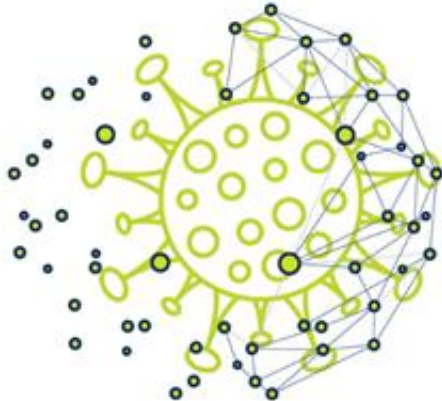


Impacts of COVID-19 on the King County Homeless Response System

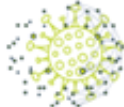
Using data to inform current and future housing strategies

Pear Moraras, MPH
Christina McHugh, MPP, MA



A Year of Crisis

Using Human Services Data
to Recover from the Pandemic



King County

Department of Community and Human Services

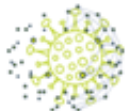
Providing equitable opportunities for people to be
healthy, happy, self-reliant and connected to
community

Performance Measurement & Evaluation Unit

Homelessness, Housing, and Community Development Division



King County



Who we are

Performance
Measurement &
Evaluation (PME) Unit,
King County Department
of Community and
Human Services (DCHS)



Team of evaluators and data scientists that supports the Department's performance measurement and evaluation needs

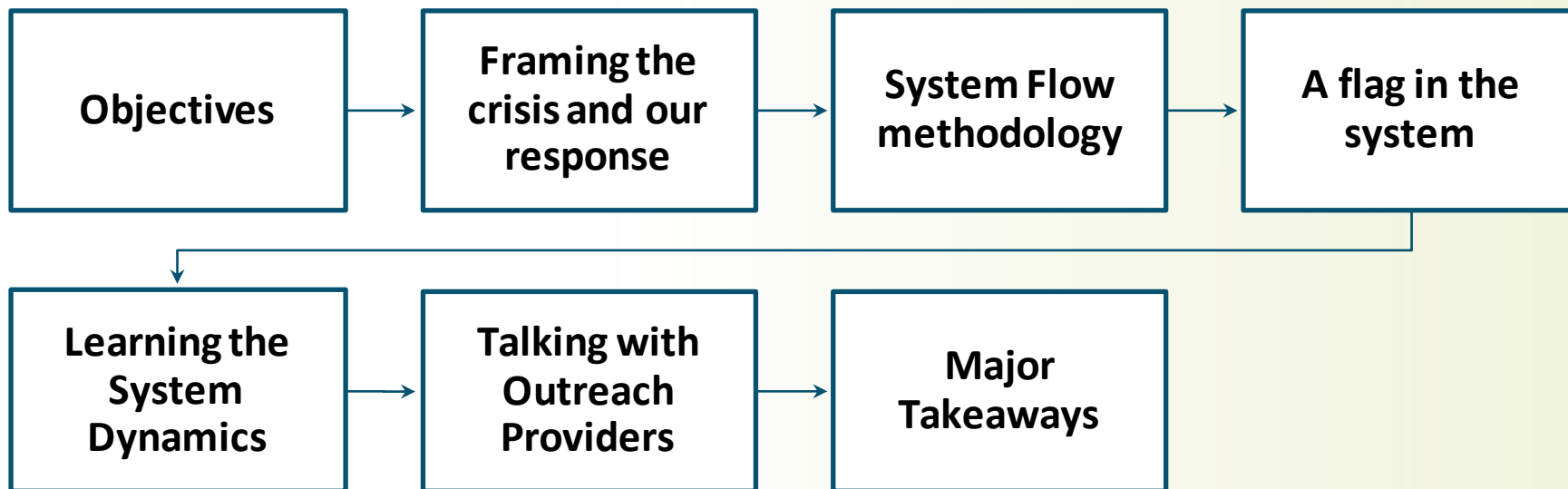
Housing and
Homelessness PME team

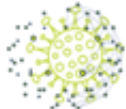
Analyzes HMIS data on system performance for Seattle-King County Continuum of Care
Communicates data on the crisis and our response to the public
Evaluates promising program models and pilots
Designs and maintains the CoC's data website and dashboards





Agenda

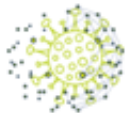




Learning Objectives

- Learn about how King County is using regularly updated system flow data to flag changes to the homeless response system.
- Learn about the system dynamics within the homeless response system and how that has broadened our understanding of housing strategies during the pandemic.
- Learn how DCHS is using other data sources and systems, including qualitative data, to better understand the impacts of COVID-19 on the King County homeless response system.





About King County, WA

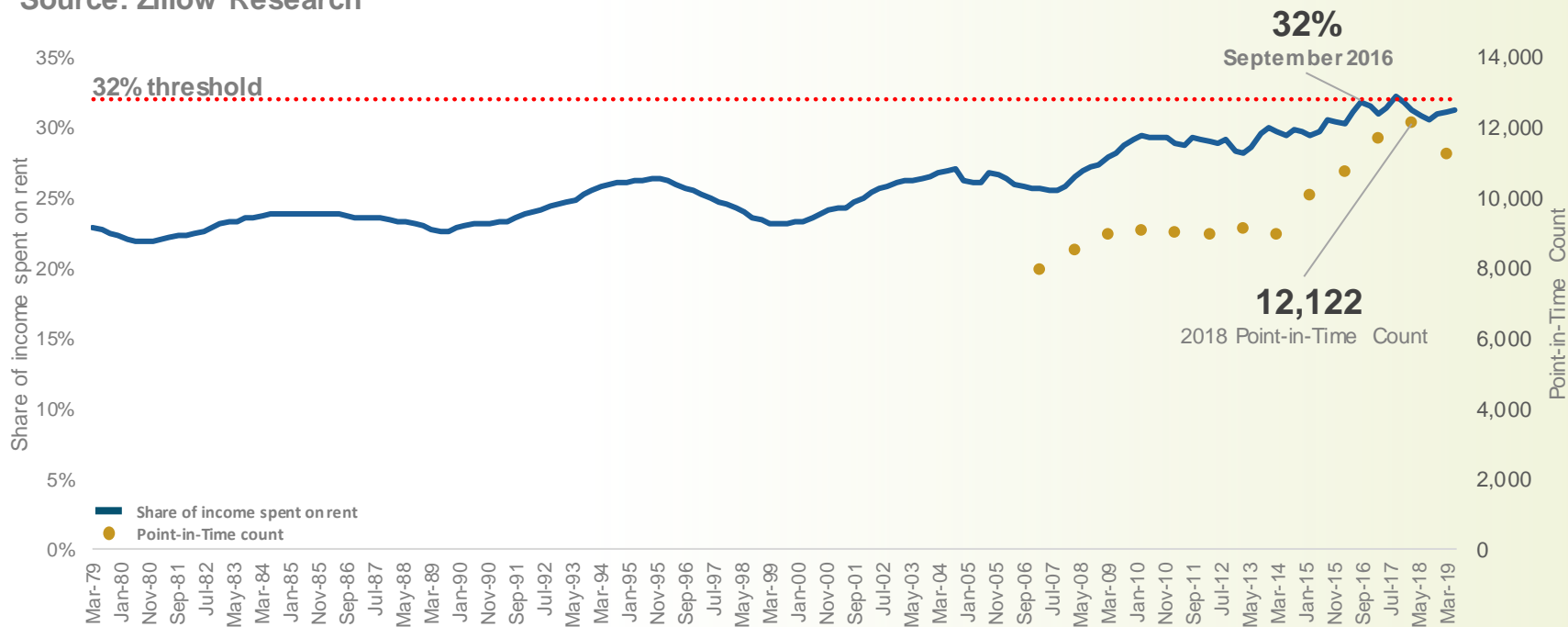
- Home to 2.3 million people
- One of the fastest growing counties
- Wide Household Income Gap
 - Top 20%: \$250,000+
 - Lowest 20%: \$35,000





Research has shown that homelessness rates climb faster when rent affordability hits a 32% threshold, which Seattle reached in 2016

Source: Zillow Research





King County Homeless Response System

A successful homeless response system is centered in the principles of Housing First and Racial Equity, with a coordinated and regional response to the crisis of homelessness. Using data to inform decisions, we are working with urgency towards making homelessness rare, brief, and non-recurring.

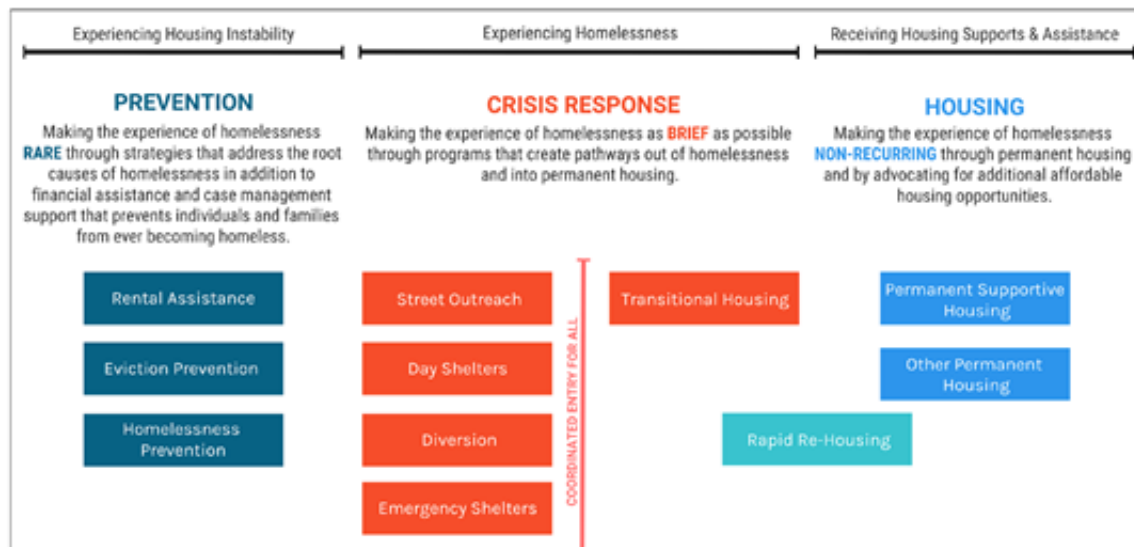


Chart Notes:

1. Coordinated Entry for All (CEA) is the Seattle/King County Continuum of Care's approach to coordinated entry. Coordinated entry is a HUD-mandated process for ensuring that the highest need, most vulnerable households experiencing homelessness are prioritized and placed in housing and that supportive services are used as efficiently and effectively as possible.
2. Households enrolled in Rapid Re-Housing are still experiencing homelessness until their housing search ends and they move into housing.





The driving framework within our community

ENTRIES

Inflow

Newly homeless in
past 24 months

Previously inactive in
past 24 months

Previously housed in
past 24 months

ACTIVE

Currently Served

Unsheltered

ES, TH, or searching
for RRH

Coordinated Entry

EXITS

Outflow

Permanently housed

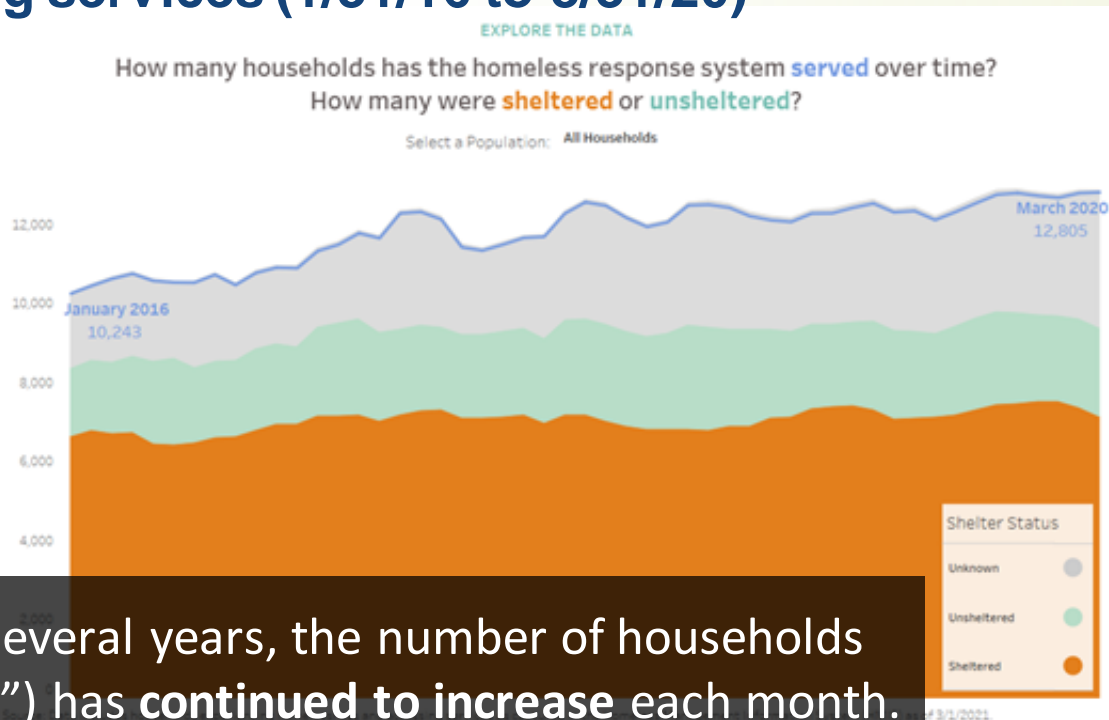
Temporarily housed
or unsheltered

Unknown
destination or
deceased





Number of households experiencing homelessness and receiving services (1/31/16 to 3/31/20)

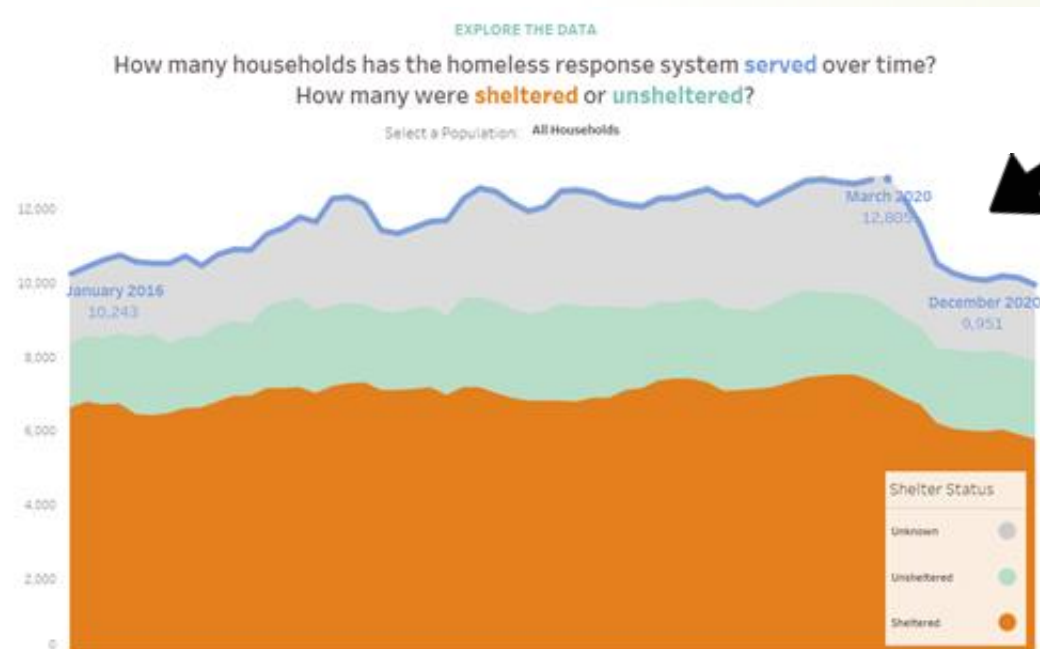


Over the past several years, the number of households served (“active”) has **continued to increase** each month.





A flag in the system



Almost immediate
decline in the **active**
number

Source: Data includes households experiencing homelessness and accessing services as captured in the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) as of 3/1/2021.

1. Population categories are not necessarily mutually exclusive.

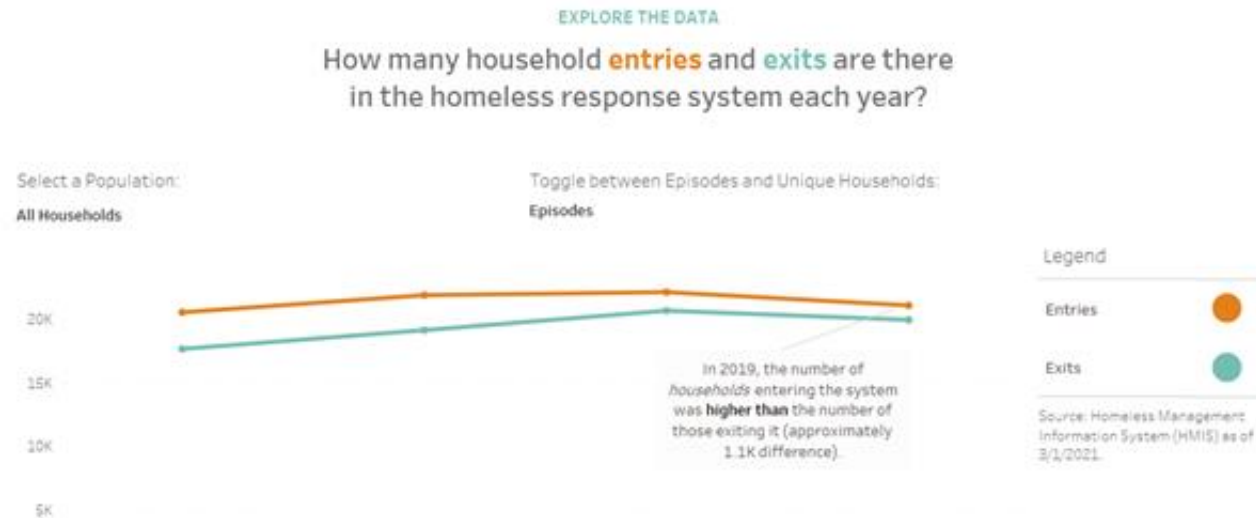
2. Youth & Young Adult households consist of households under age 25 and Adults are households that are comprised those aged 25 and older (this can include families without children under the age of 18). NOTE: Since some families are headed by young adults, these households are categorized as "Families with Children" in the Household Composition view and as "under 25" in the Age Group view.

3. Households who have an unknown shelter status include those who were added to the Coordinated Entry for All queue and have not been housed or enrolled in an HMIS program, as well as those who have exited from the homeless response system to an unknown location within the last 90 days. While these households may not have necessarily been served in the timeframe, we consider these households to be active in the system for 90 days after their exit; this was done to align with guidance from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD).





Learning the system dynamics: Entries & Exits



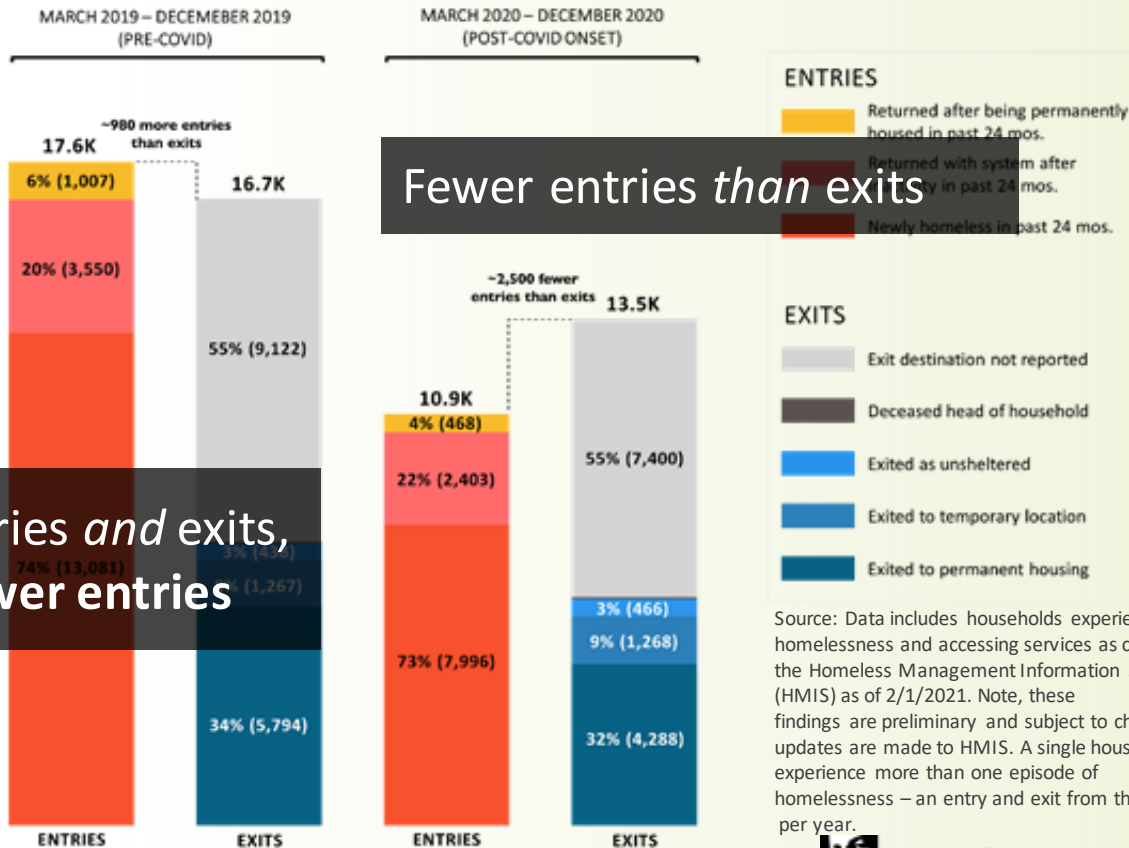
Prior to the pandemic, the number of households **entering the system** was consistently **higher** than the number of those **exiting it**.





Learning the system dynamics: Entries & Exits

Fewer entries *and* exits,
but far fewer entries

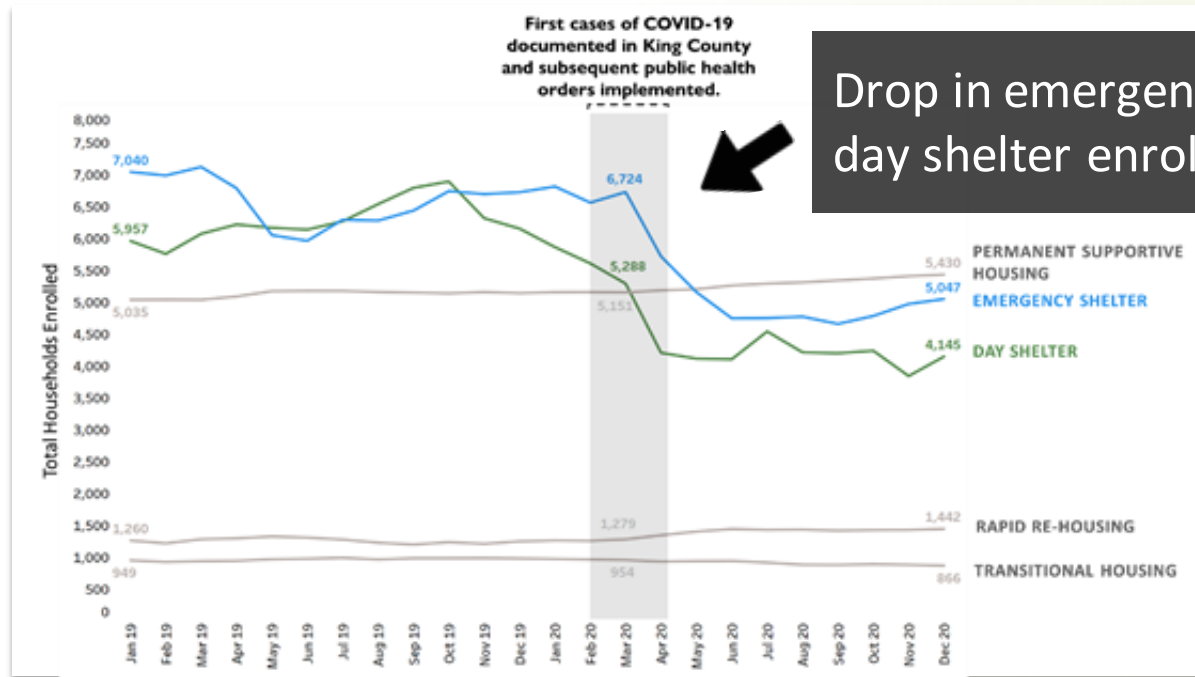


Source: Data includes households experiencing homelessness and accessing services as captured in the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) as of 2/1/2021. Note, these findings are preliminary and subject to change as updates are made to HMIS. A single household can experience more than one episode of homelessness – an entry and exit from the system – per year.





Learning the system dynamics: Enrollments



Drop in emergency shelter and day shelter enrollments

Driving factors:
Utilization and
capacity

Source: Data includes households enrolled in day shelter, emergency shelter, transitional housing, rapid re-housing, and permanent supportive housing programs as captured in the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) as of 2/1/2021. Note, these findings are preliminary and subject to change as updates are made to HMIS.





Learning the system dynamics: Enrollments

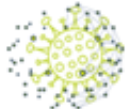


Source: Data includes households enrolled in emergency shelter, transitional housing, and rapid re-housing housing programs as

captured in the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS). These findings are preliminary and subject to change as updates are received.

Households are remaining enrolled longer & fewer enrollments over time





What are outreach providers saying?

Many individuals are reluctant to use shelter services in congregate settings due to the risk of exposure to COVID-19

“The capacity of the day shelters is a lot less than what I’m used to seeing but that’s because they can hold at 25% capacity due to the pandemic. So there’s a lot of people outside in the Seattle area alone that are just out there in those tents, and the tents are side by side. I don’t know if you’ve been out there to see what it looks like, but it’s pretty heartbreaking. You know, it tugs on the heart strings when you go out there and see that. **Only a certain number of people [is] allowed to come inside and warm up at a time.**”

“Most of them don’t want to [go to shelter], they feel like **they’d rather take their chances and be safer in their car with the limited exposure around other people, other areas.** They would rather just be with either themselves in that vehicle or their partner that’s in there with them. They’re just safer that way.”

“90% of people do not want to go to any congregate space. They are aware of the dangers of congregate [shelters and] COVID transmission and they don’t want to go. **Most people are not going to give up their tent location to go to a congregate space?**”





What are outreach providers saying?

Unsheltered homelessness has increased during the pandemic

“We did a lot of linkage to shelter and housing and there’s been very, very little this year. Almost none. So people’s hope to be able to move inside was really diminished. I actually think that there’d been a lot of consistent people that we’ve seen [because] there wasn’t really a place for them to go. And there has been relatively little displacement which is good under the pandemic. We do see a lot of new people. This is anecdotal but you know **my belief is that there are a lot more unsheltered people than there were last year and those numbers have increased dramatically but we don’t really have a way to count them. We see them much more present, absolutely they’re in places they never were before** and I would say the needs have dramatically increased over the last year... People are on the very edge of survival and that’s really escalated this year.”





What does this all mean?



System flow slowing down and contracting a bit (e.g. reductions in shelter capacity)

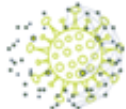


Shelter stayers avoiding congregate settings and staying unsheltered for fear of contracting the virus



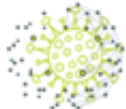
Pandemic response programs/policies reducing the traditional drivers of inflow/homelessness.





The temporary COVID-19 response programs and policies collectively act as a dam holding back a tide of homelessness and housing instability.

In contrast, we could think of HMIS system flow data as a lagging indicator driven more by system capacity and demand.



New housing strategies addressing the crisis amidst a pandemic

- Health through Housing Initiative
- Hotel-based emergency shelters
- JustCare
- Co-Lead





Thank you!

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