

THE JOURNEY TO HOME

HOW WE'RE SOLVING YOUTH HOMELESSNESS IN KING COUNTY

more than 5,000 youth in King County experience homelessness every year.

HOME: A SAFE PLACE TO LEARN, DREAM AND GROW

Home is where we experience a sense of belonging and security. A home is especially important for young people, who are growing and finding their identity in the world. It is a place for doing homework and learning the life skills needed to become a thriving adult. It is where we create plans for the future and receive support to make them real.

Unfortunately, thousands of young people in Seattle and King County lack a place to call home.

Since 2011, nonprofit organizations, local governments, including the City of Seattle and King County, and private funders have been working together to address the urgent problem of youth homelessness. One of the results is a collaborative plan to prevent youth from becoming homeless and to immediately surround those who are with the support and services they need to leave homelessness permanently behind. This plan is called "The Comprehensive Plan to Prevent and End Youth and Young Adult Homelessness in King County by 2020."

Following is an overview of what a large group of caring adults and youth in King County are doing to help homeless young people quickly find shelter, maintain stable housing, and transition into successful adult lives.

WITH NO PLACE TO CALL HOME, THE SAFETY AND LIVES OF OUR YOUTH ARE AT RISK

YOUNG PEOPLE ALONE ON THE STREETS QUICKLY BECOME VULNERABLE TO CRIMINALS AND OTHER DANGERS.

Too often, a young person on the street meets a gang member, drug dealer, or pimp before encountering a service provider or outreach worker. Young people experiencing homelessness are vulnerable to being coerced into prostitution and other forms of sexual exploitation. Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer (LGBTQ) young people experiencing homelessness face heightened levels of discrimination and violence.

GROWING UP IS HARD, AND EVEN HARDER WITHOUT THE LOVE AND SUPPORT OF FAMILY OR A ROOF OVER YOUR HEAD.

When young people have little support and no safe place to which they can return, education takes a back seat to meeting basic needs like food and a place to sleep. The stigma and logistical challenges of being homeless make getting and maintaining a job difficult. As homeless youth experience trauma on the streets, the lure of alcohol and drugs grows stronger. Their worlds can quickly crumble.

Teenagers and young adults from ages 12 through 25 are still transitioning to adulthood—socially and biologically. Even a very brief period of homelessness can have lasting impacts on a young person and jeopardize his or her future. Longer periods of homelessness put the brakes on their growth.

9% of King County homeless youth have been homeless for many years, and are considered chronically homeless.



50% of King County homeless youth are female.

51% of King County homeless youth are youth of color.

MORE THAN 5,000 YOUTH IN KING COUNTY EXPERIENCE HOMELESSNESS EVERY YEAR

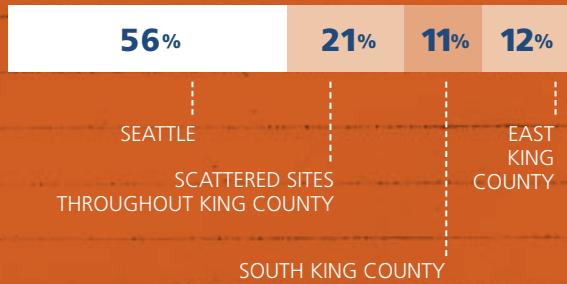
Young people experiencing homelessness come from every zip code in King County. Their circumstances and needs are as different as their individual personalities.

WHERE CAN A YOUNG PERSON FIND A BED AT NIGHT?

On any given night, 428 beds are available for youth experiencing homelessness in King County.

Nearly every night these beds are filled, yet at least 124 youth are still sleeping outside.

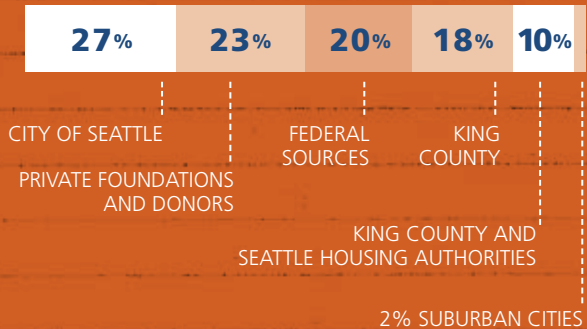
LOCATIONS OF BEDS THROUGHOUT KING COUNTY



WHO FUNDS THE SYSTEM AND SERVICES FOR HOMELESS YOUTH?

We're working together to help kids get home.

Most funding is spent on housing, rental assistance and services.



OUR COMMUNITY IS UNITING TO ENSURE EVERY YOUNG PERSON HAS A PLACE TO CALL HOME

An unprecedented collaboration across King County is putting homeless youth first. We have a regional plan that puts young people at the center and surrounds them with what we know they need: stable housing, encouraging adults, emotional support, education, and opportunities to gain work experience.

THE FACE OF YOUTH HOMELESSNESS

PATRICK, AGE 15

Patrick has a learning disability and a medical disorder and is being raised entirely by his father. His father has received calls from teachers complaining that Patrick acts out and bullies other kids. The two often argue loudly, which sometimes escalates to physical fights. Patrick now sometimes stays overnight at a nearby shelter.

17% of King County homeless youth report a disability.

JAMES, AGE 21

James was kicked out of the house at 17 when his father learned he was gay, and was shunned by relatives and a few friends. He quit high school and has been couch surfing and sleeping in the woods for four years and has developed a drinking problem.

22% of King County homeless youth identify as LGBTQ.

GABRIELA, AGE 18

Gabriela entered foster care when she was 13, living in six different foster homes in five years. Two months before her 18th birthday, she was sent to Juvenile Detention after an altercation at school. She was released the day after her 18th birthday. Ineligible for foster care because of her detention and without family support, she's been couch surfing and sometimes staying in shelters while trying to finish high school.

PRIORITY ACTIVITIES OF AND

THE ACTIVITIES

PREVENTION AND EARLY INTERVENTION



STRENGTHEN FAMILY REUNIFICATION INTERVENTIONS

HOUSING



ADDRESS REGIONAL AND NEED-BASED HOUSING GAPS

OFFER RENTAL ASSISTANCE WITH SUPPORTS

SUPPORTIVE SERVICES



CREATE CLEAR PATHS TO EMPLOYMENT

CREATE HOUSING STABILITY TEAMS

THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN TO PREVENT AND END YOUTH AND YOUNG ADULT HOMELESSNESS BY 2020

THE NEED

Strengthening family relationships and reuniting homeless youth with their families, when it is safe, is one of the most successful exit strategies from homelessness, as well as an important means of preventing it.

Major gaps exist in housing for homeless youth in South King County. Additionally, youth with active drug and alcohol use and mental health concerns are ineligible for many housing programs, yet without stable housing they cannot address these issues.

Moving from foster care or a housing program to living independently can be an abrupt change and financially overwhelming, which can result in a return to homelessness. Youth need support to make this transition in a way that builds their independent living skills, as well as their savings, over time.

Becoming successfully independent requires more than a bed. It requires skills, education, and job opportunities. Homeless youth in King County told us they need integrated employment and housing programs that connect them to internships and jobs.

Our goal is to make homelessness rare, short, and a one-time occurrence. Unfortunately, over 25% of youth who exit homelessness become homeless again within two years.

OUR PLAN

Leverage existing programs and build capacity across our system to provide in-home support around family conflict. If we succeed, more families like Patrick's will receive support to create a healthier home environment or shorten the duration of homelessness for young people.

Establish emergency shelter for 18- to 25-year-olds in South King County and increase housing for youth with mental health, substance abuse, and other needs. If we succeed, more young people like James will be connected with housing and services that can set them on a path toward stability.

Establish a gradually decreasing rental subsidy for youth, with case management and a safety net available when more support is needed. If we succeed, more youth like Gabriela will make successful transitions from foster care to independence without experiencing homelessness.

Create and support internship and employment programs, connecting youth to education, hands-on training and living-wage employment. If we succeed, more young people like Gabriela and James will have an easier path to skills-development opportunities and jobs, which are important to stepping out of homelessness.

Pool community-based crisis resources to ensure the stability of youth leaving shelters and transitional housing. Offer case management and flexible funds for rental application fees and one-time utility payments. If we succeed, more youth like James will remain stable and independent once they've moved into permanent housing.

SYSTEM-LEVEL STRATEGIES

We also need to make a number of fundamental, system-level changes that will help our community succeed at preventing and ending youth and young adult homelessness in King County.



STRENGTHEN DATA COLLECTION AND EVALUATION

We need to better understand the unique needs of homeless youth in King County and the types and effectiveness of the services and interventions they receive. Improving how we capture, share, and use data will guide appropriate changes to the system serving homeless youth and young adults, sharpen investment decision-making, and drive continuous improvements.



BUILD CAPACITY OF PROVIDERS TO RECONNECT YOUTH WITH THEIR FAMILIES WHEN IT IS SAFE AND APPROPRIATE

Connecting youth with their families is critical to ending youth homelessness. Providing additional training and other support to service providers will ensure they are skilled to use family reunification when it is a safe option.



PREVENT YOUTH FROM EXITING INTO HOMELESSNESS FROM STATE SYSTEMS OF CARE

Too many young people leaving a foster home or juvenile detention facility fall into homelessness. Working across systems will create supportive, successful transitions.



FOCUS EXPLICITLY ON DISPROPORTIONALITY

The percentage of homeless youth who are people of color and/or identify as LGBTQ is disproportionate to the general youth population. We need to be sure that all interventions and service providers in King County respond appropriately and effectively to these youth.

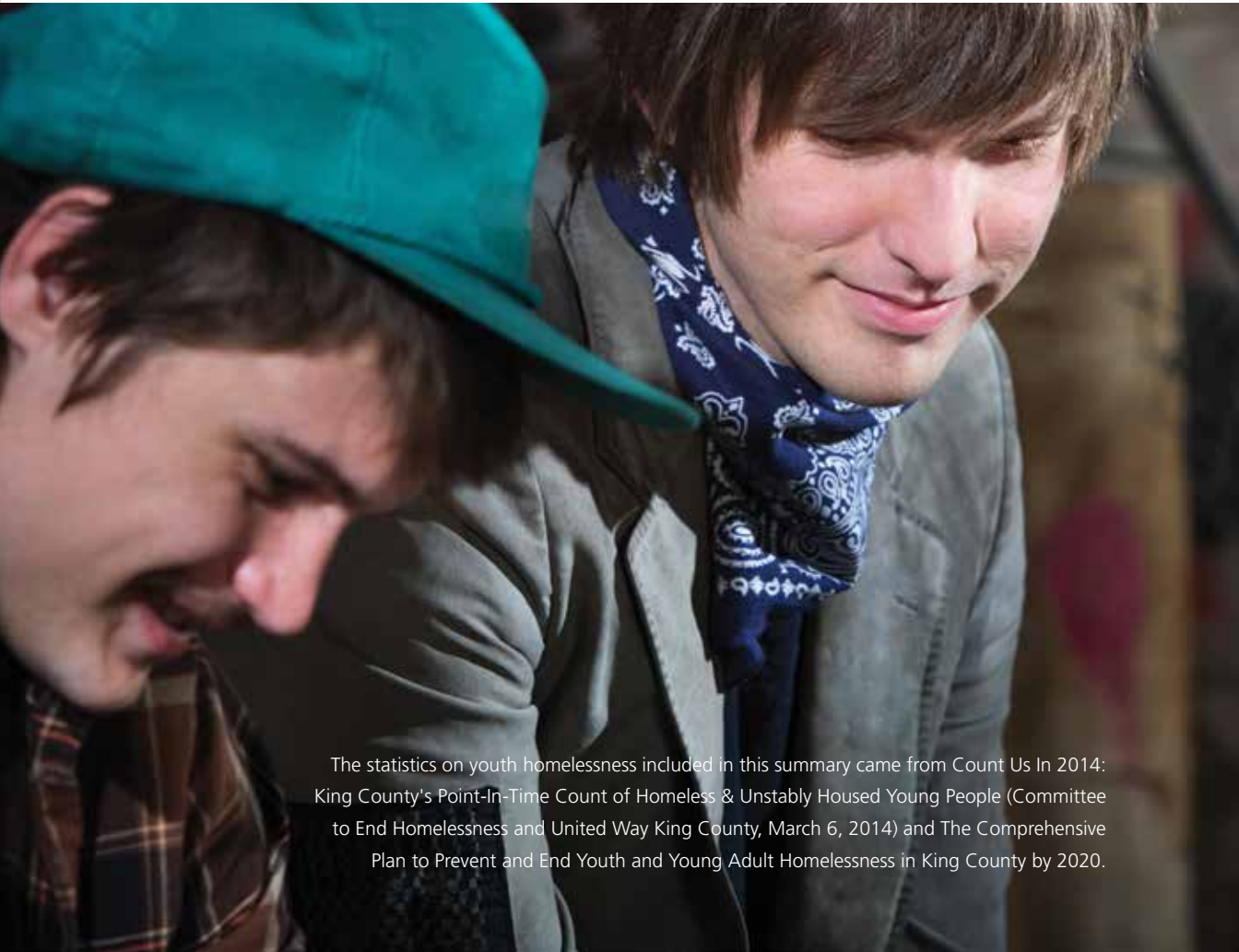
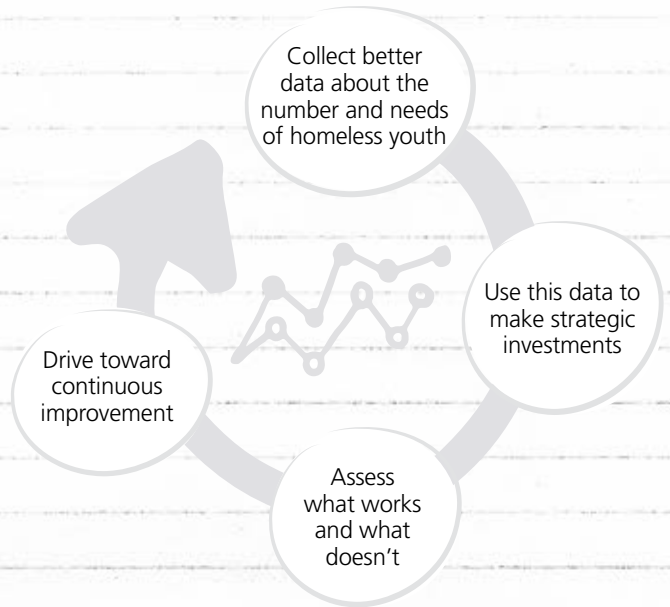


ALIGN AND CULTIVATE FUNDING

Youth homelessness is a community issue requiring a mix of public and private funding aligned toward the interventions and strategies that work. The Comprehensive Plan offers a clear guide for local, state, and federal investments.

WE'RE USING DATA TO MAKE SMARTER DECISIONS

We are capturing more accurate information about the needs and vulnerabilities of individual youth seeking services. As we implement the Comprehensive Plan, we will continuously ask the following questions to drive our decision-making: What do young people really need? Which programs are working and which aren't? What changes must we all make to improve how we help youth and families? What investments will result in the greatest impact?



The statistics on youth homelessness included in this summary came from Count Us In 2014: King County's Point-In-Time Count of Homeless & Unstably Housed Young People (Committee to End Homelessness and United Way King County, March 6, 2014) and The Comprehensive Plan to Prevent and End Youth and Young Adult Homelessness in King County by 2020.

SOLVING YOUTH HOMELESSNESS IS NOT ONLY THE RIGHT THING TO DO BUT ALSO THE SMART THING TO DO

WE ARE MEASURING SUCCESS. WHEN OUR PLAN SUCCEEDS:



MORE YOUTH AT RISK OF HOMELESSNESS WILL REMAIN SAFELY WITH THEIR FAMILIES.



FEWER YOUNG PEOPLE WILL BECOME HOMELESS AND THOSE THAT DO WILL EXPERIENCE IT FOR SHORTER PERIODS.



FEWER YOUTH WILL RETURN TO HOMELESSNESS AFTER SUCCESSFULLY EXITING IT.



OVERREPRESENTATION OF YOUTH OF COLOR AND LGBTQ YOUTH AMONG THE HOMELESS POPULATION WILL DECLINE.

JOIN US IN THE EFFORT TO PREVENT AND END YOUTH AND YOUNG ADULT HOMELESSNESS

LET'S GIVE EVERY YOUNG PERSON IN KING COUNTY THE FOUNDATION FROM WHICH THEY CAN BE SUCCESSFUL—A PLACE TO CALL HOME.

4C Coalition | Asian Counseling and Referral Service | Atlantic Street Center | Auburn Youth Resources | Ballmer Family Giving Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation | Building Changes | Campion Advocacy Fund | Casey Family Programs Catholic Community Services of Western Washington | Center for Children & Youth Justice | City of Seattle | Cocoon House Columbia Legal Services | Committee to End Homelessness in King County | Community Psychiatric Clinic | Compass Housing Alliance Consejo Counseling and Referral Services | Friends of Youth | King County | King County Housing Authority | King County Library System King County public school districts | King County United for Youth | LGBTQ Allyship | Lifelong AIDS Alliance | Medina Foundation Mockingbird Society | NAVOS | Neighborcare Health—45th Street Homeless Youth Clinic | New Horizons Ministries Peace for the Streets by Kids from the Streets | POCAAN/ Communities Uniting Rainier Beach | Pride Foundation | Queer Youth Space Raikes Foundation | Raynier Institute & Foundation | Renton Youth Source | ROOTS Young Adult Shelter | Schultz Family Foundation Seattle Housing Authority | Seattle Public Libraries | Southeast Youth and Family Services | Street Youth Ministries | Teen Feed The Northwest Network of Bisexual, Trans, Lesbian, and Gay Survivors of Abuse | The Seattle Foundation | Therapeutic Health Services Thomas V. Giddens Jr. Foundation | U.S. Dept. of Health & Human Services | Union Gospel Mission | United Indians of All Tribes Foundation United Way of King County | University District Youth Center | Urban League | Valley Cities Counseling & Consultation Washington Asian Pacific Islander Community Services | Washington State | YMCA of Greater Seattle | YouthCare YWCA of Seattle, King, Snohomish Counties

Learn more about supporting the Comprehensive Plan to Prevent and End Youth and Young Adult Homelessness in King County by visiting kingcounty.gov/youthhomelessness or contacting us at cehkc@cehkc.org

Cover image by Mike Kane, courtesy YouthCare