

***EVERYONE COUNTS!***

**Whatcom County Homeless Count**

**A POINT-IN-TIME CENSUS OF HOMELESS RESIDENTS**

March 2007

**Sponsored by:**

**Whatcom County Health Department**

**Whatcom County Homeless Coalition**

**City of Bellingham Planning and Community Development**

**Cornerstone Strategies, Inc.**  
Bellingham, Washington

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# Executive Summary

## Homelessness in Whatcom County

At any point in time, at least 1,298 people in Whatcom County are homeless. Throughout the year, hundreds more face the prospect of losing their homes due to precarious financial conditions, domestic violence, health crises, and chronic mental health and chemical dependency conditions. People being released from psychiatric hospitalization and incarceration face challenging community re-entry issues. Furthermore, the rising cost of housing and stagnant wages increases the risk of people losing their housing, and makes it increasingly difficult to find affordable housing.

## The 2007 homeless count

This year more than 50 agencies participated in the homeless count, which occurred during the week of January 22. As you read this report, please keep in mind that point-in-time counts generally underestimate the number of those who are homeless because:

- A point-in-time is just a “snapshot” and may not capture all those who are cycling in and out of homelessness over the course of a year.
- It is difficult to find where all the unsheltered people reside. It is impossible to know all the places that might provide unconventional shelter (i.e. tents, abandoned cars) for one night.

## How many are homeless?

This year we counted:

- 1,298 homeless persons (a *person* may be part of a family household, or an unaccompanied individual)
- 871 homeless households (a *household* may include one or more persons)

## Who are the homeless?

The 2007 homeless population is as diverse as the larger community population: they are old and young, male and female, unaccompanied individuals, and families. Of those counted this year:

- 72% of homeless households include only one person
- There were 171 families with children; the median<sup>1</sup> family size is 3 persons
- 78% of homeless families with children are single-parent families (92% of these parents are female)

In terms of age and sex:

- 52% of all homeless persons are female
- Ages ranged from less than one year old to 80 years old
- Median age of all homeless persons is 24 years
- Median age of unaccompanied homeless persons is 37 years

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<sup>1</sup> The median value is, essentially, the midpoint. Specifically, in a group of measurements (e.g. family size, age) arranged from lowest to highest, the median is the middle value if the number of measurements is odd. If the number of measurements is even, the median is the average of the two middle values.

## Homeless youth

Homelessness among youth may result from family problems, economic problems, and residential instability. Some youth become homeless with their families, others leave home after years of physical and sexual abuse, strained relationships, parental neglect, addiction of a family member, or their own chemical addiction.

- 541 persons under 18 years old were counted
- 25% of all homeless persons are less than 10 years old
- 106 persons counted are 16 to 21 years old
- 158 persons are 16 to 24 years old
- At least 104 homeless youth (age 13-24) are unaccompanied

## Community re-entry

Homeless Count survey respondents were asked if they had been discharged from an institution within the last six months. Altogether, 149 said they had been released from jail or inpatient substance abuse or mental health treatment.

- 12% had been released from jail
- 5% had been released from inpatient substance abuse treatment
- 4% had been released from a psychiatric hospital

## Shelter

Homeless survey respondents told us where they slept the previous night:

- 29% temporarily living with family or friends
- 27% in transitional housing
- 14% in emergency shelter
- 7% out of doors
- 6% in a motel (using a voucher)
- 5% in a vehicle
- 5% in jail
- 1% in an abandoned building
- 7% in some other place

## Chronic homelessness

To be considered chronically homeless based on HUD's definition, a person must be an unaccompanied individual who has been homeless for 12 months or more OR has had more than three episodes of homelessness in the last three years, AND has been sleeping in a place not meant for human habitation, AND has one of the following disabling conditions (mental disorder, substance abuse disorder, permanent physical or developmental disability).

Based on HUD's definition, 78 persons, or 9% of all homeless households, are chronically homeless. This is certainly an undercount since many survey respondents did not supply enough information to determine whether or not they met all of the HUD chronic homelessness characteristics.

The number (and percent) of counted households with any of the HUD characteristics include:

- 238 (27%) have been homeless for 12 months or more
- 74 (9%) have had four or more episodes of homelessness in the last three years
- 495 (57%) households have a person with a disabling condition
- 226 (26%) have been sleeping in a place not meant for human habitation and/or in emergency shelter

### **Top reasons for homelessness**

Homelessness results from a complex set of circumstances that require people to choose between food, shelter and other needs. In fact a plurality (41%) of respondents to this year's homeless count reported three or more reasons for their homelessness. Mental illness and substance abuse disorders top the list of factors leading to homelessness

- 35% Mental illness
- 32% Alcohol or drug use
- 29% Unable to pay rent or mortgage
- 23% Family break-up
- 21% Victim of domestic violence
- 19% Lost job
- 15% Temporary living situation ended
- 13% Convicted of a felony
- 13% Medical problems
- 11% Poor credit rating
- 11% Lack of job skills
- 10% Discharged from an institution

### **Comparisons to 2006**

Compared to 2006, Homeless Count partners counted similar numbers of homeless persons and households this year. The number of homeless persons increased from 1,255 to 1,298. Over the same period, the number of homeless households decreased from 922 to 871. It is worth noting here that count partner agencies exerted a similar, high level of effort in 2007 as in 2006.

### **Reducing homelessness in Whatcom County**

Whatcom County recently received a \$1.4 million, three-year grant to improve the way our community responds to homelessness. The new Whatcom County Homeless Services Center (WCHSC) project adapts evidenced-based models of homeless prevention, rapid re-housing, jail diversion, and focused re-entry planning to transform our current continuum of care from managing homelessness to ending homelessness. Key components establish new commitments to increase access to supportive and mainstream services that are vital to retaining permanent housing. As called for in Washington State's 10-year plan to end homelessness, this project proposes "a shift in focus from emergency response strategies to prevention and long term housing." Look for this exciting new project to be implemented later this year.

## **Dedication**

This report is dedicated to the memory of Joan Beardsley, a passionate community leader tirelessly committed to the vision of affordable homes for everyone, and to ending homelessness. She inspired an entire community. Her drive, dedication and enthusiasm will be missed, and it will be up to us to make sure Joan's vision comes to pass.

## Acknowledgements

The Point-in-Time Homeless Count is a remarkably complex undertaking. It is even more remarkable considering the fact that the vast majority of the effort requires individuals and organizations to volunteer their labor. Obviously we do not have the space to list all of the volunteers here, but you can view a list of the participating agencies in Table 12 on page 30. We thank them all for their eager participation this year.

Several individuals and organizations were particularly integral to the success of this year's Homeless Count:

- The Rainbow Center, its director, Lyle Stork, and Rainbow Center members delivered a great event that was enormously important to engaging unsheltered individuals and other homeless persons who otherwise would have gone uncounted.
- Elected officials, including Bellingham Mayor, Tim Douglas, Whatcom County Executive, Pete Kremen, and County Councilpersons, Seth Fleetwood, and Barbara Brenner pitched in to help make the Rainbow Center event a great success.
- Past coordinator, Allison Roberts, handed off the duties of coordinating the Homeless Count to Jim Cozad. Allison helped to kick off this year's event by ensuring a smooth transition.
- Stacy Miller, Housing Manager for Skagit County Community Action offered her advice and counsel during this year's Homeless Count planning process.
- Jim Cozad, Board President of Interfaith Coalition, was responsible for making it all come together this year.

Finally, we would like to thank the homeless individuals and families who responded to this year's Count. Responding to the survey requires time and effort, but more importantly, it asks that each person share a part of their very personal story with the whole community. Without these stories, we know very little about the complexities of homelessness or how we, as a community, can respond.

## Introduction

*At any point in time, in Whatcom County, there are at least 1,298 persons without a place to call home.*

At any point in time, at least 1,298 people in Whatcom County are homeless. Throughout the year, hundreds more face the prospect of losing their homes due to precarious financial conditions, domestic violence, health crises, and chronic mental health and chemical dependency conditions. People being released from psychiatric hospitalization and incarceration face challenging community re-entry issues. Furthermore, the rising cost of housing and stagnant wages increases the risk of people losing their housing, and makes it increasingly difficult to find affordable housing.

### **The Point-in-Time Homeless Count**

The Point-in-Time Count is a census of homeless persons. It is conducted over a very short period of time to reduce the chance of counting people twice. The Count is sponsored by the Whatcom County Homeless Coalition, Whatcom County Health Department, and the City of Bellingham Planning and Community Development Department. This year more than 50 agencies participated in the count, which occurred during the week of January 22.

Homeless census data derived from this count is useful for characterizing the homeless population in our community. Knowing approximately how many families with children, unaccompanied youth, and unsheltered veterans – to use just a few subgroup examples – helps Homeless Coalition members plan for homeless services.

The Count is also required by Washington State and federal laws as a condition of receiving financial assistance to fund homeless services.

### **Point-in-time count limitations**

National research indicates that point-in-time counts generally underestimate the number of those who are homeless because:

- A point-in-time is just a “snapshot” and may not capture all those who are cycling in and out of homelessness over the course of a specific period of time (e.g. annually). Furthermore, an annual “snapshot” may miss any seasonal fluctuations that may occur in our communities.
- It is difficult to find where all the unsheltered people reside. It is impossible to know all the places that might provide unconventional shelter (i.e. tents, abandoned cars) for one night.

## Number of homeless individuals and families in Whatcom County

53% of all homeless persons in Whatcom County are members of a homeless family; 47% are unaccompanied homeless persons.

At a single point in time in late January 2007, a total of **1,298 persons** were homeless in Whatcom County. They are members of **871 households**. For the purpose of this homeless count, households are divided into two categories: *homeless individuals* and *homeless families*. Homeless individual households are unaccompanied single persons and homeless families are households that include more than one person (e.g. couples, single-parent or two-parent families with children).

This year, 70% of the homeless households were unaccompanied homeless individuals. Altogether, there were 607 unaccompanied homeless individuals, including 104 youth (age 13 – 24) and 503 adults (Table 1). Homeless individuals comprised 47% of the overall homeless population at this point in time. Persons in homeless families totaled 691, including 438 youth (age 0-17)<sup>2</sup> and 253 adults. They accounted for 53% of all homeless persons.

**Table 1 Homeless count by individual or family status and age group**

	Homeless Individuals			Homeless Families			Total
	Single adult	Single youth	Subtotal	Adult in family	Youth in family	Subtotal	
Total	503	104	<b>607</b>	253	438	<b>691</b>	<b>1,298</b>
% of Total	39%	8%	<b>47%</b>	19%	34%	<b>53%</b>	<b>100%</b>

## Characteristics of homeless persons and families

### Household size and family status

Of the 871 homeless households counted, 700 included no children and 171 included families with children (Table 2). More than three quarters (78%) of families with children are single-parent families, the vast majority of which (92%) include the female parent. Among families with children, the household size ranged from two to seven. The median household size of families with children was three persons.

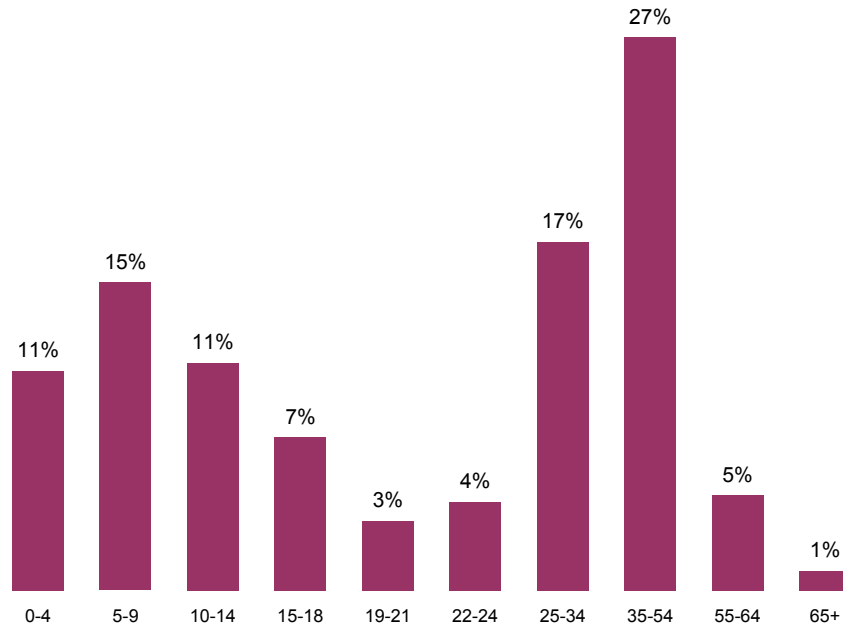
<sup>2</sup> Note that we use different age groups for youth in the unaccompanied homeless individual category (13-24) versus the homeless family category (0-17). We use the higher age limit for the *individual* category to account for the number of unaccompanied young persons who are homeless and may be eligible for certain assistance programs.

**Table 2 Household size and family status**

Household size (persons)	Households with no children	Families with children (0-17)	Total
1	626	0	626
2	54	73	127
3	18	43	61
4	2	37	39
5	0	12	12
6	0	4	4
7	0	2	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>700</b>	<b>171</b>	<b>871</b>

**Age and sex**

Just over half (52%) of homeless persons counted are female. Ages ranged from less than one year old to 80 years old. The median age of all homeless persons was 24 years. The median age of unaccompanied homeless persons was 37 years.

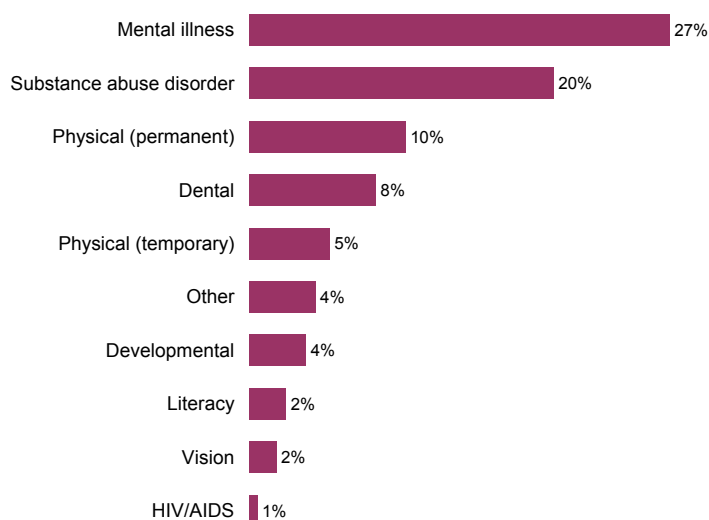


**Figure 1 Age distribution of homeless persons (N=1,291)**

The 541 minors counted this year comprise 42% of the homeless population, with 327 children under 10 years old accounting for 25% of all homeless persons (Figure 1). Seniors, age 65 and older make up only about 1% of the homeless population.

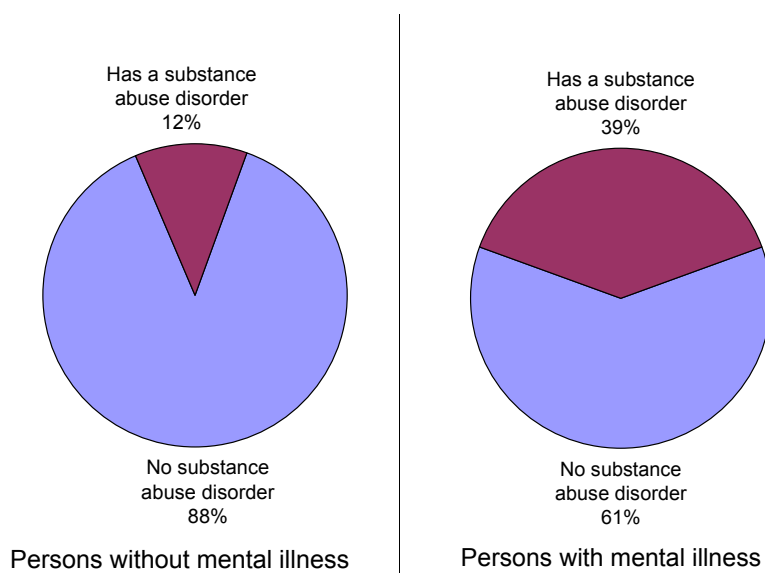
## Disabling conditions

Homeless count survey respondents were asked to list which of ten disabilities applied to each member of their household. The most prevalent disabling condition was mental illness, affecting more than a quarter (27%) of the homeless population (Figure 2). One in five homeless persons (20%) listed a substance abuse disorder, and one in ten (10%) listed a permanent physical disability.



**Figure 2 Homeless persons with disabling conditions (N=1,298)**

Additional analyses show that a substantial number of homeless persons face the challenges of co-occurring disorders (Figure 3). Those who report a mental illness disability are more than three times as likely (39%) to also report a substance abuse disorder compared to those with no reported mental illness (12%).



**Figure 3 Co-occurring mental illness and substance abuse disorder among homeless persons**

## Characteristics of homelessness in Whatcom County

72% of the counted homeless had their last episode of stable housing in Whatcom County.

### Geographic distribution: location of previous residence

Respondents were asked to say where they last had stable housing for six months or more. Only 487 of the 871 households answered this question. Of those who answered, 28% listed a location outside Whatcom County. Of the 351 households that listed a Whatcom County location, 265 had last lived in stable housing in Bellingham (Figure 4). Blaine (30), Lynden (17), and Ferndale (16) were the next most frequently cited locations of last stable housing.

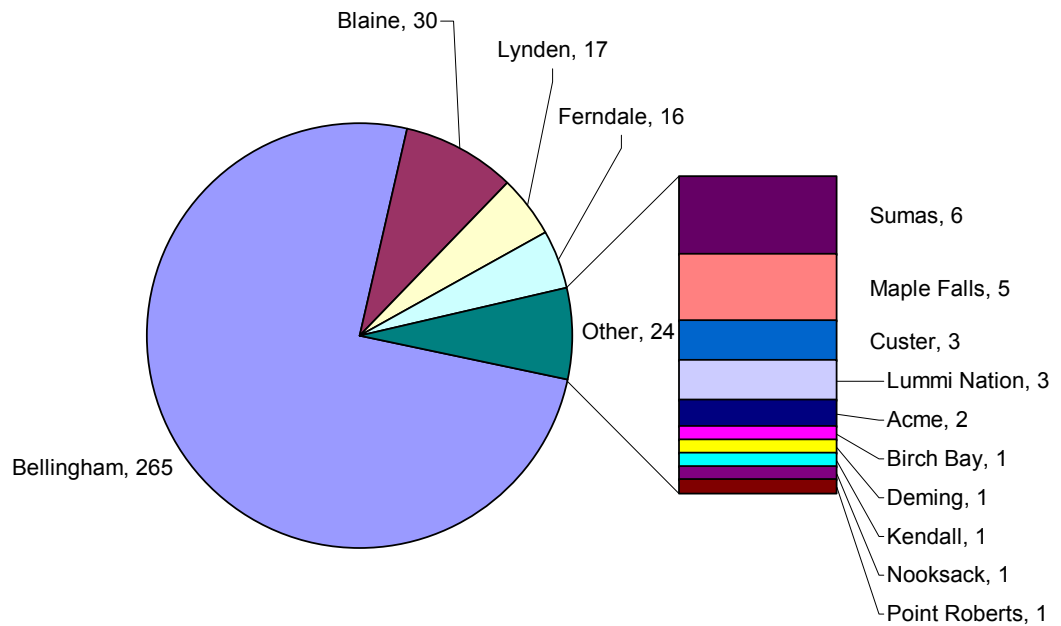
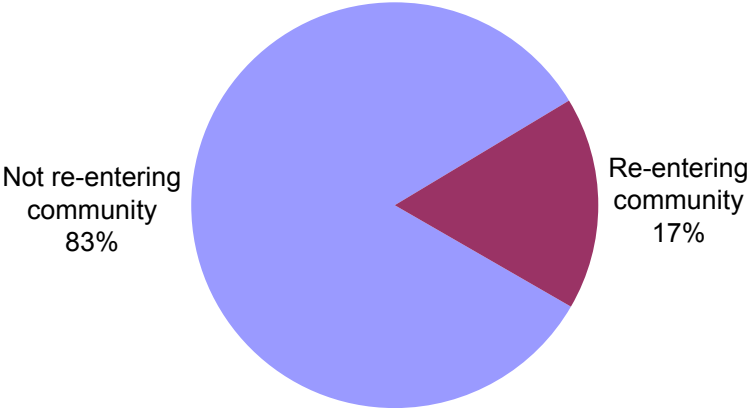


Figure 4 Number of homeless households by location of previous residence (n=487)

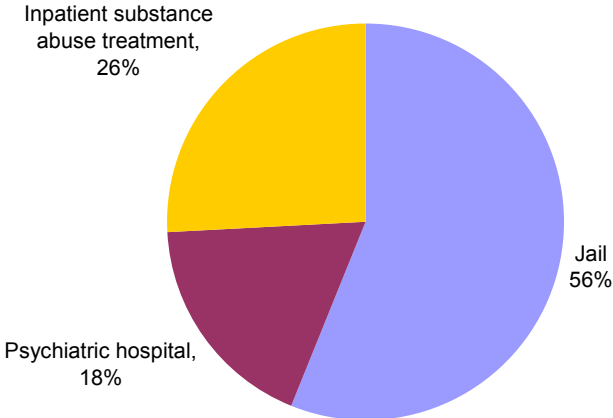
**Community re-entry**

Homeless Count survey respondents were asked if they had recently re-entered the community after being discharged from a residential institution within the last six months. Altogether, 149 (or 17% of all homeless households) said they had recently re-entered the community after release from a jail or inpatient substance abuse or mental health treatment (Figure 5).



*Figure 5 Homeless survey respondents re-entering community from a residential institution (N=871)*

Of the 149 respondents who had been released from any of these three types of residential settings, more than half (56%) had been released from jail (Figure 6). Just over a quarter (26%) of re-entering respondents had been released from inpatient substance abuse treatment, and 18% were released from a psychiatric hospital.

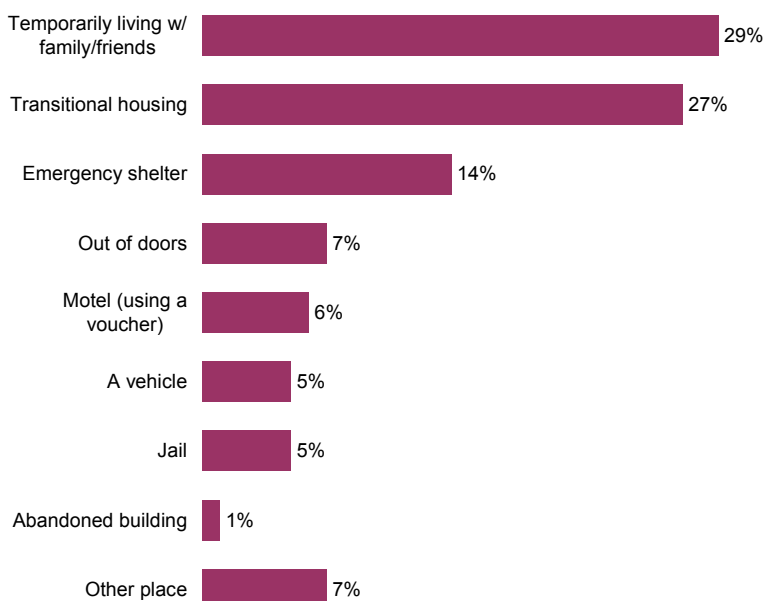


*Figure 6 Institutions from which re-entering respondents were discharged (N=149)*

## Sources of shelter

Homeless households find shelter primarily with other households (29%), in a transitional housing facility (27%) or an emergency shelter (14%) (Figure 7). Smaller proportions are housed temporarily in a motel (6%) or in a residential institution such as a jail (5%). Homeless households are considered unsheltered if they spend their nights out of doors (7%), in a vehicle (5%) or in an abandoned building (1%).

Some homeless count survey respondents listed places they had slept the night before the count that did not fit neatly into any of these categories (7%). They included temporary foster home placements, travel trailers, the hospital and other locations. Some of these respondents would be considered sheltered (e.g. foster homes), while others would be considered unsheltered (travel trailer).



**Figure 7** Source of shelter the night before the homeless count (N=816)

## Chronic homelessness

To be considered chronically homeless based on HUD's definition, a person must be an unaccompanied individual who has been homeless for 12 months or more OR has had more than three episodes of homelessness in the last three years, AND has been sleeping in a place not meant for human habitation, AND has one of the following disabling conditions (mental disorder, substance abuse disorder, permanent physical or developmental disability).

Based on HUD's definition, 78 persons, or 9% of all homeless households are chronically homeless (Table 3). This is certainly an undercount since many survey respondents did not supply enough information to determine whether or not they met all of the HUD chronic homelessness characteristics listed as items 1-4 in Table 3.

As shown in Table 3, long duration homelessness (27%), disabling conditions (57%), and being unsheltered (26%) are much more prevalent than would be assumed if one only looked at the number of HUD-defined chronically homeless.

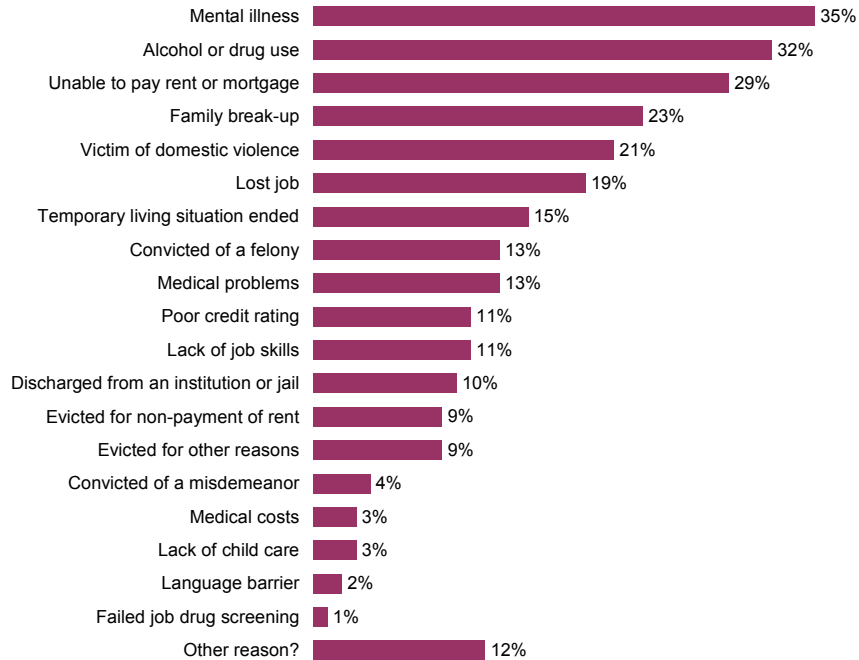
**Table 3 Chronic homelessness by HUD criteria**

Chronic homelessness criterion	Number	Percent of all homeless households (N=871)
1. Homeless 12 months or more, <b>OR</b>	238	27%
2. Had 4 or more episodes of homelessness in last 3 years	74	9%
3. Has a disabling condition*	495	57%
4. Been sleeping in a place not meant for human habitation (unsheltered)	226	26%
<b>Chronically homeless (a homeless individual who meets criterion 1 OR 2, AND 3 AND 4)</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>9%</b>

\* Mental disorder, substance abuse disorder, permanent physical or developmental disability

**Reasons for homelessness**

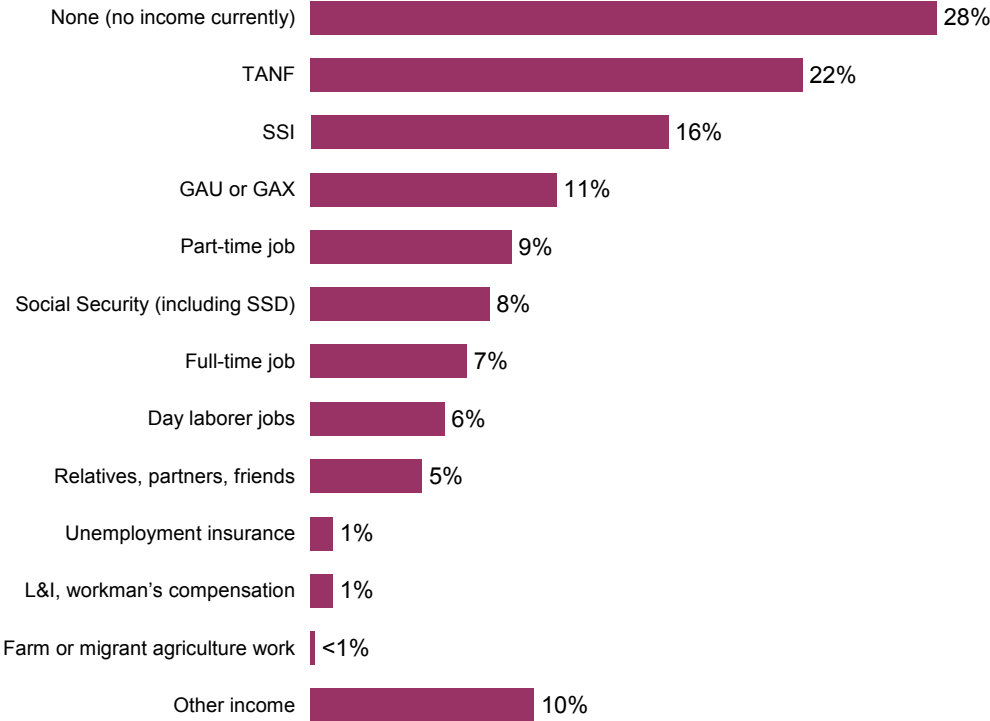
Homelessness results from a complex set of circumstances that require people to choose between food, shelter and other needs. In fact a plurality (41%) of respondents to this year’s homeless count reported three or more reasons for their homelessness. Mental illness and substance abuse disorders top the list of factors leading to homelessness that were reported by Whatcom County homeless households in 2007 (Figure 8). Further analyses also showed substance abuse disorder and mental illness were commonly reported as co-occurring disabilities.



**Figure 8 Reasons for homelessness (N=689 households)**

**Sources of income**

A substantial proportion of homeless households have no income at all (Figure 9). Three public assistance programs comprise the most common sources of income for Whatcom County's homeless: TANF (22%), SSI (16%), and General Assistance - GAU/GAX (11%).



*Figure 9 Sources of household income (N=613 households)*

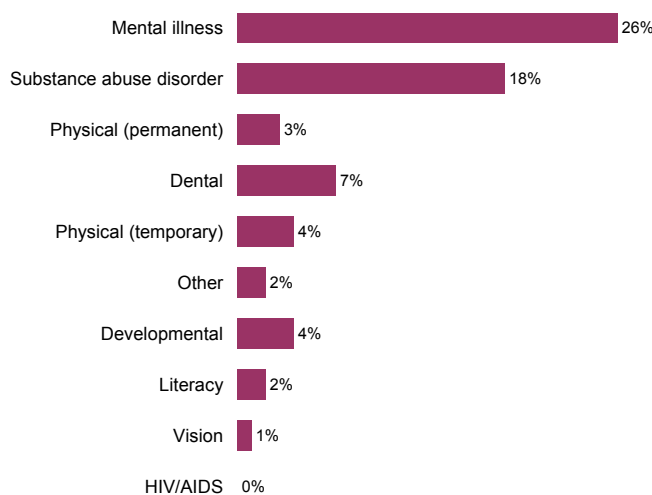
## Characteristics of homeless subpopulations

The homeless subpopulations described below include households that may have special housing and supportive services needs. As our community looks forward to improving services to end homelessness, it becomes increasingly important to understand the situations and experiences of households within these groups.

Much of the data in the sections below are derived from data in Table 4 through Table 11, which can be found on pages 20-23.

### Unaccompanied youth

We counted 104 unaccompanied homeless youth in this year's count. They ranged in age from 13 to 24 years old; 53% are female. These youth reported mental illness (26%) and substance abuse disorders (18%) in similar proportions as the overall homeless population (for comparison, refer to Figure 2 on page 10). *It should be noted that at the time of the Count, there were 15 additional unaccompanied homeless youth – 3 of which are parenting – that we know were not included in the count. But we became aware of these youth too late to incorporate into this year's data analysis.*



**Figure 10 Unaccompanied homeless youth with disabilities**

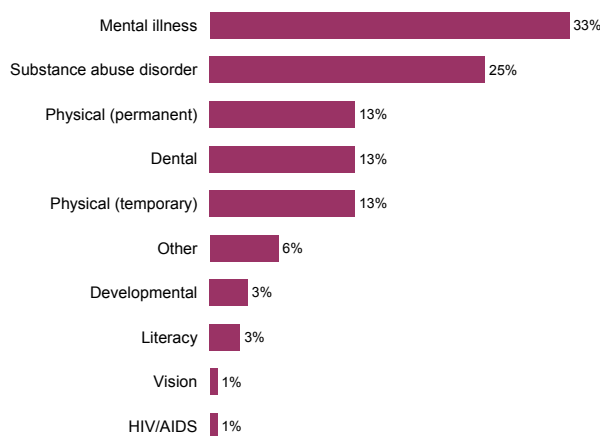
Compared to all homeless persons, unaccompanied youth are more likely to seek shelter with another household (54%) and less likely to be found in emergency shelters (12%) and transitional housing (11%). These youth are also more likely to report family break-up (35%) and recent discharge from a residential institution (17%) as reasons for their homelessness. Youth comprise the subgroup most likely to have no source of income (38%).

### Homeless families with children

The 171 homeless households that include adults and children exhibit some unique characteristics. They commonly report domestic violence (45%) and poor credit (21%) as reasons for their homelessness. Their adults are the least likely subgroup to be re-entering the community from a residential institution (9%). Homeless families are also highly likely to be earning income from either a full-time (10%) or part-time job (14%), and they also commonly receive TANF (59%).

## Domestic violence survivors

There are 144 households that reported domestic violence as a reason for their homelessness.<sup>3</sup> Only 10% of this subgroup's respondents are male; 50% have children. Compared to all homeless households, respondents in this group are somewhat more likely to report mental illness (33%), substance abuse disorders (25%), permanent and temporary physical disabilities (13% for each), and untreated dental conditions (13%).

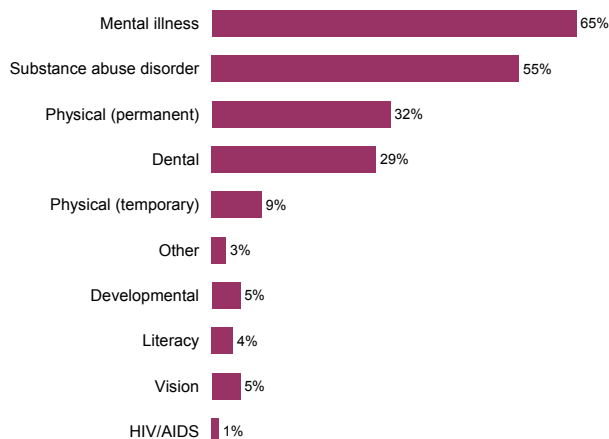


**Figure 11** Survivors of domestic violence with disabilities

More than a third of this group's households (36%) are sheltered in transitional housing programs. Their top reasons for becoming homeless are domestic violence (100%), inability pay for housing (39%), family break-up (35%), and having to end a temporary living situation (30%).

## Chronically homeless persons

Among the 78 individuals who meet HUD's definition of chronically homeless, 70% are males. This subgroup exhibits the highest prevalence of mental illness (65%) and substance abuse disorders (55%). Compared to the overall homeless population, the chronically homeless are much more likely to have a permanent physical disability (32%) and untreated dental problems (29%).



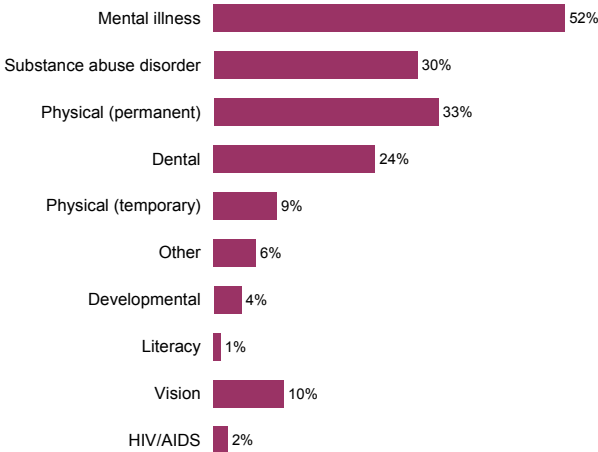
**Figure 12** Chronically homeless individuals with disabilities

<sup>3</sup> Please note that a survey respondent was considered to be a domestic violence survivor if she/he listed domestic violence as a reason for his/her homelessness. There may have been more survivors in the sample.

Chronically homeless individuals commonly sleep at an emergency shelter (41%). They comprise the subgroup most likely to report mental illness (50%) and substance abuse (45%) as reasons for their homelessness. They also are among the most likely to cite a lost job (33%), lack of job skills (33%), and medical problems (26%) as additional reasons for homelessness. Regarding income sources, it is common for persons who are chronically homeless to report no income (34%) or general assistance (GAU/GAX 28%).

**Veterans**

This year’s point-in-time count located 96 households that include a homeless veteran. The vast majority are unaccompanied individuals (90%) and male (80%). Their median age is 45 years old. Mental illness (52%) and substance abuse (30%) are quite common in this homeless subgroup. Homeless veteran households are three times more likely than the overall homeless population to have a permanent physical disability and to have untreated dental problems.



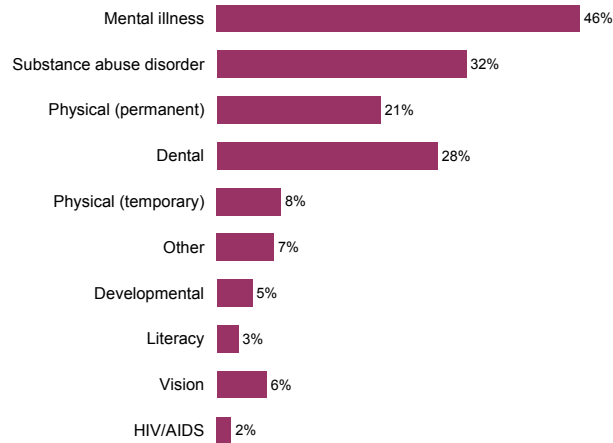
*Figure 13 Homeless veterans with disabilities*

Nearly a third (31%) of homeless veterans are unsheltered. They comprise the subgroup most likely to report that they are homeless due to losing a job (37%), lack of job skills (37%), and medical problems (29%). They are also the most likely group to have any disabling condition (79%).<sup>4</sup> Almost a third (30%) of the homeless veterans counted this year have been recently released from a residential institution, and they commonly reported having no source of income (37%).

**Unsheltered households**

Homeless count partners encountered 111 unsheltered persons sleeping in places not meant for human habitation (e.g. abandoned buildings, vehicles and out of doors). Compared to the overall homeless population, persons who are unsheltered have a higher prevalence of mental illness (46%), substance abuse disorders (32%), permanent physical disabilities (21%) and untreated dental conditions (28%) (Figure 20).

<sup>4</sup> For the purpose of this report, we use HUD’s definition of “disabling condition” to include mental illness, substance abuse disorder, or permanent physical or developmental disability.



**Figure 14 Unsheltered homeless persons with disabilities**

The unsheltered commonly reported that lack of job skills (33%), losing a job (33%) and inability to pay rent or mortgage (40%) were factors that led to their homelessness. Nearly three-quarters of persons who are unsheltered have at least one disabling condition, and 41% are chronically homeless based on HUD's definition. Many have no income (34%), and the income sources they rely on most commonly are SSI (20%), day labor (16%) and Social Security (including SSD) (14%).

*NOTE: much of the data referenced in the section above that describes homeless subpopulations can be found in the following series of tables. Also note that the size of a particular subgroup (indicated by "N=X") changes for different tables because for some survey questions, fewer people within that group provided answers.*

**Table 4 Source of shelter used by homeless households in selected subgroups**

	Families with children (N=169)		Survivors of domestic violence (N=141)		Unaccompanied youth (N=94)		All homeless households (N=816)	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
<b>Shelter</b>								
Emergency	22	13	24	17	11	12	115	14
Transitional	50	30	51	36	10	11	218	27
With other household	68	40	36	26	51	54	235	29
Motel	8	5	3	2	3	3	49	6
Jail	0	0	5	4	6	6	40	5
Other place	15	9	6	4	6	6	48	6
Unsheltered	6	4	16	11	7	7	111	14
Total	169	100	141	100	94	100	816	100

**Table 5 Reasons for homelessness reported by homeless households in selected subgroups**

	Families with children (N=161)		Survivors of domestic violence (N=144)		Unaccompanied youth (N=65)		All homeless households (N=689)	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
<b>Reasons homeless</b>								
Mental illness	21	13	38	26	12	19	240	35
Alcohol or drug use	52	32	51	35	15	23	217	32
Unable to pay rent/mrtge	49	30	56	39	14	22	197	29
Family break-up	52	32	51	35	23	35	161	23
Domestic violence	72	45	144	100	9	14	144	21
Lost job	21	13	30	21	9	14	130	19
Temp. living sit. ended	40	25	43	30	11	17	105	15
Felony conviction	17	11	18	13	5	8	90	13
Medical problems	23	14	27	19	5	8	89	13
Poor credit	34	21	26	18	2	3	77	11
Lack of job skills	21	13	30	21	7	11	130	19
Discharged from inst.	7	4	10	7	11	17	68	10

**Table 6 Chronic homelessness and re-entry characteristics of households in selected subgroups**

	Families with children (N=171)		Survivors of domestic violence (N=144)		Unaccompanied youth (N=104)		All homeless households (N=871)	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
<b>Chronic homelessness</b>								
>12 mos. Homeless	48	28	57	40	16	15	238	27
>3 times homeless	12	7	17	12	11	11	74	9
Disabling condition*	69	40	73	51	42	40	495	57
Chronic (HUD)	2	1	9	6	5	5	78	9
<b>Re-entering community</b>								
Any residential facility	15	9	25	17	26	25	149	17
Jail	7	4	13	9	18	17	100	12
Psychiatric hosp.	0	0	5	4	4	4	32	4
Inpatient treatment	9	5	9	6	7	7	46	5

\* Mental disorder, substance abuse disorder, permanent physical or developmental disability

**Table 7 Income sources reported by households in selected subgroups**

Income Source	Families with children (N=163)		Survivors of domestic violence (N=142)		Unaccompanied youth (N=63)		All homeless households (N=613)	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Full-time job	16	10	8	6	5	8	42	7
No income	15	9	24	17	24	38	169	28
Unemployment	2	1	0	0	0	0	4	1
TANF	96	59	55	39	13	21	136	22
Relatives or friends	11	7	7	5	4	6	30	5
L&I	1	1	1	1	0	0	4	1
Social Security	6	4	5	4	1	2	50	8
SSI	24	15	24	17	4	6	98	16
GAU/GAX	7	4	14	10	4	6	69	11
Part-time job	23	14	17	12	7	11	53	9
Day labor	0	0	3	2	2	3	34	6
Agricultural work	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
Other source	10	6	17	12	5	8	58	10

**Table 8 Source of shelter used by homeless households in selected subgroups**

	Chronically homeless (HUD) (N=78)		Unsheltered (N=111)		Veterans (N=95)		All homeless households (N=816)	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
<b>Shelter</b>								
Emergency	32	41	0	0	16	17	115	14
Transitional	0	0	0	0	21	22	218	27
With other household	0	0	0	0	18	19	235	29
Jail	0	0	0	0	3	3	49	6
Motel	0	0	0	0	5	5	40	5
Other place	1	1	0	0	3	3	48	6
Unsheltered	45	58	111	100	29	31	111	14
Total	78	100	111	100	95	100	816	100

**Table 9 Reasons for homelessness reported by homeless households in selected subgroups**

	Chronically homeless (HUD) (N=78)		Unsheltered (N=105)		Veterans (N=94)		All homeless households (N=689)	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
<b>Reasons homeless</b>								
Mental illness	39	50	29	28	39	42	240	35
Alcohol or drug use	35	45	29	28	28	30	217	32
Unable to pay rent/mrtge	28	36	42	40	33	35	197	29
Family break-up	20	26	26	25	27	29	161	23
Domestic violence	9	12	16	15	11	12	144	21
Lost job	26	33	35	33	35	37	130	19
Temp. living sit. ended	13	17	17	16	11	12	105	15
Felony conviction	3	4	9	9	8	9	90	13
Medical problems	20	26	18	17	27	29	89	13
Poor credit	11	14	17	16	15	16	77	11
Lack of job skills	26	33	35	33	35	37	130	19
Discharged from inst.	6	8	8	8	10	11	68	10

**Table 10 Chronic homelessness and re-entry characteristics of households in selected subgroups**

	Chronically homeless (HUD) (N=78)		Unsheltered (N=111)		Veterans (N=96)		All homeless households (N=871)	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
<b>Chronic homelessness</b>								
>12 mos. Homeless	69	89	65	59	61	64	238	27
>3 times homeless	15	19	11	10	14	15	74	9
Disabling condition*	78	100	81	73	76	79	495	57
Chronic (HUD)	78	100	46	41	29	30	78	9
<b>Re-entering community</b>								
Any residential facility	20	26	21	19	25	26	149	17
Jail	12	15	16	14	18	19	100	12
Psychiatric hosp.	4	5	4	4	6	6	32	4
Inpatient treatment	7	9	5	5	9	9	46	5

\* Mental disorder, substance abuse disorder, permanent physical or developmental disability

**Table 11 Income sources reported by households in selected subgroups**

	Chronically homeless (HUD) (N=76)		Unsheltered (N=105)		Veterans (N=94)		All homeless households (N=613)	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
<b>Income Source</b>								
Full-time job	4	5	4	4	5	5	42	7
No income	26	34	35	34	35	37	169	28
Unemployment	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	1
TANF	4	5	6	6	5	5	136	22
Relatives or friends	2	3	2	2	5	5	30	5
L&I	1	1	1	1	0	0	4	1
Social Security	8	11	15	14	11	12	50	8
SSI	9	12	21	20	12	13	98	16
GAU/GAX	21	28	15	14	22	23	69	11
Part-time job	1	1	2	2	5	5	53	9
Day labor	3	4	17	16	9	10	34	6
Agricultural work	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	0
Other source	9	12	12	12	7	7	58	10

### Homeless count trends

Whatcom County’s Homeless Coalition and Point-in-Time Count partners strive to continuously improve the quality and completeness of the homeless census from year to year. In previous years, an offsite database was used to enter, store and analyze data. Having little control over that system made it cumbersome to work with and to make meaningful data comparisons from year to year. This year marks the first time that Whatcom County has developed its own data system. This new system will make it far easier to make comparisons over time.

Still, even at this juncture, it is worthwhile to compare the findings from year to year to look for any large differences that might indicate important changes in the homeless population and population subgroups.

### Number of homeless

Compared to 2006, Homeless Count partners counted similar numbers of homeless persons and households this year (Figure 15). The number of homeless persons increased from 1,255 to 1,298. Over the same period, the number of homeless households decreased from 922 to 871. It is worth noting here that count partner agencies exerted a similar, high level of effort in 2007 as in 2006.

The relatively small differences over this period are the result of encountering more unaccompanied homeless persons in 2007 (as shown in Figure 16).

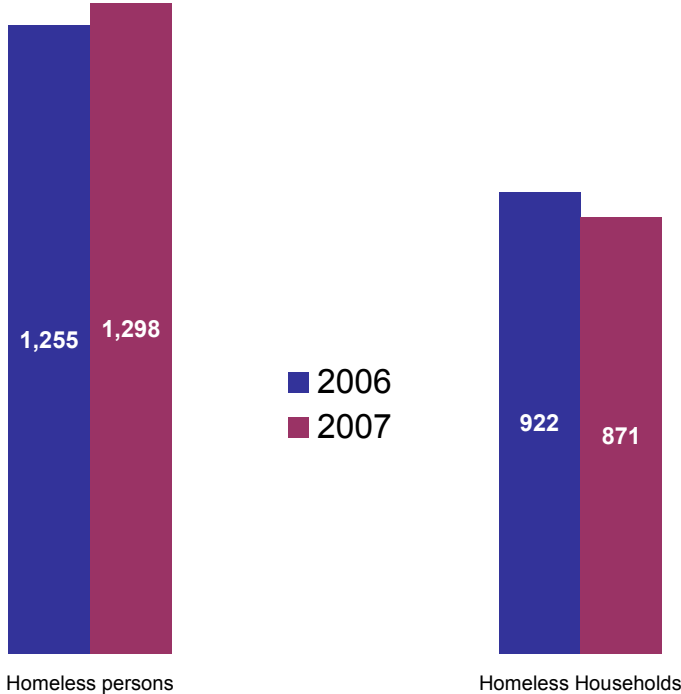
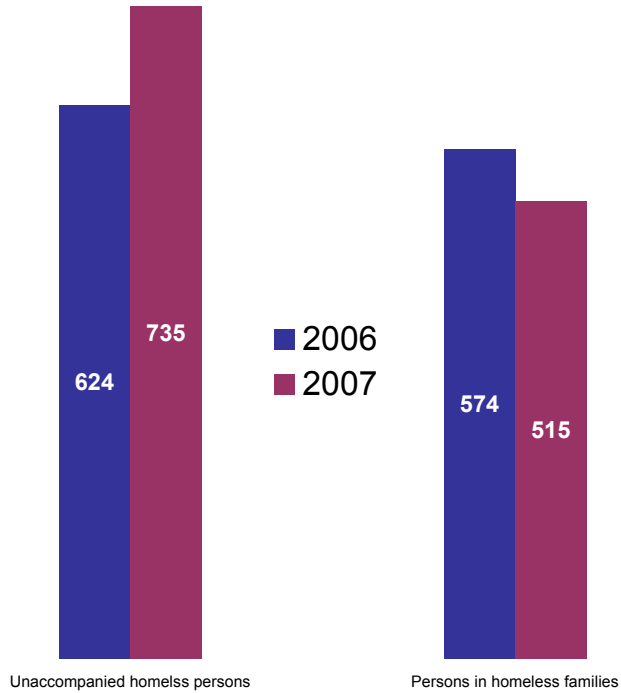


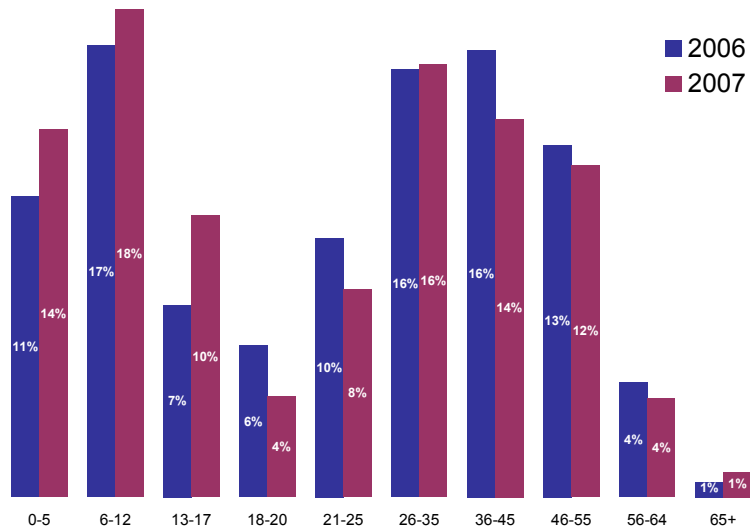
Figure 15 Overall homeless count 2006 and 2007



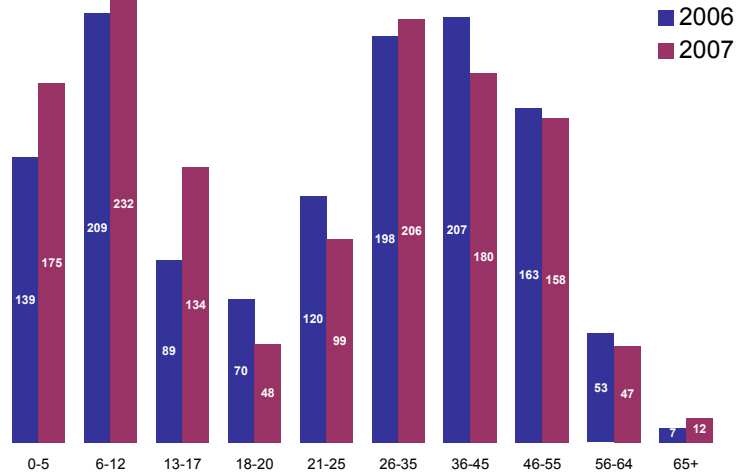
**Figure 16 Homeless persons by household configuration 2006 and 2007**

### Age

Compared to 2006, the overall age distribution of homeless persons follows a similar pattern, but with some notable differences within particular age ranges (Figure 17). Youth under 18 account for a higher proportion of the 2007 count, and fewer older youth (age 18-25) were encountered this year.



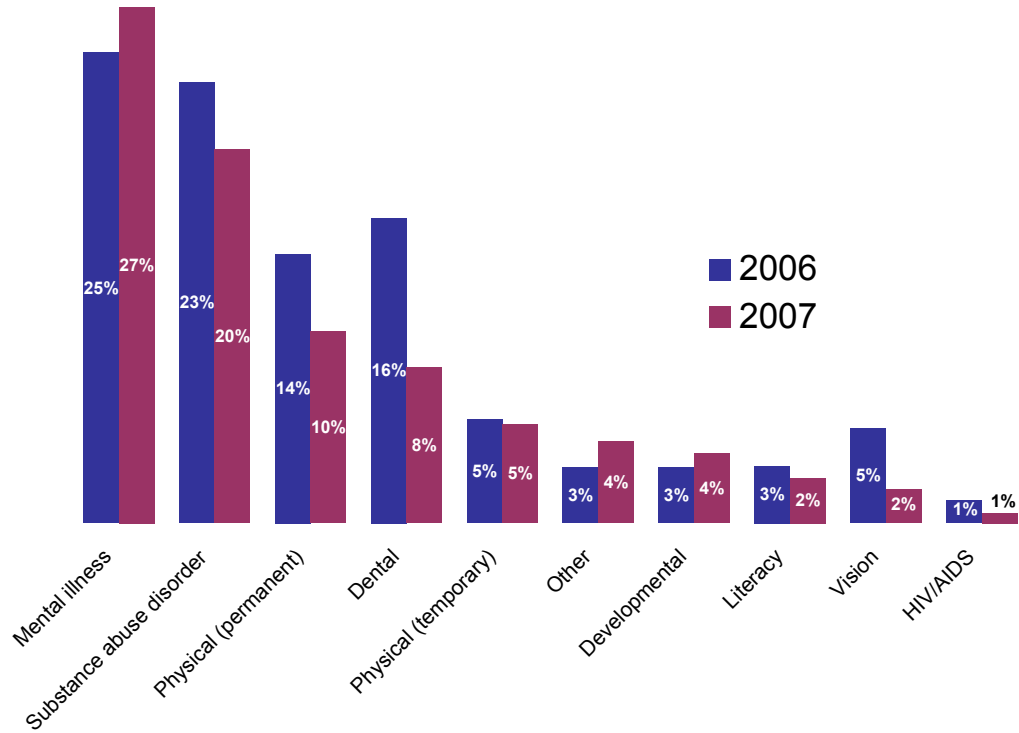
**Figure 17 Age distribution of homeless persons, 2006 and 2007**



**Figure 18 Age distribution of homeless persons, 2006 and 2007**

### Disabilities

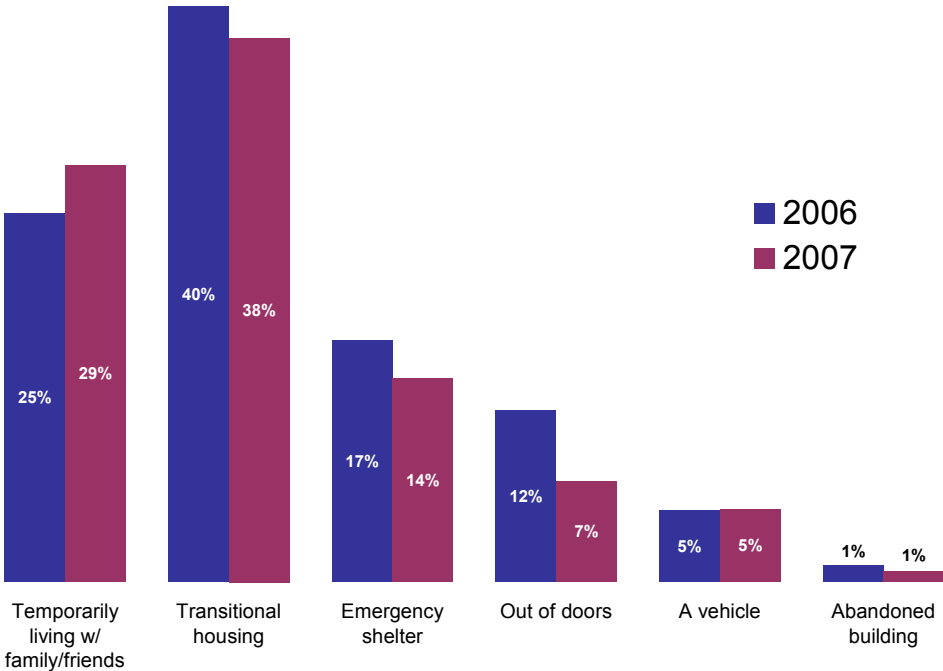
The distribution of disabling conditions among Whatcom County’s homeless persons is roughly similar in 2007 to the findings of the 2006 count (Figure 19). Among the most prevalent disabilities, the largest magnitude of difference over that period occurred in the categories of permanent physical disability and untreated dental condition.



**Figure 19 Distribution of disabling conditions among homeless persons, 2006 and 2007**

**Shelter**

The distribution of homeless persons who sought various shelter types was also similar between 2006 and 2007 (Figure 20). The percent of persons who were unsheltered or in emergency shelter declined and the number who sought temporary shelter with family and friends increased.



*Figure 20 Distribution of shelter types among homeless persons, 2006 and 2007*

## Reducing homelessness in Whatcom County

### Current homeless assistance

The Whatcom County Coalition for the Homeless (WCCH) is a consortium of public and private agencies and non-profits that collaborate to create a system of homeless housing and services. The ultimate goal is to move homeless families and individuals to permanent housing and self-sufficiency. This system is called the Continuum of Care. The WCCH oversees the implementation of the local Continuum of Care and makes recommendations for filling gaps in services. Figure 21 depicts examples agencies and their services that comprise the local Continuum of Care.

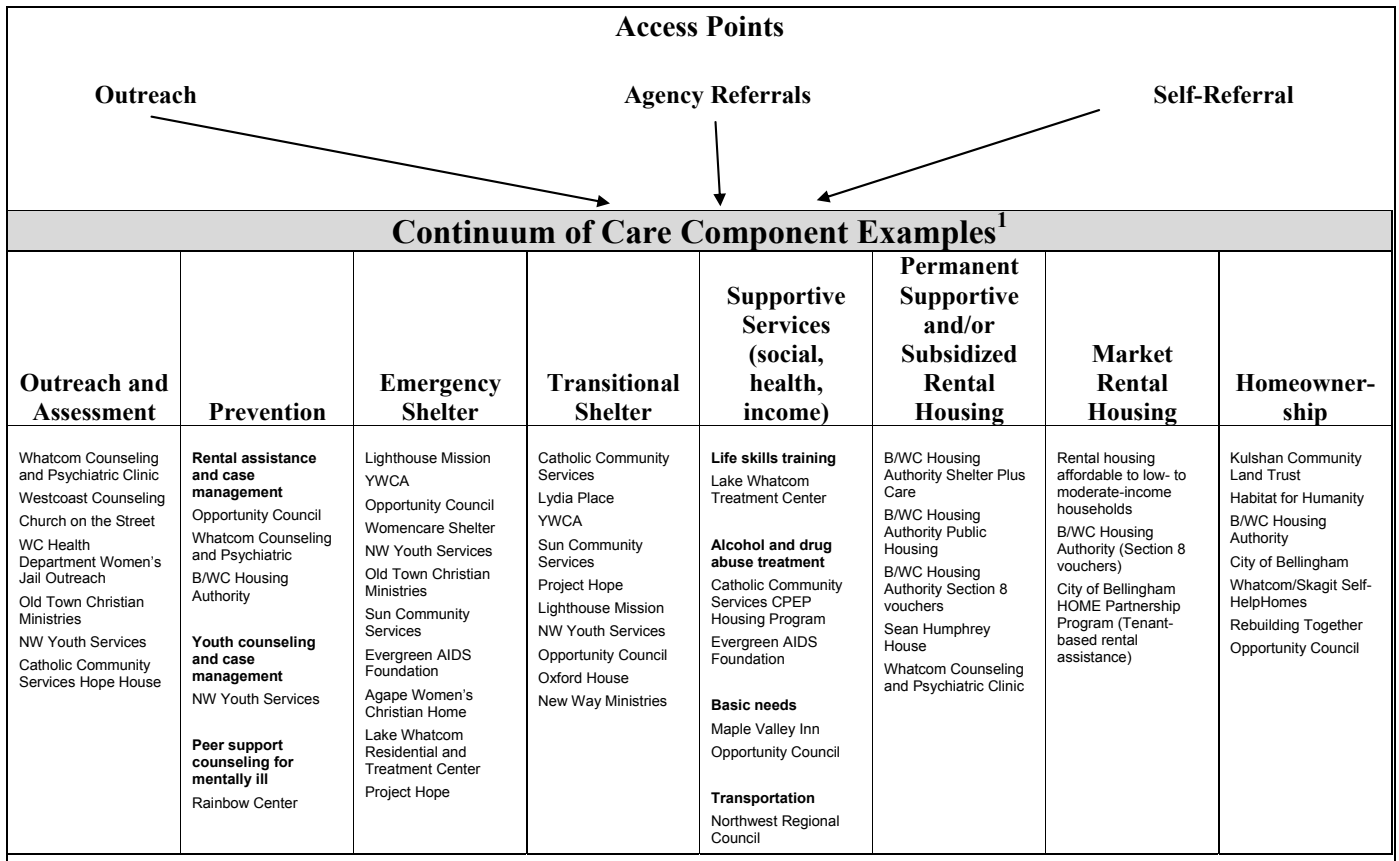


Figure 21 Examples of Whatcom County's homeless continuum of care services

Continuum of care resources that exist in Whatcom County developed over many years through the commitment of countless organizations and individuals, many of whom are volunteers. Up until this time, what has been lacking is a comprehensive system for coordinating and directing those resources and talents to focus sharply on ending homelessness in Whatcom County.

Passage of the Homeless Housing Assistance of 2005 changed the way many local jurisdictions respond to homelessness. It created new funding and required county governments to develop concrete strategies to cut homelessness in half by 2015. Whatcom County, Bellingham, and the Homeless Coalition conducted a series of

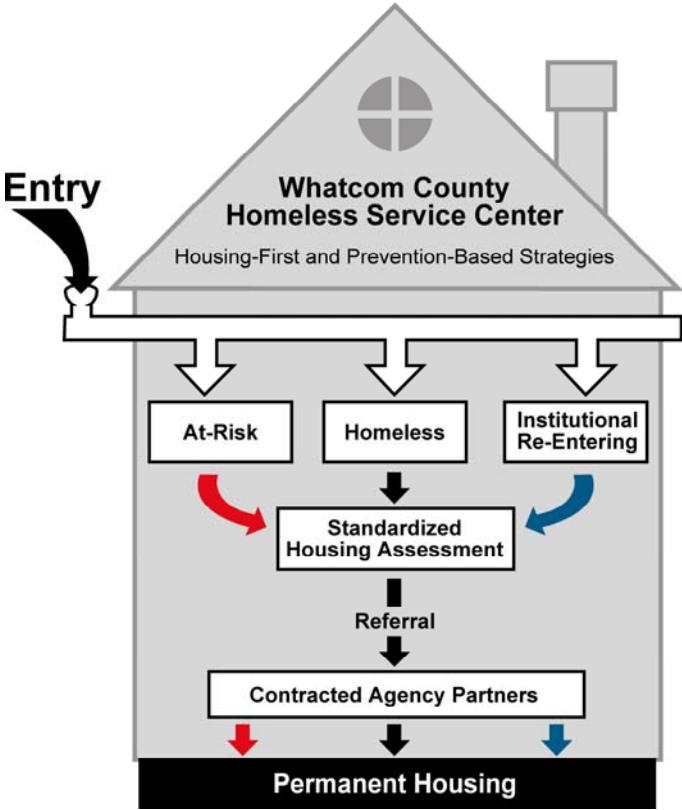
planning activities to identify homeless services gaps and propose solutions. These activities culminated at the end of 2006 in a major grant award to help our community implement new strategies to end homelessness.

**Ending homelessness: a look ahead**

Whatcom County recently received a \$1.4 million, three-year grant to improve the way our community responds to homelessness. The proposed Whatcom County Homeless Services Center (WCHSC) project adapts evidenced-based models of homeless prevention, rapid re-housing, jail diversion, and focused re-entry planning to transform our current continuum of care from managing homelessness to ending homelessness. Key components establish new commitments to increase access to supportive and mainstream services that are vital to retaining permanent housing.

As called for in Washington State’s 10-year plan to end homelessness, this project proposes “a shift in focus from emergency response strategies to prevention and long term housing.” This systems change approach, affecting all homeless subpopulations, increases the efficiencies of the existing homeless housing infrastructure which consists of low-rent housing, transitional housing and emergency shelter. At the same time, it saves money by diverting some individuals away from high-cost institutional facilities.

Under this new approach, our community is committed to homeless prevention, rapid re-housing, institutional discharge planning, and supportive services.



*Figure 22 Schematic depiction of the proposed Whatcom Homeless Services Center*

## Homeless count methodology

### Overview

The Point-in-Time count relies on numerous volunteers and voluntary participation by many agencies countywide. Essentially, the methodology of the count includes three components: (1) coordination and training, (2) data collection, and (3) data processing.

Coordination and training require that all agencies identified as having a role in the County's continuum of care be contacted and recruited to participate in the count. Then participating agencies receive instructions for that year's count and are given data collection tools most appropriate for their situation (e.g. paper survey forms or online database access for direct data entry). Coordination also includes event planning and implementation. For both 2006 and 2007 counts, free pizza dinners were hosted by Rainbow Center in downtown Bellingham and widely advertised to attract unsheltered and other homeless households that would have been missed by other coordinated count activities.

Data collection activities include having clients fill out the survey questionnaires or having agency staff enter client information directly into the online Point-in-Time Count database. In some cases, agency staff complete paper questionnaires for their clients.

Data processing begins when the paper survey questionnaires are delivered to the County's contracted data analyst or when the data is entered by participating agency staff into the online database. Data from paper forms is added to the online database and then the data is "cleaned." Cleaning includes several processes designed to detect data entry errors and duplicate survey respondents. The cleaned data is then imported into special software to facilitate statistical analysis.

### Participating organizations

More than 50 organizations participated in this year's count by collecting information from their homeless clients, or by conducting outreach for the count (Table 12). Twelve agencies are listed collectively as "Agency unknown" because they returned completed forms for a total of 26 homeless households but did not identify themselves (e.g. no return address on envelopes containing the completed forms).

**Table 12 Agencies that participated in Whatcom County's 2007 Point-in-Time Count (continued on next page)**

Participating Organization	Number of households	%
Bellingham School District	95	10.9
Opportunity Council (long-term housing)	80	9.2
Lake Whatcom Treatment Ctr.	69	7.9
Rainbow Center	65	7.5
Whatcom Counseling and Psychiatric	63	7.2
YWCA	46	5.3
WA Dept. of Corrections	41	4.7
Lighthouse Mission	40	4.6
Opportunity Council (short-term housing)	32	3.7

Participating Organization	Number of households	%
Whatcom County Jail	32	3.7
Brigid Collins House	31	3.6
Blaine School District	28	3.2
Agency unknown (12)	26	3.0
Hope House	19	2.2
Crisis Triage Center	18	2.1
Family Community Services (Lynden)	18	2.1
Bellingham Comm. Meal Prog.	15	1.7
Church on the Street	15	1.7
Ferndale School Dist.	13	1.5
Meridian School Dist.	13	1.5
Bellingham Veteran's Center	12	1.4
Lummi Housing	9	1.0
Lydia Place	9	1.0
Nooksack School Dist.	8	0.9
SeaMar Homeless Outreach	8	0.9
Womenscare Shelter	8	0.9
Bellingham Food Bank	7	0.8
Mt. Baker School Dist.	7	0.8
Lummi Employment Ctr.	6	0.7
New Way Ministries	5	0.6
Sun Community Services	5	0.6
Westcoast Counseling	5	0.6
Northwest Youth Services	4	0.5
Salvation Army	4	0.5
St. Joseph Outreach	4	0.5
Bellingham Police	2	0.2
Interfaith Comm. Health Ctr.	2	0.2
Lynden Proj Hope Food Bank	2	0.2
St. Joseph Hospital	2	0.2
Everson Police Dept.	1	0.1
Ferndale Police Dept.	1	0.1
Stepping Stones	1	0.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>871</b>	<b>100</b>

### Data assumptions and limitations

National research indicates that point-in-time counts generally underestimate the number of those who are homeless because:

- A point-in-time is just a “snapshot” and may not capture all those who are cycling in and out of homelessness over the course of a specific period of time (e.g. annually). Furthermore, an annual “snapshot” may miss any seasonal fluctuations that may occur in our communities.
- It is difficult to find where all the unsheltered people reside. It is impossible to know all the places that might provide unconventional shelter (i.e. tents, abandoned cars) for one night.

Furthermore, due to survey item nonresponse (when a respondent skips one or more of the Point-in-Time Count survey questions), some of the analyses are based on only a subset of all homeless households counted. For example, only 613 of all 871

households responded to the income source question. This large subset may or may not accurately represent the larger population of homeless households.

## Recommendations for future homeless counts

### Homeless count coordination

- **Begin earlier.** The Count coordination should begin in late October. The Homeless Coalition meeting in November should focus on the upcoming Count. This would allow for more input and involvement by Coalition members.
- **Increase and retain agency participation.** Count coordinators should update and add to the database of participating agencies. Social service agencies tend to have large turnover of employees, and every year brings new programs to the community. In early November, e-mails and follow-up phone calls should be made to all agencies to update contact information and to recruit for greater agency participation.
- **Outreach to remote areas.** We should organize additional events like the Rainbow Center's "Pizza Feed" outside of Bellingham. We need to have an event in the eastern and northern areas of the County. This requires advanced planning and local participation. We should involve the Faith Community in planning and sponsoring these events. These events could not only involve food, but also opportunities to hand out coats, sweatshirts, socks, underwear, stocking hats, etc.
- **Reach out to the Faith Community** for their help and participation in this event. We sent letters to a few Congregations this past year and did get some results in the form of completed surveys. We should involve them in helping to plan and implement Homeless Count events in remote areas of the County and inform them about the local problems of homelessness and opportunities for their involvement.
- **Increase understanding about the Count.** Events such as community meals should have a Homeless Coalition member in attendance to answer questions about the survey and its purpose. Explaining the process and procedure helps to alleviate fears, increase response, and reduce the potential for misunderstandings about the Count.
- **Invite homeless persons to help coordinate events.** We should involve homeless individuals in the process of planning and implementation of the Count and its events. Our success at the Rainbow Center "Pizza Feed" is due, in large part, to the involvement of their members in planning, greeting, staffing, advertising and clean-up for the event. We could also ask homeless individuals to help our Street Ministries during the count as well as participate at Food Bank and meal locations.
- **Increase awareness about, "who is homeless."** We need to continue to get the word out that "couch surfers" and those who "double-up" with another household are homeless. This is a population that is hard to reach and the general public may not be aware that there is a large

subpopulation of homeless individuals and families that often go uncounted and may not be considered homeless by the average citizen.

- **Use the Count as an opportunity to inform the public.** We should continue our efforts to use the event as an educational tool on homelessness in our community. Now that we have more flexibility in the ways we can analyze and report data to tell a story about local homelessness, we should increase educational outreach to community organizations, Faith Communities, as well as the media through print publications, “talk radio”, and other outlets.

### Homeless count data collection and processing

This year’s Point-in-Time Count incorporated several new data collection and processing improvements. First, the survey questionnaire used to collect data from homeless households was improved to make it more user-friendly. The form can be found in Appendix A of this report. Second, for agencies that typically employ staff who complete the survey questionnaire for their clients, an online data collection system was developed to allow these agencies to enter the data directly into the homeless count database. This reduces the chance for data entry error and eliminates the need to complete paper forms. Third, the County developed its own data processing system, giving it much more flexibility and control in data analysis.

Future Point-in-Time counts can be further improved by implementing these additional strategies:

- **Implement a local homeless management information system.** Get the County’s HMIS system up and running as soon as possible and encourage all continuum of care agencies to use it. This will greatly enhance the County’s ability to conduct homeless counts as often as it deems appropriate.
- **Re-focus the count on unsheltered and persons doubled-up with another household.** Even with HMIS at full implementation, the unsheltered population and others (e.g. people who are doubling up with another household temporarily) will elude any homeless count because they may not be listed in the HMIS system. Therefore, future coordinated Point-in-Time counts should focus most of their efforts on these populations.
- **Use the Count to engage unsheltered and doubled-up households.** After HMIS is up and running, develop a protocol, consistent with applicable state and federal laws, to add the unsheltered and doubled-up homeless households counted during Point-in-Time Counts to the HMIS system.
- **Train participating agencies to improve their data collection.** Training would focus on two issues: First, to encourage more of the agencies who use staff to complete survey forms to use the online data system. Second, taking steps to limit item nonresponse to particular survey questions. Participating agency staff should be trained to ensure that their clients complete the survey questionnaires as completely as possible.

## **Appendix A: Homeless Point-in-Time Count Questionnaire**

2007 Whatcom County Point-in-Time Homeless Count

**Instructions:** For each individual in your household, please provide the person's sex, date of birth, initials and any disabilities. Victims of domestic violence – only fill in gender and birth year.

Individual	Sex	Date of Birth			Initials (first, middle, last)	Disabilities	
		Day	Month	Year			
Individual #1	<input type="checkbox"/> Male <input type="checkbox"/> Female					<input type="checkbox"/> Physical (permanent) <input type="checkbox"/> Mental health <input type="checkbox"/> Visual (uncorrected) <input type="checkbox"/> HIV/AIDS <input type="checkbox"/> Dental (untreated)	<input type="checkbox"/> Physical (temporary) <input type="checkbox"/> Alcohol or drug abuse <input type="checkbox"/> Developmental <input type="checkbox"/> Literacy <input type="checkbox"/> Other
Individual #2	<input type="checkbox"/> Male <input type="checkbox"/> Female					<input type="checkbox"/> Physical (permanent) <input type="checkbox"/> Mental health <input type="checkbox"/> Visual (uncorrected) <input type="checkbox"/> HIV/AIDS <input type="checkbox"/> Dental (untreated)	<input type="checkbox"/> Physical (temporary) <input type="checkbox"/> Alcohol or drug abuse <input type="checkbox"/> Developmental <input type="checkbox"/> Literacy <input type="checkbox"/> Other
Individual #3	<input type="checkbox"/> Male <input type="checkbox"/> Female					<input type="checkbox"/> Physical (permanent) <input type="checkbox"/> Mental health <input type="checkbox"/> Visual (uncorrected) <input type="checkbox"/> HIV/AIDS <input type="checkbox"/> Dental (untreated)	<input type="checkbox"/> Physical (temporary) <input type="checkbox"/> Alcohol or drug abuse <input type="checkbox"/> Developmental <input type="checkbox"/> Literacy <input type="checkbox"/> Other
Individual #4	<input type="checkbox"/> Male <input type="checkbox"/> Female					<input type="checkbox"/> Physical (permanent) <input type="checkbox"/> Mental health <input type="checkbox"/> Visual (uncorrected) <input type="checkbox"/> HIV/AIDS <input type="checkbox"/> Dental (untreated)	<input type="checkbox"/> Physical (temporary) <input type="checkbox"/> Alcohol or drug abuse <input type="checkbox"/> Developmental <input type="checkbox"/> Literacy <input type="checkbox"/> Other
Individual #5	<input type="checkbox"/> Male <input type="checkbox"/> Female					<input type="checkbox"/> Physical (permanent) <input type="checkbox"/> Mental health <input type="checkbox"/> Visual (uncorrected) <input type="checkbox"/> HIV/AIDS <input type="checkbox"/> Dental (untreated)	<input type="checkbox"/> Physical (temporary) <input type="checkbox"/> Alcohol or drug abuse <input type="checkbox"/> Developmental <input type="checkbox"/> Literacy <input type="checkbox"/> Other
Individual #6	<input type="checkbox"/> Male <input type="checkbox"/> Female					<input type="checkbox"/> Physical (permanent) <input type="checkbox"/> Mental health <input type="checkbox"/> Visual (uncorrected) <input type="checkbox"/> HIV/AIDS <input type="checkbox"/> Dental (untreated)	<input type="checkbox"/> Physical (temporary) <input type="checkbox"/> Alcohol or drug abuse <input type="checkbox"/> Developmental <input type="checkbox"/> Literacy <input type="checkbox"/> Other
Individual #7	<input type="checkbox"/> Male <input type="checkbox"/> Female					<input type="checkbox"/> Physical (permanent) <input type="checkbox"/> Mental health <input type="checkbox"/> Visual (uncorrected) <input type="checkbox"/> HIV/AIDS <input type="checkbox"/> Dental (untreated)	<input type="checkbox"/> Physical (temporary) <input type="checkbox"/> Alcohol or drug abuse <input type="checkbox"/> Developmental <input type="checkbox"/> Literacy <input type="checkbox"/> Other
Individual #8	<input type="checkbox"/> Male <input type="checkbox"/> Female					<input type="checkbox"/> Physical (permanent) <input type="checkbox"/> Mental health <input type="checkbox"/> Visual (uncorrected) <input type="checkbox"/> HIV/AIDS <input type="checkbox"/> Dental (untreated)	<input type="checkbox"/> Physical (temporary) <input type="checkbox"/> Alcohol or drug abuse <input type="checkbox"/> Developmental <input type="checkbox"/> Literacy <input type="checkbox"/> Other

If there are more than 8 people in your household, how many additional people are there? \_\_\_\_\_

**PLEASE TURN OVER AND COMPLETE SIDE 2 OF THIS FORM**

Agency or event: \_\_\_\_\_

**Has anyone in your household ever served in the Armed Forces of the United States?**

- Yes       No

**Is anyone in your household receiving Veterans Administration benefits?**

- Yes       No       Don't know

**Where did you stay last night? (CHECK ONLY ONE)**

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Emergency shelter                         | <input type="checkbox"/> Motel (using a voucher)     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Temporarily living with family or friends | <input type="checkbox"/> Transitional housing        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> A vehicle                                 | <input type="checkbox"/> Out of doors (street, tent) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Abandoned building                        | Other place? (PLEASE DESCRIBE)                       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Jail                                      | _____  |

**What month and year did you become homeless? MONTH \_\_\_\_\_ YEAR \_\_\_\_\_**

**How many times have you become homeless over the past 3 years? \_\_\_\_\_**

**Where did you last live in an apartment, room or house for six months or more?**

**CITY \_\_\_\_\_ STATE \_\_\_\_\_**

**Have you been released from any of the following in the last six months? (CHECK ALL THAT APPLY)**

- Jail       Mental health hospital       Inpatient substance abuse treatment

**What has caused you to become homeless? (CHECK ALL THAT APPLY)**

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Victim of domestic violence | <input type="checkbox"/> Evicted for non-payment of rent        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Lost job                    | <input type="checkbox"/> Evicted for other reasons              |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Medical costs               | <input type="checkbox"/> Unable to pay rent or mortgage         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Convicted of a felony       | <input type="checkbox"/> Convicted of a misdemeanor             |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Poor credit rating          | <input type="checkbox"/> Family break-up                        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Mental illness              | <input type="checkbox"/> Failed job drug screening              |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Medical problems            | <input type="checkbox"/> Temporary living situation ended       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Alcohol or drug use         | <input type="checkbox"/> Discharged from an institution or jail |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Lack of child care          | <input type="checkbox"/> Lack of job skills                     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Language barrier            | Other reason? (PLEASE DESCRIBE)                                 |
- \_\_\_\_\_

**What are your household's sources of income? (CHECK ALL THAT APPLY)**

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Full-time job                   | <input type="checkbox"/> SSI                              |
| <input type="checkbox"/> None (no income currently)      | <input type="checkbox"/> GAU or GAX                       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Unemployment insurance          | <input type="checkbox"/> Part-time job                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> TANF                            | <input type="checkbox"/> Day laborer jobs                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Relatives, partners, friends    | <input type="checkbox"/> Farm or migrant agriculture work |
| <input type="checkbox"/> L&I, workman's compensation     | <input type="checkbox"/> Other income? (PLEASE DESCRIBE)  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Social Security (including SSD) | _____   |

**Thanks for your help! Your response will help us improve services to homeless persons.**

**Appendix B: Whatcom County Homeless Count Report to CTED**

**March 30, 2007**

**Whatcom County 2007 Point-in-Time Homeless Count Report to  
Washington State Department of Community, Trade and  
Economic Development**

**1. Briefly describe your efforts to count unsheltered persons.**

Whatcom County coordinated this year's homeless count with over 50 organizations, many of which provide outreach and services to unsheltered persons. Those organizations helped to locate and collect data from the unsheltered population. We also organized and advertised an event – a free pizza dinner – to encourage unsheltered persons to participate in the count.

**2. Briefly describe how you minimized the duplication of those that were counted.**

We minimized duplication by coordinating count activities so they were limited to a point in time that lasted just a few days, with most counting occurring on one day. We also deployed a computer routine that uses respondent initials, date of birth, and sex to search for and delete duplicate persons from the data.

**3. What quantitative data or qualitative impression do you have on how complete the count was in your county?**

We believe the count was accurate for the sheltered population; however, the unsheltered population is an undercount. While we cannot reasonably assess the degree of undercount, we think that there may be a more severe undercount of unsheltered homeless persons in the more remote regions of our county where there tends to be limited homeless outreach and engagement services. Some service providers also suspect that we may have an influx of homeless persons seasonally, so the unsheltered numbers may be larger during the warmer months.

**2007 Whatcom County Point-in-Time Homeless Count**

<b>Part 1: Homeless Population</b>	<b>Sheltered</b>		<b>Unsheltered</b>	<b>Temporarily Living with Family or Friends</b>
	<b>Emergency</b>	<b>Transitional</b>		
Number of Families with Children (Family Households):	30	67	6	68
a. Number of Persons in Families with Children:	96	198	21	200
b. Number of Single Individuals and Persons in Households without Children:	164	273	109	189
<b>(Add Lines Numbered 1 &amp; 2) Total Persons:</b>	260	471	130	389
<b>Part 2: Homeless Subpopulations</b>	<b>Sheltered</b>		<b>Unsheltered</b>	<b>Temporarily Living with Family or Friends</b>
	<b>Emergency</b>	<b>Transitional</b>		
a. Chronically Homeless	32	0	46	0
b. Mentally Disabled	53	178	52	64
c. Persons with alcohol and/or other drug problems	47	71	38	77
d. Veterans	21	27	29	18
e. Persons with HIV/AIDS	0	4	2	1
f. Victims of Domestic Violence	55	127	32	66
g. Unaccompanied Youth (Under 18)	14	22	7	51
h. Physically Disabled	33	40	25	29
i. Seasonal Agricultural Workers	0	1	0	0
j. Persons with both substance use and mental health problems	33	48	20	35
k. Senior citizens (aged 65 or older)	0	6	5	1

\*Due to missing data about shelter from some homeless count survey forms, these numbers may not exactly match those reported elsewhere in Whatcom County's 2007 Point-in-Time Count report. For example, we counted 1,298 homeless persons, but the total persons in Part 1 above equals only 1,250 because survey forms representing the remaining 48 persons lacked data on where that household sheltered the night before the count.