



City of Tacoma

Neighborhood and Community Services Department – Human Services Division

Impact Statement: Homelessness

Tacoma2025 Priority:

Human and Social Needs: *All Tacoma residents are valued and have access to resources to meet their needs.*

Definition:

The City of Tacoma recognizes the Department of Housing and Urban Development's definition (<https://files.hudexchange.info/resources/documents/HomelessDefinitionRecordkeepingRequirementsandCriteria.pdf>) of homelessness across all four categories, but will also recognize homelessness as a state of being including couch surfing, doubled-up, non-permanent, and unsafe.

Priority Areas:

The City will prioritize investments in systems that address homelessness for Tacoma residents:

- Solutions to eliminate street homelessness
- Solutions to housing youth and young adults

Issue Statement:

Tacoma has seen a dramatic increase in visible homelessness. The 2016 Pierce County Point in Time Count reported 1,762 individuals experiencing homelessness, an increase of 37% over the course of one year. Vulnerable populations are disproportionately represented and impacted by homelessness:

- 48% of the homeless adult population lives with some degree of mental illness and/or substance use disorder;
- 1 in 4 people experiencing homelessness were children under the age of 18 with the highest incidence occurring in grade school children;
- 28% experienced domestic violence;
- 66% identify as non-white (i.e., African American, Asian, Native American, Latino).

The Point-In-Time Count is an underestimation of the actual amount of people experiencing homelessness because it only accounts for people who have consented to being counted and are visible on the streets or in shelters. Missing from the count are those in institutional settings such as hospitals or jails, households or individuals that live with family and friends, or are couch surfing from one temporary home to another.

Despite the rise in homelessness, local shelter capacity remains the same. In 2015, an average of 800 individuals was provided shelter on any given night, with at least 140 individuals and 50 families being turned away each night. Shelter stay is meant to stabilize an individual or household so that a plan for connecting them to permanent housing options may be developed. However, it often becomes an extended stay averaging 90-120 days, which is at least 3 times longer than the intended 30 day stay.



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Impact Statement: Household Stability

Tacoma2025 Priority:

Human and Social Needs: *All Tacoma residents are valued and have access to resources to meet their needs.*

Definition

The City of Tacoma recognizes household stability as an individual or household's ability to obtain and maintain adequate resources to prevent involuntary relocation, loss of housing, and ultimately homelessness.

Priority Areas

For an at-risk household to stabilize and to thrive, barriers to household stability must be addressed. The City will invest in systems that provide solutions to increase household stability for Tacoma residents through:

- Behavioral health supportive services and treatment
- Foreclosure Assistance
- Food security
- Rent assistance
- Utility assistance
- Safety net services for Rapid Rehousing and/or individualized supportive services (e.g. MHSUD)

Issue Statement

Those facing the highest risk of being displaced from their living arrangement are the people who work entry-level jobs or live on fixed incomes (seniors or people with disabilities living on SSI). These individuals and households often live paycheck-to-paycheck, and an emergency, such as an increase in rent, illness, injury, or the loss of a job, destabilizes their households and leaves them vulnerable.

- *Housing Foreclosure:* As of April 2016, 1 in 945 homes in Tacoma were in foreclosure, a significant decrease from 1 in 542 in May 2012, but still higher than the state and national rates of 0.06% and 0.08% respectively. The loss of a home can lead to household displacement, doubled-up in smaller living quarters, and/or homelessness.
- *Lack of affordable housing:* Tacoma renters face a tight rental market with only 12 units of affordable and low-income rental housing available for every 100 households living at or below 30% of the area's median family income. The Tacoma Housing Authority reports that in 2015 there were 10,000 people on the waitlist to receive a subsidized housing unit, of which only 1,200 were chosen for available housing units. Housing affordability is a major factor causing households to make difficult financial decisions relating to their households welfare such as paying utility bills or putting food on the table. From October 2014 through October 2015, 12,530 Tacoma residents contacted South Sound 2-1-1 to ask for assistance. The most



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common requests were for utility assistance, rent assistance, and the availability of low-income and/or affordable housing.

- *Food security:* From 2011 to 2015, the number of foodbanks and meal sites serving Tacoma residents increased from 17 to 22 and served a total of 503,372 clients in 2015. More residents are relying on emergency food operations for their daily meals especially the most vulnerable populations, i.e. seniors and families with children.
- *Safety net services:* Families and households who transition from shelters to housing such as Rapid Rehousing are more likely than others to experience homelessness again within a one year time period. The recurrence of homelessness can be attributed to the lack of available and accessible safety net services that are designed to keep them housed. Those most likely to experience a recurrence of homelessness are the 48% of the homeless adult population living with some degree of mental illness and/or substance use disorder.