

# State Homeless Crisis Response Systems

## Summary

The response to homelessness in Washington consists of overlapping federal, local and private efforts with the Department of Commerce playing a coordinating role. There are 6 federal continuums of care (CoCs) consisting of the five largest urban counties and a Balance of State CoC made up of the remaining 34 medium and small counties. In addition, every county, and some cities, have access to state and local funds dedicated to addressing homelessness.

## Background

Most recently updated by the passage of the Homeless Emergency Assistance and Rapid Transition to Housing Act of 2009 (HEARTH Act), the CoC planning process occurs within designated geographies such as cities, counties, or as a "Balance of State." Within each CoC, cross-sector partners come together to apply for federal funding for homelessness intervention projects including both housing and services. The federal government awards funding every two years. As a condition of receiving the funding, assistance projects must comply with mandated reporting and service delivery requirements such as the Point-in-Time Count homeless census requirement, Coordinated Entry for program application and matching, and others.

This federal framework overlaps with a statewide approach established by legislation ([43.185C RCW](#)) in 2005. The Legislature tasked counties with developing plans to end homelessness and adopted the document recording fee ([RCW 36.22.250](#), "DRF") as a key funding source. In addition, a portion of DRF was held by the state for homeless assistance



## Key numbers

**156,624**

People experiencing homelessness statewide in July 2024 (Snapshot)

**31,040**

People experiencing homelessness statewide in January 2024 (PIT)

**6**

CoCs in Washington

**34**

County-level response systems

## Agency contact

**Oliver Crain**

DEPUTY MANAGING DIRECTOR

Homelessness Assistance Unit

[Oliver.Crain@commerce.wa.gov](mailto:Oliver.Crain@commerce.wa.gov)



grants to counties, youth homelessness grants and programs, landlord mitigation and subsidies for permanent housing with or without services.

For the funds managed by Commerce, many require compliance with federal mandates and further prescribe evidence-based best practices and policies to reduce homelessness.

Thirty-four local governments receive all relevant federal, state, and local funds and, [following state law](#), prepare 5-year homeless housing strategic plans that outline their goals, strategies, timelines and performance measures related to eliminating homelessness. Commerce provides guidance and technical assistance on the local homeless housing plans. Counties then implement their plans to deliver homeless assistance and housing services, or contract with local nonprofits to do the same. For most of its youth homelessness assistance grants and programs Commerce contracts directly with the service provider.

## Total funding and services provided, SFY 2024

Service type	Beds	Total expenditures	Cost per day per household	Cost per successful exit per household
Rapid Rehousing	NA	\$100,456,462	\$55	\$24,962
Emergency Shelter	12,933	\$255,156,474	\$96	\$47,338
Transitional Housing	3,435	\$31,751,221	\$54	\$28,649
Homeless Prevention	NA	\$107,996,396	\$44	\$11,706
Permanent Supportive Housing	12,660	\$224,079,350	\$59	\$332,704
Other Permanent Housing	4,718	\$38,584,513	\$46	\$106,210
Street Outreach	NA	\$26,548,141	\$7	\$12,009
Services Only	NA	\$33,502,199	\$15	\$18,922
Coordinated Entry	NA	\$9,516,658	\$1	\$865
Day Shelter	NA	\$12,025,760	\$9	\$42,796
Safe Haven	76	\$2,521,509	\$115	47,576
Other, Unknown, NA	NA	\$38,881,255	\$20	\$21,487
<b>Totals</b>	<b>NA</b>	<b>\$881,019,938</b>	<b>NA</b>	<b>NA</b>

This table is a component of the [2024 Homelessness in Washington Report](#).

## Current unmet needs

Detailed in the Executive summary of the [2024 Homelessness in Washington Report](#).

## Key performance outputs and outcomes

[Commerce has a website](#) dedicated to tracking homeless crisis response system performance indicators.

## Key challenges ahead (detailed further in State Homeless Plan)

- Addressing the complex needs of highly visible individual experiencing unsheltered homelessness and concurrent mental health and/or substance use disorders in today's resource constrained environment.
- Continuing to implement evidence-based best practices for homelessness assistance in light of shifting federal policies and local priorities.
- Fostering statewide alignment and coordination between federal, state, local and private partners.
- Delivering high-quality services in partnership with a depleted workforce plagued by turnover.