

H O M E L E S S N E S S   I N   K I N G   C O U N T Y

# Safe Harbors

January - December 2007



City of Seattle Human Services Department  
King County Department of Community & Human Services  
United Way of King County



**Dear Friend:**

**Safe Harbors**, our countywide Homeless Management Information System, was developed to help us learn more about who is homeless in our community and what we can do to help. By gaining a better picture of those who are homeless — who they are, where they were living before, how many times they have needed emergency services, and how they fare after they receive help — we can do a better job preventing homelessness from happening and helping those men, women, and children who do become homeless find safe, permanent housing and the support they need to live stable lives.

This report summarizes a year of data collected through Safe Harbors. It follows the report we issued in December 2007, which was the first analysis of six months of data from the system, giving us a great deal of information about who is in need and how we can respond.

We collected more **than 19,000 client profile records** from publicly funded emergency shelters and transitional housing programs in King County during 2007. After adjusting the database to account for the fact that some people were served by more than one program and that not all client records had complete information, we have analyzed in this report a total of **nearly 9,000 people** who were served by emergency shelters or transitional housing programs during 2007. Over time, Safe Harbors will report on a larger range of homeless services.

Of those who were served, nearly **22% of single individuals were identified as struggling with chronic homelessness**; nearly **40% of adults served reported that they had some type of special need**, such as a physical disability, mental illness, or chemical or alcohol dependency; and **more than 1,000 of those served were children from over 650 families**. Those families who shared information about their income reported a median monthly income of \$648, less than 15% of our area's median income.

During 2007, **8,745 exit records were collected in the Safe Harbors system**. Although most of those records did not provide information on clients' destinations, nearly 25% of the records that contained information indicated that clients had found subsidized housing, and 20% reported that clients had found unsubsidized housing.

Safe Harbors is an important tool as we work to end homelessness. It gives us crucial information that we can use to identify trends, point to problems, and determine the best way to respond. Over the coming months, we will continue to work with our partners in the community to expand the system and learn more about the outcomes of people who leave our emergency services: knowing more will help us do more to serve those in need and, ultimately, to end homelessness.



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# S U M M A R Y

## What is Safe Harbors?

**Safe Harbors** is King County's web-based Homeless Management Information System (HMIS). It is used to collect and analyze information about people who are homeless and the services they use. Safe Harbors is managed by the City of Seattle's Human Services Department, and is a joint project of the City of Seattle, King County's Department of Community and Human Services, and United Way of King County.

This report summarizes data collected during 2007 by 170 participating emergency shelter and transitional housing programs within King County. Staff at these programs used the Safe Harbors database to collect information about the people they serve.

The 170 programs that provided information for this report are a subset of 245 programs that operate publicly funded supportive services, including emergency shelter, transitional housing and permanent housing within King County. This report analyzes data only from emergency shelter and transitional housing programs; future reports will provide information on a wider range of supportive services for those who are homeless.



## Findings

Based on information from 2007\* from 170 participating emergency shelter and transitional housing programs, we have learned that:

- **More than 19,000 client records** were collected at those programs during 2007. Some of these records were from people who sought help from multiple programs; and some of these records did not contain enough information to be analyzed. After accounting for these issues, the dataset that was developed for this report contained records on **nearly 9,000 people**.
- **Just over 25% of those seeking emergency assistance were served in family groups; the remaining 75% were single individuals.** Overall, including both single individuals and adults in families, women made up 29% of adults served.
- **More than 1,555 single individuals were identified as chronically homeless.** A person who is chronically homeless is a single adult suffering from a disabling condition who has been homeless for a year or had four episodes of homelessness in three years.
- **More than 1,700 single women were served during 2007.** Of these women, 52% who provided their age were older than 35.
- **More than 1,750 client records** were collected for services provided to children during 2007. Accounting for families who used more than one program and records that did not contain enough information to be analyzed resulted in a dataset of more than **1,000 children in over 650 families** who are analyzed in this report. The average age of these children is 8, and nearly 700 of them are school age and may need extra support to stay in school. Families who reported their income had a median monthly income of \$648, less than 15% of the area's median income for a family of three.
- **People of color are over-represented among the homeless population.** While Caucasians make up over 75% of the county's population, only 54% of individuals and 27% of family members who provided information to Safe Harbors programs are white. African Americans are the largest ethnic minority in the system, at 36% of single individuals and 55% of family members, compared with 5% in the county's population overall.

*\*All information collected for Safe Harbors is carefully managed and fully encrypted to protect privacy.*



- **Veterans are over-represented among the homeless population.** Approximately 15% of the single individuals served identified themselves as being veterans, compared with 10% in the overall county population. Nearly 100 veterans reported their age as 34 or younger, meaning they are likely veterans of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.
- **Those who are homeless tend to have less education.** Of those who reported information about their educational level, more than 40% of single individuals, 36% of adults in families, and 49% of single women lack either a high school diploma or a GED, compared with 5% of the overall county population.
- **Many of those in the system were homeless before they sought help from a Safe Harbors program.** Approximately half the clients who were served reported their last place of residence. Of those who reported this information, 24.9% of single individuals and 7.9% of families reported that their last residence was a place not meant for habitation, such as a car or outdoors.
- **Safe Harbors programs collected 8,745 exit records during 2007.** Although most of those records do not contain information on clients' destinations, nearly 25% of the records that do contain information indicate that the client had found subsidized housing, and 20% report that the client had found unsubsidized housing.

## Next Steps

The information presented here tells us a great deal about those who used emergency shelters or transitional housing services in King County during 2007. These findings will be used by local decision-makers, service providers, stakeholders, partners, and members of the public as we strive to do more to address the causes of homelessness and help those who have become homeless.

It is critical that agencies ensure the data being collected on each client served is full and complete. If we are unable to accurately represent the true extent of homelessness, it will undermine the efforts of our community to provide an effective safety net of homeless services. As data collection improves, we anticipate that we will see increases in the number of clients who have been served. We will also be able to provide a more comprehensive analysis of the needs of people served by the homeless system, what happens to people once they leave the system, how they transition to new programs, what gains they make while receiving services, and what barriers they continue to face.

During late 2008, a greatly enhanced and improved Safe Harbors HMIS will be made available to providers to help us learn more about the long-term outcomes of people who leave the homeless services system. This new system is highly anticipated by service providers as a tool that will provide them with the ability to meet external reporting requirements from a variety of funding entities. The transition to the new Safe Harbors system will begin in October 2008, with full participation by current user agencies by January 2009. The focus during 2009 will be to bring on all additional agencies beyond shelter programs that are required to participate because they receive funding from the City of Seattle, King County, or United Way, as well as those not required to participate, further broadening the scope.

# WHAT IS SAFE HARBORS?

## Why was Safe Harbors developed?

Safe Harbors is King County’s web-based Homeless Management Information System (HMIS). It is used to collect and analyze information about people in King County who are homeless and to learn more about the emergency services they use. Safe Harbors is managed by the City of Seattle’s Human Services Department, King County’s Department of Community and Human Services, and United Way of King County.

Safe Harbors was developed to follow our progress toward our goal of ending homelessness in King County and also in response to Federal and State requirements. Local jurisdictions must have an HMIS to be competitive for Federal McKinney-Vento funding and for Washington State Department of Community, Trade & Economic Development homeless service funds.

## Status of Safe Harbors

Homeless services agencies receiving funding from the City of Seattle, King County, or United Way are required to enter information about their clients into the Safe Harbors database. (Programs that do not receive public funding, and programs that provide confidential domestic violence shelters are not required to participate in Safe Harbors, although the Safe Harbors partners are working with these agencies to increase their participation. In addition, unaccompanied youth under 18 are not counted in the Safe Harbors database due to privacy concerns.) During 2007, a total of 170 publicly funded programs in the countywide Continuum of Care participated in Safe Harbors.

**This report analyzes information on emergency shelter and transitional housing programs.** Information about other homeless services will be analyzed in future reports. The 170 programs analyzed in this report enter data into Safe Harbors in one of two ways: direct **HMIS Data Entry**, on a real-time basis; or **Data Integration**, once a quarter.

**HMIS Data Entry:** HMIS Data Entry: 133 programs with 3,709 beds entered data directly into the Safe Harbors database in real time. With client approval, this information can then be shared with other agencies.

**Data Integration:** 40 programs with 3,581 beds already had information systems in place when Safe Harbors began. These programs use their existing systems and upload their data to Safe Harbors once a quarter. In analyzing Safe Harbors data, it was generally more difficult to obtain individual identifying information or client details – such as veteran status – from data integration records.

**Figure 1: Participation in Safe Harbors HMIS 2007**

	HMIS Data Entry	Data Integration	Did not participate	Total
<b>Total # of beds</b>	3,709	3,581	1,127	<b>8,417</b>
<b>Total % of beds</b>	44%	43%	13%	<b>100%</b>
<b>Total # of programs</b>	133	40	72	<b>245</b>
<b>Total % of programs</b>	54%	16%	30%	<b>100%</b>

*Note that the total number of beds does not include beds in domestic violence shelters.*

## WHO IS HOMELESS IN KING COUNTY?

The Safe Harbors database sorts people into two basic categories: individuals and families.\* During 2007, a total of **19,000 client records** were collected by publicly funded emergency shelters or transitional housing programs. From this set of client records, Safe Harbors staff created a dataset based on information about people who were served. This dataset was adjusted to account for the fact that some records represented people who were served by more than one program, and some records did not contain enough information to be analyzed.

These adjustments led to a dataset of **7,036 single individuals** and **1,930 members of 665 families** who were identified as served by publicly funded emergency shelters and transitional housing programs in King County during 2007.

The analysis dataset on this total of 7,036 single individuals and 1,930 family members is printed in the Appendix.

### Single Individuals

During 2007, **more than 14,000 client records** were collected on services provided to single individuals by publicly funded emergency shelter and transitional housing programs in King County. Accounting for the fact that some people were served by more than one program and some records did not contain enough information to be identified resulted in an analysis dataset of **7,036 single individuals**. Over time, we will work with participating programs to decrease the number of those who cannot be identified, so that our analysis will be more complete.

Single individuals who used Safe Harbors services are predominantly male (72%), though include a substantial number of single women seeking services as well.

Nearly 40% of these individuals reported that they had a disability or other special need. Those who reported their income (from employment, public benefits, pensions, or other sources) have a median monthly income of \$339.

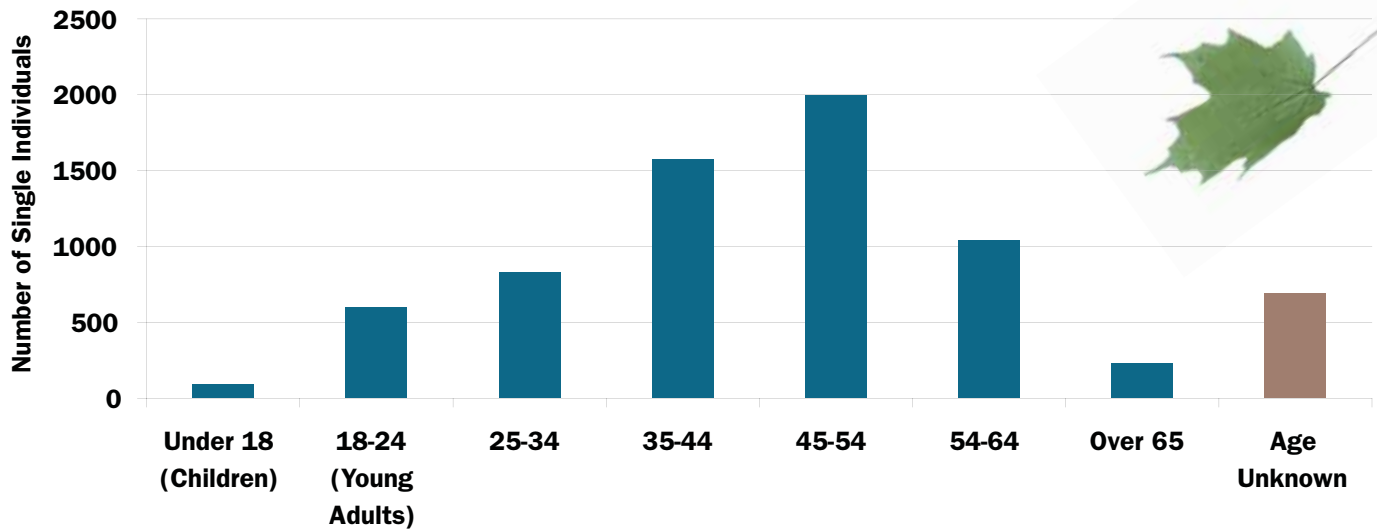
**Figure 2: Single Individuals Served by Emergency Shelters and Transitional Housing, 2007**

Client Records	People	Percent
Male	5,086	72.3%
Female	1,737	24.7%
Unknown	213	3.0%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>7,036</b>	<b>100.0%</b>



*\*Families are defined as two adults seeking services together, or one or two adults and their dependent children.*

**Figure 3: Age of Single Individuals Served, 2007 (n=7,036)**



The average age of single individuals served who provided information is 43.6 years. Individual women average slightly younger at 41.1 years, although 52% of single women are 35 or older.

As the age distribution chart shows, most single individuals served are between 35 and 64 years old. However, 598 of these individuals are young adults aged 18 through 24 (8.5% of those who provided age information) who may need special supportive services to learn to live independently. In addition, a number of the individuals served are over 65 (227 or 3.2% of those who provided information) and may need health and social support services.

### Families

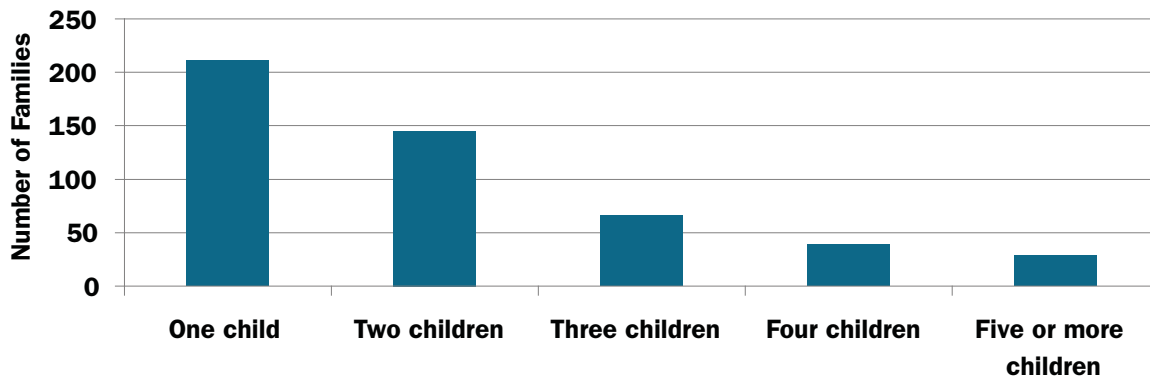
During 2007, a total of more than **3,200 client records** were collected on family groups served by publicly funded emergency shelters or transitional housing. From this total, as for single individuals, Safe Harbors staff created an analysis dataset that accounted for the fact that some family members were served by more than one program and some records did not contain enough information to be analyzed. For 2007, this analysis dataset included **1,930 family members in 655 families**.

Just under half these family members are adults (43.3%). Adult members of families are predominantly female (70%) and are predominantly single parents, while the gender distribution of children is nearly 50-50. The average family has two children.

**Figure 4: Family Members Served by Emergency Shelters and Transitional Housing, 2007**

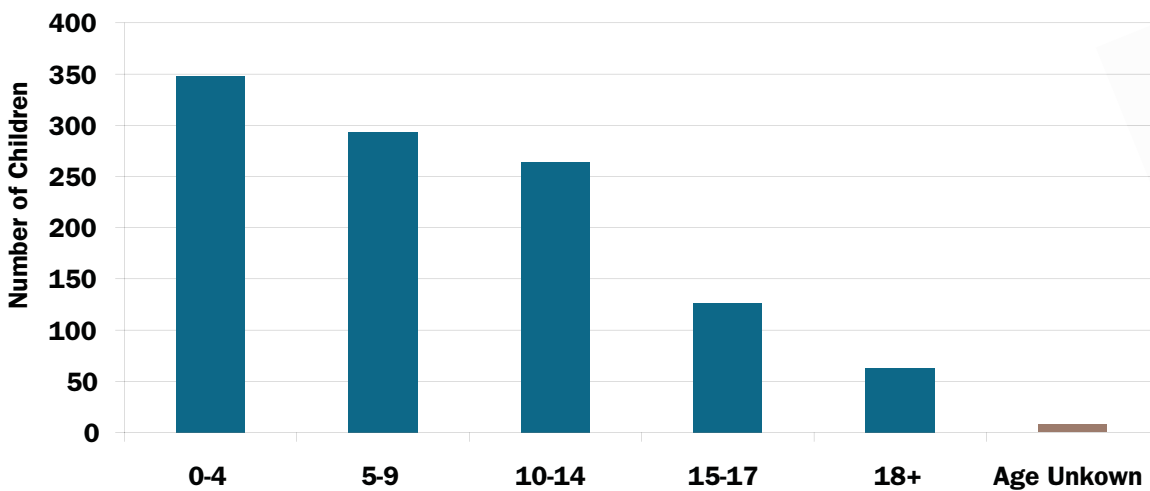
Client Records	Adults	Percent	Children	Percent
Male	230	27.8%	559	50.7%
Female	578	69.9%	520	47.1%
Unknown	19	2.3%	24	2.2%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>827</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>1,103</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

**Figure 5: Number of Children in Families, 2007 (n=490 families)**



Of the 1,930 family members identified through the Safe Harbors dataset, **1,103 are dependent children**. The average age of children served is 8 years, and, as the age distribution chart below shows, a majority of these children are school age (66%) and thus may need support to find a school, stay in school, and keep up with schoolwork even as their families attempt to regain stability. Just over one-third of children are under age 5 (34%); their families may need help with parenting, child care, and health care.

**Figure 6: Age of Children in Families Served, 2007 (n=1,103)**



*Note that 63 young adults 18 and older entered Safe Harbors as dependent child members of a family group and are accounted for here rather than in the section on young adults.*

Of the 827 adults in families who were served, 4% were under 18, 15% were 18-24, and 63% were between 25 and 44. Young parents may need parenting help and additional support to learn to live independently.

## Chronically Homeless Individuals

According to the U.S. Department of Housing & Urban Development, a person is defined as being “chronically homeless” if he or she has a disabling condition and has been continuously homeless for a year or more or has had at least four episodes of homelessness in the past three years. Based on this definition, Safe Harbors program staff identified **1,555 single individuals as chronically homeless** during 2007 (22% of all single individuals in the analysis dataset). Those who have been chronically homeless likely need supportive services in addition to housing to help them address their disabilities and succeed in permanent housing.

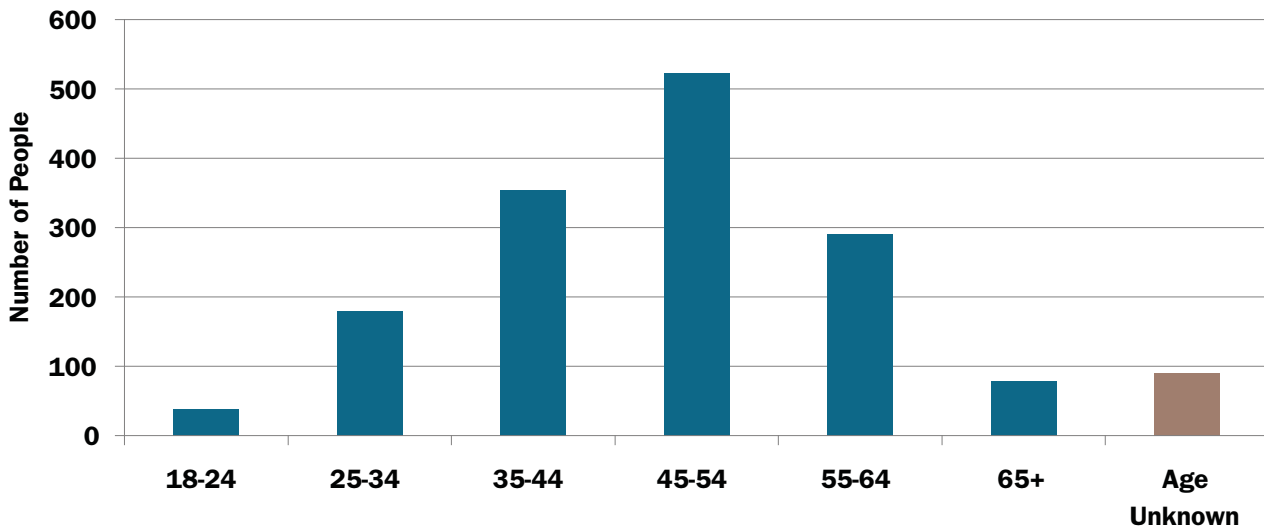
The gender makeup of those who are chronically homeless is much the same as for the general population of individuals who are homeless: most (69%) are men, but just over a quarter (29%) of them are women. This proportion may change as participating programs become more proactive about identifying clients who are chronically homeless.

**Figure 7: Chronically Homeless People Served by Safe Harbors Programs, 2007**

Gender of Chronically Homeless	People	Percent
Male	1,066	68.6%
Female	455	29.3%
Unknown	34	2.1%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1,555</b>	<b>100%</b>

The age of those identified as being chronically homeless is slightly higher than for the overall population of single individuals (46.9 years vs. 43.6 years, for those who provided information).

**Figure 8: Age of Those Identified as Chronically Homeless, 2007 (n=1,555)**



## Veterans



Of the 7,036 single individuals in the analysis dataset, **1,086 (15.4%) identified themselves as veterans**. Because this was a self-identification, the actual number may be higher; however, even at this level, this number is higher than the proportion of veterans in the overall county population, meaning that veterans in King County are more at risk for homelessness.

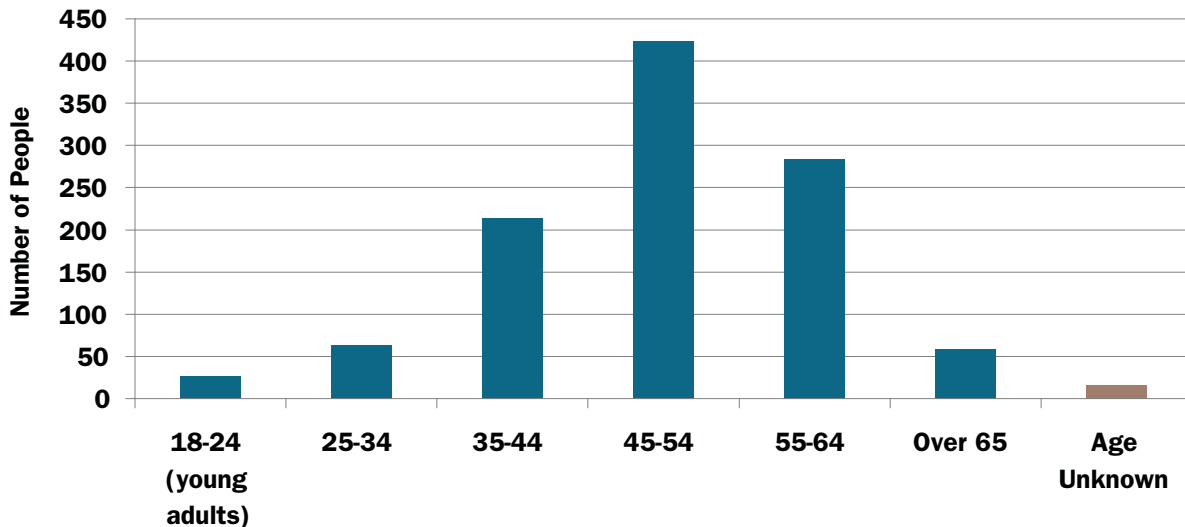
Veterans served by Safe Harbors programs are almost exclusively men (95%).

**Figure 9: Veterans Served, 2007**

Gender of Veterans	People	Percent
Male	1,035	95.3%
Female	37	3.4%
Unknown	14	1.3%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1,086</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

The age of veterans served is somewhat higher than for other single individuals who are homeless, with an average age of 49.3 compared with 43.6 for the group of single individuals as a whole. Just under a third of them (31.9%) are over age 55 and are potentially Vietnam-era veterans; 8.4% of them are 34 or younger and may be veterans of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

**Figure 10: Age of Veterans Served, 2007 (n=1,086)**



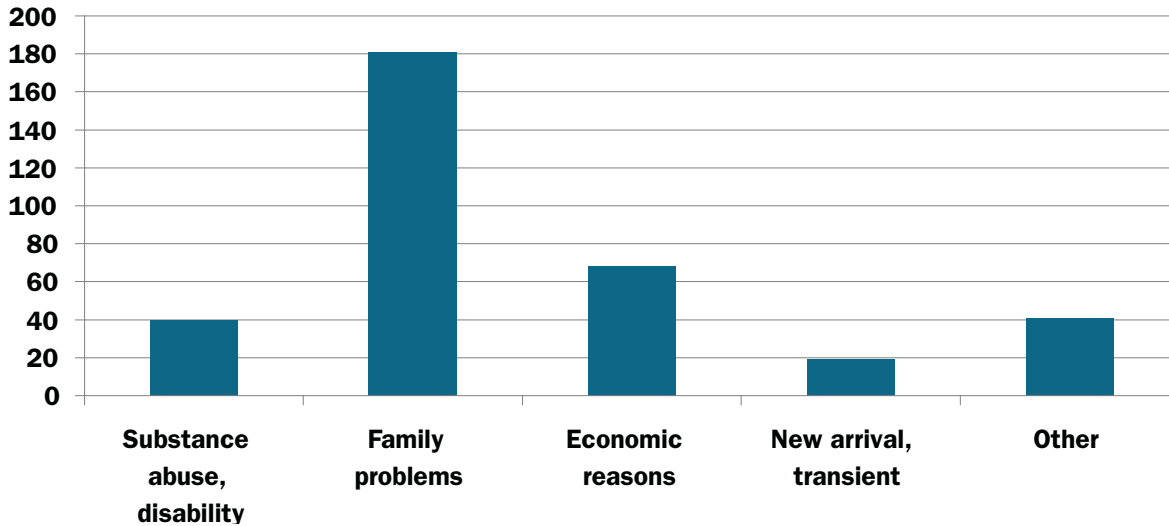
## Young Adults

Of the 7,036 single individuals in the analysis dataset, at least **598 are young adults** aged 18 through 24 (8.5% of all single individuals who provided information on their age). Information on youth under 18 years of age is limited due to “Informed Consent” restraints: unless they are legally emancipated, those under 18 cannot give informed consent. This would require parent or guardian approval, which is unlikely. As a result, information was collected only on individuals 18 or older.

Young people who become homeless have often left home before graduating from high school (50% of young adults who provided information lack a high school diploma or GED) and may need help learning to live independently.

Young adults who were served were asked to identify the reasons they had become homeless. Clients were able to identify more than one reason. A family problem (a family crisis, domestic violence, or displacement) was the most commonly identified reason for homeless, and was chosen as a reason nearly 200 times by young adults who were served.

**Figure 11: Young Adult Reasons for Homelessness, 2007**



Note that clients were able to identify more than one reason for homelessness.

Approximately the same proportion of these young adults are female (31.3%) as in the larger group of all single individuals who were served (32%).

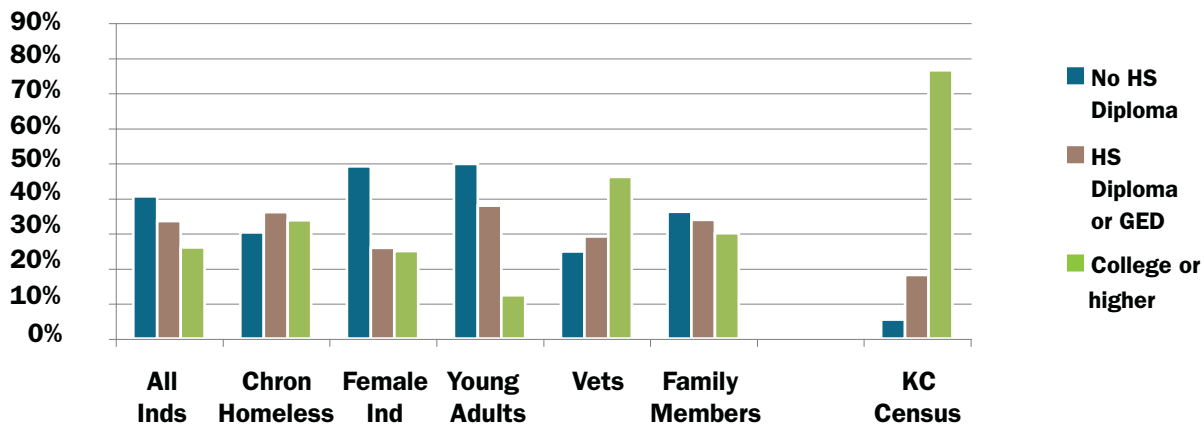
**Figure 12: Young Adults Served, 2007**

Gender	People	Percent
Male	392	65.5%
Female	187	31.3%
Unknown	19	3.2%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>598</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

### Education Levels

Approximately 12% of those served provided information on their level of education. The information these clients provided shows that people who are homeless are, in general, less educated than the general population. Of those who provided information, 41% of single individuals lack either a high school diploma or GED, compared with 5% of the overall, countywide population. Young adults who are homeless are less educated: a full 50% of young adults who provided information lack a high school diploma or GED.

**Figure 13: Education of Those Served, 2007 (n=863 for All Individuals, 260 for Family Members)**



Note that not all clients provided information. Percentages shown in this figure are based only on the 863 individuals and 260 family members who provided information, rather than on the full analysis dataset.

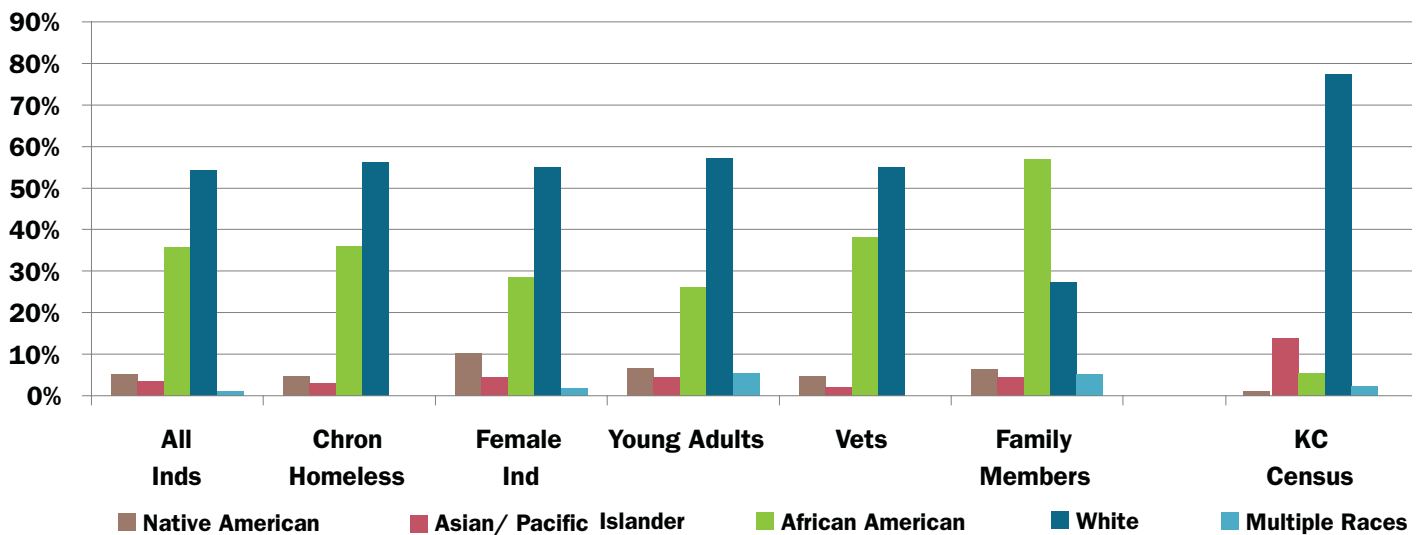
## Race

Approximately 75% of those who were served provided information on their race. Of those who provided information, people of color are over-represented among the homeless population. Although Caucasians make up 77% of the overall population in King County, only 54% of the single individuals and 27% of the family members who provided information on their race are Caucasian. African Americans are the largest ethnic minority in the system, at 36% of single individuals and 55% of family members. By comparison, they make up only 6% of the population in King County.

632 individuals and 166 family members identified themselves as Latino or Hispanic, suggesting that more than 9.0% and 8.6% respectively of these populations are of Latino or Hispanic origin. This is considerably higher than King County census estimates of 5.5%.

Information collected by Safe Harbors on race is similar to that collected through the 2008 Annual One Night Count of people who are homeless. The One Night Count identified 40% of people as African American, compared with 36% for Safe Harbors; 45% as White or Hispanic, compared with 54% for single individuals served by Safe Harbors; 4% as Asian/Pacific Islander, compared with 4% for Safe Harbors; and 3% as Native American, compared with 5% for Safe Harbors.

**Figure 14: Race of Those Served, 2007 (n=5,416 for All Individuals, 1,299 for Family Members)**



Note that not all clients provided information. Percentages shown in this figure are based only on the 5,416 individuals and 1,299 family members who provided information, rather than on the full analysis dataset. Information on Hispanic/Latino origin is tabulated separately as per the U.S. Census Bureau.



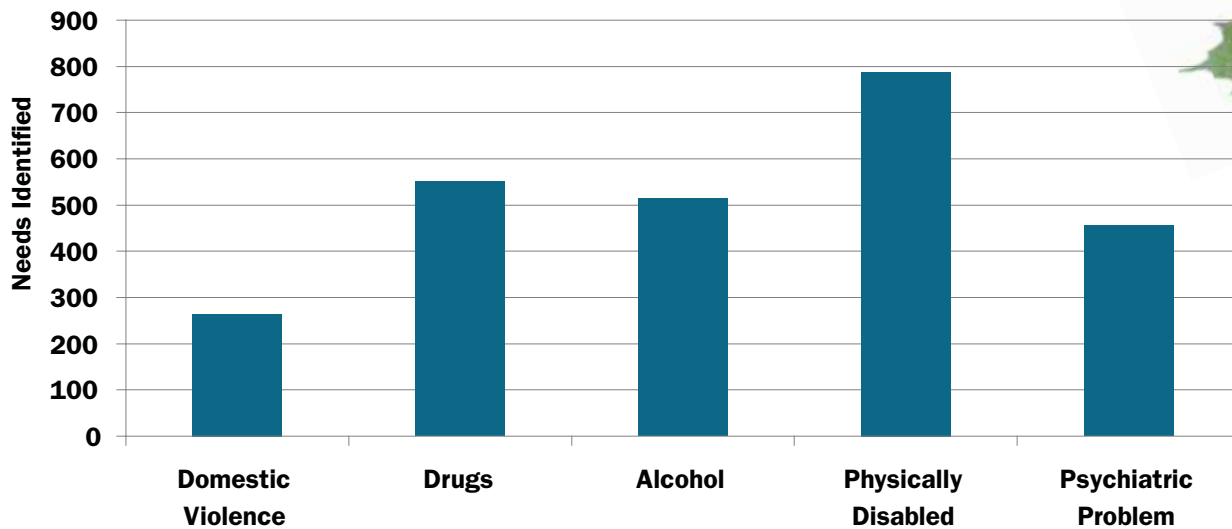
## Special Needs

Many of those who were served indicated that they were dealing with special needs. In all, those reporting a special need included: 37.7% of single individuals overall; 63.7% of individuals identified as being chronically homeless; 47.3% of single females; 29.4% of single young adults; 30.9% of single veterans; 29.8% of adults in family members; and 6.2% of children in families.

Clients were able to identify more than one special need, and could also note that they had no special needs. Among veterans and those identified as being chronically homeless, physical disability was the most commonly reported special need; among young adults, psychiatric problems was the most commonly reported special need; and among adults in families it was domestic violence.

The special needs of those served included drug and alcohol dependency, domestic violence, psychiatric problems, and physical disabilities. This chart below shows the basic categories of special needs that were identified by single individuals served by Safe Harbors. Note that it was possible for a person to report more than one special need, or to report that they had no special needs; thus, totals of special needs identified do not conform to the total numbers of people served.

**Figure 15: Reported Special Needs of Single Individuals, 2007**



*Note that clients could identify more than one special need.*

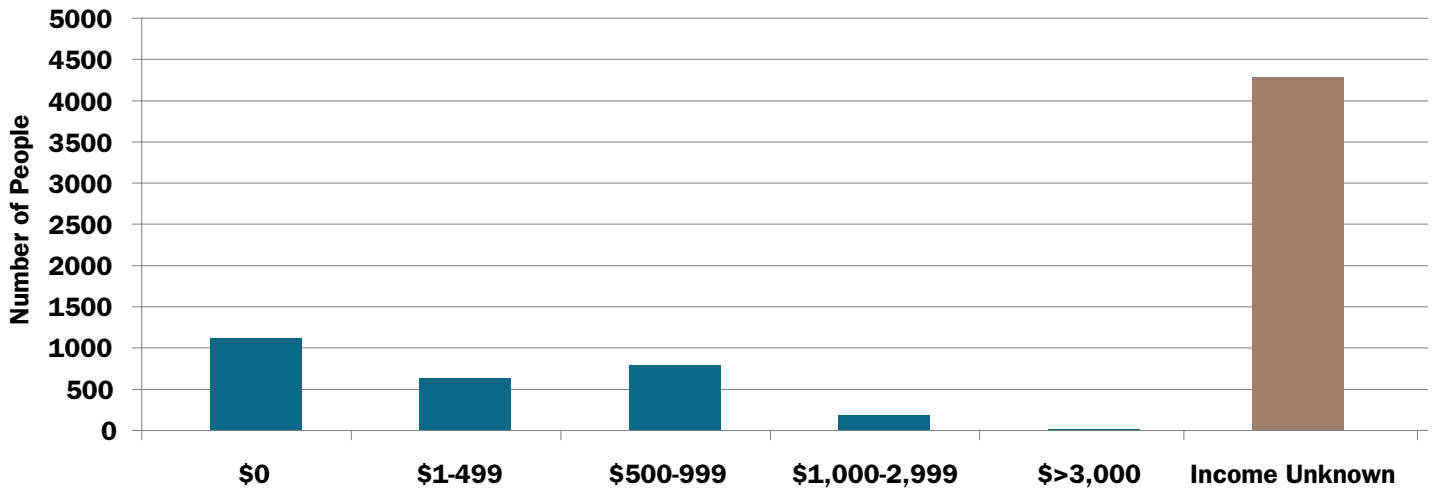
## Income

Approximately 40% of those who were served provided information on their income level. For those who reported their income, the median monthly income is \$339 for single individuals and \$648 for families.

This translates into a gross income of \$4,068 per year for single individuals and \$7,776 for families, less than 10% of the area's median income for a one- or three-person household. Those earning less than 50% of median income are considered to be low income and are eligible for subsidized housing assistance.

As the chart shows, 64% of the homeless single individuals who provided information on their income live on less than \$500 a month, and another 29% live on \$500 to \$999 a month, for an income of less than \$12,000 a year.

**Figure 16: Single Individuals' Income at Intake, 2007 (n=7,036)**



Those who provided information listed a wide variety of sources of income that included wages employment, unemployment insurance, public benefits, disability payments, and pensions.

**Figure 17 : Sources of Income, 2007**

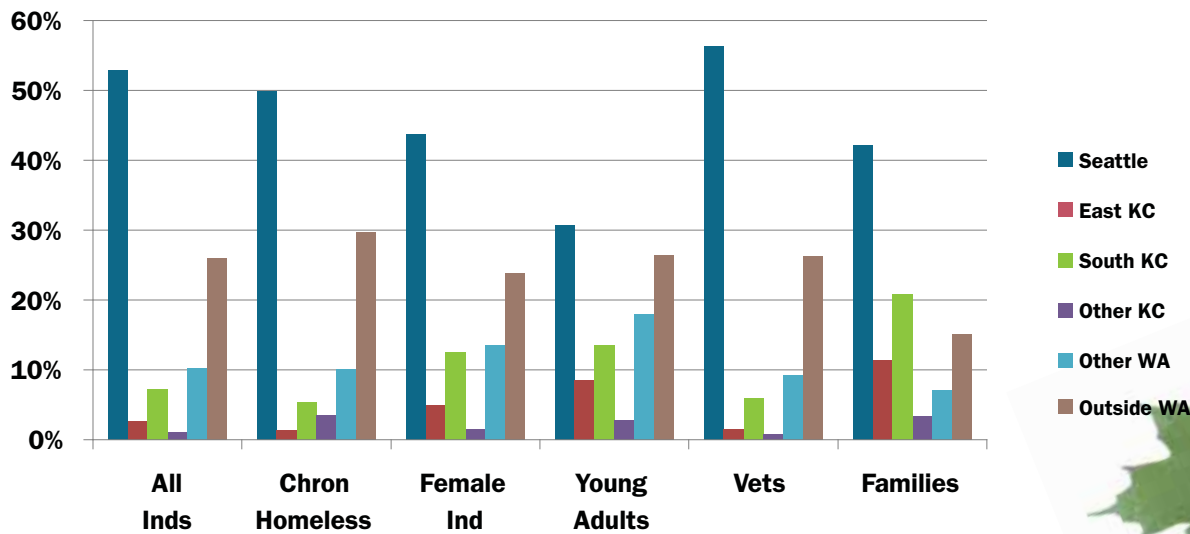
Single Individuals (n = 1,707)	Number with this source	Family Members (n = 577)	Number with this source
Alimony, spousal or child support	-	Alimony, spousal or child support	34
Employment	288	Employment	130
General Assistance	459	General Assistance	24
Pension/retirement (not incl. Veterans' Administration)	63	Pension/ retirement (not incl. Veterans' Administration)	-
Supplemental Security Income/ Social Security Disability Insurance	689	Supplemental Security Income/ Social Security Disability Insurance	62
Temporary Assistance for Needy Families	39	Temporary Assistance for Needy Families	270
Unemployment insurance	24	Unemployment insurance	11
Veterans disability or pension	50	Veterans disability or pension	-

*Please note that income categories are not mutually exclusive.*

## Location of Last Residence

Those served by Safe Harbors programs were asked to report the location of their last permanent residence. Approximately half of those served provided this information. As the chart shows, 64% of single individuals and 78% of families who provided information reported that they last lived somewhere in Seattle or King County. However, approximately 26% of single individuals and 15% of families who provided information noted that they were from outside the state. The majority of those who provided information reported a last residence in Seattle: 53% of individuals and 42% of families. Elsewhere in King County, while only 3% of all individuals noted that their last place of residence was East King County, 8% of young adults and 11% of families had last lived on the Eastside. And, while only 7% of individuals reported South King County as their last place of residence, 21% of families reported that they had last lived in South King County.

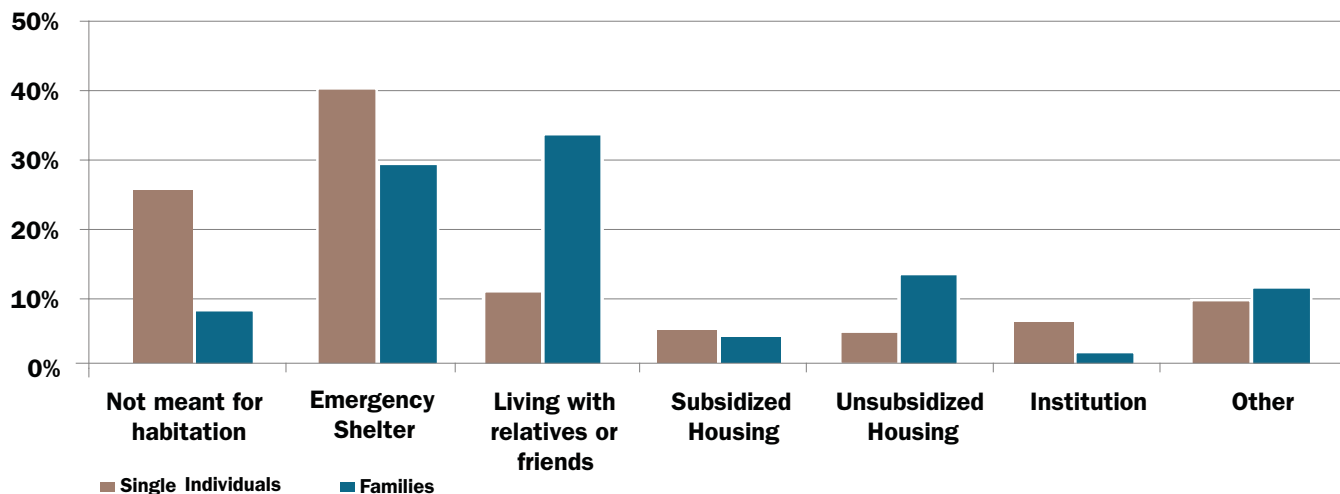
**Figure 18: Last Permanent Residence, 2007 (n=3,536 for All Individuals, 535 for Families)**



Note that not all clients provided information. Percentages shown in this figure are based only on the 3,536 individuals and 535 families who provided information, rather than on the full analysis dataset.

Of the Safe Harbors clients who reported their type of last residence 24.9% of single individuals and 7.9% of families reported that their last residence was a place not meant for habitation (such as outdoors or in a car).

**Figure 19: Last Type of Home, 2007 (n=4,325 for Single Individuals, 546 for Families)**



Note that not all clients provided information. Percentages shown in this figure are based only on the 4,325 individuals and 546 families who provided information, rather than on the full analysis dataset.

# DASHBOARD MEASUREMENTS

The Committee to End Homelessness in King County developed four Dashboard Measurements to learn how well our community is doing at meeting our goal of ending homelessness. Data from Safe Harbors will provide updates to these measurements.



## Reduce the number of people who are homeless in King County.

This goal will be measured by the percent reduction in the number of people who are unsheltered or in shelters and the number of people in transitional housing programs.

Baseline information for this measurement has been identified as the 2006 One Night Count, which was conducted on January 27, 2006 by the Seattle/King County Coalition for the Homeless. The 2006 baseline was identified as: 1,946 people unsheltered, 2,463 people in emergency shelter, and 3,501 people in transitional housing.

Safe Harbors does not provide an estimate of the number of people who are living unsheltered, those in domestic violence shelters, or those in shelters that do not use public funds; it accounts only for those who use publicly funded emergency shelters or transitional housing. In addition, it should be noted that while One Night Count information is a snapshot of three hours in time, Safe Harbors records show use of emergency programs throughout the entire year. For January through December 2007, Safe Harbors identifies the following first recorded use of Safe Harbors services:

**Figure 20: Client Records Entered into Safe Harbors (Shelters, Transitional Housing), 2007**

	<b>TOTAL</b>
Single Individuals	5,176
Family Members	1,078
Families	369

*Note: A count of uniquely identifiable clients upon first entry into the system.*

Not all of these clients became homeless for the first time during 2007; this number reflects, in part, the fact that many programs are still relatively new to Safe Harbors. This information will become more comprehensive over time, as more programs use Safe Harbors and have used it for a long enough time that we can identify patterns among those who have become homeless.

We are working to gather more comprehensive information on the number of people who used emergency shelters and the number who used transitional housing programs. Because many people used multiple programs over the course of the year, it is difficult to obtain a single number. We estimate that during 2007, 87% of individuals and 62% of family members used emergency shelters, with the remainder using transitional housing programs.

**Figure 21: Program Use by People in Safe Harbors Programs, 2007**

	<b>Emergency Shelter</b>	<b>Transitional Housing</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
Individuals	6,087	949	7,036
Family Members	1,181	749	1,930
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>7,268</b>	<b>1,698</b>	<b>8,966</b>

## Prevent people from experiencing homelessness in King County.

This goal will be measured by the percent reduction in the number of people who have become homeless for the first time.

As the section on last residence described, approximately half of those served by Safe Harbors provided information on their last place of residence.

Many Safe Harbors clients who did provide this information noted that they were already homeless when they registered with Safe Harbors. Of those who provided information on their last residence, 24.9% of single individuals and 7.9% of families reported that their last residence was a place not meant for habitation (such as outdoors or in a car).

Of those who shared information on the type of housing they had before they became homeless:

- 5% of individuals and 13% of families who provided information reported that their last place of residence was unsubsidized housing;
- 5% of individuals and 4% of families who provided information reported that their last place of residence was subsidized housing; and
- 6% of individuals and 2% of those in families who provided information reported that their last place of residence was an institution (such as prison, a hospital, or foster care).

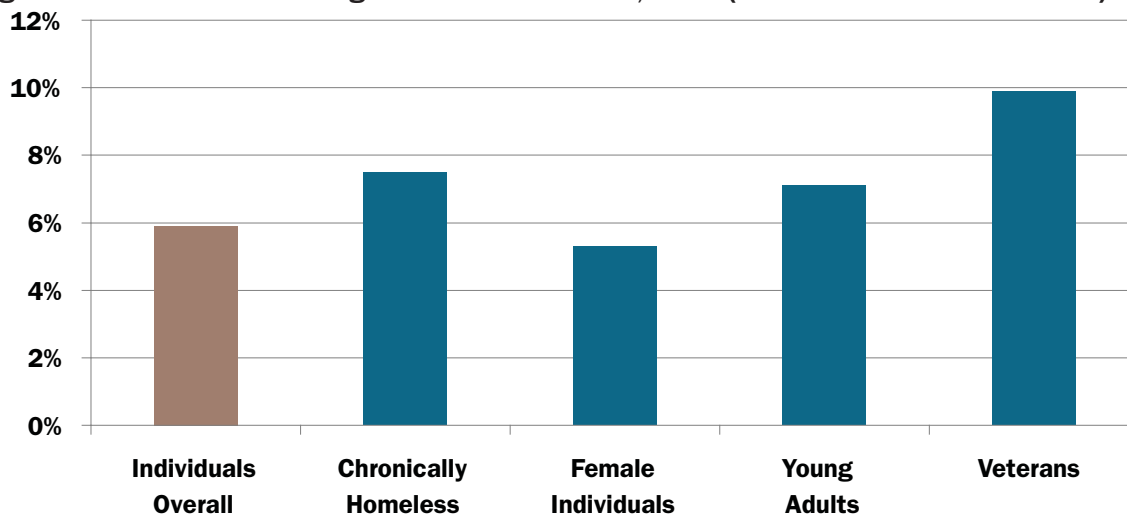
## Reduce the number of people discharged into homelessness.

This goal will be measured by the reduction in the number of people who are discharged from an institution or foster care into homelessness.

Six percent of the single individuals who provided information reported that their last residence was an institution. These individuals had been released from jail, prison, or a juvenile detention facility; left or “aged out” (at age 18) of a foster care home; or were released from a hospital or a psychiatric or substance abuse treatment facility into homelessness.

This problem affects some groups more than others: veterans and those who have been identified as chronically homeless are more likely to have been discharged from an institution into homelessness. They may cycle between institutions and homelessness unless they can find appropriate supportive services. Of young adults served by Safe Harbors, 7% had been discharged from an institution. Young people who become homeless may have “aged out” of foster care upon turning 18, or been released from a juvenile detention facility.

**Figure 22: Individuals Discharged from an Institution, 2007 (n=255 for Individuals Overall)**



Note that approximately 6% of single individuals indicated that their last place of residence was an institution. This chart shows the variation within that group of people among subgroups of the population of single individuals.

## Improve housing success for people who move into permanent housing.

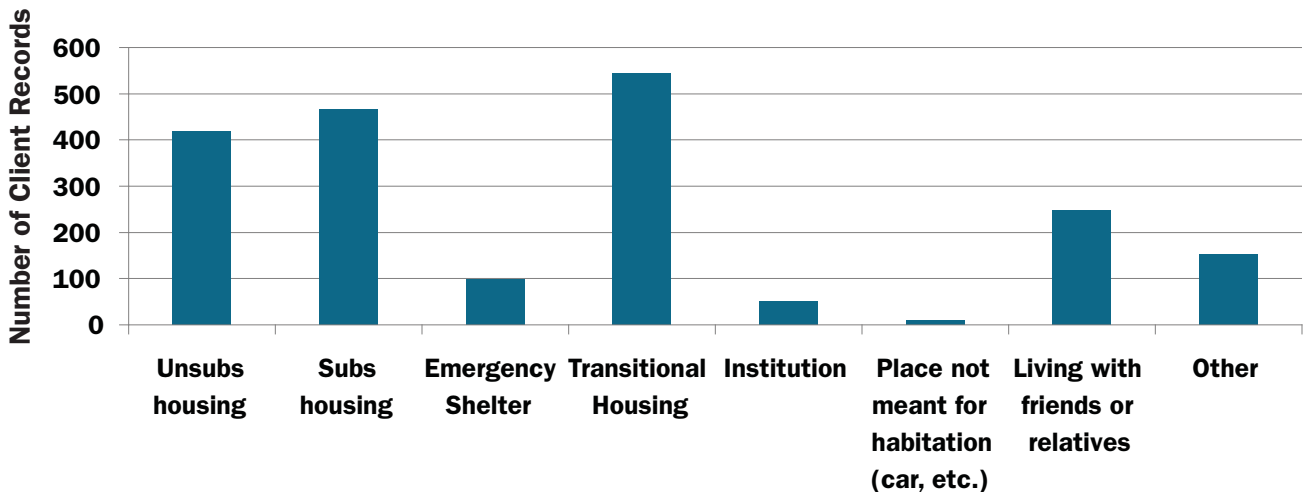
This goal will be measured by the increase in the number of people who maintain housing for two years; and by the reduction in the number of people who return to the homeless system.

Because this report is the first to analyze a year of Safe Harbors data collection, it is too soon to know how people who leave Safe Harbors programs will fare over time. In addition, because Safe Harbors currently reports only on those who are using emergency services, it currently does not provide long-term, comprehensive information about those who move on to permanent housing or other destinations.

During 2007, a total of 8,745 client exit records were collected by the Safe Harbors system. Most of these records (77.2%) do not contain destination information. For the remaining 1,991 records that were collected on clients exiting the system:

- 32.3% of records indicated clients were moving to a different shelter or to transitional housing;
- 23.5% of records indicated clients had secured subsidized housing;
- 21% of records indicated clients were moving to unsubsidized housing; and
- 12.5% of records indicated clients were going to live with friends or relatives.

**Figure 23: Exits from Safe Harbors, 2007 (n=1,991 client records)**



*Note that this chart shows only client records marked as exiting the system that provided destination information; 77% of exit records did not include destination information. Note also that because many clients were served by more than one program this information on exit records refers to records rather than individual people.*

Moving beyond the emergency services analyzed by Safe Harbors, organizations around the region have been working to provide permanent, supportive housing for those who have been homeless. Since 2005, local governments, United Way and philanthropic organizations have funded 1,175 units of housing for those who are homeless. Another 1,059 units are currently in the pipeline and will be completed by 2010. In addition, approximately 2,300 already existing housing units (that were developed before 2005) serve those who have been homeless. These units will help provide permanent homes for many people who are currently using Safe Harbors services.

# A NOTE ON SAFE HARBORS DATA

The information summarized in this report represents a new analysis of Safe Harbors data collected by 170 emergency shelter and transitional housing programs King County from January through December 2007. It will become our benchmark for future analysis. To create this report, a dataset was prepared for people who used Safe Harbors services during 2007. The process of developing the dataset was affected by several issues, which our new system will enable us to address more effectively in future years.

## Use of Multiple Programs


Approximately 28% of clients served by Safe Harbors agencies during 2007 were served by more than one program during the course of the year. Staff devoted a great deal of time to accounting for clients who were served by multiple programs to ensure that they would not be counted more than once in the dataset. With the new HMIS system coming on line late 2008, we anticipate that we will be better able to analyze this issue in more depth. We also expect that agencies will be better able to enter their data into the system and thus provide us with more complete and higher quality information.

## Informed Consent

State law requires clients to “opt in” to allow identifying information to be entered into the Safe Harbors database. As a result, not all records contained identifying information, and some records did not include enough information to be used in this report.

**Figure 24: Information Provided to Safe Harbors, 2007**

Information Provided	HMIS Data Entry Agencies	Data Integration Agencies
First and Last Name	90.1%	57.3%
Social Security Number	25.9%	43.0%
Race	98.7%	47.1%
Gender	96.9%	47.8%
Date of Birth (entire)	81.8%	41.3%
Birth Year	86.8%	57.4%



Program staff collecting information for Safe Harbors are assisting people whose lives are in crisis. It is not always possible to collect all the details of a client’s situation at initial intake. In addition, we understand clients’ reluctance to provide identifying information. However, we are working vigorously, both on the design and in the ongoing management of Safe Harbors, continue to ensure that all information collected is securely protected and fully encrypted. We will continue to address this issue with Safe Harbors agencies as the improved Safe Harbors system is launched.

## Limitations on who is counted

Safe Harbors is the most comprehensive effort to date to understand who is homeless in King County. But it does not count everyone. Safe Harbors collects information about people who use publicly funded emergency shelters or transitional housing. Permanent housing programs and other homeless services have not yet been analyzed. Domestic violence shelters and services that do not receive public funds do not currently participate in Safe Harbors. In addition, Safe Harbors does not account for people who are homeless but living in a car, on the streets, or doubled up with others, who do not use shelter, transitional housing, or other related homeless services. Our goal, as we implement the new HMIS is to expand participation by privately funded agencies.

## NEXT STEPS

The information presented in this report represents the first analysis of a year of Safe Harbors data. As we continue to operate and improve Safe Harbors, we will publish updated information and analysis.

During 2009, local providers will begin using a new and improved Safe Harbors system, an expanded HMIS developed by Adsystem. It will allow us to report more fully on all emergency services. This new HMIS will include an expanded array of tools upon its release, including a self-sufficiency matrix, comprehensive outcomes measurement, and new reporting and data querying tools to help us learn more about the long-term outcomes of people who leave the homeless services system. This new tool will provide local programs with a comprehensive client assessment tool that is easy to use and coordinated with a broad range of public and private funders. We expect that this will result in increased agency participation and broad data coverage across King County. If we are to truly end homelessness, it is imperative that we have the data necessary to make educated and informed policy decisions, which we will be able to do with a more robust tool.

This new system is highly anticipated by service providers as a tool that will provide them with the ability to meet external reporting requirements from a variety of funding entities. A great deal of work has gone into coordinating reports across the City and the County both in the public and private arenas to reduce the reporting burden agencies currently bear.

We will also begin the process of approaching those providers who are not required to participate in Safe Harbors with the goal of incorporating their services data as well.

The transition to the new Safe Harbors system will begin in October 2008, with full participation by current user agencies by early 2009. The focus during 2009 will be to incorporate all additional emergency shelter, transitional housing, and permanent housing providers that are required to participate because they receive funding from the City of Seattle, King County, or United Way.

The Safe Harbors partners will continue to work with agency program staff to improve the quality and scope of the data while at the same time ensuring there are adequate safeguards in place to protect the privacy of those who are served.

Safe Harbors has already told us a great deal about who is homeless in King County, what services they are using, and what additional help they need. It will continue to be a valuable tool in our work to end homelessness.

Information from Safe Harbors will be used to provide regular updates for local elected officials, human services providers, stakeholders, and members of the community so that we can measure our progress in each of the areas identified as critical for ending homelessness in King County.





Our goal as a community is to end homelessness – not manage it.

Safe Harbors is a crucial part of this effort.  
With better information, we will be able to understand who is homeless  
and determine how we can help.

**Safe Harbors is a project of**

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King County Department of Community & Human Services  
United Way of King County

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