

CITY OF YAKIMA

LEGAL

DEPARTMENT

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MEMORANDUM

August 6, 2020

TO: Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council
Alex Meyerhoff, Interim City Manager

FROM: Sara Watkins, Senior Assistant City Attorney

SUBJECT: Data Regarding People Experiencing Homelessness

The main source of data on homelessness in Yakima is found in the HMIS system, or the Homeless Management Information System. This is a HUD database that compiles data for all persons experiencing homelessness who seek services. It is used to collect client-level data and data on the provision of housing and services to persons and families experiencing homelessness, as well as persons and families at risk of homelessness. The HMIS program is administered by the Washington State Department of Commerce. Yakima County homeless programs coordinate with Commerce and the County is a cooperating agency, but does not necessarily have any discretion in how the data is managed.

HMIS data collection cooperation between service providers and the County is contractually required of all entities receiving funding from Yakima County's Homeless Coalition. My understanding of this data system is that there are a number of different reports that can be created from the data. Yakima County is the agency that has the capability of requiring HMIS cooperation as part of its contracts. HMIS is not required to be used unless an entity receives federal funds or is contractually obligated to do so. However, in Yakima there are organizations, such as the Union Gospel Mission, that voluntarily input data into the system.

Aside from the HMIS data regarding persons and families experiencing homelessness, the Yakima Homeless Coalition also awards grants for both state and local funding. Information about which entities receive those grants, the grant requirements, and the expected outcomes are determined and monitored by the County, through the Coalition. However, ultimate decision-making on the grants is held by the County Commissioners. The Yakima Homeless Coalition regularly meets. Their agendas and associated documents can be found here: <https://www.yakimacounty.us/2391/Yakima-County-Homeless-Coalition>, however, there have been no uploaded documents since January 2020. Yakima County staffs this coalition and documents could be requested through Esther. Councilmember Lund is the City's representative on the Executive Committee to the Coalition. Any councilmember may attend the general meetings. The next meeting is September 15, 2020 from 1:30pm—3:30pm virtually. If you would like to receive information regarding attending this meeting, you may email HumanServices@co.yakima.wa.us.

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The recently updated Yakima County Five Year Plan can be found here:
<https://www.yakimacounty.us/DocumentCenter/View/23705/Yakima-County-5-Year-Plan-to-Address-Homelessness-2019-2024?bidId=>

The 2020 Point in Time Count has not yet been released.

The two year grant cycle for organizations to receive state and local funding (including the 2163 filing fee funds) recently concluded and new grants were awarded. Awards were effective July 1, 2020, and are good for two years. Here is a link to the press release from Yakima County that outlines the grant award winners, amounts awarded and the category under which the grant was awarded: <https://www.yakimacounty.us/DocumentCenter/View/25046/HHA-RFP-2020-Awards-Press-Release?bidId=>

If you would like to learn more information about each of the programs, it can be found here:
<https://www.yakimacounty.us/2436/Programs-We-Fund>