

MCHHS Prevention Newsletter - Summer 2022

Community Spotlight: Mid-Willamette Valley Homeless Alliance

1. What does the Mid-Willamette Valley Homeless Alliance do to bring people and communities together?

The Alliance hosts 15 committees that bring individuals and agencies together to address homelessness across Marion and Polk counties. Committees focused on a range of topics, from data systems to temporary crisis sheltering for extreme weather and wildfires, from youth homelessness to health & safety issues. The Collaborative Committee is our largest group, and in the past year (2021):

- 263 people attended at least one Collaborative Committee meeting.
 - 244 people represented 110 different organizations, and
 - 19 people were not affiliated with an organization
- 33 of the 110 organizations were represented in at least half of the Collaborative Committee meetings.
- Attendance at each of the eleven regular meetings ranged from 33 to 74 people, with an average of 55 people at each meeting, while 109 individuals attended the February "Summit" meeting.

2. What are some successes the Alliance has seen recently?

The Alliance has secured multiple grants, including a \$5.5M Emergency Solutions Grant that allowed a dozen different programs to hire more than two dozen new staff and extended emergency shelter and rapid re-housing services throughout the region; and a \$3.7M Youth Homeless Demonstration Program grant to develop a coordinated community plan to end and prevent homelessness. We are in the middle of an open competition to allocate YHDP funds to local providers.

In the past year, we expanded the number of places people can access the homeless services system from just two to nine locations, so more individuals and families can engage in the Coordinated Entry process, which includes access, assessment, prioritization, and referral. This expansion involved training staff at multiple agencies to provide trauma-informed assessments and improve our data collection and ability to refer people to appropriate services in a timely manner.

3. What are some goals or upcoming plans for the Alliance?

One of our primary roles as a HUD-approved Continuum of Care is to stimulate community planning and coordination of programs for people experiencing homelessness. We need good data to do good planning. People want to know how many people are homeless, who they are, what barriers they face, and are there more or fewer people than before. To support a common understanding of local conditions, we are developing an outward facing data dashboard that will be accessible on our website. It will not only provide charts and graphs, but also explain the source of the information, so people can compare apples to apples over time.

On the coordination side, we are facilitating discussions about how to spend homeless services funds dedicated specifically to rural Marion County and coordinating implementation of the regional plan to end youth homelessness. Each of these efforts engages new partners and expands the cadre of individuals and agencies working across systems.

Every committee has a work plan, and our full Strategic Plan can be found on our website (www.MWVHomelessAlliance.org).

4. What are some challenges the Alliance has faced recently?

The Alliance is challenged to develop capacity to support the rapid growth in interest and actions to address homelessness throughout the region, across subpopulations, and with specific issues. There are a lot of great people doing great work who could use more support in communicating and coordinating with one another.

5. How can people get involved with Mid-Willamette Valley Homeless Alliance?

Everyone is welcome to attend the monthly Collaborative Committee meetings held the third Wednesdays, 10:00-11:30 on Zoom. Information on all the committees, past newsletters, and ways to help can be found on the website (www.MWVHomelessAlliance.org). Questions can be sent to Staff@MWVHomelessAlliance.org.

6. Fun question: you're a new addition to the crayon box. What color would you be and why?

The Alliance would be the color of hope because it reminds you that things are possible.

7. Any parting words?

Everyone working together can end homelessness!