



# Tacoma Pierce County Coalition to End Homelessness

<https://pchomeless.org/> - [info@pchomeless.org](mailto:info@pchomeless.org)

## How can we make space for those with lived experience to share their experiences in ways that will have an impact?

Group Discussion Summary • Tacoma Pierce County Coalition to End Homelessness • 8.26.22

### Vindication

They signed The Declaration of Sentiments  
with nib of rib, the right to suffrage their daring  
Called ugly then witch, pretty then weak  
to be at once woman and voter, their daring  
Hunger, headaches, heartaches, hatred, death  
all this, and more, it cost them, their daring  
As men are born, with God's grace, so are women  
they urged and argued with brains and daring  
With firm convictions and hopes of fallen yokes  
steadfast they marched nursing dreams of future daring  
Sojourner, Dolores, their daughters left behind  
now work against voter suppression with daring  
There is more work on the horizon, more  
yeast to knead into the bread of their daring  
Persist Claudia! in mind and body be  
not ugly, not pretty, but ablaze with daring.

— *Claudia Castro Luna*

### Ways to encourage and support lived experience voices

- Open posture and attitude, welcoming space, honor the story, build trust
- When LE feedback is offered and it doesn't fit easily into the existing narrative or plan, don't disregard, change the narrative or plan.
- Hiring practices need to prioritize people with lived experience for some of the positions (city, county, non-profits. Nothing will change if we do not do this.
- It can be hard to get who are lived experts in positions with good job trajectory. Levels of peer education can allow for that sort of growth.
- On the job training also allows for empowerment and income growth potential when absence of formal education could present a barrier.
- Influence policy changes that value lived experience vs education with job postings.
- Communications departments should include folks with lived experts as content experts to review materials prior to disseminating to public.
- Advocate for people with lived experience to be included in conversations BEFORE policies are decided.
- Engage youth.



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- County could reward agencies with incentives that offer resources and opportunities to those who are lived experts.
- Find ways to tell more people about LEC opportunities and incentivize participation.
- HEAL team can let homeless people they connect with know about LEC and how to contact them. Does Tacoma Rescue Mission have a way to let people know about LEC?
- The county put pressure on the city's getting money from the county to ensure folks who are lived experts into the work they do. A bit of "peer pressure" to get folks to honor and involve folks.
- Make opportunities for LEC available, without expectation but allow LEC decide where it can best participate.
- Support (rather than duplicate) the work of the lived experience coalition. Sponsor membership in groups?
- Check with people about ways to be useful allies. Partner with people to attend meetings we already attend that might be of interest? Contact decision makers pre and post meeting to inform them of the importance of listening to these voices?
- Pay attention to "spaces" and who is in them.
- Support outreach efforts (allocate time and find new funding streams if needed) for camp visits prior and during policy meetings and other public forums that would benefit from voices of people with lived experience.
- Bring those who are lived experts to City Council meetings to tell their stories. Allows for humanity for those who might choose to ignore that issues are there.
- Could do some one-on-one or small group work to support people to bring their voices to this call.
- Use technology to connect LEC voices to the community who make derogatory comments about homeless people. Facebook, Tik Tok, Instagram to humanize people experiencing homelessness.
- Use the Tacoma Public Library's media lab to record stories that can be shared. Build in storytelling coaching to increase the impact of the stories. (As opposed to reading a script)
- Find a way for community members to borrow hotspots from TPL. Possibly find grant money or other funds to replace lost ones.
- Find ways to charge technology (phones, etc.)
- Don't see clients as generally available but would hook them up if they have an interest.
- Therapeutic writing groups are a useful tool for formerly homeless.
- People in encampments with leadership skills need to be encouraged and know their voices are welcome.

## Observations offered

- Respect the knowledge of unhoused people, you do not need to be academically-educated to have knowledge. Anyone could be unhoused. We are seeing more middle-class people become unhoused. Our images of who are the unhoused people need to be updated.



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- Accepting services does not mean that the person actually gets the services--there are many barriers AFTER the person says yes to receiving services. Bad phone numbers, no one answering the phone, no transportation, no internet access, programs already full, etc. Don't assume that a referral can directly result in a person receiving services in a timely manner.
- Perhaps we could have some short workshops on trauma and create space where that can be explored.
- Secondary trauma is real and something that should be discussed more. Those stories are also valuable to recognize.
- A lot of times people with lived experience are silenced or are used to being ostracized. Their "bubble of experience" is sometimes dismissed as exaggeration. Need to create safety and support for people to speak. People are sometimes reluctant to talk about the worst period of our lives and when we do, we're wading through our own trauma and PTSD.
- Employment issues keep coming up, LEC is a strong and needed voice in the Coalition and in policy decisions.
- "Solutions" on homelessness and policy decisions should not be made without involving those affected.
- City involved LEC participant in hiring process. A step in the right direction.

## Questions to consider

- How do we get the unhoused reliably into spaces where we need their voices?
- Ensure that lived experts aren't tokenized. Not make it normal for folks to tell a story and not have follow up for changing their circumstances. How can we be more mindful of that?