Supporting Interim Survival Mechanisms for Single Adults in King County

In 2005, our community, along with every county in Washington and most major cities across the country, set the ambitious goal of ending homelessness in 10 years. We should be proud of what our community achieved in the past nine years. We've helped over 36,000 individuals exit homelessness. And our community has demonstrated its compassion by creating the third largest homeless housing stock in the country behind only New York and Los Angeles. Yet, like every other county in Washington, and city in America, we haven't ended homelessness.

We continue to have neighbors who are homeless. They are from every part of the county– 87% are from King County, and 97% from Washington State. These are our neighbors, and we must do even more to house them.

Earlier this year, our Governing Board, Interagency Council, and Consumer Advisory Council adopted the following vision for ending homelessness in King County. We committed to:
- making homelessness a RARE event in King County
- ensuring that for those that who do become homeless it is a BRIEF episode
- ensuring that it's only a ONE-TIME occurrence.

Homelessness is an experience that individuals and families may face for a variety of reasons. The reality of homelessness is extremely challenging for those experiencing it, and it can also present challenges for the community at large. Therefore, we must work together as a whole community-- across sectors and geographic boundaries-- to find solutions that are effective for those experiencing homelessness and that allow our communities to continue to thrive.

From its inception the Committee to End Homelessness has recognized that Interim Survival Mechanisms, such as organized group encampments and parking programs, are a legitimate part of our community's larger response of creating a pathway to housing and ending homelessness. The original Ten-Year Plan to End Homelessness recognized that Interim Survival Mechanisms utilized valuable public assets – such as the volunteerism of the faith community – in a way that would otherwise go untapped.

Since at least 2000, we have seen examples of Interim Survival Mechanisms, specifically some organized tent encampments and organized parking programs that have operated as safe, cost effective and empowering communities for people experiencing homelessness in our community. Our community has also seen other forms of ISMs, such as unauthorized tent encampment and vehicle camping, that have created public health concerns and, at times, dangerous situations for the people utilizing them.

It is a reality that many people are living outdoors, and that our current shelter and housing capacity is insufficient to meet the need of those unsheltered in King County to find safe places to sleep and gather tonight. People living outside are not safe, and many people have died from accidents, illness, and violence as a result of homelessness in King County.

The Committee to End Homelessness recommends inclusion of organized Interim Survival Mechanisms as a part of the response to providing safer options for King County's unsheltered population across King County. CEH has also recommended and is working to increase shelter and housing options within King County (see appendix).

Summary of Interim Survival Mechanisms

An Interim Survival Mechanism is a strategy to provide a short-term support to single adults without children experiencing crisis and living unsheltered in our communities. Interim Survival Mechanisms are intended to provide initial and immediate safety and security, and provide access to supportive services to help people rapidly transition from homelessness to a more stable living environment and connect with employment opportunities.

The Single Adult Advisory Group categorized Interim Survival Mechanism s into two categories: (1) Tent Encampments; (2) Parking. People experiencing homelessness often utilize different interim survival mechanisms to survive and stay safe. Therefore, some of the same people living in tent cities on one night may have accessed a parking program in the past, and may access an encampment in the future.

1: Tent encampments. Within the category of tent encampments, three subcategories were identified:

   A. <u>Organized Group Encampments</u>: These encampments have historically operated under a self-managed model. Organized encampments tend to be larger in size (more than 50 people), are sanctioned (either directly or indirectly) by local government, and usually required to move every 90 days, depending on local codes or ordinance. Organized Encampments operate in partnership with a host property, usually a faith-based organization.

   B. <u>Unsanctioned Group Encampments</u>: Also called "ad-hoc" encampments. These encampments are not sanctioned by local governments, and tend to be smaller in size than organized encampments.

   C. <u>Individual Encampments</u>: This category refers to individual people or couples who sleep in isolation, away from organized and unsanctioned encampments.

2: Parking. Within the category of Parking, three subcategories were identified:

   A. <u>Organized Parking Programs</u>: Organized Parking Programs operate with the blessing of either local government or of the host property owner, and offer people living in their vehicles (vehicular resident) a place to park and some access to services.

   B. <u>Clustered Parking</u>: Some vehicular residents will park in close proximity with other vehicular residents, on the street or in industrial areas where the parking rules allow it, while some businesses allow people to sleep in their parking lot for a period of time.

   C. <u>Individual Parking</u>: This category refers to individual vehicular residents who park their car in isolation, away from organized parking programs or cluster parking. Some individual parkers will develop a relationship with neighbors before parking in a specific area or neighborhood.

The Single Adult Advisory Group focused its discussion and recommendations in this paper on 1A (organized group encampments) and 2A (organized group parking). However, the majority of people sleeping unsheltered each night are not living in organized, sanctioned settings. Despite these, there are ad-hoc tent and parking encampments that operate with their own individual rules, enforcement, and community. Without a safe place to send people to sleep, cleanups of unsanctioned encampments will only continue to move people around. Further analysis is needed to develop recommendations for addressing people living in the remaining subcategories.

Current Local Practices

Over the course of the two meetings, the Interim Survival Mechanism Work Group took a deeper look into two of the Interim Survival Mechanism categories: Organized Encampments, and Organized Parking Programs.

A. Organized Group Encampments: Currently operating programs include Tent Cities 3 & 4, Nickelsville, and Camp Unity. Features of these that have operated to date include:

- o Some municipalities have passed ordinances for encampments (8-9 cities in King County), while others have not
- o Codes of conduct, including non-violence, no alcohol or drugs,
- o Can provide stability that allows people to be successful with moving into housing,
- o Opportunity to increase public education and awareness of homelessness in King County
- o Provides opportunity for public to donate and volunteer
- o Community education and engagement about the encampment and its rules
- o Land has been private and public, often on faith-based land, and has included a state park
- o High level of peer-to-peer support
- o Provides a point of engagement for services such as medical vans and other mobile services
- o Provides residents with 24-hour access, accommodates couple and pets, privacy, at minimal cost

B. Organized Parking Programs: Currently operating programs that are examples of Organized Parking Programs include the Seattle-funded Road to Housing Program; a church hosted-program in Kirkland; a church hosted-program in Kent; and scattered churches. Features of Organized Parking Programs identified:

- o Some programs receive public funding and others do not.
- o Land has been private, such as faith-based groups
- o Seattle's Road to Housing provides case management, access to housing, and flexible client assistance funds
- o Outreach to vehicle residents about their needs and facilitating connections to available resources, either by community advocates, faith-based groups, or services funded by City of Seattle Human Services Department.
- o Access to Services: This can include enrollment in available benefits programs, case management, assistance to help people remain legally safe in their car (registration, tabs, insurance).
- o Provides residents with 24-hour access, accommodates couple and pets, privacy, at minimal cost

Key Elements of an Effective Organized Interim Survival Mechanism Partnership

Different Interim Survival Mechanisms have operated in King County for over a decade, and been utilized by many people. Within the two major Interim Survival Mechanism s described here, Organized Encampments and Organized Parking Programs, the Interim Survival Mechanism Work Group has identified several key elements for an effective response and partnership among host organizations, encampment or parking program residents, neighbors, local government, churches, and businesses. These elements were developed in the context of local experience, not national 'best practice'.

These elements include:

1) Dependable Organization: The Interim Survival Mechanism is operated by an organization with the experience, capacity and legal standing to manage an Interim Survival Mechanism. The organization has a demonstrated ability to maintain commitments to participants, partners, and neighbors. Organizations, host sites, and partnering organizations need to have open lines of communication and develop a mutually beneficial arrangement.

2) <u>Provision of Basic Assets</u>: The most critical asset needed to support an Interim Survival Mechanism is land, made available for a minimum of three months. Other basic assets required as part of an Interim Survival Mechanism include access to transportation, hygiene facilities, access to utilities (water, trash, electricity), and police protection.

3) <u>Pathway to Housing</u>: Residents are provided with opportunities to access housing and supportive services, such as employment, that will move them out of encampments or vehicles and out of homelessness permanently.

4) <u>Management Plan</u>: The Interim Survival Mechanism includes the development of a Management Plan. The Management Plan includes a Code of Conduct, a system for staffing necessary functions such as security, a system of accountability for both violations of the Code of Conduct and a fair grievance process, and methods to provide community education and opportunities for and engagement of the larger community.

5) <u>Community Relationships</u>: The Interim Survival Mechanism includes ongoing community relationship development. This includes local standards to protect the general health and safety of those relying on Interim Survival Mechanisms and their neighbors, neighborhood notification and review of operations, a system for resolving legitimate neighborhood complaints and concerns, and a process to cease operation of the Interim Survival Mechanism if local standards are not maintained.

6) <u>Public Education</u>: Education about the CEH's strategies, including its Crisis Response plan, and the details and role of Interim Survival Mechanisms. Public education should include highlighting promising practices, individual client stories, and next steps for making Interim Survival Mechanisms a successful component of the CEH Crisis Response.

Next Steps

1. <u>Further analysis:</u> discuss, analyze, and recommend action steps for addressing people who are living in unsanctioned group encampments, individual encampments, clustered parking, and individual parking.

2. <u>Development of a Catalog</u>: The Single Adult Task Force is develop a detailed catalog of currently operating Interim Survival Mechanism s, including geographic locations, specific program details, any available outcomes, and available cost data. The catalog should also inventory the existing ordinances across the county. The catalog could also include case studies and resident, host, and neighbor stories.

3. <u>Partner Outreach</u>: Outreach to partners in government, faith community, and business community is needed to find mutually beneficial opportunities. The discussion will center on the how we can mutually support each other in our work. Other partners who should be included in the discussions around supporting ISMs include: faith based organizations, business community, neighbors/property owners, nonprofit organizations, charitable foundations, public and private utilities, waste removal companies, the religious community, trade associations, unions, individual Cities, County, State, Federal, and other governmental entities, such as Public Health, King County Metro, State Departments of Transportation and Commerce, Parking Enforcement, City and County Planning Departments, and police.

4. <u>Wait list</u>: develop a waiting list of potential locations for encampments.

Appendix 1:

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**Update to the Interagency Council for
Strengthening the Crisis Response System
from the Single Adult Work Group**

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Overview:

Every day large numbers individuals and families in our community go unsheltered. At this time our community simply does not have the shelter capacity to meet the need. The goal of the Seattle/King County's Crisis Response System is to help meet the immediate needs of individuals and families who are unsheltered through increasing the capacity to move people quickly from the streets into a setting that provides safety and stability, and where they can begin the process of moving into long-term housing.

 The IAC has approved the following recommendations. This paper summarizes the strategies and potential costs and impacts.

1. Increasing the efficiency of existing shelter resources;
2. Implementing new program components to facilitate either quicker exits off the streets or from shelter;
3. Expanding shelter capacity across the region; and
4. Increasing support and public education for interim survival mechanisms that bring people out of the elements.

Crisis Response Recommendation #1

Create a flexible short-term assistance fund for outreach staff to use to assist unsheltered individuals to move from the street and on to the pathway to housing.

Program Description:

The flexible short-term assistance fund provides a new tool that outreach workers can use to help individuals make the transition from the street into a safer and more stable environment. The intent is to provide outreach staff with the autonomy, authority, and the resources necessary to move people off the streets <u>now</u>. Outreach staff will work together and will function as "housing e entrepreneurs." Funders and providers will work together on the specifics of program design to ensure the development of a robust tool that works for agency staff.

The flexible funds program is person-centered and allows outreach workers to meet the unique needs of the individuals with whom they are working at a given point in time. These funds will also allow the community to leverage existing program resources to produce a greater impact. Assistance can range from rental deposits to help people moving into a new apartment, assistance reconnecting with family in other communities, or help with car repairs or other barriers preventing people from transitioning off of the streets.

The estimated launch date is January 2015.

The flexible funds program will focus on:

1. Providing agency outreach staff with a flexible tool they can use to assist families and individuals;

2. Providing shelter staff with access to funds to assist clients to move quickly from shelter into housing;

3. Providing flexible financial assistance that can be used to emphasize a creative "what will it take" approach to get people off the streets and on a pathway into housing even when there is no expectation of long-term or deep rental assistance; and

4. Close collaboration with the Landlord Liaison Project to identify potential housing options.

> **Estimated Costs**: $500,000 per year for 2 years
>
> **Estimated Impact**:   Avg cost per individual = $4,000.
>   Program goal is 75% stable at 12 months

Crisis Response Recommendation #2

Support long-term shelter stayers to move to more appropriate housing through the provision of rental subsidies and support services.

Program Description:

In 2013 the Single Adult Shelter Task Force identified a cohort of individuals in the shelter system who were utilizing shelters for exceptionally long periods of time. Long-Term Shelter Stayers (LTSS) make up 26% of local shelter users but consume 74% of all shelter bed nights.

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 shelter capacity. The LTS Work Group focused on a cohort of 277 individuals with some of the longest stays, and set a goal to move 100 of them into housing in 2013. The placements were anticipated to be in existing homeless-designated housing units as they became available, and in three new buildings scheduled to open in 2013. Due to delays in project openings, progress was assessed after first quarter 2014: 85 people identified via HMIS were housed, plus 9 additional people identified by housing agencies.

Providing access to rental subsidies and associated services is another tool that providers can use to assist LTS to move out of shelter and into settings that are more appropriate for the individual. This recommendation includes access to rental assistance funds, as well as funds to assist with move-in costs, arrearages and furnishings.

Currently, an opportunity exists to pair this rental subsidy and services program recommendation with a new effort to address the needs of LTS who have significant behavioral health disorders. DESC has submitted a proposal to SAMHSA for a 3-year project that aims to serve and house a total of 135 clients. Housing units have been committed to that project.

While this funding is not a certainty, the model is strong and can help move significant numbers of long-term stayers out of shelter. Therefore, based on feedback from the **LTS Workgroup**, alignment with the DESC/SAMHSA grant proposal is recommended.

More specifically, if SAMHSA funding is awarded, these dollars should be used to fund rent assistance to increase the number of people who can be placed in housing during the term of the DESC/SAMHSA grant. If SAMHSA funds are not awarded, these dollars should fund services, replacing the SAMHSA funds and enabling DESC to place individuals in the housing committed to the grant. The services will assist clients with the transition into housing and linkages to other mainstream services to ensure long-term stability.

This recommendation creates the possibility of leveraging significant federal dollars to achieve greater impacts for clients, as well as moving significant numbers long-term stayers out of the shelter system into more appropriate housing.

Do note that in most cases individuals in this program will have significant barriers to independence and will require long-term housing supports and likely some on-going access to services.

The continued development and implementation of this recommendation will occur with guidance from the LTS Work Group.

Estimated Costs:

$2,000 One-time move-in costs, including staff support, deposits & furnishings
$10,000 Annual rental assistance @ $842 per month (avg of Studio & 1-BR FMRs)

Estimated Impact: An additional 20 LTS moved into housing yearly

Total Recommended Program Budget: $250,000 per year

Crisis Response Recommendation #3

Increase shelter capacity by expanding existing shelters. Maintain existing shelter capacity to prevent a net loss of shelter beds. Focus on a regional response to shelter needs.

Program Description:

Every day large numbers of individuals and families in our community go unsheltered. At this time our community simply does not have the shelter capacity to meet the need. Strategies to make the shelter system more efficient by decreasing lengths of stay, and effective, by focusing on providing individuals a pathway to housing will ultimately allow our community to better meet the needs of unsheltered people. However, such system improvements will take time to execute. Significant emphasis must be placed on maintaining existing shelters to help ensure no net loss of emergency shelter.

In the interim, strategies that increase shelter capacity include:

1. Expanding existing winter and severe weather shelters;
2. Supporting efforts outside of the City of Seattle to increase shelter capacity; and,
3. Supporting faith-based and other community-based efforts to provide shelter.

Recommendations:

1. Prevent net loss of shelter beds by maintaining existing shelter capacity.

2. Focus on expanding existing time-limited winter and severe weather shelters.

3. Support the expansion of existing shelter where additional resources could potentially add shelter beds.

4. Support regional efforts to establish new shelter.

5. Where appropriate (what is definition of appropriate here? Provide funding to enhance services to help create a pathway to housing.

Next Steps:

1. Catalog county-wide summary of opportunities to expand shelter capacity including: existing time-limited shelters, potential new shelters, and opportunities to increase capacity at existing shelters;

2. Identify underutilized community assets that might be able to be used for shelters including vacant properties and government- owned buildings.

    Estimated Costs: Costs vary widely, and are dependent on shelter model, types of services provided, location, etc.

Crisis Response "Recommendation #4:

Increase support and public education for interim survival mechanisms that bring people out of the elements. Include exploration and support for non-traditional shelter and housing models, encampments and car camping that create pathways to housing.

Program Description

Interim Survival Mechanisms are strategies that provide a short-term support to people experiencing crisis and living unsheltered in our communities, and can be grouped into two categories: (1) Tent Encampments and (2) Vehicle Parking, both of which are organized programs operating in the County. In addition, there are unsanctioned encampments and individual encampments. Similarly, there are unsanctioned or clustered parking groups, and individual parkers.

The Single Adult Advisory Group and an Interim Survival Mechanism subgroup have met and discussed plans for increasing support and public education throughout the County for interim survival mechanisms. They have discussed successes and challenges, from the perspectives of encampment and parking programs and host cities, churches, and businesses. Through these discussions, several key elements of effective partnerships for operating organized encampments and parking programs have emerged in draft form. These include the provision of basic assets (such as land and utilities), a management plan, dependable organization for large scale programs, community relationships, public education about organized encampments and parking programs, and pathways to services and housing.

Estimated Costs: Potential costs include land, utilities, and transportation.

Next Steps:

The Single Adult Advisory Group has agreed on the following next steps:

1. Develop a catalog of currently operating organized and unsanctioned encampments and parking programs, with location, program details, outcomes, and costs where available.

2. Develop a document for use in partnership building, community relationship building and public education. The document, already in draft form, will include a summary of Interim Survival Mechanisms, local programs/practices, key elements of effective partnerships, and key stakeholders to involve in partnerships.

3. To successfully sustain existing partnerships, and build new ones, outreach to partners in government, faith community, and business community is needed.

Appendix 2: Single Adult Advisory Group Charter

(This is the Single Adult Workgroup charter)

Purpose Statement

The Single Adult Task Force is a subcommittee of the Interagency Council. To develop and guide the implementation of plan to create pathways to housing for single adults experiencing homelessness. To include the development of robust crisis response strategies to meet the immediate survival needs of unsheltered individuals.

Purpose/Charter Statement:

The Single Adult Task Force is responsible for developing and implementing a plan to address key strategic areas of focus, including setting priorities for investment that result in ending single adult homelessness.

1. Targeted enrollment through Client Care Coordination and other Campaign to End Chronic Homelessness strategies

2. Implement Single Adult Shelter Report Recommendations:
   a. Strengthen the homeless crisis response system through expansion, alignment, and targeting
      - Expand basic shelter for non-parenting adults
      - Increase resources and align services for shelter as point of engagement and access to housing and services
      - Target resources to enhance shelter as pathway to housing, focusing on long-term stayers
   b. Support a more effective homeless crisis response system through policy and system coordination
      - Increase public and private resources for affordable housing
      - Remove barriers to housing
      - Increase political will and advocacy for crisis response
3. Coordinated assessment and referral for single adults

4. Stimulate movement of single adults living in permanent supportive housing who have stabilized to independent living situations (to free up capacity)

5. Integrate Emerging Crisis Response Strategies, including these four priorities:
   A. Rapid Rehousing: Rapid re-housing and Landlord Liaison services
   B. Long-Term Stayers: Support Long Term Shelter Stayers to Move to Stable Housing
   C. Navigators: Link people staying in shelter, encampments, and cars with services, financial assistance
   D. Increase support and public education for interim survival mechanisms. Include exploration and support for non-traditional shelter and housing models, including encampments and car camping that create pathways to housing. Maintain/expand existing shelter beds throughout county.

Additional recommendations to explore at a later date include:

- Explore host homes and shared housing models.
- Outreach and engagement for chronic singles. Coordinate strategies with Seattle's Center City Initiative.
- Diversion from shelter (including immigrant/refugees)

Chair(s): Daniel Malone, DESC and Katy Miller, King County DCHS

Date Established/Projected Completion Date
Established: March 2014   Completion date: TBD

Task Force Members

Last	First	Agency
Co-Chairs		
Malone*	Daniel	DESC
Miller*	Katy	King County DCHS Community Services Division (now with USICH)
Members		
Beaumon	Flo	Catholic Community Services
Benet	Jesse	King County DCHS Mental Health, Chemical Abuse and Dependency Services Division
Capucion*	Jarvis	WHEEL/SHARE, Occupy CEHKC
Eisinger*	Allison	SKCCH
Fajans	Trudi	PHSKC
Gale	Chloe	REACH/ETS
Hall*	Josh	City of Seattle HSD
Ingram*	Joe	Interfaith Task Force on Homelessness
Johnson	Jason	City of Seattle - HSD
Kiser*	MJ	Compass Housing Alliance
Leslie	Emily	City of Bellevue
Kostyack	Maureen	Seattle OH
Larsen	Kelli	Plymouth Housing Group
Lente	Natalie	PHSKC
Plumacher	Sola	City of Seattle - HSD
Putnam*	Mark	CEHKC
Reynolds	Rick	Nightwatch

Roberts*	Steve	Congregations for the Homelessness
Willard	Dave	DSA/MID
Winkel	Kristin	King County Housing Authority
Wolters	Lisa	Seattle Housing Authority
Staff		
Cox	Lorri	PHSKC
Matulionis	Vince	United Way of King County
McGowan	Lauren	UWKC
Powers	Neil	UWKC

Others, including additional provider staff, will be involved in the process through focus groups, etc. as needed.
*(NOTE: Interim Survival Mechanism workgroup was formed with members of the Advisory Group with asterisks above, plus: Bill Kirlin-Hacket (Interfaith Task Force on Homelessness), Tim Harris (Real Change), Colleen Kelly (City of Redmond), Camp Unity, and Michael Ramos (Church Council of Greater Seattle).

Meeting Frequency
Monthly to start

Reports to
IAC

Role for Governing Board / IAC / Stakeholders

- Governing Board: Understand the strategies and recommendations of single adult plan. Guide prioritization of funds among all CEH investment priorities, and help build political will to sustain ambitious goals.
- IAC: Provide across-systems input on work plan implementation.
- Funders group: Determine how to mesh these priorities with other funding priorities.
- Consumer Advisory Council: Feedback and insight to the overall plan.
- Stakeholders, Collaborate on implementing the plan and guide system realignment.