

# **Tillamook County**

## **10 Year Plan to End Homelessness**

## Understanding Homelessness in Tillamook County

Tillamook County Community Action Resource Enterprises, Inc. (CARE) conducted Tillamook County's first ever unsheltered point in time count in January of 2010. This count validated what many in the community had long felt to be true; Tillamook County has a large population of people experiencing homelessness. These people come from all age groups, all backgrounds, a variety of living situations, and are challenged by many social concerns. Not surprisingly, the population represented in Tillamook County closely mirrored the population all across the state.

The thing that *was* most surprising to those of us in Tillamook County was the raw numbers, 430 individuals in 267 households in 2010, 360 individuals in 241 households in 2011, and 414 individuals in 266 households in 2012; approximately 2% of the total population of Tillamook County was experiencing homelessness each year. Even more shocking and appalling, nearly one third of those people were children and young adults under the age of 23.

We looked more deeply at the household types with an eye to the young adults and found that while the state grouped those in their mid twenties with those up to age 44, Tillamook's numbers in that age group were skewed to the younger end. A large number of the single adults counted were under the age of 26, showing the strong tendency for young adults in Tillamook County to experience homelessness.

Total People by Age	2010	2011	2012
<18	106	93	110
18-23	81	76	96
24-44	101	118	136
45-54	41	50	45
55+	28	18	16
Unknown	73	5	11
<b>Total</b>	<b>430</b>	<b>360</b>	<b>414</b>

Household Types	2010 # of HH	2011 # of HH	2012 # of HH
Unaccompanied Pregnant Youth	0	1	0
Unaccompanied Youth	9	7	8
Single Adults	176	174	196
Couple without children	10	11	
One Parent Family with children	50	32	62
Two Parent Family with children	22	16	

The counts in 2010, 2011 and 2012 revealed that the most commonly reported causes of homelessness were the inability to afford rent and experiencing unemployment. These two reasons were followed by domestic violence and alcohol and drug use. The trend

Reasons for Homelessness
#1. Inability to afford rent
#2. Unemployment

toward economic causes of homelessness being at the top of the list is being seen across the state and the country during this recession. Prior to the recession domestic violence, drug and alcohol abuse, and mental illness typically topped the list.

Data from the counts all three years revealed that among those who reported where they would stay, the majority were doubled up with friends and family. Those who were

living in places not meant for human habitation were largely camping and sleeping in cars.

While the statistics look similar to those all across the state of Oregon, they alone do not tell the full story of homelessness in Tillamook County. In order to create a plan to end homelessness in Tillamook County we must also look at how the geography, the economy, availability of affordable housing and services impact the situation.

Highway 101, which travels from Washington to California, is the principal thoroughfare and a popular tourism corridor. It is also a thoroughfare commonly used by a transient population experiencing homelessness moving between the north and south portions of the west coast. Tillamook sees a strong influx of people experiencing homelessness during the summer months as people travel along the coast. Services for this transient population must be a part of Tillamook's plan.



The county is sparsely populated, home to just 26,170, according to the official 2010 estimate from the Population Research Center at Portland State University. The total land area is 1,125 square miles of mostly mountainous timberland, along with a strip of beach that stretches more than 70 miles from north to south. The population is concentrated along the Pacific Coast in small communities, the largest of which is Tillamook, home to 4,765 people.

Without large urban centers offering services and serving as gathering places, those who are homeless tend to be spread across the county and invisible. Tillamook, where most low-income housing and homeless services organizations are located, is the approximate mid-point of the county. To truly end homelessness services must be available throughout the length of the county.

Even before the current economic downturn, the Oregon Economic and Community Development Department classified the central portion of the county as “distressed” based on a combination of eight economic factors, including income levels and unemployment figures. The 2008 Poverty Report shows that in Tillamook one adult raising one child would need to make \$15.81 per hour to meet the basic family budget amount of \$32,880. It then goes on to say that most entry level jobs in Tillamook County, including retail sales persons, cashiers, home health aides and secretaries, all make significantly less than \$15.00 per hour.

There are a limited number of low income housing units in Tillamook County. CARE maintains a listing of apartments which identifies only 8 complexes that are specifically identified as “low-income” offering subsidies to remain affordable. If people are to rent

in the private market, the affordability tool available is the Section 8 Voucher program through the Northwest Oregon Housing Authority (NOHA). Unfortunately at the time of the writing of this plan there were only 140 active vouchers in Tillamook County with 270 people on the wait list.

This means that the majority of housing units are out of the reach of many of the people living and working in Tillamook County. According to the recently released Poverty Report 2010 from the Oregon Housing and Community Services Department, the median household income in Tillamook County for a renter is \$26,451. For those renters who earn the median income and below, 58% are classified as rent burdened or spending greater than 30% of their household income on housing costs.

CARE and a network of churches and community partners assist low to moderate income households in Tillamook County by providing eviction prevention through short-term rental assistance and also provide move-in assistance when funds are available. Unfortunately CARE is only able to serve 5 to 7 households per month. In order to end homelessness in Tillamook County, there is a need for an adequate supply of low-income housing as well as permanent supportive housing for those without income.

Housing specifically for those who are homeless is virtually non-existent in Tillamook County with CARE offering the only transitional and permanent supportive housing in the county. CARE has grants from HUD to provide 3 units of scattered site leasing transitional housing, and 5 units of scattered site leasing permanent supportive housing; a total of 8 units. These units remain perpetually full.

For those who are homeless the options for temporary shelter are also very limited in Tillamook County. The only homeless shelter is specifically for victims of domestic violence and is operated by the Tillamook County Women’s Resource Center (WRC). CARE provides the limited state funded homeless services that are available in Tillamook County; focusing on eviction prevention and rapid rehousing.. During the winter months CARE operates an inclement weather warming center, and also utilizes motel vouchers to provide shelter when funding is available.



**Shelter Options**

Pacific House Domestic  
Violence Shelter

CARE Warming Center

CARE and Partner  
Motel Vouchers

## **Development of the plan**

The numbers from the first unsheltered count were a wake up call to Tillamook County. CARE, Tillamook's local community action agency and Tillamook County Commission on Children and Families partnered to sponsor the Tillamook County Homeless Summit in July of 2010. The data from the count, in conjunction with state and federal level data, was used to plan a process by which interested local people could spend a day learning about best practices in response to homelessness and then work together to prioritize approaches for Tillamook County.

The summit drew 75 people to participate in the conversation. The summit was opened by Paul Carlson from the US Interagency Council on Homelessness, Peggy McGuire, Oregon Housing and Community Development, Mark Labhart, Tillamook County Commission, Marlene Putman Commission on Children and Families, and Erin Skaar, CARE. These individuals laid out the groundwork around homelessness at the federal, state and local levels.

There was a strong foundation laid in the area of housing first and housing solutions. The participants were encouraged to look at housing options rather than service options. Participants were told that if ending homelessness was to become a reality in Tillamook County they must look at where people will live first, then at how to provide them the other services that they need.

The summit then provided for breakout sessions in six categories: Affordable Housing, Chemical Dependency, Homeless Youth, Domestic Violence, Corrections Release and Veterans. Two breakout sessions were held in each area of emphasis allowing opportunities for people to attend two sessions during the day. In each session best practices from other communities were shared and approaches for Tillamook County were brainstormed.

Out of these sessions themes were identified and the approach to the plan was created. It was expected that each breakout session category would likely become an area of the plan. Interestingly the brainstorming took a different direction. There were 4 common themes that flowed through each of the categories/target populations that lead the plan to form in a different direction. The participants looked at the continuum of homelessness and identified needs for emergency housing, transitional/permanent housing, partnerships with private landlords, and better local coordination among service providers.

As these themes were further developed by local committees, it became clear that while Tillamook County needed to develop its own strategies, the goals aligned with both the state and federal plans in many ways. The goals set forth in this plan reflect the local input of the homeless summit and subsequent committee work as well as the goals of the state and federal plans to end homelessness.

The strategies as outlined for each of the goals were driven by those who were willing to continue to work on the process following the summit. As a small community with very limited resources the strategies that are being pursued at this time are those that people in the community believe in and have shown that they will put their energy into.

## **Goals/Strategies**

### **Goal 1. Expand, develop and coordinate the supply of affordable housing and supportive services to prevent and end homelessness.**

1. Expand and preserve the supply of housing choices and opportunities including appropriate service models.
2. Re-house and move people into permanent housing as quickly as possible.

### Previously Existing Programs

- Home TBA – provides rental subsidy for 5-7 families each year in scattered site transitional housing.
- CARE CoC Transitional Housing – provides 3 units of scattered site leasing for up to 24 months
- CARE provides financial move-in assistance and short term rental assistance as funding allows

### New Programs

- CARE CoC Permanent Supportive Housing - 5 new units of scattered site leasing permanent supportive housing
- God's House – Worksite and housing tentatively sited
- House of Grace Transitional Housing – house complete in Tillamook for 5 women
- Grant awarded for Shelter Resources to refurbish Meadow Glen Apartments with State of Oregon housing dollars.
- County awarded grant funds to support transitional housing for inmates released from jail through the Probation Department.

### Programs in the Planning Stages

- CARE is working with NOWCDC (a non-profit housing development agency) to do a community analysis of needs that will hopefully lead to a housing project application to the state in the next three years.
- CARE and Tillamook County Women's Resource Center continue to seek funding for 4 units of scattered side leasing transitional housing for survivors of domestic violence.
- CARE and TFCC are beginning to seek funding for housing units for those with mental illness and those in recovery.
- Tillamook County Board of Commissioners and CARE will begin conversations with local jurisdictions, Northwest Oregon Housing Authority and Community Action Team about the future development of housing in Tillamook County.

**Goal 2. Expand, develop and coordinate the emergency response network for those experiencing homelessness.**

1. Establish emergency warming centers.
2. Develop day-time drop in centers for those experiencing homelessness.
3. Utilize volunteer support for emergency responses.

Previously Existing Programs

- CARE and local churches provide emergency shelter in motels for 1-2 nights
- WRC provides emergency shelter for victims of violence in safe house settings
- WRC operates Pacific House Shelter for victims of violence

New Programs

- Warming center for the winter was implemented in December of 2011
- Project Homeless Connect event outreaches to those experiencing homelessness and providing clothing, tents, tarps, etc.

Programs in the Planning Stages

- City of Tillamook included a homeless shelter as a need in their strategic plan.
- Team Tillamook looking as a building for combined retail and housing/sheltering
- CARE is doing research is into options for unaccompanied youth sheltering

**Goal 3. Develop and coordinate education for, and relationships among, tenants and landlords.**

1. Implement tenant education programs.
2. Establish a rent guarantee fund.
3. Educate landlords and property management companies.

Previously Existing Programs

- CARE works with local management companies and landlords to place homeless clients into housing

New Programs

- Northwest Oregon Housing Authority has begun to offer tenant readiness classes in Tillamook County.

Programs in the Planning Stages

- Developing a group with landlords to educate and collaborate
- Developing a funding risk pool to use with landlords to encourage them to take a risk on homeless clients with a poor rental history

**Goal 4. Identify and implement systems improvements for coordination at the program awareness, funding and delivery levels.**

1. Create a local homeless coalition including a broad base of support including political, government, law enforcement, medical, business, and social services.
2. Inventory all available housing and support resources in Tillamook.

3. Identify gaps and advantageous partnerships.

Previously Existing Programs

- Individual agencies communicate as needed to assist homeless clients

New Programs

- CARE CoC Permanent Housing Program includes many community partners for referrals and for support services
- Project Homeless Connect event outreaches to those experiencing homelessness and providing clothing, tents, tarps, etc.

Programs in the Planning Stages

- Developing a Continuum of Care with a broad representation of agencies to discuss specific client needs and system needs to better work together