

# MID-WILLAMETTE VALLEY HOMELESS ALLIANCE

## COMPREHENSIVE COC PLAN FOR SERVING INDIVIDUALS AND FAMILIES WITH SEVERE SERVICE NEEDS WHO ARE EXPERIENCING UNSHELTERED HOMELESSNESS

**INTRODUCTION.** The Mid-Willamette Valley Homeless Alliance (Alliance), serving people living in the Marion-Polk geographic region of Oregon, developed this comprehensive plan to address the needs of people with severe service needs who are experiencing unsheltered homelessness.

**TARGET POPULATION.** This plan prioritizes people with severe service needs experiencing chronic homelessness and mental health concerns, identified through street outreach and coordinated transition planning with healthcare and homeless service providers. Plan strategies focus on geographic areas within the Marion-Polk region that demonstrate high levels of unsheltered homelessness, housing distress, or poverty.

**PLAN DEVELOPMENT.** We extend our thanks for the generous time of many community partners who offered their experience and expertise in developing this plan, with special thanks to workgroup members with lived experience who provided their personal insights.

**VISION AND VALUES.** The Alliance's vision is: *To develop an evidence-based system of services, including stable housing, designed to meet the unique and complex needs of adults, youth, children, and families in Marion and Polk counties who are at risk of or are experiencing homelessness.* This vision encompasses the unique circumstances of people experiencing unsheltered homelessness with severe service needs. In developing this plan, workgroup participants emphasized the following values.

- ***Client-centered*** – Services are responsive to the preferences and needs of individuals and families.
- ***Equity-focused*** – The plan emphasizes implementing strategies that advance equity.
- ***Trauma-informed*** – People realize the prevalence, recognize the effects, and respond with knowledge in practice.

**PLAN OBJECTIVES.** The seven plan objectives are described in detail on the following pages.

1. Leverage housing.
2. Leverage health care resources.
3. Identify, shelter, and house individuals and families experiencing unsheltered homelessness.
4. Update the CoC's strategy to identify, shelter, and house individuals experiencing unsheltered homelessness with data and performance.
5. Identify and prioritize households experiencing or with histories of unsheltered homelessness.
6. Involve individuals with lived experience of homelessness in decision making – meaningful outreach.
7. Support underserved communities and equitable community development.

## COMPREHENSIVE PLAN OBJECTIVES & STRATEGIES

Objectives	Strategies
<p><b>1. Leverage Housing.</b> Increase affordable housing options through development of new housing units and landlord recruitment.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Landlord/housing navigators</li> <li>• Landlord Incentive Fund</li> <li>• Case management</li> <li>• Trauma-informed training</li> <li>• Resource connections</li> <li>• Tenant training</li> </ul>

**Landlord Recruitment.** The CoC’s current strategy to recruit landlords and their units is for CoC-funded and other organizations to employ Landlord Navigator positions.

This practice began in 2014 when ARCHES day center, operated by the Mid-Willamette Valley Community Action Agency, hired the first landlord navigator within the Marion-Polk region. What we learned is that these navigators are extremely effective in identifying units and having them ready for people who are on waiting lists for permanent housing or otherwise unhoused. Landlords who may be initially resistant feel more secure in housing clients with backgrounds of homelessness and severe service needs, especially because the landlords know they have effective support. Today, several major providers in the region employ landlord navigators.

When landlord navigators are coupled with trauma-informed trainings and targeted communication to connect landlords with case managers and available resources, the practice becomes even more effective in placing clients in permanent housing. In addition, providing clients with tenant training improves the likelihood that clients will be successful in permanent housing.

For example, Center for Hope & Safety, a domestic violence housing provider, conducts Rent Well training with three CHS team members as Certified Instructors. Some clients’ barriers are due to their abusers’ direct actions versus the actions of survivors, such as bad rental histories, because of damage caused by the abuser. Over the 15-hour Rent Well course, participants identify housing needs and barriers and learn their rights within fair housing laws. The curriculum offers detailed information about local housing laws, how to talk to potential landlords about screening barriers, credit repair and building, budgeting, eviction process, and tenant rights. Participants also learn to view the leasing process from a landlord’s perspective. This shift in perspective teaches renters effective communication skills that assist throughout their renting journey. After graduating, students have 18-month access to a Landlord Incentive Fund. This guarantee acts as monetary insurance for a landlord who rents to a Rent Well graduate. The landlord must register for the fund before the tenant moves in. Within the first year of tenancy the fund provides up to \$5,000 for unpaid rent, damages, or legal fees beyond the security deposit. The combination of Rent Well education and the Landlord Incentive Fund creates a pathway to housing for hard to house tenants.

To demonstrate how well this strategy works, Salem Housing Authority’s landlord navigator has assisted more than 125 families in the past two years getting leased up with vouchers. At Center

for Hope & Safety’s CoC-funded rapid rehousing (RRH) program, four housing advocates have located 26 units across the region since 2020, assisting fifty percent of RRH clients, while the other half were able to locate housing on their own.

This strategy works in areas where partners have not been able to find units because navigators have built relationships with property managers and private landlords. This has allowed the referring agency to communicate more easily on issues such as to screening criteria exceptions, ease of move-in where they will accept a promissory note in lieu of a check, and landlord-tenant relations support when issues arise. Agencies report instances where landlords have contacted them with available units after having rented to a previous client. Landlord navigators also become familiar with the screening criteria of various landlords, which ones are flexible versus which ones will not allow exceptions. Finally, these landlord liaisons can respond to compliance issues, ensuring units meet fair market rent requirements and pass inspections.

As an example of new practices and lessons learned: since hiring a landlord navigator in July 2021, Salem Housing Authority has learned that the position is absolutely invaluable in the leasing of vouchers, particularly for families who have not had recent experience with renting. It can be very challenging to find places that work within voucher program guidelines, and then to navigate the application and appeals process. SHA’s navigator has been able to match voucher holders with units that fit within their affordability requirements and has seen its voucher success rate increase and stay around 70-75% since the navigator was added, a high rate of success, especially considering the low vacancy market that the Salem-Keizer is currently experiencing.

The CoC will use data to update its strategy through the Built for Zero collaborative case conferencing model, identifying and housing individuals and persons in families with the longest lengths of time homeless. Quality By-Name Lists are updated twice daily through the CoC’s HMIS and pulled weekly for case conferencing sessions. Data is transferred from HMIS to the Built for Zero data analytics tool and examined monthly to monitor the length of time homeless. The CoC will analyze the Length of Time Homeless System Performance Measure to update its landlord recruitment strategy. By comparing programs that employ landlord navigators with programs that do not, the CoC can calculate the average reduction in length of time clients are homeless by program, confirming the effectiveness of the strategy and, if confirmed, expanding landlord navigation throughout the region.

Objectives	Strategies
<p><b>2. Leverage Healthcare Resources.</b> Leverage substantial health care resources and connect people with severe service needs to healthcare resources; designate staff to coordinate initial connections.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Comprehensive discharge planning</li> <li>● Medical referrals</li> <li>● Information sharing</li> <li>● Medicaid billing</li> </ul>

**Leveraging Healthcare Resources.** The CoC created a Health & Safety Subcommittee which is forging healthcare partnerships beyond this individual project, through joint planning around medical referrals, discharge planning, and information sharing through the region’s Coordinated Care Organization that oversees the Medicaid plan. Partners will leverage healthcare and housing partnerships, supporting participants to achieve whole person stability, access mainstream

stabilizing resources (i.e., food stamps, Medicaid, SSI/SSDI), streamline discharge planning, reduce use of emergency systems, and maintain long-term affordable permanent housing with the use of vouchers.

Objectives	Strategies
<p><b>3. Identify, Shelter, and House Individuals and Families Experiencing Unsheltered Homelessness.</b> Reduce barriers to people with severe service needs moving from unsheltered homelessness to low barrier, culturally appropriate shelter and temporary housing to permanent housing.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Housing First approach</li> <li>• Coordinated street outreach</li> <li>• Emergency shelter policy</li> <li>• Mobile Coordinated Entry assessment team</li> <li>• Repurposed hotels/motels</li> <li>• Micro-shelter villages</li> <li>• Chronically homeless case conferencing (BFZ)</li> <li>• Pairing Stability Vouchers and/or Housing Choice Vouchers with projects</li> <li>• Expanding permanent housing inventory</li> </ul>

**Current Strategy to Identify, Shelter, and House Individuals and Families Experiencing Unsheltered Homelessness**

The Marion-Polk CoC region’s street outreach efforts include the coordinated work of thirteen different outreach teams assigned to cover 100 percent of the Marion-Polk geographic area. The outreach strategy incorporates *evidence-based practices*, such as joint training and real-time communications that help ensure all persons experiencing unsheltered homelessness are identified and engaged. Outreach staff are trained in motivational interviewing, de-escalation, and safety practices, as well as how to access resources in the field and options for transportation to site-based community resources. Outreach staff are equipped with supplies to address immediate needs and can access additional health, safety, and sheltering supplies from CoC partner organizations. Supplies include resources to meet the needs of people who are unsheltered (e.g., tents, clothing, hygiene supplies), as well as pet food and access to veterinarian services for beloved pets. Having these additional resources helps outreach staff engage with all persons experiencing unsheltered homelessness.

- **Coordination.** The CoC convenes a monthly meeting of Marion-Polk region street outreach program managers to ensure teams are coordinated. At the direction of their managers, teams connect frequently, identifying common sites where workers from different agencies are coordinating across the region. The CoC’s adopted Street Outreach Policy states: *Street Outreach Workers will (1) Participate in regularly scheduled Coordinated Outreach networking meetings; and (2) Use the Basecamp application for real-time communication about needs, available resources, and sharing other relevant information. ... Street Outreach Workers will coordinate schedules and otherwise align efforts to assure an equitable distribution of resources and efforts to connect with and engage individual families throughout the region. Individual agencies will share their team’s schedule with other agencies, and collaborative “all call” outreach times will be scheduled. ... Outreach Teams will cooperate and share supplies to help meet the needs of unhoused individuals and families throughout the region. Agencies with the capacity to*

*store supplies will serve as collection sites for community donations, with the philosophy that the supplies are for the equitable benefit of all unhoused neighbors, and not just the people that the one agency reaches.*

- **Frequency.** Street outreach workers conduct frequent outreach, seven days a week for 5-8 hours per day, primarily during daylight hours.
- **Help People Exit Homelessness/Unsheltered Homelessness.** The CoC's strategy to increase rates of exits to and retention in permanent housing for individuals and persons in families residing in emergency shelter, safe havens, transitional housing, and rapid rehousing is to further expand street outreach capacity and Coordinated Entry assessments to identify earlier eligibility for permanent housing resources.
- **Engage People with Highest Vulnerabilities/Use Culturally Appropriate Strategies.** Our CoC tailored its street outreach to people experiencing homelessness with the highest vulnerabilities by training outreach teams in incremental engagement strategies, focused on meeting persons "where they are at" and effectively engaging individuals who are least likely to request assistance. Certain outreach teams are strategically deployed to identify and engage people intentionally operating "off the grid." Rural teams work with small communities to become familiar with forested areas, creeks, and ditches where people may be camping. Outreach teams use culturally appropriate strategies. For example, a new bilingual/bicultural specialty team was formed in the past year to identify and engage farmworkers.
- **Connect People to Permanent Housing.** The CoC has used street outreach workers to implement a Housing First approach, whereby people identified as high needs (i.e., people with severe service needs) on the VI-SPDAT are referred directly to housing. Outreach team members participate in Built for Zero (BFZ) chronically homelessness case conferencing and assist in locating high needs individuals prioritized for housing. Case conferencing teams were developed by our BFZ Strategy Team, an interagency team responsible for data analysis and testing system changes to improve metrics, which grew from five people representing one agency and a CoC representative, to a team of 12 people representing 10 different agencies within a year of our first BFZ learning session. Two case conferencing teams focus on housing chronically homeless individuals (11 team members from seven agencies) and Veterans (13 team members from eight agencies).
- **Hire People with Lived Expertise.** Organizations in the CoC region are hiring individuals with lived expertise in unsheltered homelessness to conduct street outreach. A Ray of Hope and Salem Housing Authority each have two outreach workers with lived expertise, and Community Action has increased its hiring of outreach workers with lived expertise in the past year. At Church at the Park, of three outreach workers, one has lived expertise of homelessness and a second has lived expertise of both homelessness and mental health issues. The outreach supervisor also has lived expertise of homelessness.

## **Current Strategy to Provide Immediate Access to Low Barrier Shelter and Temporary Housing for Individuals and Families Experiencing Unsheltered Homelessness**

The CoC's current strategy to provide immediate access to low barrier shelter and temporary housing for individuals and families experiencing unsheltered homelessness has three elements.

1. The first element is the practice emanating from the CoC's Coordinated Entry (CE) Policy for emergency services which states: *Persons in need of emergency shelter shall not be required to complete a CE assessment prior to accessing emergency shelter; providers of emergency shelter shall facilitate participant access to CE assessments to occur within three (3) days of entry to emergency shelter.*
2. To reach people least likely to apply for homeless assistance, this strategy's second element is the addition of a mobile CE Assessment Team that goes into the field with outreach workers and visits emergency shelters and other locations to conduct assessments. This mobile team partners with outreach workers, including those focused on rural, unincorporated areas. The CoC has trained more than 250 people, including outreach teams, emergency shelters, and rapid rehousing providers, in CE System basics, including their roles in facilitating connections between clients and assessment services and updating client information.
3. The third element includes expanding availability of non-congregate shelter for individuals and families experiencing unsheltered homelessness. Grant funding awarded through the City of Salem and State of Oregon has significantly expanded non-congregate sheltering in the CoC region. Added shelter capacity was made available through Oregon's Project Turnkey program and by creating new micro-shelter villages. In 2020, Project Turnkey 1.0 created 19 new shelters in 13 Oregon counties, leading to a 20% increase in the state supply of shelter beds. Based on Project Turnkey's success, in 2022 the Oregon Legislature allocated \$50 million in new funding for Project Turnkey 2.0. In the Marion-Polk region, this meant two Project Turnkey facilities have been added to our emergency shelter bed inventory, expanding non-congregate capacity by more than 150 beds, with one more facility in the works. Through one-time federal funding, City of Salem dedicated \$7.78 million in FY 2022 and 2023 for micro-shelter village start-up costs and operations, contracting with local providers to create a third micro-shelter village adding 20 2-bed pods (40 beds) to our emergency shelter inventory. In the coming year, 20 more 2-bed pods will further expand micro-shelter beds.

The CoC's current strategy has performed well, significantly expanding non-congregate shelter beds and temporary housing to individuals and families experiencing unsheltered homelessness. Overall, the CoC region added 392 emergency shelter beds since 2021 through Project Turnkey and other repurposed hotel/motel facilities, expansion of the Union Gospel Mission Men's Mission, and development of micro-shelter villages. The CE emergency shelter policy is placing people immediately into shelter, and the mobile CE Assessment Team is allowing people in encampments and shelters to be assessed for Coordinated Entry more quickly and efficiently. Unfortunately, not all emergency shelter beds in the region are low barrier or culturally appropriate. The CoC's Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Subcommittee was created in

2021 to implement strategies that address disparities. The DEI Subcommittee recently developed an equity lens to help all sectors, committees, and providers examine practices and decisions for impact on equity. The CoC continues to expand outreach in geographic areas with higher concentrations of underrepresented groups, and one provider has formed an outreach team to engage specifically with migrant farmworkers, predominantly from Mexico.

Lessons learned from these new practices are that repurposed hotels/motels and new micro-shelter villages are valuable additions to traditional congregate sheltering, where it is more difficult to protect against the transmission of communicable diseases or provide a sanctuary of privacy and buffer from emotional triggers. The primary reason our CoC is expanding non-congregate sheltering is basic expansion of capacity to serve people experiencing homelessness with greater dignity. Non-congregate shelters also reduce the spread of infectious diseases.

### **Current Strategy to Provide Immediate Access to Low Barrier Permanent Housing for Individuals and Families Experiencing Unsheltered Homelessness.**

The CoC's current strategy to provide immediate access to low barrier permanent housing includes three elements: (1) chronically homeless case conferencing (Built for Zero); (2) using a Housing First approach; and (3) expanding permanent housing options for people with severe service needs.

1. **Case conferencing.** The case conferencing team focused on housing chronically homeless individuals is composed of eleven team members from seven agencies, with outreach workers being engaged on the team. The Built for Zero collaborative case conferencing model identifies and houses individuals and persons in families with the longest lengths of time homeless. Quality By-Name Lists are updated twice daily through the CoC's HMIS and pulled weekly for case conferencing sessions. Data is transferred from HMIS to the Built for Zero data analytics tool and examined monthly to monitor shifts in the length of time homeless. By prioritizing long-stayers, the CoC reduces the length of time individuals and families are homeless.
2. **Housing First.** By using a Housing First approach, individuals and families experiencing unsheltered homelessness may directly access permanent housing, rather than moving through shelter or transitional housing pathways.
3. **Expand permanent housing.** The CoC is working with governments and housing partners to expand permanent housing options for people with severe service needs. Expanding permanent housing is a significant need in the Marion-Polk region. Salem Housing Authority, which is an active member of the CoC, is piloting an on-site behavioral health model at Redwood Crossings, a 37-unit SHA-owned Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH) complex, which will be replicated at Sequoia Crossings, a new 30-unit PSH facility designed to increase housing retention and client stability, and 20 PSH units in the 51-unit Yaquina Hall. Partners are encouraged by the initial success at Redwood Crossings and are identifying resources to include this model in these two new facilities that will open in 2023, adding 50 PSH units to the 37 already filled at Redwood Crossings.

Over the past two years, the City of Salem has revised design standards to make it easier for multi-family housing development, allowing greater flexibility through simplified regulations. Mayor Hoy, the CoC board’s Vice-Chair, was influential in these revisions and shared information with other officials in the region, including those serving on the CoC board. Last year, the City of Salem provided a \$75,000 grant for the CoC to organize and host a conference in 2023 on creative affordable housing funding and implementation strategies with speakers who will drive the conversation to unexplored areas, creating tracks for government and nonprofit participants.

Across the nation, more than 147,000 individuals have been housed using Built for Zero’s evidence-based methodology, involving comprehensive, real-time by-name data, community-level measurement, and frequent case conferencing. The CoC will measure the length of time people experience homelessness as well as ensure projects are correctly implementing a Housing First approach. Each CoC-funded project’s actual use of the Housing First approach is verified through site visits, project interviews, and an annual Coordinated Entry System evaluation, using the HUD CE System Evaluation Self-Assessment, and client feedback. The CoC uses information gathered via intake forms, client feedback, and individual project interviews during the Housing First evaluation. Factors and performance indicators include evidence that the provider does or does not require service participation or preconditions (sobriety, minimum income) to rapid placement and stabilization in permanent housing, operate with low barriers, work to quickly move people into permanent housing, and do not require participation in supportive services.

Evidence that supports the CoC’s strategy is that in the past twelve months, 16 Veterans and 51 chronically homeless individuals were housed. This is a significant advancement, considering the CoC celebrated housing its very first chronically homeless person through case conferencing in October 2020.

The CoC launched Built for Zero, a new methodology, in 2020, coinciding with the launch of a new Marion-Polk Continuum of Care. Lessons learned from Built for Zero implementation include the importance of quality data systems, comprehensive outreach, and data analytics to guide system improvements, as well as the success of using collaborative case conferencing to house more efficiently and effectively the hardest to house individuals and families.

Objectives	Strategies
<p><b>4. Update the CoC’s Strategy to Identify, Shelter, and House Individuals Experiencing Unsheltered Homelessness with Data and Performance.</b> Use data, performance, and best practices to improve and expand street outreach, access to low barrier shelters and temporary accommodations, and rapid placement in permanent housing.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Housing First assessment</li> <li>● Connections to Coordinated Entry and HMIS</li> <li>● System Performance Measure analysis</li> <li>● Policy updates</li> <li>● Performance assessments</li> <li>● Best practices training</li> <li>● Qualitative participant assessment</li> </ul>

## **Updating the CoC's Strategy to Identify, Shelter, and House Individuals Experiencing Unsheltered Homelessness with Data and Performance**

Data, performance, and best practices will be used to improve the performance of and expand street outreach as follows.

- The CoC will analyze data, expecting to see increased rates of exits to and retention in permanent housing for individuals and persons in families residing in emergency shelter, safe havens, transitional housing, and rapid rehousing by expanding outreach capacity. Data quality can be an issue with street outreach data collection. Outreach team members participate in additional training, and managers are charged with monitoring for data completeness. In addition, the CoC created a Data Team that reports to the Performance & Evaluation Committee on data quality issues. The CoC adopted a street outreach policy that focuses on the best practice that outreach be systematic, coordinated, and comprehensive. Other best practices that will be added to the policy are: (1) housing focused; (2) person-centered, trauma-informed, and culturally responsive; and (3) emphasize safety and harm reduction. These additional principles are frequently reviewed, and training provided, by partner agencies and in Street Outreach meetings. In 2021, to improve performance, the CoC conducted training on trauma-informed practices, first aid, mental health first aid, de-escalation, and general safety practices. The CoC will continue to coordinate training and support efforts around data analysis, improving performance, and implementing best practices in the field.
- Street outreach activities are connected to Coordinated Entry and HMIS. The CoC will analyze the Coordinated Entry assessment process to identify areas for improvement in earlier eligibility for permanent housing resources among people experiencing homelessness with severe service needs. The CoC has prioritized HMIS strategies that: (a) identify individuals and families with severe service needs through a rubric associated with the Coordinated Entry assessments, producing by-name lists for use in case conferencing; and (b) improve the collection of demographic information for use in disaggregating data by race, ethnicity, gender/gender identity, sexual orientation, and disability.
- The CoC continues to incorporate new partners into our street outreach strategies. For example, the CoC partners with Law Enforcement Assisted Diversion (LEAD) connecting navigators with lived experience and law enforcement professionals to address low-level crimes, such as trespassing. People living on the streets can be diverted into LEAD and connected with supportive services, as well as avoid the criminal justice process through diversion. The region's three largest governmental jurisdictions (City of Salem, City of Keizer, and Marion County) actively participate in LEAD, along with four smaller jurisdictions in the region. Businesses are provided avenues to make referrals and engaged in assessing the program and recommending areas for improvement and expansion. Emergent health issues receive immediate care, and clients are assisted to enroll in Medicaid, when eligible, and establish a primary care provider. In addition, LEAD Navigators are trauma-informed and practice client-centered case management to

engage individuals ready for addiction treatment in appropriate services. The CoC will further involve these partners through inviting business input into street outreach implementation practices and developing targeted partnerships that leverage additional healthcare services for people experiencing unsheltered homelessness with severe service needs.

Data, performance, and best practices will be used to improve access to low barrier shelter and temporary accommodations as follows.

- The CoC will review three System Performance Measures to evaluate the effectiveness of shelter and improve participant outcomes: (1) percentage of exits to housing; (2) average length of time homeless; and (3) returns to homelessness.
- The CoC will conduct other project assessments to identify any performance issues. The CoC's performance assessment will incorporate a review of best practices, including: (1) the use of a Housing First approach (e.g., access shelter without prerequisites, no participation requirements); (2) using Coordinated Entry to offer safe, appropriate diversion strategies that identify alternatives to emergency shelter; (3) lowering barriers to entry (e.g., sobriety, income requirements); (4) addressing concerns of people who are reluctant to access shelter; (5) facilitating rapid exits to permanent housing; and (6) using data to measure performance.
- Data, performance, and best practices will be used to expand, as necessary, low barrier shelter and temporary accommodations. As noted above, the CoC region has successfully expanded temporary accommodations through micro-shelters and repurposed hotels/motels and is in the process of opening a Navigation Center. Expanding non-congregate sheltering increases capacity to serve people experiencing homelessness with greater dignity. Populations prioritized for new non-congregate sheltering include those who are medically fragile and more susceptible to infectious diseases and the rigors of outdoor living.
- The CoC will collect and analyze data related to expansion of low barrier shelter and temporary accommodations through HMIS that will enable the CoC to evaluate shelter use patterns, frequent users, length of time spent in shelter, and right size emergency shelter capacity within the CoC's emergency response system. Best practices for implementing emergency shelter within an effective emergency response system include:
  - promoting dignity and respect, including ensuring equal access, addressing disparities, and promoting cultural competency;
  - connecting participants to mainstream resources;
  - accommodating partners, pets, and possessions;
  - providing housing navigation services; and
  - using data to improve flow.

Objectives	Strategies
<p><b>5. Identify and Prioritize Households Experiencing or with Histories of Unsheltered Homelessness.</b> Demonstrate a comprehensive method to identify and provide street outreach services to individuals and families experiencing unsheltered homelessness and prioritize these individuals and families for permanent housing.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Program eligibility through PHA Limited Preference</li> <li>● Coordinated Entry prioritization policies</li> <li>● Motivational interviewing</li> <li>● Street Outreach Worker networking and training</li> <li>● Identification assistance</li> <li>● Housing navigation services</li> <li>● Healthcare services</li> <li>● Employment and non-employment benefits</li> </ul>

**Identify and Prioritize Households Experiencing or with Histories of Unsheltered Homelessness**

The CoC will adopt program eligibility processes that reduce unsheltered homelessness by establishing a limited preference with the Salem Housing Authority to pair Stability Vouchers and/or Housing Choice Vouchers, if available, with the housing needs of unsheltered individuals with severe service needs.

The CoC will adopt Coordinated Entry processes that reduce unsheltered homelessness for people with severe service needs by revisiting the prioritization policies currently governing Coordinated Entry. For rapid rehousing, the CoC’s policy prioritizes unsheltered individuals with severe service needs and a history of chronic homelessness prioritized first; people with disabilities (severe service need) and long periods of episodic homelessness second; and people who are not chronically homeless but with disabilities and severe service needs third.

However, for Permanent Supportive Housing, a housing type needed for this target population, the current Coordinated Entry policies prioritize chronically homeless individuals and families with the longest history of homelessness and with the most severe service needs, as determined by VI-SPDAT and FUSE first, all things being equal, priority order of: (a) households consisting of unaccompanied youth; (b) households with a single parent and two or more dependent children under age six; and (c) households experiencing domestic violence. The second priority is for chronically homeless individuals and families with the longest history of homelessness but without severe service needs, and the third priority is for chronically homeless individuals and families with the most severe service needs. The CoC will consider moving priority number two to third place, thereby increasing potential reductions in unsheltered homelessness for people with severe service needs.

The CoC will use street outreach to connect those living in unsheltered situations with housing resources by conducting training that strengthens the outreach teams’ mindset and focus on connecting people who are unsheltered with permanent housing. Outreach workers participate in Built for Zero (BFZ) chronically homeless case conferencing which is undergirded with the BFZ mantra, a belief that homelessness is solvable. When translated to the realities of life on the streets, however, outreach workers can become more focused on harm reduction than housing.

Training in motivational interviewing where people used to outdoor living gain motivation to become housed is one facet of that training strategy. Reinstating monthly networking meetings for street outreach teams throughout the region to share experiences is another facet of the strategy. Finally, adapting the monthly street outreach managers' meetings to expand training topics that move teams toward the pathway for housing is yet a third facet of the strategy.

- **Increasing Access to Identification.** Additional steps our CoC is taking to ensure that people who are unsheltered or who have histories of unsheltered homelessness can access housing and other community resources include increasing access to identification. The Oregon legislature in 2021 directed the Oregon Department of Transportation to waive fees for issuing, renewing, or replacing identification cards if persons issued cards are experiencing homelessness. The CoC is working with partners to ensure all homeless services providers are aware of this legislation. Even with a fee waiver, however, case managers often need to assist people needing identification to access birth certificates and other required documents.
- **Increasing Access to Health Care and Other Supportive Services.** Oregon is a Medicaid expansion state, and our CoC's board of directors includes director-level representation from PacificSource, the region's Coordinated Care Organization responsible for Medicaid membership for both counties. Recent discussions with PacificSource have focused on strengthening discharge planning with the region's hospitals. The CoC board also includes a representative from Salem Health, the region's largest hospital. In late 2021, the CoC formed a Health & Safety Subcommittee with equal representation from healthcare clinicians/system employees and housing providers, including people with lived experience in homelessness. The group includes healthcare organizations and providers of substance abuse treatment and mental health treatment. At the program level, outreach and emergency shelter providers work with three designated organizations to help enroll clients in Medicaid and other health insurance. The CoC educates homeless services case managers throughout the Marion-Polk region about health care resources, Medicaid, and other benefits.

In addition, the CoC promotes services where individualized assistance to advance employment and secure non-employment benefits increases financial stability for people exiting unsheltered homelessness. In 2020, the CoC entered into a Memorandum of Understanding with Willamette Workforce Partnership, the region's WIOA organization, which provides mainstream employment resources, on-the-job training, continuing education, and individual case management, as well as focused resources to assist people experiencing homelessness or participating in housing programs to gain workforce skills and relevant experience for sustainable employment. Willamette Workforce Partnership operates WorkSource Centers throughout the region and coordinates cognitive and skill-based training to meet the needs of the emerging workforce.

The CoC works with projects to promote SSI/SSDI Outreach, Access, and Recovery (SOAR) certification of program staff. SOAR trainers make presentations at provider meetings and train providers in SAMHSA's SOAR model to assist clients in obtaining

SSI/SSDI benefits. In the past 24 months, eleven providers from the region completed SOAR training.

Objectives	Strategies
<p><b>6. Involve Individuals with Lived Experience of Homelessness in Decision Making – Meaningful Outreach.</b>            Demonstrate that the CoC meaningfully includes individuals with lived experience of homelessness in decision making and service delivery activities.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Targeted outreach</li> <li>• DEI Subcommittee policy recommendations</li> <li>• Participant focus groups</li> <li>• Project assessments</li> <li>• Emphasize lived experience in local competition for funding</li> </ul>

**Involving Individuals with Lived Experience of Homelessness in Decision Making – Meaningful Outreach**

The CoC conducted extensive outreach efforts to engage people with lived experience of homelessness to participate in the working group that developed this plan. CoC staff made personal contacts with multiple homeless service providers—Community Action, Church at the Park, A Ray of Hope Today, organizations representing underserved populations, and others—asking key contacts to help identify and recruit people who have experienced unsheltered homelessness to participate. Based on those outreach efforts, the CoC obtained commitments from five people with lived experience who actively participated in multiple planning meetings, collectively committing 26 hours of insights to this comprehensive planning process. Life experiences included a female Veteran who is a resident at Tanner Project transitional housing in Salem; three people who were recently homeless from rural Woodburn, a town of 26,000 people 20 miles north of Salem; and a service provider who once was homeless and is now giving back through delivering homeless services.

People with lived experience with unsheltered homelessness are meaningfully and intentionally integrated into the CoC decision making process in many ways. In 2020, the CoC created a Voices of Lived Experience Workgroup which transitioned into the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Subcommittee in 2021. One of the group’s recommendations was to increase the numbers of voting members with lived experience on the CoC Board of Directors from one to three. In addition to the LEAD Navigator board position, the board charter was amended to add two people, one who was recommended by local service providers and who is the chair of the Youth Action Board and has recently experienced homelessness.

In 2021, the CoC created a Youth Action Board (YAB), composed of up to twenty individuals under the age of 25 with lived experience of homelessness. The YAB and its members were pivotal in designing the CoC’s comprehensive plan to end youth homelessness and continue to guide its implementation.

People with lived experience also serve on the CoC Collaborative Committee and, as more agencies hire people with lived experience, are increasing their presence in groups such as the Street Outreach Managers team and other CoC committees that recommend policies and procedures to the board.

People with lived experience influence service delivery practices and offerings within the CoC region. For example, CoC- and ESG-funded programs conduct focus groups and routinely gather feedback from their clients on their experiences receiving assistance. One ESG-funded provider conducted three focus groups with a total of forty clients to hear what they thought about possible program expansions and ways to better support people receiving services. This input was used to improve existing services and develop new services that were recently awarded local funding.

The CoC encourages projects to involve individuals and families with lived experience of unsheltered homelessness in the delivery of services by promoting engagement practices through committee discussions, project assessments, and local project competitions for funding which place a value on demonstrating involvement of people with lived experience. Certain organizations set the example for others in the CoC region. One such organization is Church at the Park, built on the philosophy of servant leadership and developing meaningful community connections. This philosophy sets the foundation for honoring lived experience in the workplace and investing in professional development that equips people with the skills, confidence, humility, and support to serve others experiencing homelessness. The invitation for program clients to participate in community living provides an entree to purpose-driven experiences. Accompanying training, mentoring, and support help clients recognize the value of their contributions and move into paid positions within the organization. Many, if not most, of Church at the Park’s staff have recent (or current) lived experience with homelessness.

Objectives	Strategies
<p><b>7. Support Underserved Communities and Supporting Equitable Community Development.</b> Support and serve underserved communities in the CoC geographic area and offer equitable housing interventions to address their needs.</p>	<p>Use data to understand disparities for underserved populations            Outreach and communications            Provider training            Embedding DEI strategies throughout the CoC organization</p>

**Support Underserved Communities and Equitable Community Development**

The CoC’s current strategy to identify populations served in the Marion-Polk region that have not been served by the homeless system at the same rate they are experiencing homelessness was to conduct an assessment of how the region’s homeless service system responded to diversity, equity, and inclusion and then assign responsibilities to embed study recommendations within the CoC structure The assessment included a comprehensive literature review; statistical HMIS data analysis about racial disparities with data provided by Oregon Housing & Community Services, and interviews with data experts to further explore common issues found throughout the nation and region-specific issues identified by experts; 13 structured interviews with key stakeholders, community leaders, Grand Ronde tribe representatives, and people representing BIPOC organizations; and a survey of 90 community social service organizations, asking opinions about how their organizations were responding to DEI needs with policies, protocols, training, and management/service delivery strategies. The team held a forum with the CoC

Collaborative Committee to explore, in greater depth, the questions borne from the survey, gather best practices, synthesize data, and identify change and leadership theories and practices to help guide CoC leadership on how to craft the culture and define their vision.

Four CoC committees were specifically assigned to track progress on preventing or eliminating disparities in the provision or outcomes of homeless assistance, reporting their progress to the CoC Board of Directors and Collaborative Committee: (1) The HMIS Users Workgroup, with support from the HMIS Lead, monitors and ensures the CoC is collecting data to better understand the pattern of program use for people of different races and ethnicities in its homeless services system; (2) The Coordinated Entry (CE) Committee, with support from the CE Management Entity, reviews CE processes to understand their impacts on people of different races and ethnicities experiencing homelessness; (3) The Performance and Evaluation Committee reviews APR and CAPER data to understand the patterns of program use for people of different races and ethnicities in CoC- and ESG-funded programs; and (4) The CoC's Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Subcommittee implements strategies to address disparities.

Disparities identified for underserved communities<sup>1</sup> in the CoC's 2021 study were that Native American and Latinx populations were overrepresented in the houseless population and there was an underutilization of vouchers by these subpopulations. According to the 2019 Community Health Needs Assessment, Marion and Polk counties have larger percentages of members that identified as Hispanic or Latinx than Oregon. About 26% identified as Hispanic/Latinx in Marion County and 13% in Polk County, compared with 12% in Oregon. More than a fifth of all people experiencing homelessness nationally were Hispanic or Latinx (22%). Nearly three in ten people in families with children experiencing homelessness were Hispanic/Latinx (29%), considerably higher than the proportion of Hispanic/Latinx individuals experiencing homelessness. Multi-generational families in the Latinx community are often doubled up in housing units, yet not counted as homeless. With incomes below a living wage and limited affordable housing stock, opportunities for them to improve their housing situation are limited.

Native Americans make up 2.8% and 2.7% of Marion and Polk counties' populations, respectively. The Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde's 2018 Community Assessment reported that homelessness is on the rise among Native American families. Emergency/shelter housing is nonexistent, and many homeless families resort to camping in the woods. Some of families are on waiting lists for Tribal housing, but non-Tribal families and families that utilize medical marijuana cannot access Tribal housing. In addition, some families that meet the criteria for Section 8 housing are unable to find landlords in the area willing to rent to them. Common barriers include poor rental history, lack of references, bad credit, and criminal history.

---

<sup>1</sup> Populations sharing a particular characteristic, as well as geographic communities, that have been systematically denied a full opportunity to participate in aspects of economic, social, and civic life. These communities include Black, Latino, and Indigenous and Native American persons, Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders, and other persons of color; lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ+) persons; persons with disabilities; persons who live in rural areas; and persons otherwise adversely affected by persistent poverty or inequality. (Special NOFO Section III.C.2.t)

Members of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer (LGBTQ+) community in the Marion-Polk region are more likely to become homeless and, once homeless, more likely to endure discrimination and harassment that extends their homelessness. LGBTQ+ youth experiencing homelessness are at particular risk. Between 20 and 40 percent of all homeless youth identify as members of the LGBTQ+ community and, for them, homelessness or the threat of homelessness can force youth into survival behaviors that jeopardize their wellbeing and safety.

The CoC's current strategy to provide outreach, engagement, and housing interventions to serve populations experiencing homelessness that have not previously been served by the homeless system at the same rate they are experiencing homelessness include: (1) outreach and communications, (2) provider training, specifically in equity, inclusion, and cultural responsiveness, and (3) embedding DEI strategies throughout the CoC organization.

The CoC continues to expand outreach in geographic areas with higher concentrations of underrepresented groups and has formed an outreach team to engage specifically with migrant farmworkers, predominantly from Mexico. The CoC also creates communication tools, such as flyers, websites, or other printed or online materials, inclusive of underrepresented groups. Written materials are translated into the four primary languages spoken in our region, multiple organizations have bilingual/bicultural staff, and all service providers use a language translation service when they do not have staff fluent in a client's preferred language.

The CoC is training staff working in the homeless services sector to better understand racism and the intersection of racism and homelessness. The annual summit in February 2022 was focused on racial equity. More than 120 providers and community decision-makers attended the keynote address, *Successfully Navigating Multicultural Contexts*, and 50 attendees participated in a breakout session on racism, racial equity, and homelessness.

The CoC board incorporated DEI strategies into its most recent strategic plan update. The Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Subcommittee has been developing specific action steps for CoC policy and practices. Fair Housing Council of Oregon staff regularly attend the Collaborative Committee and have presented on Oregon's history of housing discrimination and, most recently, on housing equity for LGBTQ+ populations.

To ensure projects are effective in supporting equitable community development, the CoC will evaluate project data and recommend any adjustments to reduce disparities.

**APPENDIX I**  
**Acknowledgements**

The following people participated in meetings and interviews to provide information for this plan. We appreciate their contributions.

A Ray of Hope, Today!/Neighbors	Shawntel	Black
Active Effortz	Amber	Brady
Active Effortz	David	Zepeda
Behavioral Health Consultant	Kathy	Savicki
Bridgeway Recovery Services	Tim	Murphy
Center for Hope & Safety	Jayne	Downing
Center for Hope & Safety	Tara	Stephen
Church at the Park	Samantha	Dompier
Church at the Park	Matt	Herbert
City of Salem	Gretchen	Bennett
Mano a Mano Family Center	Levi	Hererra-Lopez
Marion County Health & Human Services	Christina	Bertschi
Marion County Housing Authority	Christine	Sommer
Mid-Willamette Valley Community Action Agency	Lindsay	Dent
Mid-Willamette Valley Community Action Agency	Robert	Marshall
PacificSource Community Solutions	Marian	Blankenship
PacificSource Community Solutions	Elaine	Lozier
Polk County Public Health, Behavioral Health	Kerry	Blum
SafeSleep UNITED	Lynelle	Wilcox
Safety Compass	Chelsea	Fife
Safety Compass	Claire	Vogelsang
Salem Housing Authority	Lynette	Brown
Salem Housing Authority	Melanie	Fletcher
Salem Housing Authority	Nicole	Utz
Tanner Project	Laura	Bailey
Willamette Health Council	Josie	Silverman-Mendez
Willamette Workforce Partnership	Ami	Maceira-McSparin
Willamette Workforce Partnership	Kim	Parker-Llerenas

Revised 2/3/23