



## HOUSING & HOPE

A monthly email series on housing & homelessness.

Welcome to **Housing & Hope**: a monthly email series on housing and homelessness. Our aim through this twelve-part series is to share Catholic Community Services and Catholic Housing Services' philosophy for supportive housing as a response to the local housing crisis, as well as our belief that the experience of homelessness is complex and diverse for each individual and family in our care. The people and programs highlighted each month have been selected to help build a holistic understanding of the barriers to housing stability that our clients face, and to encourage a deeper awareness of the nonlinear journey to housing.

### **History: Catholic Community Services and Catholic Housing Services**

Catholic Community Services (CCS) and Catholic Housing Services (CHS) have been dedicated to supporting the vulnerable and underserved populations across Western Washington since their respective beginnings. When CCS opened during the 1918 influenza pandemic, it was to care for the orphans, widows, and families struggling with the consequences of World War I. One hundred years later, CCS continues to serve those struggling with poverty and the effects of intolerance and racism. CHS was established in 1979 with the mission of creating affordable housing options that meet specific community needs in order to support and uplift marginalized populations, and continues to fight for housing equality to this day. We are proud to continue supporting these communities, in large part through our supportive housing programs. Together, CCS and CHS provide a continuum of care for some of the most vulnerable populations in Western Washington through supportive housing programs which offer residents support services and a safe, affordable place to live and thrive. Our programs target the diverse needs of the families, veterans, chronically homeless adult men and women, and farmworker and senior communities who look to us for support.

### **Housing Needs in Washington State:**

CCS/CHS believe every person has the right to a safe, affordable place to call home. According to [a report](#) by the United States Interagency Council on Homelessness, an estimated 21,577 individuals in Washington State experience homelessness on any given day. This number has been rising since 2013, due in large part to rent increases across the state. In order to afford an average 2-bedroom home in Washington, renters are required to work ninety hour weeks at the state's minimum wage of \$13.50, or forty hour weeks at an hourly wage of \$30.46, according to the National Low Income Housing Coalition's (NLIHC) [statewide statistics](#). Other factors which can contribute to homelessness include unemployment and employment in low wage jobs, and lack of mental health and substance abuse services.

## FACTS ABOUT WASHINGTON:

STATE FACTS	
Minimum Wage	\$13.50
Average Renter Wage	\$21.90
2-Bedroom Housing Wage	\$30.46

MOST EXPENSIVE AREAS	HOUSING WAGE
Seattle-Bellevue HMFA	\$40.37
Portland-Vancouver-Hillsboro MSA	\$28.75
Tacoma HMFA	\$27.08
Bremerton-Silverdale MSA	\$24.92
San Juan County	\$23.69

MSA = Metropolitan Statistical Area; HMFA = HUD Metro FMR Area.

From National Low Income Housing Coalition's [Out of Reach 2020](#) report.

Safe, affordable housing is especially critical now due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Findings from a [May 2020 study](#) conducted by the University of Washington's Department of Global Health show that people experiencing homelessness are at especially high risk of contracting the virus because they often do not have access to basic preventative measures like handwashing, and "shelters are often crowded and not conducive to safe distancing." Those experiencing homelessness who do contract the virus are two to three times more likely to die than others in the general public, according to [a report by the NLIHC](#). To keep people safe, King County is taking extra precautions to help protect people experiencing homelessness against outbreaks by moving guests out of congregate shelters into more distanced emergency sites, like motels and community centers. The increased financial commitment has kept the population of people experiencing homelessness in King County as safe as the general population from COVID-19, with similar rates of positive cases between [unhoused](#) and [housed](#) people. Such results have indicated the need to think critically about the future of our shelters and the necessary resources to care for unhoused people across Western Washington.

### Supportive Housing:

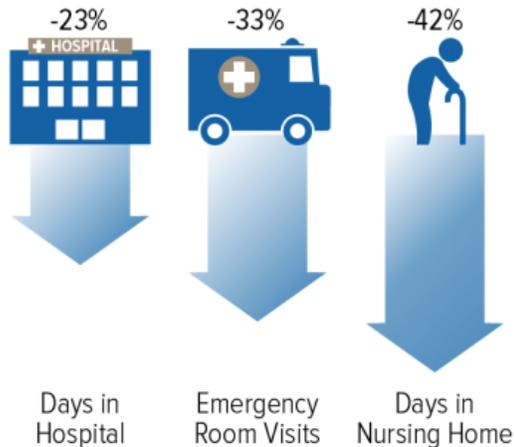
Models which concurrently provide affordable housing options and individualized supportive services have therefore risen in popularity, a combination CCS/CHS supports as a part of our belief that the barriers to housing are complex and difficult to overcome alone. This pairing of affordable has [been proven](#) to be the most effective in achieving long-term housing stability, and "has positive effects on employment, mental and physical health, and school attendance." Supportive housing programs aim to provide lower barriers to entry than other types of housing programs (but often still necessitate credit or background checks). Evidence suggests that programs uniting affordable housing with additional support can [reduce reliance and use of other systems](#) like healthcare and corrections, and are therefore [more cost effective](#) than affordable housing programs or case management services individually. This model has therefore been a cornerstone of many of our housing assistance programs for decades.

## Supportive Housing Can Produce Health Care Savings

Combining affordable housing with intensive services for a high-needs group saved an average of over \$6,000 a year per person in health care

Note:

Intensive services include help finding housing, working with a landlord, physical and behavioral health care, assistance finding employment, and others.



From Center on Budget and Policy Priorities [2016 report](#).

### CCS/CHS and Supportive Housing:

CCS/CHS strives to uphold the values of the Catholic Social Teachings and looks to apply them in all aspects of our work. Three of the fundamental values which inform CCS/CHS are clearly reflected in our philosophy for supportive housing:

- ❖ *Rights and Responsibilities*: every person has the fundamental right to those things required for human decency,
- ❖ *The Dignity of Work*: the economy must serve the people by providing fair wages and rights to private property, and
- ❖ *Solidarity*: the pursuit of justice for all, despite national, racial, ethnic, economic, or ideological differences.

Pope Francis' encyclical, [Laudato Si': On Care for Our Common Home](#), echoes these principles as a directive to support affordable housing policies. He writes that the "Lack of housing is a grave problem in many parts of the world, both in rural areas and in large cities...Not only the poor, but many other members of society as well, find it difficult to own a home. Having a home has much to do with a sense of personal dignity and the growth of families." His words remind us of the moral dimension of the housing crisis, and why solutions must incorporate supportive services for residents into affordable housing programs.

We are hopeful that this twelve-part series will shed light on our varied programs, the diverse experiences of our clients, and the need to continue providing safe, supportive, and stable housing for Western Washington's most vulnerable communities. Each month's email will highlight a different CCS/CHS program and share the story of a client's journey to housing stability with that program,

emphasizing the complexity of both the experience of homelessness and the paths to stability. October's story centers on Noel House, an enhanced shelter in Seattle which provides case management and supportive housing options for women experiencing homelessness. Daphne, a second-time Noel House resident, and Crissanta, a mother reconnecting with her children, share their experiences and how their lives have changed through their time at Noel House.

If you would like more information on any of CCS/CHS' 115+ housing programs, or would like to learn more about CCS/CHS' philosophy for supportive housing, please feel free to contact the Fund Development department directly at [development@ccsww.org](mailto:development@ccsww.org).

If you have received this email from a different source and would like to sign up for the monthly series to receive emails directly, please do so [here](#).