

Leading Oregon's Emergency Homelessness Response

Oregon Housing and Community Services
Special Needs Housing: Combating Homelessness

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Leading Oregon's Emergency Homelessness Response

Responding to an important statewide housing need

Oregon's severe shortage of affordable housing has resulted in a significant increase in unsheltered homelessness across the state. This humanitarian crisis affects individuals and families who cannot keep up with the rising costs of living, stagnant wages, and personal hardships. The COVID-19 pandemic only exacerbated the underlying structural factors that drove homelessness in Oregon. Unfortunately, more people, especially communities of color, people with disabilities, and those who live in rural communities, are falling into homelessness than ever before.

The rising disparities in who experiences housing instability and homelessness have caused Oregon to reevaluate its approach to serving those in need and invest in strategies designed by the communities who are most impacted rather than one-size-fits-all approaches that have failed to turn the tide on the persistent disparities in our system, especially amongst communities of color.

On her first full day in office, Governor Tina Kotek issued three Executive Orders to address unsheltered homelessness. [Executive Order \(EO\) 23-02](#) declared a state of emergency in Continuum of Care regions, which had increased unsheltered homelessness by 50% or greater since 2017. This innovative approach to using executive authority to create a new homelessness response system focused on specific, measurable objectives creates a long-standing impact. The governor also recognized the critical role of housing production and coordinated state efforts to end homelessness by declaring two additional executive orders to increase the supply of affordable housing significantly.

In alignment with the Executive Orders, three actionable goals were to be achieved by Jan. 10, 2024:

1. Prevent 8,750 households from becoming homeless statewide.
2. Add 600 low-barrier shelter beds in emergency areas.
3. Rehouse at least 1,200 unsheltered households in emergency areas.

Oregon Housing and Community Services (OHCS) and the Oregon Department of Emergency Management (ODEM) began planning immediately by hosting listening sessions in each region identified in Executive Order 23-02. These sessions allowed the agencies to share detailed information with local partners, answer questions about key elements of the Executive Order, and, most importantly, hear about the local community's concerns and challenges.

Several statewide themes emerged related to the financial aspect of the executive order, including barriers related to procurement, the timing of funding delivery, administrative costs, and the need for flexible funds to cover the costs of the service delivery organizations. Communities wanted to build on what works locally and shared the urgent need for more behavioral health and wraparound services.

Effectively employing partnerships

OHCS worked with each Continuum of Care (CoC) region to establish Multi-Agency Coordination (MAC) Groups. The MAC groups provide interagency management planning, coordination, and operational leadership to provide strategic coordination, identify resources, and manage goals. The local MAC groups

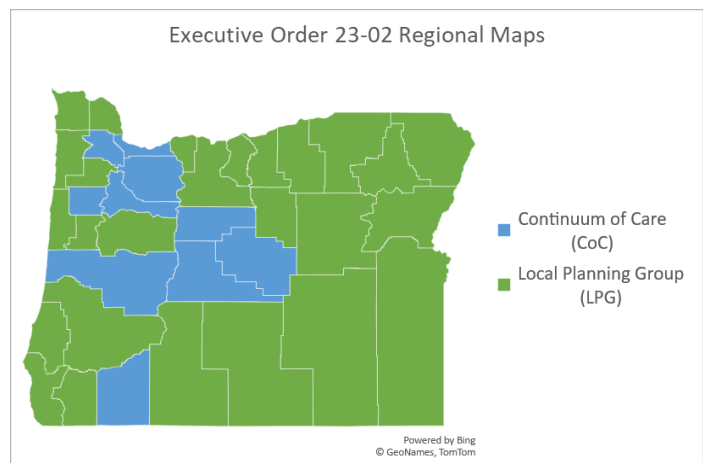
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include stakeholders from each region to ensure the success of establishing a homeless response system, including:

- Local jurisdictions (homelessness and emergency management staff)
- Public housing authorities
- Local homelessness agencies
- Rapid rehousing service providers
- Shelter developer/operators
- Landlord associations
- Behavioral Health providers

The statewide work required a close partnership between OHCS, the housing finance agency working to implement the homeless services' resources, and the Oregon Department of Emergency Management, that helped to facilitate and bring in the emergency management teams. This innovative and unique approach of bringing together the homeless services systems and the emergency management apparatus of the state ensured high-quality and evidence-based interventions for people experiencing homelessness and a rapid response to the crisis unfolding on our streets. This unique partnership formed the basis of a homelessness response system that different jurisdictions can replicate.

Once formed, each MAC group created a community plan outlining their goals for rehousing and creating new shelter beds and their strategies to meet them. These plans required them to complete an analysis of disparities found in their community and then implement specific strategies to reduce those disparities, especially focusing on persistent and long-standing racial disparities for those experiencing homelessness. OHCS provided technical assistance and support to ensure each community had what they needed to build effective partnerships with organizations and people with lived experience. The plans to reduce disparities also included working with Culturally Specific Organizations, Tribal Governments, or other specialty providers such as youth homelessness experts or behavioral health providers.



Recognizing the importance of providing support and services for those in rural areas of the state, OHCS opted to require the establishment of Local Planning Groups throughout all geographic regions of the Balance of State. Local communities divided themselves into 16 Local Planning Groups (LPGs) with designated leads to build consensus and approach planning equitably and efficiently. Counties convene many local planning groups, but each region has selected a different entity to lead their work. This diversity and flexibility were vital to ensuring that rural partners with varying levels of partner involvement could all participate. By funding regional coordinating bodies rather than individual projects, we provided a framework for collaboration and partnership that ensures each local region has the resources and strategy to begin to work towards ending homelessness in their communities.

To support this effort, OHCS contracted with the Community Action Partnership of Oregon (CAPO), the Rural Oregon Continuum of Care's fiscal agent, to expand its ability to provide robust data tracking and outcome reporting for the new providers and programs that this investment will create.

OHCS utilized the House Bill 5019 budget report, provider feedback, and lessons learned from previous funding structures to divide the funding process into two main parts. This approach ensured that each

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community across the Balance of State received funding and allowed OHCS to select the most viable and robust projects for shelter funding to ensure that they could meet the goal of increasing the number of shelter beds in the Balance of State. This dual funding approach included:

1. Formula funding tied to rehousing goals for each Local Planning Group (LPG) or MAC Group,
2. Competitive funding to support shelter bed creation.

Demonstrate effective use of resources

OHCS contracted with a team of experts at ICF International, Inc. to expand state capacity and guide partners on innovative practices for homelessness response. ICF provided direct technical assistance experts to the MAC groups, offering on-the-ground training, webinars, consultations, and strategic development. They guided communities through topics such as:

- Development of master leasing and block leasing programs
- Building homeless services staffing capacity
- Detailed training on best practice provision of rapid rehousing programs
- Development of local landlord engagement strategies to increase available housing
- Strategic guidance on building collaboration between public, private, and philanthropic homeless services funders
- Strategic investment planning for various public and private funding streams
- Development of a flexible “barrier buster” fund to help quickly move people from homelessness to permanent housing
- Supporting design and planning for the conversion of a motel for use as housing units
- Supporting the design of a peer specialist program specific to homeless services activities
- Guidance and coaching on housing-focused street outreach practices

Achieving strategic objectives

Thanks to the partnership of MAC Groups, service providers, local governments, culturally specific partners, other state departments, and others, OHCS successfully ended the first year of the emergency homelessness response. The state surpassed all its initial goals related to preventing homelessness, creating shelter capacity, and rehousing people experiencing unsheltered homelessness.

Final EO 23-02 Results			
	Shelter Beds Created	Households Rehoused	Homelessness Prevention
Goal	600	1,200	8,750
Final Results	1,047	1,426	9,024

Media coverage

[Safe Rest Village at Aloha United Methodist Church \(UMC\) opening Demonstrates Power of Faith Partnerships | Washington County, OR \(washingtoncountyor.gov\)](#)

[Gov. Kotek signs two executive orders to continue addressing homelessness](#)

[Gov. Kotek extends homeless emergency order, helping new shelters stay open](#)

[Gov. Tina Kotek announces two new executive orders to address homelessness in Oregon](#)

[Kotek will sign new housing executive orders on first anniversary in office – Oregon Capital Chronicle](#)

[Homelessness and housing remain at the top of Gov. Kotek's priorities as she marks 1 year in office](#)

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[Homelessness and housing remain at the top of Gov. Kotek's priorities as she marks 1 year in office](#)

[Communities sign off on funding for governor's homelessness state of emergency](#)

[Gov. Kotek signs Oregon's affordable housing, emergency homelessness package](#)

[Kotek launches emergency response infrastructure to implement homeless state of emergency - KTVZ](#)

[Oregon lawmakers propose \\$200M homeless, affordable housing package](#)

[Oregon Gov. Kotek declares homelessness state of emergency, signs housing executive orders](#)

[Oregon Gov. Tina Kotek takes first actions on 'humanitarian disaster' of homelessness](#)

Governor Tina Kotek signs House Bill 2001 and 5019 into law, a bold step to address the housing needs of the people of Oregon



OHCS staff attended Gov. Kotek's historic signing of House Bill (HB) 2001 and 5019 into law. This bipartisan legislation addresses the state's housing and homelessness crisis, including a suite of policy changes and investments. "As Oregonians, we are bound by our shared values that all people have access to basic, fundamental needs to which affordable housing is fundamental," said OHCS Director Andrea Bell. "This legislation marks forward progress in the direction of sustained effort to improve the quality of lives of the people of Oregon."

Success stories

Deschutes County

This participant arrived at the Lighthouse July 5th of 2022, penniless, horribly ill, and in the throes of addiction, stating that they needed help, or they would die if they continued living this way. With support from the Navigation Center staff, they engaged in medically assisted treatment and worked to acquire benefits, pursue health, and maintain recovery. They became employable and resumed a role in the lives of their extended family and adult children. They became a leader and role model in the unhoused community during their stay at The Lighthouse and then transitioned to Safe Parking but remained connected with their case manager at The Lighthouse. Eventually they stepped into a management position at the restaurant where they were employed. Recently, they flew to Ohio to support their adult daughter with the birth of her child. They moved into their own apartment on March 2, 2024, the first time they have lived independently in a decade. With their strength and resilience this person has been a pillar in our community and an inspiration to many.

Jackson County

"Angie" was facing multiple medical challenges while being unhoused and struggling with diabetes. She is excited to have secured safe and stable housing and is grateful for being treated with kindness and respect and as a neighbor by everyone, from community partners to the construction crew. This has given her immense hope for the future, as she now has access to the housing and resources necessary to stabilize her medical needs. In addition, her dreams of going to college are once again a possibility.

Multnomah County

"Evan" was overjoyed to finally receive the keys to his new home after a long wait. As an undocumented day laborer, he had faced numerous challenges and struggled to find a safe and warm place to sleep every night. Having his own apartment was a dream come true for him and brought him immense happiness and motivation. He is truly an inspiration to everyone he meets and shares his story with!

Clatsop County

In December, the Columbia Inn had 17 children staying - children from 6 months to 17 years old, plus one baby boy due any day now! They came from living in tents and cars, couch surfing, or fleeing with a

"These resources are bringing services and system coordination to Clackamas County's rural communities, including Sandy, Molalla, and Estacada, that would not otherwise exist. Outreach programming now includes street and encampment engagements, trash cleanup events, camp cleanups, shower and laundry events, care coordination, and resource navigation, including housing placement. The services are being positively received in these communities and helping to open pathways to going farther in addressing community concerns and meeting community needs. It's amazing what we can accomplish when we work together.

-Clackamas County

parent from a domestic violence situation. We had an early visit from Santa, and two shelter workers provided a Christmas cookie decorating event. Columbia Inn staff gathered wish lists from the kids. CCA did its best to provide each child with what they wanted most. One Christmas Eve, a beautiful dinner was served by CAA staff and Board members, followed by Santa distributing the gifts. Everyone was grateful and happy with their presents. Christmas morning, board members were here again to make a delicious breakfast. While we all wish no child would ever have to spend time in a shelter, especially during the holidays, seeing these children were safe, warm, and dry was heartwarming. It felt like a holiday miracle to have come to this point in just over two months of being open.

Oregon's Emergency Homelessness Response

Oregon's Emergency Homelessness Response is underway, helping communities address homelessness and housing instability. Progress is being made on the governor's goals to:

1. Prevent 8,750 households from becoming homeless statewide.
2. Add 600 low-barrier shelter beds in emergency areas.
3. Rehouse at least 1,200 unsheltered households in emergency areas.

Seven Continuum of Care (CoC) regions in the state received funding to create new shelter beds and rehouse a specific number of unsheltered residents in their communities. All of the CoCs have been working hard to meet their goals, including Multnomah County, which has reached its goal of adding 140 additional shelter beds to their system.



Clinton Triangle in SE Portland opened on July 25. The site currently shelters over 180 Portlanders, most of whom have experienced chronic homelessness and were referred directly from street outreach workers. The site is intended as a low-barrier shelter for adults only. These individuals have found safety, stability, and the chance to connect with caseworkers and service providers. The goal is for every individual at this site to have the opportunity to stabilize and develop a long-term housing and health plan.

This is just one of many examples of how Oregon's Emergency Homeless Response funding is being put to good use. Learn more about this work and track its progress at <https://orhomelessnessresponse.org>.

Jackson County

I have to say that I owe everything to Lavonne, Karla, and the team at ACCESS. I was at rock bottom and had lost everything. I was living in my car with my two children and had no hope for the future. I felt like I had nothing left and no one to turn to.

That was when I found ACCESS. From the first time I went there, I felt safe and supported. Lavonne was an angel in my life, and she helped me through the toughest times. She made me feel like it was okay to ask for help and that I was not alone.

Thanks to ACCESS, I was able to find a place to stay at the Roxy. It gave me stability and routine again, and it was exactly what I needed to get back on my feet. Without Lavonne and the ACCESS team's help, I don't know where I would be today.

Now, I am in the most beautiful home with my kids, and I cannot be more grateful. Their happiness is everything to me, and I know that I owe it all to ACCESS. Thank you, Lavonne, Karla, and the entire ACCESS team. You have made a massive difference in my life, and I will be forever grateful.

Oregon's Emergency Homelessness Response gives Oregonians a path forward

In January 2023, Governor Kotek declared a state of emergency to address homelessness in Oregon. Partners from across the state, including housing services providers, healthcare professionals, landlords, and law enforcement, have come together to develop and implement community plans to address homelessness using interventions based on the needs of people experiencing unsheltered homelessness in their community. Oregon's Emergency Homelessness Response is making a positive impact and transforming lives.



Chris* had never been homeless. She always had a job and a roof over her head. Things became tough for Chris's household after the pandemic, as they did for many others, with rising rent, food costs, and isolation. In 2023, Chris lost her home. Her partner, who lives with diabetes, was able to secure a single room to live in with their pets. Chris lived in her car and started working for DoorDash and Uber to save enough income to qualify for a new home. Before long, Chris' partner was unable to work due to health complications and lost their home. They lived in Chris' car together, making it extremely difficult to continue working.

Chris connected with ACCESS, who secured a beautiful apartment for them to call home. Because of this opportunity, Chris and her partner can return to work and take back their lives. "This program literally saved my household. No words can describe the kind of hope this has given us. We felt doomed, and suddenly, we were safe," said Chris.

This is just one of many examples of how Oregon's Emergency Homelessness Response funding is being put to good use. Learn more about this work and track its progress at <https://orhomelessnessresponse.org>.

*Name changed to protect identity



Safe Rest Pods in Aloha, OR

Safe Rest Pods grand opening

We congratulate Washington County as we attended the grand opening of Safe Rest Village in Aloha, a pod neighborhood with 61 shelter beds. These individual pods provide a warm and private living space for people experiencing homelessness, giving people a safe place to stay as they continue their path to more permanent and stable housing.

To provide residents with critical housing navigation and case management support, Open Door HousingWorks will provide on-site wraparound services such as behavioral health resources, addiction treatment support, and grief counseling for those who come to seek shelter. Safe Rest uses low-barrier criteria for entry and practices trauma-informed care.

This shelter is the first in Aloha and was one of multiple shelters built in partnership with Washington County with project funds provided by Oregon Housing & Community Services (OHCS) to execute Governor Kotek's 23-02 Executive Orders on homelessness and the housing crisis.

While we have a long way to go toward solving homelessness in Oregon, OHCS is excited to continue partnering with community organizations and local government agencies to build more shelter beds to support those in need of safe housing within our communities.



Oregon's Emergency Homelessness Response making an impact in Deschutes County

Oregon's Emergency Homelessness Response has significantly impacted communities in Deschutes County. After Governor Kotek declared a state of emergency on her first full day in office, various partners from housing service providers, healthcare professionals, landlords, and law enforcement came together to develop and implement community-based plans to address unsheltered homelessness. The program has been successful in changing people's lives for the better.

For example, "John," who is experiencing homelessness in Bend, had been living in his car. He went to the Franklin Avenue Shelter because he had planned surgeries and needed a safe and secure room in which to recover.

At the time, shelter staff were conversing with PacificSource and St. Charles about better supporting medically vulnerable people who were experiencing homelessness in the community. They shared John's situation and pending needs with the medical providers, who were confident that, in partnership, they could adequately care for John through his surgical procedures and recovery. John spent six days in the Franklin Avenue Shelter, stabilizing and preparing for surgery. He spent three days in St. Charles Medical Center undergoing his first surgery and recovery before being transported to Pilot Butte Rehabilitation. After three weeks, he transitioned back to Franklin Avenue Shelter, where he continued to recover. His next surgery is scheduled for this month, and they are hopeful to create a similar path for his future recovery.

Oregon's Emergency Homelessness Response has allowed local service providers to grow partnerships with the medical community, moving toward greater communication and collaboration. Thanks to these resources, shelter providers and local skilled nursing facilities can keep people like John sheltered and supported while effectively and safely meeting their medical needs.

HMIS trainings underway across the state

The Housing Stabilization Division's Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) team has been busy working with partners throughout the state to ensure they have the training necessary to report on their Executive Order 23-02 (EO 23-02) goals. EO 23-02 declared a state of emergency related to unsheltered homelessness in seven Continuum of Care (CoC) regions across the state, based on 2022 Point-in-Time Count data showing an increase in unsheltered homelessness of 50% or greater since 2017.

The HMIS team recently held two virtual training sessions with community action agencies, Multi-Agency Coordinating Groups, CoCs, and other partners who have received EO 23-02 funding. They provided training on creating programs and providers by project type, HUD Prescribed Processes (ES entry/exits & HMID), and shared information on new monthly and quarterly reporting requirements. This data will be utilized to closely track and communicate the results of the work to create new emergency shelters, rehouse community members experiencing unsheltered homelessness, and prevent thousands of Oregonian families from becoming homeless in the first place.

They also traveled to Medford, where they conducted in-person training and information sessions for the Jackson County CoC around EO 23-02 data entry and processes. The HMIS team utilized the time to facilitate a conversation around HMIS data entry methods that could be used effectively by Jackson County partners for the EO 23-02 rollout. Many community partners attended the trainings, including some agencies that have never used HMIS. It was wonderful to see these new partnerships and that EO 23-02 is being rolled out collaboratively and thoughtfully.

OHCS working with governor, ODEM to create MAC Groups

OHCS, Oregon Department of Emergency Management (ODEM), and Gov. Tina Kotek's office have been working to help the Continuums of Care identified in [Executive Order 23-02](#) to establish Multi-Agency Coordination (MAC) Groups. The MAC groups are made up of local homelessness and emergency management staff, behavioral health providers, rapid rehousing service providers, public housing authorities, shelter developers and operators, local homeless agencies, and more. The MAC groups will provide the planning, coordination, and operational leadership to help move individuals and families into housing stability.

Nearly all regions have created their MAC groups, which are currently creating community plans to establish goals related to the executive order. The plans are due to OHCS and ODEM on March 10 for review. Once approved, they will inform resource allocation and associated contracts with each region.

Find the most up to date news on the [Frequently Asked Question page](#).