



Red, White,  
and Blue Book

## NATIONAL SURVEY OF PROGRAMS AND SERVICES FOR HOMELESS FAMILIES

WASHINGTON  
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from the INSTITUTE FOR CHILDREN AND POVERTY

Washington had an estimated 3,123 homeless families on a single night in 2008, with providers serving more than three times their bed capacity over the course of the year.<sup>1</sup> This brief summarizes the state's public and private initiatives to assist these families.

### State Taskforce on Homelessness

**Taskforce:** The Washington Interagency Council on Homelessness (established by the state legislature as part of the Homeless Housing and Assistance Act of 2005) brings together representatives from multiple state agencies to make policy recommendations to the governor regarding homelessness in Washington.

**Governor's Appointee:** Will Graham, Assistant Director for Housing in Washington's Department of Commerce, has chaired the state Interagency Council on Homelessness since December 2006.



### Demographic Summary and Overview of Regional Organization

	Washington	King County	Pierce County	Snohomish County	Spokane
Persons in homeless families <sup>2</sup>	9,798	2,984	990	949	371
Number of family shelter beds <sup>3</sup>	10,723	3,787	974	1,103	595
Persons in homeless families (per 10,000 population in families) <sup>4</sup>	41	46	33	35	23
Percent of families in poverty <sup>5</sup>	12.45%	9.01%	12.37%	8.51%	14.33%
10-Year plan date approved or implemented	2006	2005	2005	2006	2005
10-Year plan target population	All	All	Chronic	All	All
Point-in-time count frequency	Annually	Annually	Annually	Annually	Annually
Point-in-time count managing agency	Washington Department of Commerce	Seattle/King County Coalition on Homelessness; King County Department of Community and Human Services	Pierce County Department of Community Services	Snohomish County Office of Housing, Homelessness, and Community Development	City of Spokane Human Services Department
Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) managing agency	Washington Department of Commerce	Seattle Human Services Department	Pierce County Department of Community Services	Snohomish County Office of Housing, Homelessness, and Community Development	City of Spokane Human Services Department
Continuum of Care (CoC) lead applicant or main organizing agency	Washington Department of Commerce	Committee to End Homelessness in King County	Pierce County Department of Community Services	Snohomish County Office of Housing, Homelessness, and Community Development	City of Spokane Human Services Department

### State Plans to End Homelessness in Washington

Washington's 1999 Homeless Families Plan outlined strategies to shelter and re-house homeless families, prevent family homelessness, expand access to supportive services, and improve provider understanding of homelessness. Between the plan's inception and the 2007 biennial update, the state Housing Trust Fund allocated more than \$21 million to develop or preserve 558 units of emergency shelter and transitional housing for homeless families and victims of domestic violence.<sup>6</sup>



The 2005 Homelessness Housing and Assistance Act required the state and each locality to create a plan to end homelessness for all individuals, including families. Successful elements of the 1999 Homeless Families Plan were incorporated into the 2006 State Ten-Year Homeless Plan, including integrating supportive systems, developing additional units of transitional and permanent supportive housing, and promoting community collaboration and leadership.

Since the 2006 plan's implementation, Washington has developed 1,017 emergency, transitional, and permanent housing units with supportive services for homeless families. These units represent nearly all of the 1,087 supportive units called for by the plan.<sup>7</sup> Despite the increase in permanent supportive housing units and a decrease in the number of homeless families in some counties, Washington remains far from its goal of halving homelessness by 2015, as the number of homeless individuals (2.4%) and persons in homeless families (5.8%) have both increased since the plan's inception.<sup>8</sup>

### Transitional Housing, Operating, and Rent Program

In 1999, Washington's state legislature created the Transitional Housing, Operating, and Rent (THOR) program, which provided assistance exclusively to homeless and at-risk families with children. Local service providers receive funding that may be used to support rental assistance programs, case management, transitional housing operating costs, and administrative expenses. As part of an expanded effort to address homelessness in 2008, the legislature broadened the successful program to serve all homeless individuals and families, increasing the existing \$5 million appropriation by an additional \$2.5 million.<sup>9</sup> Now, THOR serves homeless individuals and households with adult family members with chemical dependency disorders, mental health issues, and incarceration histories. The program also focuses specific attention on families with children who are engaged with the child welfare system.

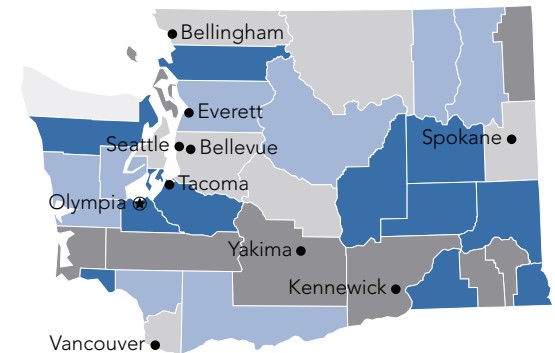
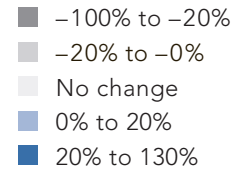
### Washington Families Fund

The Washington Families Fund (WFF), established in 2004, finances public, private, and nonprofit agencies that provide housing and supportive services to homeless families. Building Changes, the Seattle-based nonprofit organization that manages the fund, has awarded five or ten year grants to 36 local organizations that manage 522 units of supportive housing and offer case management, job training, parenting classes, and financial education to homeless families. Through considerable state (\$12 million) and private (\$8.3 million) support, WFF has served 1,009 households since its inception.<sup>10</sup>

The majority of WFF participating families experienced an average episode of homelessness lasting ten months prior to receiving assistance. Most families are headed by females with two children, nearly half of whom are five years of age or younger. Following program participation, 73% of families transitioned to permanent housing, 73% of children experienced school stability, and family employment increased by 53%.<sup>11</sup> In 2009, WFF collaborating organizations reaffirmed their support to the initiative by committing to reduce family homelessness in Washington by 50% over the next decade.

### Percent Change of Persons in Homeless Families from 2006 to 2009

(by county)



Source: Washington Department of Commerce, 2006 Annual Point-in-Time Count of Homeless Persons; Washington Department of Commerce, 2009 Annual Point-in-Time Count of Homeless Persons.

### Endnotes

- <sup>1</sup> U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, *HUD's 2008 CoC Homeless Assistance Programs—Homeless Populations and Subpopulations*; U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, *AHAR Exchange Public Reports: 2008 Comprehensive Report of Sheltered Homeless Persons*.
- <sup>2</sup> U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, *2008 Homeless Populations and Subpopulations*.
- <sup>3</sup> U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, *HUD's 2008 CoC Homeless Assistance Programs—Housing Inventory Chart Report*.
- <sup>4</sup> U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, *2008 Homeless Populations and Subpopulations*; U.S. Census Bureau, *2006–2008 American Community Survey 3-Year Estimates*.
- <sup>5</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, *2006–2008 American Community Survey*.
- <sup>6</sup> Washington Departments of Commerce and Social and Health Services, *2007–2009 Homeless Families Plan*.
- <sup>7</sup> Washington Department of Commerce, *Ten-Year Homeless Plan: 2008 Annual Report*.
- <sup>8</sup> Washington Department of Commerce, *2006 Annual Point-in-Time Count of Homeless Persons*; Washington Department of Commerce, *2009 Annual Point-in-Time Count of Homeless Persons*.
- <sup>9</sup> Washington Department of Commerce, *Ten-Year Homeless Plan: 2008 Annual Report*, Appendix D.
- <sup>10</sup> Building Changes, *Washington Families Fund at a Glance*, 2009; Building Changes, *Washington Families Fund 2008 End of Year Report*.
- <sup>11</sup> Building Changes, *Washington Families Fund at a Glance*, 2009.

The *National Survey of Programs and Services for Homeless Families* is an online resource for service providers, advocates, researchers, and public policy makers working in the field of family homelessness. The Web site provides a state-by-state snapshot of the interconnections between governmental and nonprofit work to end family homelessness. For additional information on Washington and other states, visit [www.icprwb.org](http://www.icprwb.org)