

Press Release



The Washington State Lived Experience Coalition (LEC) has been receiving inquiries regarding our position on tiny homes from both the press and community partners. With colder weather months quickly approaching, we thank community members and advocates for their continued efforts to end homelessness by centering people with lived experience in developing solutions.

As a coalition representing hundreds of members, many of whom continue to reside in tiny home villages, we must be clear that tiny homes do not end anyone's experience of homelessness and as currently constituted, they are not meeting the needs of the people staying there. Additionally, Tiny Homes Villages for those experiencing homelessness do not meet federal human habitability standards and are in fact sheds rather than tiny homes. For better or for worse, the many people warehoused there in dehumanizing conditions and lack of services still make it home. This speaks to the strength and resiliency of the human spirit to create a home out of any situation for their loved ones even if that is a car, a tent, or a tiny shed. We must ask ourselves, how does such a system harm the individuals and families living there?

The stance we take regarding all types of emergency shelter (including tiny homes) is that they must be a place of dignity with fidelity to Housing-First, Harm-Reduction, Trauma-Informed Models and Racial Equity and Social Justice Principles, including:

- adequate plumbing and electricity,
- a robust and quality standard of care focused on obtaining permanent housing, and
- a self-governing and democratic environment where individuals living there are empowered to make decisions about their own lives.

Furthermore, tiny home villages and other temporary emergency responses often distract policymakers and the public from prioritizing and investing in permanent solutions to homelessness, such as:

1. **Move-on strategy:** The LEC has spoken to numerous individuals living in tiny homes that do not have sufficient supportive services to obtain permanent housing and end their experience of homelessness. Currently, the average length of stay in a tiny home is over 400 days. A move-on strategy to connect people currently residing in tiny homes with permanent housing would make more efficient use of existing tiny home units and simultaneously free up additional shelter space in our community.
2. **Permanent Supportive Housing:** A highly effective evidence-based response to homelessness is permanent supportive housing (PSH). With over 1,000 new units of PSH coming online between now and January, we continue to support robust investments in PSH to meet our community need.
3. **Hotels and Motels:** The LEC advocates that government and other funders maintain and continue to obtain hotels, motels, rehab of existing structures, and other multifamily housing

opportunities for people experiencing homelessness. Having an indoor location to stabilize and access services is a more humane and safe option than the current tiny home model. Additionally, tiny home villages will take months to develop and site before they provide shelter, missing the critical months of inclement weather when our unhoused neighbors are most vulnerable.

4. **Emergency Housing Vouchers:** Regional providers have recently received allotments of emergency housing vouchers (EHV) as part of American Rescue Plan Act. EHV covers costs up to 120% of fair market rent and should be immediately prioritized for people living unsheltered.
5. **Rapid Re-housing:** Rapid Rehousing has been under-utilized as a bridge housing model for individuals experiencing chronic homelessness and other complex health/behavioral health issues. With fidelity to the model, offering intensive case management for up to 24 months, individuals and families can more quickly move into permanent housing. In fact, the rental vacancy rate in our region has been steadily increasing since 2015 creating opportunities for landlord engagement strategies and master leasing programs that can be leveraged to permanently house people experiencing homelessness instead of over investing in temporary and grossly inadequate measures like tiny homes.

What our members are saying:



“People think we are comfortable here, does it look like we are comfortable? We are not! We just want to find a place to live.”
– Mathew and Ashly have lived in an 8x8 tiny shed for more than 2 years

“There is no structure or accountability. Bad behavior is rewarded.”
– Jaimi has lived in two different 8x8 tiny sheds. He has met with case managers and done everything they have asked but is still in a tiny home five years later.

“I have been trying to get my SSDI benefits. I just received my SSID this year without any help from (the agency operating the tiny home village).”
– Chris has lived in a tiny shed for over 3 years. His shed is only 7X8.

National experts agree:

“By prioritizing access to permanent, stable, and accessible housing with services when needed, Housing First can effectively end homelessness. Focusing on emergency shelters alone, rather than permanent housing, will not end this crisis. We know what works; we just need to build the political will to address this issue once and for all.” – Diane Yentel, President & CEO, National Low Income Housing Coalition

“It’s time for Seattle and King County to take permanent housing to scale with urgency rather than kicking the can down the road which only results in more homelessness. Increasing tiny shelters won’t stop the rising numbers of people falling into homelessness and won’t make measurable differences in the number of people living on the streets. Seattle and King County know how to create a range of permanent housing options - all that is needed is the political will to invest at the scale needed to create impact.” – Barbara Poppe

“The National Alliance to End Homelessness has found from decades of research, data and experience that a Housing First approach is the best and most effective way to end homelessness. It is most cost-effective, and gets results faster. Most importantly, it is most in keeping with the humanistic values that should undergird any work on homelessness: people who are homeless are human beings who deserve security, self-determination and dignity.” – Steve Berg, Vice President for Programs and Policy, National Alliance to End Homelessness

“The data is clear - the homelessness crisis in King County is an affordable housing crisis, and the solution is not tiny shelters without heat or plumbing but development of affordable and supportive housing. In the meantime, the region can increase shelter capacity by using new federal resources – like the Emergency Housing Vouchers funded through the American Rescue plan - to get people currently in shelter into permanent housing and create more flow through the system.” -- Ann Oliva, currently the Vice President of Housing Policy at the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, and was the primary author of the King County [Framework for Regional Action](#)



We stress caution to any decision makers, funders and community members contemplating an increase in tiny homes and tiny home villages. Without adequate funding for evidence-based solutions to homelessness, **tiny home villages may become our de-facto community response – warehousing and dehumanizing people into our own entrenched version of shanty towns, favelas, and slums.** We know King County can do better and look forward to partnering with the Regional Homelessness Authority, Grassroots Organizers, Business and Faith Communities, Sound Cities Association, Philanthropy, and other stakeholders on a shared path forward.



Contact: Johnathan Hemphill, Director of Communications
Email: Johnathan@wearelec.org