

The Housing and Behavioral Health Advisory Board Annual Report

According to resolution 33-18 the Housing and Behavioral Health Advisory Board will submit report containing recommendations for funding priorities to the Board of County Commissioners (BOCC) by January 31 of each calendar year.

The Housing and Behavioral Health Advisory Board (HBHAB) started August 22, 2018. This is the third annual report that will attempt to summarize the work that has been done throughout 2020, to identify gaps, and to recommend priorities for the next year.

Summary:

In 2020, COVID-19 has had a significant impact on the homeless and behavioral health crisis response system, including the loss of shelter beds due to social distancing requirements combined with increased costs resulting from moving to 24-hour operations and a reduction in the use of volunteers, as examples. In the behavioral health sector, many agencies have had to implement new methods of interacting with clients such as telehealth and strategizing on how to respond to individuals and communities that are feeling the increased stresses of stay-at-home orders, feelings of isolation and economic down turns.

The Covid-19 response has resulted in increased funding sources to local communities. A total of \$2,367,003 dollars has been committed to the Mason County Homeless Crisis Response System in response to Covid-19. The highlights of this new funding are as follows:

- **C19 Outbreak EHG:** As part of the planning and preparing for isolation and quarantine beds for people experiencing homelessness and to help increase shelter bed capacity due to a loss of beds from physical distancing this grant has added 20 beds to Community Lifeline. The installation of a fire suppression system will allow Community Lifeline to provide year-round emergency shelter operations.
- **Eviction Rent Assistance Program:** Over 100 households throughout Mason County have been provided rental assistance to avoid eviction.
- **Shelter Program Grant:** This grant provides construction funds that has allowed Community Lifeline to complete interior renovations to add increase the female bed count from 7 to 15. It will also allow the operational funding so Community Lifeline can remain open year-round to serve single adults.
- **CARES ACT Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG-CV):** This grant will expand non-congregate emergency shelter capacity by adding up to 30 beds. Currently there are 7 units of family shelter with 20 households on the wait list impacting over 60 individuals. Single parents with one minor child make up 75% of the households on the wait list and these new emergency shelters will provide a safe place for these families.

In the Behavioral Health Sector, Mason County Public Health has partnered with community organizations on grant applications. A following is a summary of the new programs funded by these collaborative efforts:

- **HRSA RCORP:** Rural Community Opioid Response Program- Mason County Public Health was awarded \$1,000,000 over 3 years, in partnership with Peninsula Community Health Services, North Mason Regional Fire Authority and Mason Health to further the community work around substance use recovery through developing Peer Support services.
- **LEAD Program:** Law Enforcement Assistant Diversion, became operational in August. This grant will go on arrests first and then social contact referrals second. Social contact referrals will come from law enforcement and community partners. Mason County has 16

law violations that will constitute an individual as program eligible. There will be a priority for substance use disorder and mental health and for those experiencing extreme poverty.

- **Criminal Justice Treatment Account (CJTA):** The Criminal Justice Treatment Account (CJTA) began in 2002 to aid those involved in the criminal justice system gain access to substance use disorder treatment. Specifically, this funding was dedicated to support defendants with a substance use disorder, including those enrolled in a drug court program. The additional funding supports a peer case management and mentorship program, through Northwest Resources. This is a one-time funding to the end of July 2021 with the goal to make this a sustainable position.
- **Jail re-entry and MAT program:** In partnership with Olympic Health and Recovery Services (OHRS), Mason County Public Health has worked to implement a shared peer position, that is helping incarcerated individuals start MAT as well as connecting them to recovery support services upon re-entry. The work being done in the Mason County jail is funded by TST dollars (.5). This position is supplementing other work in Mason County (LEAD, Trueblood) and is funded by OHRS (.5).

The Housing and Behavioral Health Advisory Board presents the following priority recommendations to the Board of County Commissioners for the 2021 year:

1. **Housing**
 - a. Reduce the number of people living in poverty
 - b. Increase affordable housing units in Mason County especially for single adults
2. **Behavioral Health**
 - a. Reduce the number of people that are in the criminal justice system, especially the jail, due to behavioral health conditions
 - b. Use the fund balance in the TST to create behavioral health dedicated supportive housing units

Introduction

As many people will remember, 2020 has been an interesting year that has brought many challenges with the Covid-19 pandemic. The board did not meet from March through May 2020 due to meeting restrictions during the Covid-19 pandemic. Meetings resumed through Zoom in June 2020. While many positive outcomes have resulted from the pandemic and additional funding, the necessary focus and response has limited the ability of organizations to fully implement the recommendations from 2019. COVID-19 has had a significant impact on the homeless crisis response system, including the loss of shelter beds due to social distancing requirements combined with increased costs resulting from moving to 24-hour operations and a reduction in the use of volunteers, as an example. It appears these impacts will continue into and through 2021. In the homeless sector, the emergency shelters have had to make many adaptations and have risen to meet the challenges head on. For example, Community Lifeline staffed up and moved to 24/7 operations serving three meals a day. Two-years ago they operated as a temporary cold-weather shelter whose opening was temperature dependent. The Covid-19 pandemic has also brought several new grants to local communities to prepare for and respond to the pandemic as well as some new grants that were already in the works such as the Shelter Grant Program. The pandemic has exposed the vulnerability of congregate shelters and forced communities to work toward finding alternative sheltering solutions that are non-congregate and offer trauma informed care approaches.

The Housing and Behavioral Health Advisory Board is tasked with several areas from identifying gaps, prioritizing funds, making funding recommendations, and evaluating effectiveness of the programs. A summary of the recommendations from 2019 and the actions taken in 2020 by the Advisory Board are described in the tables below:

1. Funding prioritization and gap identification which can be addressed utilizing available funding sources:

a. Behavioral Health

Gap / Prioritization Identified	Result
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Therapeutic Courts- Research efficiency of court costs to # served, ROI 2. County Departments-partnering with other providers, what are the community needs 3. Community Behavioral Health Tx & Support Service integration-assess if Medicaid funds are being used for services verses TST and utilize TST more for projects that cannot be funded by Medicaid (i.e. BHR for school services. Check on ESD 114 BH treatment services offered in N. Mason) 4. Fee for service vs block grant- capitated costs to actual costs- Fee for Service for grants 5. Leveraging funding, not using Full-time positions but share between agencies 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Pending 2. Mason County Public Health has partnered with community organizations such as non-profits, Hospital, and Federally Qualified Health Clinics on grant applications. 2 grants were awarded that foster relationships and care coordination among these groups. 3. Opted not to renew contract and further investigate behavioral health needs and gaps within school districts 4. Under consideration 5. MC Public Health is co-funding a BH position in the jail to coordinate services upon reentry

b. Housing

Gap / Prioritization Identified	Result
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Affordable Housing 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Letter of support to ROC Northwest/Northwest Cooperative Development for a loan application to help make the Evergreen Mobile Estates on Blevins Rd. a residential owned cooperative development that has potential for additional affordable housing.

2. Request for Proposals (RFP): Review, evaluate, score, and provide funding recommendations to Mason County Community Services to ensure funding is prioritized in the areas of greatest need:

Affordable Housing: The Advisory Board recommended to award funding to Quixote Communities to aid in the development and construction of the Veteran Tiny Home Village. One of the goals has been to increase housing especially for single adults. The tiny home

village plans to create 30 tiny homes for single veterans and open September 2021.

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic several new grants became available to plan, prepare for, and respond to Covid-19. Many of these grants have had tight turnaround times and the Advisory Board has been highly responsive to make funding recommendations under these circumstances. The table below summarizes all the housing/homeless crisis response system grants. An asterisk is placed next to the grants that are specific to Covid-19 response.

Grant	Total Amount	Annual Amount	Start Date	End Date	Renewable	Agency
Local Document Recording Fees (2163)	\$479,000	\$479,000	7/1/2020	6/30/2020	Yes	CH, CL, SFC, TPSA
Consolidated Homeless Grant	\$224,100	\$224,100	7/1/2020	6/30/2020	Yes	Crossroads Housing
Housing and Essential Needs (HEN)	\$998,761	\$998,761	7/1/2020	6/30/2020	Yes	Community Action Council
C19 Outbreak EHG*	\$505,405		3/15/2020	12/31/2020	No	CL, Crossroads, I&Q Needs
Eviction Rent Assistance Program (ERAP)*	\$500,876		8/1/2020	12/31/2020	Unknown	CH, SFC, NMR
Shelter Program Grant	\$344,428	\$114,809	8/1/2020	6/30/2023	Unknown	Community Lifeline
CARES ACT ESG-CV R1*	\$165,874	\$82,937	7/1/2020	6/30/2022	Yes	CH, SFC
CARES ACT ESG-CV R2*	\$850,420	\$425,210	10/1/2020	9/30/2022	Unknown	CH, SFC, TPSA
Diversion / CE Pilot	\$110,000	\$110,000	7/1/2020	6/30/2021	Unknown	direct award to CH
SUBTOTAL	\$4,178,864	\$2,434,817				

3. Set community and program goals and ensure alignment of strategic plans:

a. Housing:

- i. The Mason County 5-year Homeless Crisis Response Plan is used to guide funding decisions
- ii. Given the number of new grants, all efforts are made to braid funding where possible and fill gaps to work collectively as a response system. For example, rather than emergency shelters operating in silo's we are working toward a systems approach to maximize bed capacity, especially during the pandemic where physical restrictions have made this challenging.

b. Behavioral Health:

- i. The original priorities from the treatment sales tax remain and include increasing behavioral health access, reducing recidivism, decreasing the number of individuals that cycle through the jail and hospital.
- ii. Mason County Public Health has received additional grants for the opioid crisis response, LEAD (law enforcement assisted diversion) and cooperative grant that increase behavioral health peers in the jail and medical centers. All efforts to align priorities and support efforts are made with the different funding sources.

- c. The Advisory Board updated the Resolution and By-laws to open membership to include the federally recognized tribes to promote cooperative efforts throughout Mason County.

4. Examine and evaluate the identification of goals, performance measures, strategies, and costs and evaluation of progress towards established goals:

- a. The Advisory Board hears presentations from community agencies that are directly funded or impact the housing and behavioral health crisis response systems. The agencies share data around inputs, outputs and outcomes as well as discuss some of the gaps, successes and challenges to help develop strategies for system improvements.
- b. The PIT Count identified 111 unsheltered homeless individuals with 15 identified veterans and 5 from the Belfair area. These results are consistent from previous years. The single adult household represents the largest proportion and supports the need for more housing that caters to the single adult.
- c. Coordinated Entry:
While the number of unsheltered individuals has been relatively consistent from the Point in Time Count the past three years the number of households experiencing a housing crisis has seen a large decline as evidenced by the number that have been connected to Coordinated Entry. The table below reports the number of households seeking prevention assistance and those that are literally homeless. It is interesting to note that over the past three years Coordinated Entry has improved in outreach efforts and has more agencies engaged in making referrals. The reporting dates are from July 1 through June 30 of each year.

	2017 - 2018	2018 - 2019	2019 - 2020
Prevention Assistance (county)	152	83	75
<i>Belfair Area (subset)</i>	<i>49</i>	<i>17</i>	<i>12</i>
Literally Homeless (County)	353	241	172
<i>Belfair Area (subset)</i>	<i>103</i>	<i>43</i>	<i>20</i>

During the past three years, the number of households requesting prevention assistance and that are literally homeless has declined 49%. Homeless prevention refers to households that have a pay or vacate notice and literally homeless refers to households that are living in the following situations unsheltered, in a vehicle, RV not meant for habitation or abandoned building.

5. Development and/or approval of policies and procedures related to the request for proposal process, contract monitoring, performance, and corrective actions.

- a. The Advisory Board discussed options to measure contract performance and suggested this is done mid-contract to gauge progress and help the board in making future funding decisions. The Advisory Board was in favor of inviting subcontractors into the meetings throughout the year and create a process to send letters reflecting the good work being done in the community.

6. Define opportunities to better manage services and expected outcomes.

- a. One of the recommendations from the report last year was to "Evaluate how Coordinated Entry (CE) is working in the community to inform any shifts in how CE operates within the homeless crisis response system within the County."

- i. The Advisory Board listened to presentations from local agencies and reviewed a proposal for the Coordinated Entry System. As a result, the board recommended changes to the Coordinated Entry process that centralized more oversight with the lead agency and provided more outreach (service) to all parts of Mason County. As a result, households from Belfair and Hoodspoint have been housed as part of the Rapid Rehousing program where none had in the previous 18 months.
- b. Community Lifeline reported that since they have been operating 24/7 they have seen general health improvements and many more individuals supporting each other in recovery from people staying in the adult emergency shelter. More people are receptive to housing. Community Lifeline is reporting 16 people have become housed in the first quarter of fiscal year 2021 (July – September).

Recommendations:

The H&BHAB continues to acknowledge the complexity of the action needed to end homelessness and will work in coordination with other planning efforts in the City and County to address issues of affordable housing and homelessness. The Board recognizes the need for innovative efforts in these areas, staff development within the non-profit sector, and partnership with the private sector to aid in the supply of housing to keep pace with population growth and is available to various income levels.

The H&BH Advisory Board offers the following recommendations for the Board of County Commissioners to consider for 2021.

General Recommendations:

Goal: a) Reduce the number of people living in poverty in Mason County; b) Improve general operations of the crisis response system

- Facilitate enhanced involvement from Economic Development Council, WorkSource, Economic Development Council and regional WorkForce Councils to expand job opportunities through the recruitment of industries that offer high paying jobs. Stimulating job growth may indirectly increase much needed housing development.
- Set aside funding for research projects such as program return on investment (program effectiveness) and current housing vacancy rate.
- Consider fee for service contracts rather than block funding where applicable
- Request for Proposal Process
 - Consider renewal of critical Homeless Crisis Response System grants such as emergency shelters, HEN and rapid rehousing programs along with state mandated systems like coordinated entry.
 - Consider a bed-night calculation to determine funding adult emergency shelters
 - Continue with 2-year funding cycles

Housing & Homelessness

Goal: Increase the number of affordable housing units in Mason County

Behavioral Health agencies and Homeless Service Providers both speak to the lack of housing stock as the single barrier to recovery and reducing homelessness. The following recommendations are focused on the problem of limited housing stock:

- Guide the Housing Authority Board to a sustainable model that can flourish and add more supportive housing units in Mason County especially for single adults

- Maximizing income from developer fees
- Generating net cash flow from operations of new properties
- Creating a sustainable pipeline of tax credit syndications and re-syndications
- Pursue additional strategic dispositions to increase affordable housing stock
- Apply for state capital budget funds to create new housing
- Request quarterly briefings from the Housing Authority Board Chair on progress
- Apply for a Housing Trust Fund grant: the above actions position an entity in Mason County to submit a competitive Housing Trust Fund application. Housing Authorities are routinely an entity type that is awarded Housing Trust fund grants.
- Enact HB 1590 allowing a local sales and use tax for affordable housing to be imposed by a councilmanic authority
- Leverage funds that can be used for capital projects such as HB 1406, 2060 local document recording fees and Treatment Sales Tax fund balance to support a supportive housing project
- Continue to evaluate how to best preserve and expand affordable housing in Mason County
- Explore housing code amendments that will create more housing options that increase density in otherwise areas designated for single family homes (e.g. duplex/triplex units on corner lots, ADU's, provisions for tiny homes, etc.)
- Foster relationships with the City of Shelton on housing comprehensive plans and develop complimentary strategic plans for affordable housing
- Encourage the Economic Development Council to prioritize housing developer recruitment in Mason County.
- Encourage options that will recruit development in Urban Growth Areas and work with the Planning Commission to support these actions
 - Develop pre-approved housing stock plans to accelerate projects and reduce expenses including innovative prefabricated home solutions
 - Increase the number of ADU's (Accessory Dwelling Units) throughout the county
 - Continue to reduce permit times and other options that make building attractive to developers
 - Review the GMA/Comp Plan mandate that the housing element "make adequate provision for" housing for all economic segments. Consider options to enforce this mandate, and encourage the jurisdiction develop and adopt an "Affordable Housing Incentive Plan" which the RCW provides for
- Develop or review a strategic plan that will support the infrastructure needed for housing development

Behavioral Health

Goal: a) Reduce the number of people that are in the criminal justice system, especially the jail, due to behavioral health conditions

- Support efforts for Managed Care Organizations (MCO's) to provide additional resources beyond required minimums.
- Support legislation that allows Medicaid to continue while a person is incarcerated.
- Continue to support a portion of the Treatment Sales Tax funds to help pay for housing for people that are part of a coordinated mental health or substance use disorder treatment program. Currently 5% of the fund goes toward this.
- Support sustainable funding for the LEAD program and True Blood program
- Support a behavioral health navigator position in the Sheriff's department

- Use the fund balance of the Treatment Sales Tax to secure behavioral health supportive housing
- Support the expansion of diversion opportunities to reduce the number of people incarcerated due to behavioral health conditions
- Continue to reinforce the need for SUD and mental health peers throughout the behavioral health system of care
- Examine the percent of offenders by geographic area to inform strategies and supportive services reach areas of high need in Mason County
- Expand safe place options for youth
- Assist in the coordination of information from the different behavioral health meetings occurring in Mason County (e.g. EOC Social Services Task Force, OHRS Crisis Response System of Care, Board of Health)
- Continue to focus on supporting a complete system of care, by filling gaps in the criminal justice system, crisis support system and the emergency response system, while encouraging and facilitating coordination between each entity to ultimately reduce recidivism and high utilization of each system
- Consider using the Treatment Sales Tax to permanently fund a Public Health position to coordinate the Mason County Behavioral Health System of Care (i.e. many of the activities, grants, contracts and programs listed in this report and strengthen Mason County Public Health as the backbone organization in the community)