



Social Determinants of Health - Housing Workgroup Overview – DRAFT v7

The lack of safe and affordable housing in Central Oregon has become more than just a question of access and availability – it has become a public health crisis. Low-income families in all three counties struggle to find affordable housing. Homelessness persists and is becoming more widespread, while in many instances, it remains relatively invisible. Given all we know about the importance of housing to health, the current housing environment in this region is widening and exacerbating inequities and health disparities that impact people with fewer financial and support resources. This is particularly true for individuals and families trapped in a cycle of crisis and housing instability due to growing poverty, trauma, violence, mental illness, addiction or other chronic health conditions.

The Social Determinants of Health - Housing Workgroup (“Housing Workgroup”) is one of eight workgroups sponsored by the Central Oregon Health Council, a nonprofit, public and private community governance entity dedicated to improving the health of the region and providing oversight of the Medicaid population and the Coordinated Care Organization (PacificSource). The Housing Workgroup is comprised of individuals, organizations and agencies across many areas – affordable housing, homelessness, health care, social services, education and transportation - who are focused on promoting and supporting the vulnerable and at-risk end of the housing spectrum: homelessness, very low and low income housing and workforce housing. The Housing Workgroup acknowledges that we must bridge housing solutions with the health system. As such, this group will work to address issues of housing using a health lens. Our current priority focus areas include:

- 1) Organizational Capacity** – To lay a strong foundation, we will develop shared definitions around key terms (i.e. homelessness, housing stressed, etc.) and conduct a data inventory to determine who is gathering/tracking what data and what is missing.
- 2) Policy** - This new workgroup will be a resource around affordable housing and homelessness by providing technical assistance through research and working with stakeholders to DRAFT specific ordinances or policies for local government (i.e. neighborhood associations, city, county, etc.).
- 3) Advocacy** - This new workgroup will be a force for helping to pass specific legislation/ordinances, impact local, state and federal housing policies and/or countering NIMBY (i.e. through letters of support, testifying at hearings, etc.).
- 4) Outreach and Awareness** - Data and information on housing isn’t always in a form that can be easily understood nor is it adequately distributed to those who need to see it. This new workgroup will work with local news media and social networks, gather and analyze data, and share actionable information on homelessness and affordable housing. It will also play a role in making sure that the health perspective is maintained in the work of other housing efforts.
- 5) New initiatives** - This new workgroup will be a resource in developing new cross sector (i.e. housing and health) initiatives, with a focus on non-traditional, disruptive innovation. It will also provide support in resource development (i.e. grant writing).