



Tacoma Pierce County Coalition to End Homelessness

<https://pchomeless.org/> - info@pchomeless.org

What kinds of messaging should we be doing to reach out to those who are not hearing the message now?

Group Discussion Summary • Tacoma Pierce County Coalition to End Homelessness • 6.3.22

“We need better messaging around mental health and substance use that builds empathy and understanding without engaging in victim blaming. We avoid these topics because we don’t want to further stigmatize struggling people, but this leaves an information vacuum.”

“The main thing standing in the way of communication is fear. We exist in echo chambers, and to be effective in getting the message out we need to go outside our comfortable spaces and choose conversations where we might encounter different views and have an opportunity to ask questions, be curious, and hopefully make some progress.”

Public conversation on street homelessness is mostly negative

- Community seems to have a lot less patience around encampments than even a year ago.
- Many taxpayers probably feel like public funds aren’t being used efficiently - such as with sweeps.
- Conflation of crime and homelessness is an issue.
- There’s much blaming of homeless people for being homeless.
- When negative conversations arise, we sometimes freeze or deflect rather than addressing it because it is upsetting to hear from our friends & neighbors (or possibly colleagues)
- We talked about why people aren’t receptive to information about homelessness — they feel helpless, futility, no progress is being made, don't have time to get involved, etc.

Actions that could be taken

- Reaching out to those interested; need a PR campaign
- How about a Coalition social media workgroup? Could gather lots of success stories and information and data and writings from members of Coalition to then put out through social media. Counter those negative messages about homelessness being unsolvable and people wanting to stay on streets.
- Social media sub group needs way more participation than just Theresa & Laurie who are pretty much the entire subcommittee for messaging for the Coalition
- Reach out to the businesses that are affected by encampments and give them the tools to help.
- Many of the messages already developed by the coalition are important and effective; would be good to push out to new audiences.
- Need an elevator speech when it comes up one-on-one w folks who have misperceptions. We should have an elevator speech competition - winner gets 2 cases of water and 5 gently used tents that they can distribute as they like. :-)
- Need consistent messaging across all levels in government.
- Need more public understanding of the link between homelessness and trauma.



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- Messages of compassion, pathways to houselessness, challenges to secure housing, history of housing in the US, solutions found across the globe.
- Do education about the anticipated wave of more seniors becoming homeless. Need outreach (including this info) to professional organizations, faith communities, and social clubs/senior centers.
- Those with contracts like SeaMar aren't maximizing their outreach; broader outreach will likely take money.
- Utilizing agencies that already have broad household access, like the Health Dept to disseminate information - and it is a health-related issue.
- Important to include equity messaging and the many routes into homelessness.
- Need to be better at storytelling because people relate to individual struggles and are empathetic.
- Need stories on how the limited resources available get in the way of people's struggles to succeed.
- Look at role of zoning issues to preventing low income housing.

Miscellaneous observations

- Critical Time Intervention model (<https://www.criticaltime.org/cti-model/>) not working, not interested in resources but simply housing, going where the money is...
- Sweeps to where? (system needs to be re-evaluated)
- Reality of not being able to reach priority pool
- House of Prayer has had success w community mtgs w the local neighborhood watch when they open a new site or start a new program
- Curious to see what the 80 tiny homes being built on city land in Olympia (Quincy street) looks like and mean to the homeless population? Is this a permanent solution or temporary?
- Many unsheltered live in vehicles and are working and hidden poor. Many of them have jobs.