



OREGON HOUSING *and*
COMMUNITY SERVICES

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Sept. 28, 2023

Senator Kayse Jama, Chair
Senator Dick Anderson, Vice-Chair
Senate Interim Committee On Housing and Development
900 Court Street NE
Salem, OR 97301-4048

Re: Oregon's Emergency Homelessness Response

Chair Jama, Vice-Chair Anderson, and Members of the Senate Interim Committee On Housing and Development:

We at Oregon Housing and Community Services (OHCS) are grateful for our continued partnership with the Oregon Legislature in a swift response to homelessness across our state. Thank you for your time and thoughtful questions during yesterday's committee meeting. While we were able to respond to your questions during the hearing, we wanted to provide additional information via written responses:

What does the data reporting timeline look like for this effort?

Local communities are actively entering data into the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) to capturing both unsheltered to housed goals and eviction prevention goals. The previous month's outcomes are reported to OHCS by the 20th of the following month. For example, OHCS received data from the work that happened in July 2023 on August 20th, 2023. It then takes OHCS staff time to compile the data from communities around the state and ensure its clarity and accuracy. After that occurs, we are able to publish those outcomes on the 15th of the next month.

This means our reporting is not real-time. However, this timeline ensures that OHCS is able to bring together the data entry of more than 1,000 service providers in three different HMIS software implementations across the state to ensure we are sharing information that accurately reflects what is happening in local communities.

What portion of those who are unsheltered might need substance abuse treatment?

According to national data, anywhere from 25 to 40 percent of individuals experiencing homelessness have a substance abuse disorder. However, that data only represents **individuals** experiencing homelessness, who make up about 70% of the overall populations experiencing homelessness. National data points to the fact that the prevalence of substance abuse disorder amongst individuals in families experiencing homelessness is much lower. This data also lacks significant context around the complexities of each individual's experience of homelessness. This data reveals an important truth about people experiencing homelessness: the majority do not have a substance use disorder.

[Data presented by Oregon's state economists](#) is clear: homelessness is a housing problem. Other states with similar rates of crime and addiction don't see the same level of homelessness.



As a former behavioral health provider, I know firsthand the impact that safe, stable housing has made in the lives of so many of my clients who are on journeys of recovery. And for many Oregonians experiencing homelessness with a substance abuse disorder, entering a low-barrier shelter is the first step to the services and support they need to work toward recovery.

What safeguards are in place to preserve housing stability?

As a part of the Emergency Homelessness Response effort, OHCS and our partners have a variety of tools to support longer term housing stability for those who have been rehoused. OHCS and our local partners can employ block leasing to help Oregonians accessing housing. Long Term Rental Assistance (LTRA) is also a key strategy and a critical tool to support housing stability- and for some people, is key to their ability to stay housed. Investing in Long Term Rental Assistance resources is an avenue for fewer people living in shelters, motels, on the street, or doubled up in unstable arrangements; fewer families, seniors, and people with disabilities would not have to choose each month between paying the rent and buying needed medicine or food.

Across our programs more broadly, OHCS employs a variety of strategies across the housing continuum to keep Oregonians stably housed. Homelessness prevention supports, namely rental assistance, are vital to ensure a final safety net for Oregonians at risk of eviction. That serves as a later intervention, and OHCS has structured our rehousing investments to maintain housing stability. OHCS is also laser focused on preserving affordable housing funded by OHCS and other public partners. We've had many conversations with the Committee about our efforts to preserve affordable housing, and it's a conversation we anticipate will continue as deed restrictions for affordable housing expire and repair, rehab, and operational costs continue to escalate.

I look forward to continuing conversations on our going partnership to address homelessness across the state. On behalf of OHCS and our local partners, thank you for your leadership.

Mike Savara
Special Initiatives Director
Oregon Housing and Community Services

