

Media Advisory – Jan. 29, 2009

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Initial homeless count numbers show slight decrease

Early data collected during Thursday's annual Point In Time homeless count show only a slight decrease over numbers collected during 2009.

Volunteers spent the day and early evening gathering data on Snohomish County's homeless population. This year's total – still incomplete – shows 2,291 individuals in 1,279 households without a permanent place to stay. This compares to last year's final count of 2,356 individuals in 1,469 households.

Of those households, an estimated 822 homeless children under the age of 18 were counted.

“Nobody should have to be without a permanent home,” Snohomish County Executive Aaron Reardon said. “With today's economic crisis, we must not only find homes for those without, but we must help those families on the brink of losing their homes.”

Numbers for 2010 initially can be divided into two categories. Those staying in shelters and transitional housing the night of the count totaled 1,383 individuals in 661 households. This is compared to 1,246 individuals in 614 households for the 2009 count. An additional 908 individuals in 618 households who were surveyed on the street identified themselves as homeless. This compares to 1,110 individuals in 855 households for the 2009 count.

The county's Human Services Department will spend the next two months closely studying and finalizing data from the Point in Time count, comparing numbers and demographics collected during past years while looking for trends. Totals are expected to increase slightly in the coming weeks as individual agencies that helped collect numbers finish reporting their results.

Specifically, the county is reviewing additional information related to a person's disability status, the number of episodes of homelessness and the duration.

“Statistics gathered will help the county determine how different populations are affected by homelessness, including single mothers with children, those with mental-health and chemical-dependency issues, as well as veterans,” said Ken Stark, Snohomish County's Human Services director.

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

homelessness. Data from the annual count also is used to understand how widespread homelessness is in Snohomish County and who is most affected.

In 2006, the county approved the “Everyone At Home Now” report, a strategy for ending homelessness here by 2016. The plan calls for the expansion of homeless housing coupled with support services and for the development of programs geared toward specific groups.

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