



City of Seattle  
Edward B. Murray, Mayor

**Human Services Department**  
Catherine L. Lester, Director

**Date:** February 1, 2016

**To:** Seattle City Council

**From:** Catherine Lester, Director

**Subject:** Homeless State of Emergency Implementation Plan

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On November 2, 2015, Mayor Edward B. Murray, along with King County Executive Dow Constantine, declared a civil state of emergency on homelessness. This state of emergency was prompted by the growing crisis in Seattle, a crisis which is also being felt in other communities along the West Coast and across the nation.

While Seattle is fortunate to be in the midst of a building boom and dramatic economic expansion, there continues to be a sharp rise in the number of people living unsheltered in our city, either in cars, in tents or on the street. In the most recent One Night Count that occurred last week (On Friday, January 29, 2016 between 2 and 5 a.m.), there were 2,942 unsheltered people counted in Seattle. This is a 35% increase since 2012 when there were 1,898 unsheltered people counted in Seattle.

The State of Emergency (SOE) response was organized according to three main categories: 1) prevention efforts, 2) encampment outreach, and 3) targeted shelter to address basic needs. These categories informed the six investment areas that are the basis of the SOE response and which are described in the Implementation Plan; they are:

1. Shelter beds and services
2. Encampment outreach and clean-up
3. Rapid re-housing and diversion
4. Targeted vehicle response
5. Seattle Public Schools (children experiencing homelessness)
6. Mobile medical van

The Human Services Department (HSD) allocated more than \$40 million to services addressing homelessness in 2015. With the one-time allocation for the SOE response, the department's 2016 budget for services addressing homelessness is more than \$47 million. As the number of unsheltered people in our community continues to grow, so does the amount of local funding allocated by the City to address this problem. This highlights the importance of engaging our state and federal partners in this crisis, and for our commitment to address long-term, systemic changes that ensure we are investing in what works.

In March 2015, the department published the *Homelessness Investment Analysis* report which summarized an analysis of the City's current investments and laid out key opportunities for systemic improvement. These opportunities are noted below:

- **Opportunity to Shift Service Models:** Majority of investments are for basic intervention services, with less “upstream” for prevention, diversion, and rapid housing access.
- **Opportunity for Funder Alignment:** Improving investment alignment within HSD as well as with other funders will support our shared goals in addressing homelessness.
- **Opportunity for Greater Strategic Focus:** Establishing a strategic policy and investment framework that includes predictive modeling for making investments decisions.
- **Opportunity for Greater Contract and Service Efficiencies:** Streamlining contracting practices to reduce administrative burden and ensure strong stewardship for results and outcomes.
- **Opportunity for Enhanced Data and Evaluation Capacity:** Use data-informed practices and evaluation to achieve contract performance and compliance goals, as well as impact for clients.

While the current homelessness crisis requires immediate action to address the needs of people living unsheltered in our community, systemic transformation will require discipline and dedication for achieving the goals of being more client-centered, using data to inform investments and practice, and aligning local efforts with our regional and federal partners.

The SOE Implementation Plan provides important insights that should inform the City's focus on addressing the systemic issues that contribute to the growing crisis of homelessness in our community. I look forward to the opportunity to brief City Council about this important work and our next steps in addressing this crisis.

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Attachment: Homeless State of Emergency Implementation Plan (February 1, 2016)