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Point-in-Time Homeless Count for 2021

EVERETT, Wash., January 8, 2021—The annual Point-In-Time Homeless Count is an important tool in the community’s efforts to assess the number of homeless individuals and families in Snohomish County, as well as to determine ways of ending homelessness. The count determines how many people are staying in emergency shelters, transitional housing, and on the street or other places not meant for habitation. During these challenging times, Snohomish County and its partners are working hard to protect everyone in the community against the spread of COVID-19, including people who are experiencing homelessness.

In an effort to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in communities, and address the challenges of conducting a Point-In-Time count of unsheltered homeless persons during a pandemic, the Department of Housing and Urban Development is allowing local communities to request an exception to conduct the unsheltered count for 2021. Washington State also issued a notice that the State is not requiring an unsheltered count in 2021 as is usually required.

Snohomish County’s request was approved by HUD on December 28, 2020. However, the County will still partner with local human service providers to complete a sheltered count of all individuals experiencing homelessness later this month.

Safety was the main reason the County sought the request. Not only the safety of the local non-profit staff and hundreds of volunteers that are critical partners in our annual unsheltered count but also the safety of those experiencing homelessness.

Typically, Snohomish County relies on almost 400 volunteers and nonprofit staff to complete our count. Organizing and training that many volunteers is not possible given current COVID-19 restrictions. Due to the additional challenges brought on by the pandemic, our local nonprofit providers which provide substantial support to the Count are currently operating at or near capacity due to the pandemic. If nonprofit staff were redeployed to conduct the Count, not only would it curtail the delivery of critical pandemic-related services but could exacerbate the existing public health crisis.

During the 2020 count, 673 individuals reported they were unsheltered. Another 459 persons were without a permanent place to stay and were temporarily housed in emergency shelter or transitional housing.

Snohomish County will complete a sheltered count using our established methodology as required and will utilize our robust coordinated entry data in our Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) to gather critical data regarding the needs of people experiencing unsheltered homelessness in our community.

The PIT Count is used to inform priorities for federal, state, and local funding, and it helps identify trends and craft solutions for addressing the needs of vulnerable individuals and families. However, the analysis and overall trend data are one of many tools utilized by the Snohomish County Partnership to End Homelessness to track progress toward goals to prevent, reduce, and end homelessness. Great progress has been made in the collection, analysis, and evaluation of local homeless data. Some of that work is available through public dashboards which may be explored at <https://public.tableau.com/profile/SnoCoHMIS#!/>

More information on the PIT history and methodology may be found on the Human Services Point in Time Count webpage: <https://www.snohomishcountywa.gov/2857/Point-In-Time>.

The **Snohomish County Human Services Department** helps all persons meet their basic needs and develop their potential by providing timely, effective human services and building community.

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