

# Home Again

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*A 10-year plan to end homelessness in  
Portland and Multnomah County*

## 2005 Status Report

The outcomes of the 10-Year Plan to End Homelessness have exceeded many of our expectations in the first year. This success is largely the result of more coordinated efforts by the City and the County, and the effective work of service providers to get homeless people into housing first. Indeed, 2005 results for the 10-year plan offer further evidence that the “housing first” model, one of the main tenets of the Plan, adopted under the 10-year plan works and works well.

Last year, 660 chronically homeless individuals and 407 homeless families with children were housed. Two hundred and eight of these families were high-resource users. Additionally, the majority of chronically homeless individuals remained in permanent housing at the end of year.

These outcomes, along with political will demonstrated by both the City and the County, resulted in the creation of new

funding to further support the 10-Year Plan moving forward. New resources for homelessness include:

- The City’s dedication of \$1 million in new resources for the “Key Not a Card” initiative;
- Allocations from both the City (\$5 million) and the County (\$1 million) over the next five years to support Bridges to Housing, a regional effort to create permanent supportive housing for homeless families;
- The City’s creation of a \$9 million bond for permanent supportive housing.

Local private foundations are also exploring ways to support the plan, and we continue to look for ways to engage the private sector, individuals and neighborhoods throughout Portland and Multnomah County.



# Results for January – December 2005

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## The Nine Actions to End Homelessness

### 1. Move people into housing first.

The 10-year plan called for 175 chronically homeless people to be moved into permanent housing by the end of 2005. As of the end the year, 660 chronically homeless people were placed into permanent housing (295 directly from the street), including 36 “hard to reach” homeless youth. In addition, 407 homeless families with children were moved into permanent housing, 208 of whom were considered “high resource users.”

**Key Not a Card – A key to a home, not just a business card, for chronically homeless households**  
The City of Portland made \$1 million in one-time funding available to demonstrate the success of the “housing first” strategy to end chronic homelessness by creating a visible, measurable impact throughout the community.

In the first three months of Key Not a Card, outreach workers from four projects have offered chronically homeless family and adult households more than just their business card – they have helped 58 chronically homeless households move into housing and retain that housing.

These impressive numbers are a result of new funds for rent assistance, the effective and coordinated work of dedicated service providers, and the resilience and persistence of homeless individuals and families. On average, the chronically homeless individuals assisted this year had experienced homelessness for 3.85 years, with a median of 2 years. Families served experienced homelessness for an average of 1.4 years and a median of 3 months. “High-resource” families were homeless for slightly less than one year (.96 years), with a median of 6 months.

There is retention data on nearly 90 percent of chronically homeless people placed in housing in 2005, and this data shows that the vast majority still remain in permanent housing. Since most placements occurred less than one year ago, our best data is reflected in 6-month retention rates. Of the chronically homeless people placed in housing during the first year of the plan, 79 percent were still in housing after 6 months.

We are just beginning to evaluate the significance of the high numbers of “high-resource families.” These families were identified based on a detailed criteria developed by the Coalition for Homeless Families. Households in this category have faced a number of challenges, including issues such as foster care involvement, corrections systems involvement, and physical or behavioral disability.



## 2. Stop discharging people into homelessness.

### **Oregon helps people retain benefits**

In 2005, Senate Bill 913 passed in the Oregon legislature making it possible for the Department of Human Services to make a “presumptive determination” for chronically mentally ill persons. This determination allows people to receive medical benefits upon release or to suspend benefits, not terminate them, for less than 12 months incarceration.

During 2005, the City and the Multnomah County Sheriff’s Office have been working to design an effective system that discharges people into stable housing. Starting in 2006, the City will work with the Sheriff’s Office to employ a homeless discharge planner. This planner will work with homeless inmates and ensure their proper discharge into housing and services. This project, in addition to providing real supports for homeless inmates, will also identify systemic barriers to effective discharge, and create new partnerships across jail and community-based housing and service agencies.

## 3. Improve outreach to homeless people.

Progress on developing an “Access Center” for homeless people continued throughout 2005. The City completed a community-based planning effort that resulted in a program design for the Center. Additionally, the City’s Bureau of Housing and Community Development (BHCD) has established a partnership with the Portland Development Commission to begin identifying resources and locations.

In October 2005, Central City Concern received funding to implement the new “Housing Rapid Response” (HRR) program from the City of Portland. The HRR program is a collaborative effort with ACCESS, a project within the City of Portland Neighborhood Association, which coordinates services for people who are currently homeless and have ongoing contact with the Portland Police Department. The goal of HRR is to immediately house chronically homeless criminal offenders who are repeat users of correctional facilities. Offenders are referred via the ACCESS project. Almost all referrals to HRR are for people who have either active substance abuse issues or untreated mental health concerns. The first three months’ results include:

- 26 people (20 men and 6 women) were moved directly into housing;
- Of the 10 people who exited the program, 50 percent have chosen to return;
- 35 percent of participants have voluntarily entered substance abuse treatment services
- 62 percent have remained housed



#### 4. Emphasize permanent solutions.

After months of deliberation and discussion with providers and stakeholders, the BHCD decided to shift funding from 34 emergency shelter beds for women at the Salvation Army's Harbor Light facility to the Women's Emergency Services Collaborative (WESC).

This new program includes short-term housing (SRO rooms in a community environment) meals, and mental health services. Also offered are focused permanent housing placement

**Shelter Waitlist Case Manager – Skip shelter and go directly to housing**

In August 2004, TPI created a new position to assist adults on the wait list for shelter. Since that time, more than 1,000 of those people on the wait list have met with a waitlist case manager. Of these, 140 were moved directly into permanent housing. Of the 140 placed in housing, 92 percent remain housed. Since late November 2005, 32 percent of those requesting shelter that met with a wait list case manager were housed without needing to enter shelter.

and retention services. WESC is a collaboration of four non-profit agencies (Cascadia Behavioral Healthcare, Transition Projects, Incorporated, JOIN, and Northwest Pilot Project).

The WESC program began operating in September, 2005, when 34 homeless and chronically homeless women staying at the Harbor Light were offered intensive services to transition into permanent housing.

Results of the women moved from the Harbor Light so far include:

- 60 percent of the women were placed directly into permanent housing;
- Another 15 percent were placed into residential treatment or transitional housing;
- As of February 2006, 80 percent of those placed into permanent housing, as well as 80 percent of those placed into residential/transitional housing remain housed.

In all, through the WESC program, 123 homeless households with 134 people have been assisted. Of those, 16 women (69 percent chronically homeless) have been placed into the SRO emergency housing units operated by Cascadia.

Three women have exited to permanent housing, and another two are moving into permanent housing this week. One hundred percent of all women exiting

the emergency SRO units were moved into permanent housing. Overall, 51 households have transitioned into permanent housing, with 47 (92 percent) of those households remaining housed. While this program was designed to serve single adult women, the flexibility of the program along with the focus on permanent housing placement has allowed 8 family households to exit homelessness.

**Volunteers of America Home Free DV Program - Housing First & Domestic Violence** In 2003, to better serve their clients, VOA closed a domestic violence shelter they had operated for 77 years. They now provide only outreach-based services including scattered-site housing, home visits, and children's services. With no additional funding, VOA was able to serve five times as many clients. Of the 285 households served with emergency housing, 60% went directly into permanent housing. Their transitional housing program places 80-100 households per year in private apartments, with retention rates between 70-80% at 6 months.



## **5. Increase supply of permanent supportive housing.**

Since 2003, Portland has established a permanent supportive housing pipeline of 546 units. In the last year alone, 254 units of permanent supportive housing opened, with another 223 units currently under development. This success is the result of improved coordination of programs between the City, County, non-profit organizations and service providers, specifically the City's Bureau of Housing and Community Development, the County's Department of County Human Services, the County Housing Office, the Housing Authority of Portland, and the Portland Development Commission. With the adoption of the 10-year Plan, the City and County jointly agreed to create 600 units for families and 1,600 for adult households within 10 years.

The "Risk Mitigation Pool" is an \$800,000 fund recently established by the City of Portland to address the needs of landlords and property owners who rent to chronically homeless or formerly homeless people. Because homeless people often have spotty rent histories or poor credit ratings, landlords and property owners are often reluctant to risk renting to them. While final administrative procedures are still being determined, the goal of the Risk Mitigation Pool is to provide a financial incentive to these property owners to provide permanent supportive housing to people who need it. Essentially, the pool pays "excessive expenses" incurred by landlords and property owners who operate and/or own permanent supportive housing units.

## **6. Create innovative new partnerships to end homelessness.**

### *Project Homeless Connect*

On Tuesday, January 17, 2006, 400 volunteers and community groups gathered to launch Project Homeless Connect in Portland. Project Homeless Connect was designed to link essential services to homeless people; at the end of the day, more than 900 homeless people were assisted in numerous ways. Probably most importantly, Project Homeless Connect tapped into the energy and commitment of policy makers and people from the community and joined them together to help forge creative solutions to end homelessness.

At the beginning of Project Homeless Connect, homeless clients were interviewed to ascertain their needs. Volunteers then escorted people to various on-site services where the homeless clients were given much-needed medical, dental, legal, addiction, and housing counseling services. The services were provided by professionals volunteering on-site, and other as amenities such as long distance phone calls and lunch were available thanks to the donations of corporate sponsors.



Additionally, Multnomah County is taking the lead on planning a Project Homeless Connect Day for homeless families. Similar types of assistance will be provided, along with children and family specific services.

*Bridges to Housing – Housing and services for homeless families using private & public funds*

This regional effort focuses on serving homeless families throughout the Portland-Vancouver metro area. Bridges to Housing (B2H) leverages new resources (\$20 million in private funds and \$50 million in public resources) to fund community-based organizations that provide permanent housing linked to services. The first phase of B2H will begin in Spring 2006. B2H families will be placed immediately into permanent housing, and all family members will receive individual services. With the leadership of the Neighborhood Partnership Fund, a Portland based non-profit organization, it is being developed by a core group of local governments and housing authorities from Multnomah, Washington and Clackamas Counties in Oregon, and Clark County in Washington, as well as providers of social services and housing. B2H expects to create 300 units of housing with services over a 10-year period.

Bridges to Housing is also the result of a unique public-private partnership. Support is coming from the private sector through the Enterprise Foundation as well as local governments. Funders include Multnomah County (\$1 million for 2006); Clark County (\$1 million over 10 years for services and \$1 million over 5 years for capital needs); and the City of Portland (\$5 million over five years for capital needs).

**7. Make the rent assistance system more effective.**

*Short-term Rent Assistance is streamlined*

During 2005 and following an extensive community process and negotiations between partners, the City of Portland, Multnomah County, and the Housing Authority of Portland streamlined what had been a complex array of short-term rental assistance programs. The new model consolidates six different funding sources and three administrative entities into one. It also changes the rent assistance model previously used into one that supports flexibility, requires success, and makes “housing first” and homelessness prevention a priority. Approximately \$2 million is available through this streamlined model for agencies to assist individuals and families.

***Transitions to Housing – Rent assistance that works***

Between 2001 and 2005, Transitions to Housing has helped 1,749 households avoid homelessness or move into permanent housing with a short-term shallow rent subsidy. \$420,000 per year of City General Funds goes to 10 individual organizations to provide this service. Over the course of the program, 12-month retention rates are 73%.



## 8. Increase economic opportunity for homeless people.

BHCD's Economic Opportunity Initiative funded 7 projects serving households earning 50 percent median family income, which in our area is \$33,950 a year for a family of four and \$23,750 a year for an individual. These households were either already homeless or at high risk of becoming so. One hundred and seventy-seven people were enrolled in those programs, and of those who were eligible for a 6-month follow up (65), 88 percent were employed or were progressing successfully with their employment plan.

## 9. Implement new data collection technology throughout the homeless system.

The Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) is a web-based system that collects data and research about the homeless population. It allows multiple partners in the homeless system to coordinate data and accurately count the number of homeless persons served by the City's and County's various systems. Our local HMIS is called ServicePoint.

The goal for the first year of the 10-Year Plan was to have the data from 26 homeless agencies entered in the system. We began the year with only five homeless agencies participating. At the end of 2005, 22 homeless agencies were tracking clients served by approximately 200 different programs. In addition to the 22 agencies that primarily serve homeless people, another 16 agencies that serve both low-income and homeless people are tracking economic opportunity program activities and client data on ServicePoint. This will allow us to compare and contrast people receiving homeless services with those served by workforce and micro-entrepreneurial agencies.

**People are using HMIS.**

*As February 5, 2006, 70,104 service records were in ServicePoint, the web-based HMIS used in Portland.*

HMIS is already allowing us to track the number of unduplicated homeless and chronically homeless persons served by participating agencies. Since January 1, 2005, 9,897 unduplicated homeless persons have been recorded in HMIS by the 38 participating agencies.

The next phase of the HMIS implementation will incorporate data from Multnomah, Clackamas, and Washington Counties into HMIS, allowing the tracking of regional homeless data. HMIS use by the counties is planned for spring of 2006, and will add 30 homeless agencies onto ServicePoint. The eventual goal is to have 75 percent of all shelters, transitional housing, and HUD-funded permanent supportive housing using HMIS.



## 12-Month Report on 1<sup>st</sup> Year Goals and Results – the Numbers

Goal	Result
175 chronically homeless people will have homes	660 chronically homeless people moved into housing, 295 directly from the streets
160 new units of permanent supportive housing will be opened and 300 additional units will be under development	254 units of permanent supportive housing opened, with another 223 units currently under development
20 “hard to reach” homeless youth will be working toward housing stability	36 “hard to reach” homeless youth were housed
Waiting lists for shelters and turn away counts will be reduced by a minimum of five percent	34% reduction in the waiting list/turn away count
Rent Assistance Program Reforms will be completed to produce a streamlined administration and increased outcomes for families and individuals	Rent Assistance Reforms 100 percent complete with contracts in place.
250 homeless families with children will be permanently housed, 50 of whom will be high resources users	407 homeless families with children were permanent housed (208 households were high resource users)
Resources for permanent supportive housing will increase from 12 to 20 percent of the overall homeless service system	Operations and services funding for permanent supportive housing increased from 12 % to 16 %. Capital dollars for PSH increased by 18 %. Total PSH funding increased by 37 % (from \$19.6M to \$31.3M)
An enhanced partnership to end homelessness will be formalized by public and private community partners	Over 400 volunteers from the private, non-profit, and government sectors, including dozens of private citizens, volunteered for Project Homeless Connect on January 17, 2006.
The new Homeless Management Information System will be fully operational in 26 homeless service agencies	22 homeless agencies representing 200 different programs are currently participating in HMIS, and an additional 16 non-homeless agencies participate from the economic opportunities initiative



**Agencies and departments that contributed data for the outcomes**

**THANK YOU!**

Albina Ministerial Alliance  
Bradley-Angle House  
Cascade AIDS Project  
Cascadia  
Central City Concern  
Friendly House  
Human Solutions  
Insights Teen Parent Program  
Janus  
JOIN  
Lifeworks NW  
Multnomah County CBS Team  
Multnomah County Department of School & Community Partnerships  
Neighborhood House  
New Avenues for Youth  
NW Pilot Project  
Outside In  
Portland Impact  
Raphael House  
Transition Projects  
Volunteers of America Home Free

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