



# HOUSING FIRST

A model to address homeless persons with serious mental illness

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# Objectives

- Define the model of “Housing First” and understand its applicability to persons experiencing homelessness
- Review medical literature on Housing First models and its effect on management of serious mental health disorders
- Become familiar with local community resources and examples of Housing First models in Seattle

# Why I care about housing:



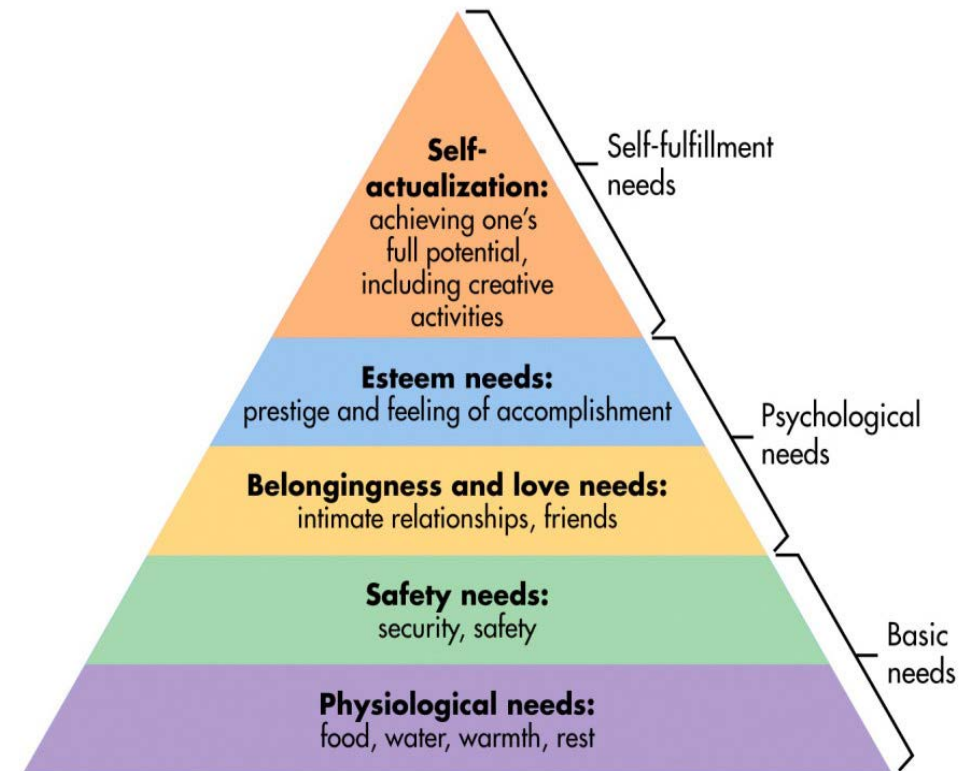
Downtown Department of Public Health

My patients stories:

- VS
- RW
- LR

# What can we do about it?

- “Housing First” model
  - Presumption: Once patients achieve housing stability, they are better prepared to address their physical and mental illness
- In contrast to “Housing Readiness”

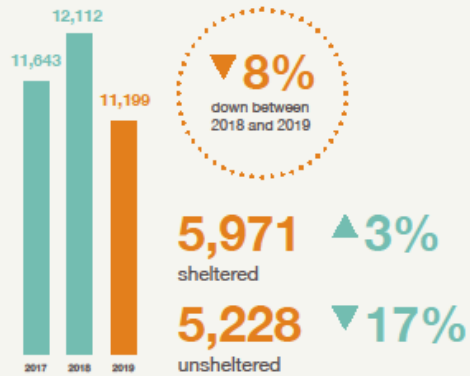


# Homelessness in King County 2019



# 11,199

people were experiencing homelessness in King County on January 25, 2019.



## By the numbers.

**2,451** ▼ 7%  
individuals in families with children

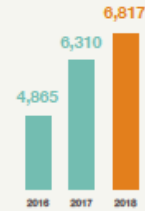
**830** ▼ 10%  
veterans

**1,089** ▼ 28%  
unaccompanied youth and young adults

**82** / 1089 ▼ 52%  
minors

## We are housing more people every year.

**17,992**  
total exits to permanent housing from our system in the last 3 years:



## Join us.

Preventing and ending homelessness takes the whole community. Take action:

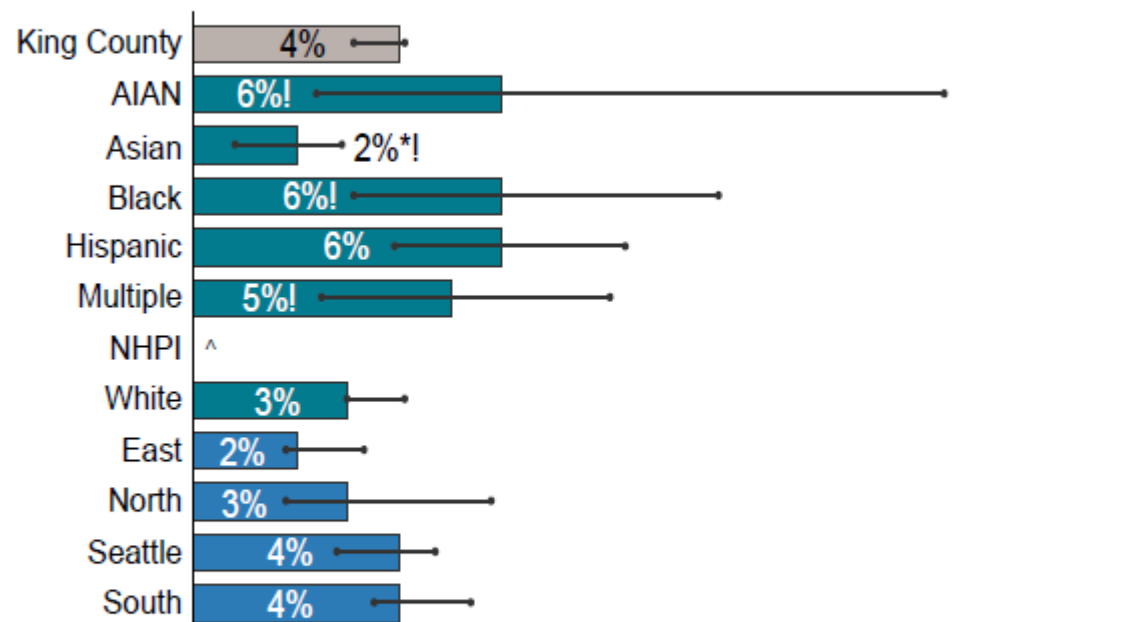
- Say hello
- Speak up
- Share time
- Rent or hire

For more information on Count Us In, visit [AllHomeKC.org](http://AllHomeKC.org)

All data from Count Us In 2019 and the King County Homeless Management Information System (HMIS)

In partnership with **stalom**

## Serious psychological distress (adults) King County (average: 2011-2015)



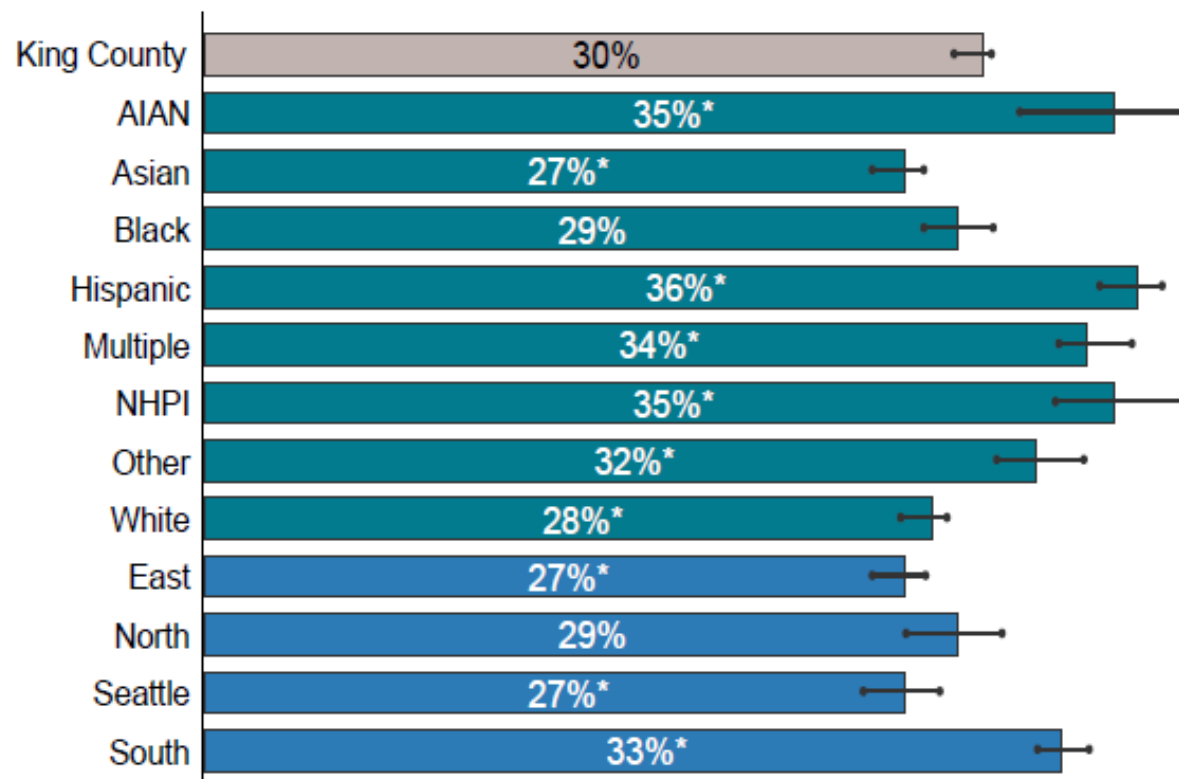
Source: Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System

\* Significantly different from King County average

! Interpret with caution; sample size is small, so estimate is imprecise

^ Data are suppressed if too few cases to protect confidentiality and/or report reliable rates

## Youth with depressive feelings (school - age) King County (average: 2014 & 2016)



Source: Healthy Youth Survey

\* Significantly different from King County average

# Chronic Homelessness

- Persons who have been:
  - Continuously homeless for 1 year or more
  - Experienced 4 episodes of homelessness during the last 3 years
- Sleeping in a place:
  - Not meant for human habitation (streets)
  - In an emergency shelter



# Housing First History

- Funding at a national level
  - Supportive Housing Program
  - Shelter Plus Care Program
- 1992: NYC: Pathways to Housing
- 1994: Seattle: DESC (Downtown Emergency Service Center), Union Hotel
  - Started with 300 clients and about 300 units of housing





# Core Principles of Housing First

- Direct placement of targeted homeless people into permanent housing
- Assertive outreach to engage and offer housing
- Low barriers admissions policies
- Few to no programmatic prerequisites
- Support services are typically available
- “Relapse” does not result in clients losing housing
- Tenants usually pay 30% of their income for rent
- Continued work by case management to hold housing for clients

# Economic Savings in the Seattle

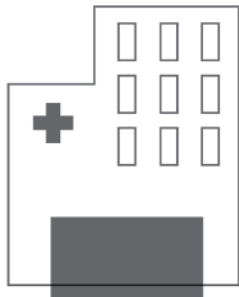
How do Plymouth's costs compare?

The same funding can buy vastly differing stability, support, and time:

# Economic Savings in the Seattle

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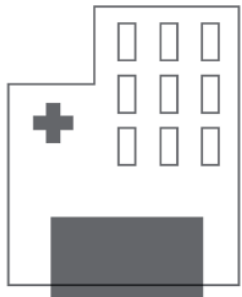


3 Days  
AT HARBORVIEW

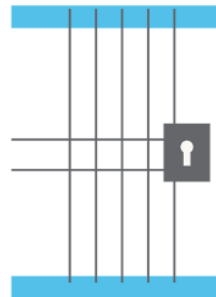
# Economic Savings in the Seattle

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The same funding can buy vastly differing stability, support, and time:



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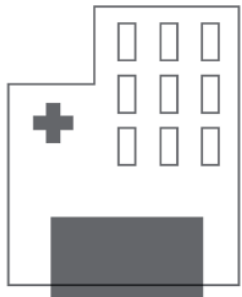


3 Months  
IN A KING COUNTY JAIL

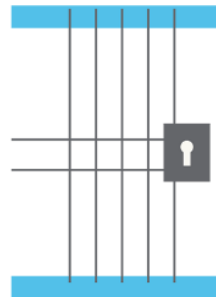
# Economic Savings in the Seattle

## How do Plymouth's costs compare?

The same funding can buy vastly differing stability, support, and time:



3 Days  
AT HARBORVIEW



3 Months  
IN A KING COUNTY JAIL



One Year  
AT PLYMOUTH HOUSING GROUP

# First study in mental health + Housing First

- **2007:** HUD first published about mental health and Housing First
  - 90% (n=60) met criteria for psychiatric conditions
    - 72% (n=43) had schizophrenia or other psychiatric conditions
    - 27% (n= 16) had mood disorder
  - Found that over 12 months after housing, 43% self-reported improvement in their symptoms



# First study showing retention of housing

- **2009:** HUD again published on housing stability among those with mental health problems
  - 84% (n=67) met criteria for psychiatric conditions
  - Found that over 12 months after housing, no significant self-reported improvement in their symptoms
  - **However, 84% remained housed**, which was seen as a positive predictor of future success (remainder died, were incarcerated, or needed more intensive care)

# Decreased utilization of inpatient resources

- 2016: Researchers from DePaul University and King County examined the effects of a DESC single-site (case control) Housing First program vs “usual community care”
- Every tenant had 2+ psychiatric hospitalizations in the past year
- Some tenants came from long-term street homelessness
- Housing First tenants:
  - **High housing retention (90%) and a significant (44%) reduction in days hospitalized**
- Comparison group:
  - 35% permanently housed and 23% **increase** in days hospitalized

# Outpatient effectiveness

- Very limited data supporting improvement in mood disorders
- 2010: Quasi-experimental difference-in-difference study in San Diego, CA from 2005-2008
  - 363 clients with severe mental health + homelessness
  - 209 received HF vs 154 clients received public mental health services

# Outpatient effectiveness, continued

- Housing First saw substantial **decreases** in the following:
  - Mean number of days spent homeless per year
  - Inpatient service usage
  - Emergency services
- Outpatient mental health visits increased by 78 visits
- Outpatient costs increased by \$9,180
- Inpatient costs declined by \$6,882, ER services declined by \$1,721, and Jail services declined by \$6,141

# Seattle's Housing First Models

- DESC, Plymouth Housing, and Compass Housing
- Housing placement is coordinated by King County's CEA:
  - Used to use the "Vulnerability Assessment Tool" to place clients
  - Now use the "VI-SPDAT"

# DESC (Downtown Emergency Services Center)

- Founded in 1979
- Opened its first HF model in 1994, The Union
  - Seattle's first HF model
  - The nation's third HF model
  - Housed 52 residents
- Today, own >1,400 units of Housing First housing



# DESC's "Estelle" Apartment



# DESC's "West Wing" housing





# Plymouth Housing

- Founded in 1980s
- Opened its first HF model in 2004, with a renovation of the historic
- Today, own >1,400 units of Housing First housing



# Plymouth housing in First Hill



# Compass Housing Alliance

- Founded in 1920 by a couple from Sweden
  - Rev. Otto and Mrs. Alva Karlstrom
  - Started as Lutheran Sailors and Loggers Mission in Pioneer Square
- Currently expanding services and developing properties with a Housing First Approach



# Resources for patients and for yourself:

- Downtown Emergency Service Center (DESC) Main Office
  - 515 Third Avenue, Seattle, WA 98104
- Plymouth Housing Rental Office
  - 2113 Third Avenue, Seattle WA 98121
- AllHome King County
  - Holds annual workshops on Housing First Models
- [HUD website](#)

# Need for future research

- Much energy surrounding Housing First models, but more research is needed
  - Mood disorders
  - Longer term studies needed
  - Independent/third party research groups needed

# Take Home Points

- Homelessness is a real problem in King County, with 11,199 people in our community without a home earlier this year
- One model for long term housing is the Housing First model, which is focused on low-barrier housing with few strings attached and many wrap around services
- This model has been shown to be effective financially and is a SAMSHA evidence-based model for health
- There are many examples of physically attractive Housing First buildings in our neighborhood of First Hill, and many resources for you and your patients
- There is still much research to be done in this field

# Citations

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