a strategy for transitioning some of the identified long-term shelter stayers to permanent housing. Long-term stayers, defined as people who use shelter for more than 180 days in one year, account for 8% to 9% of single adults using emergency shelter in Seattle-King County. There were 734 long-term stayers in single adult shelters reported in 2012. The LTS Work Group decided to create a priority group of 277 people with the longest stays. These individuals were served for 180 days or more in 2011 and were also served during the last quarter of 2012.

The LTS Work Group established a goal to move 100 of the 277 people into housing in 2013, utilizing existing homeless housing as vacancies occurred, and three homeless housing projects that were under construction and slated to begin move-ins before the end of the year. No additional financial resources or housing units were added to the homeless housing system to address this priority.

Ninety-one percent of the 277 individuals were served by three agencies: Downtown Emergency Service Center, Compass Housing Alliance and Catholic Community Services. Safe Harbors HMIS data was used by shelter staff to identify individuals in the priority group. Shelter staff then assessed specific client needs and preferences. Client data was reviewed monthly to determine progress and action steps.

Characteristics of the LTS Priority Group

According to HMIS data:

- The large majority was male (78%).
- Average age was 56, as compared to an average of 44 in single adult shelters overall.
- 58% of individuals reported being disabled, compared to an average of 52%.
- 22% identified as veterans, compared to an average of 13%.
- 57% identified as White, 25% as Black/African American, 8% as US Indian/Alaska Native, 3% as Asian, 1% as Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, 1% as Multiracial, and 6% unknown. Twelve percent identified as Hispanic/Latino.

The High Utilizer Integrated Database (HUID) provided information for 188 identified individuals:

- Generally they are not high utilizers of public systems such as emergency department services, jail and sobering center; 75% used only emergency shelter.
- Vulnerability scores were not reported for most individuals. Of those with VAT scores, only 26 individuals (14%) had high scores and were eligible to move to Client Care Coordination dedicated units in permanent supportive housing (about one-third of supportive housing available for homeless adults).
- The level of vulnerability varied by shelter. At DESC’s shelter, 66% of the LTS Priority Group had high VAT scores; Compass and CCS reported relatively few people with high VAT scores.
- A recent DESC analysis of DESC shelter clients showed that clients with longer stays in shelter had higher average VAT scores. Of the individuals who used shelter for the majority of days in the past two twelve month periods, 62% had high VAT scores, consistent with DESC’s portion of the LTS Priority Group.

Shelter program staff reported these additional characteristics and barriers to housing:

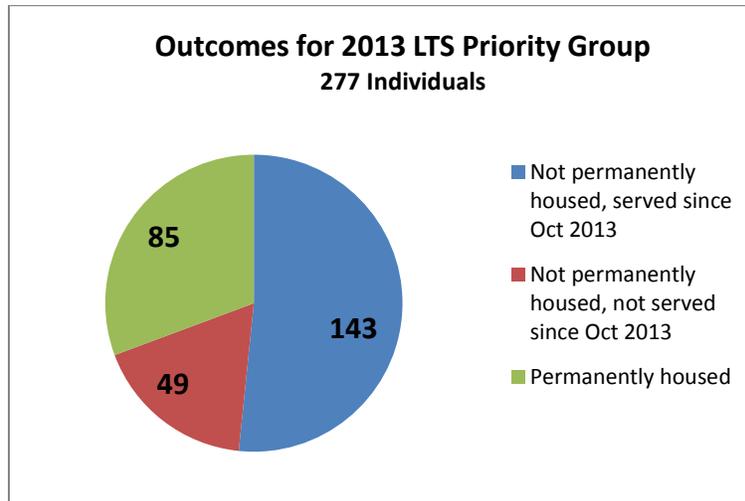
- The vast majority had extremely low or no income and would require housing with deep and ongoing subsidies.
- In general, people had succeeded in shelter for many years, and staff believes they could succeed in housing with limited service support.
- Many are reluctant to move, in some cases related to mental illness that makes them distrustful and unwilling to provide documentation.
- Many have significant barriers to housing such as lack of or negative housing and credit history.
- Some have criminal records that will be a barrier to housing.
- Some lack income verification, and face challenges to verify identification and income via Social Security.
- Some are undocumented and cannot be served in most subsidized housing that uses certain federal sources.
- A small percentage are registered sex offenders who are extremely difficult to house.

2013 LTS Priority Group, by Shelter Provider and Gender

Agency	Total	Female	Male
Compass Housing Alliance	75	13	62
Catholic Community Services	122	14	108
Downtown Emergency Service Center	55	17	30
Eastside Interfaith Social Concerns	4	1	3
Immanuel Community Services	1		1
Salvation Army	10	1	9
SHARE	4		4
YWCA	6	6	
Total	277	52	217

Outcomes for the LTS Priority Group as of 03/28/2014

Of the 277 individuals in the 2013 Priority Group, 85 exited shelter to permanent housing. Forty-nine individuals were not permanently housed and are no longer utilizing a Safe Harbors participating shelter program (within the past six months). 143 individuals have not been permanently housed and continue to be served in shelter (within the past six months).



Of those who did move to permanent housing, 74 (87%) moved to a permanent supportive housing program, 7 (8%) moved to a rental with a housing subsidy, and the remainder moved to a Safe Haven or are living permanently with family.

Housing Type for Individuals who moved to Permanent Housing from January 1, 2013 through March 28, 2014

Type of Permanent Housing	Number
Permanent supportive housing for formerly homeless persons (such as SHP, Shelter+Care, or SRO Mod Rehab)	74
Rental by client, other (non-VASH) ongoing housing subsidy	7
Safe Haven	2
Staying or living with family, permanent tenure	2
Total	85

Of the 74 individuals who moved to permanent supportive housing, the specific housing location is known for 57 individuals by using Safe Harbors HMIS data. Additional housing locations may be identified as LTS work continues in 2014.

**Housing Location for Individuals who moved to Permanent Supportive Housing
from January 1, 2013 through March 28, 2014
57 individuals tracked**

Supportive Housing Provider, Location	Number
Existing Homeless Housing	
• Compass Housing Alliance	4
• Catholic Community Services	2
• Downtown Emergency Service Center	6
• Low Income Housing Institute	2
• Plymouth Housing Group	5
New Housing Developments	
• DESC Aurora House	11
• CHS Patrick Place	21
• DESC Cottage Grove	5
Total	57

Lessons Learned and Recommendations

The LTS Work Group benefitted from a collaborative approach. Members included shelter and housing providers and funders. The group met monthly to set priorities, identify the individuals in the LTS Priority Group served by each provider, and make referrals across programs. VAT scores were obtained for residents who appeared likely to qualify for Client Care Coordination units in permanent supportive housing. Care was taken to follow confidentiality requirements. People were successfully housed, primarily in permanent supportive housing, where they were eligible and where services could meet their individual needs.

One key challenge was identifying housing options for extremely low income residents. Many of the long term stayers have limited access to financial resources. Typically they are receiving state assistance in the form of temporary disability which provides \$197 per month or Social Security benefits that total less than \$800 per month. The waiting period for Section 8 housing choice vouchers is very long and currently the wait lists are closed with no date specified for re-opening. The Work Group had to rely on infrequent vacancies in existing homeless housing (most properties are operating at 94% to 100% occupancy) and a few new housing projects coming online.

In addition, providers reported that many clients were difficult to engage in discussing a housing transition, primarily due to mental illness and addiction issues. Some clients were unwilling to prepare for a housing transition until a specific housing opening had been identified. Others were unwilling even when housing was available. Engagement and case management resources within shelters are limited,

and some of the reluctant clients may need more persistent engagement in order to become comfortable with the idea of moving out of shelter.

The LTS Work Group recommends that CEH continue its priority for placing long-term stayers in housing in 2014. There were a total of 813 single adult long-term stayers reported in 2013 (people using emergency shelter for more than 180 days in 2013), an increase from 2012 due in part to the addition of reporting from SHARE shelters. The Work Group has established a 2014 LTS Priority Group of 293 individuals who used shelter more than 540 days during 2012-2013. As many as half of these individuals are carried forward from the 2013 LTS Priority Group; thirty of these people have been housed and are counted in this report.

Shelter providers in the LTS Work Group will continue to engage individuals and identify appropriate placements. Since no new homeless housing for single adults will be leasing up in 2014, other housing options will be essential. To expand housing placements, the Work Group recommends:

- Continue to prioritize the LTS population for new homeless housing development and as existing homeless housing units become available.
- Expand this effort by creating opportunities to move LTS to subsidized public and nonprofit housing that is not set-aside for the homeless, and for rental assistance to access housing that is otherwise unaffordable for extremely low income individuals. This housing would be appropriate for both individuals with limited service needs and individuals who will be receiving behavioral health or other services to help them live independently.
- Identify opportunities to place LTS in new subsidized housing developments coming on line, including senior housing and housing for people with mental illness.
- Increase case management resources to support transition of LTS into housing and onto mainstream services. Transition can be enhanced by increasing case management capacity within shelter and by providing navigation services.

In addition, strategies to place LTS in housing would be enhanced by further research in 2014, including:

- Assess outcomes for people in the 2013 Priority Group who were placed in housing. Some of these individuals were placed in permanent supportive housing that reports to Safe Harbors; others will require extra effort. Information about the amount of service support needed (and provided) at the time of transition to housing and ongoing would be useful.
- Explore intervention options for people residing in shelter between 5 and 10 months, which research suggests could prevent or reduce long-term shelter stays.

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