

Media Advisory – January 30, 2012

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Homeless count shows increase over last year

Early data collected during last week's annual Point in Time homeless count show a slight increase over numbers collected during 2011.

During Thursday's count, numerous volunteers spent the day and early evening gathering information on Snohomish County's homeless population. This year's total – still incomplete – shows 2,382 individuals in 1,401 households without a permanent place to stay.

This compares to last year's final count of 2,273 individuals in 1,385 households. Of the individuals counted this year, an estimated 829 were homeless children under the age of 18; 115 were homeless veterans; and 381 said they were victims of domestic violence.

"While there are signs that the national economy is improving, we're still seeing the effects of the Great Recession," said Snohomish County Executive Aaron Reardon. "We must find new ways to help families without a home as well as those on the brink of losing their homes."

Homeless numbers for 2012 can be divided into three categories: those sheltered in an emergency shelter or transitional housing, those that are unsheltered and on the streets and those that are precariously housed (often referred to as "doubled up temporarily" or "couch surfing").

Those sheltered for the night of the count totaled 1,336 individuals in 662 households. This is compared to 1,352 individuals in 672 households for the 2011 count. There were 723 individuals in 541 households who did not have shelter. This compares to 587 individuals in 493 households for the 2011 count. Finally, an additional 323 individuals in 198 households were precariously housed. This compares to 334 individuals in 220 households for the 2011 count.

County staff and members of the Homeless Policy Task Force will spend the next month closely studying and verifying data from the Point in Time count, comparing numbers and demographics collected during past years while looking for trends.

"Statistics gathered will help the county determine how different populations are affected by homelessness as well as better ways to help them," said Ken Stark, Snohomish County's Human Services director.

The Point in Time count is a federal requirement. The results help ensure that vital federal and state funding continues to come into the community to fight homelessness.

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