

### **Who is homeless in Whatcom County?**

- The most recent count was 700 people, or about 0.3% of the population
- About 2/3 of the local homeless population had their last stable address here in Whatcom County
- There is great diversity in the homeless population and each person has their own story
  - Some sleep outside, others use shelters
  - Some people have full time jobs, others are unable to work
  - About 75% are single adults. The other 25% are made up of families (Couples, Adults with children, Adults with adult children)

### **Why are people homeless in Whatcom County?**

- Financial challenges are the number one contributor to homelessness
  - When rent costs more than 30% of a person's income they are much more likely to become homeless (In 2017 American Community Survey found that 65% of Whatcom County renters were paying more than 30% of their income.)
- Other significant factors include untreated mental illness, disabilities, ongoing health challenges, untreated substance abuse, domestic violence, family rejection, and discharges to homelessness from institutions

### **What needs to happen?**

- Affordable housing development
  - *Rent capped at 30% of the tenant's income*
- Rapid rehousing
  - *1-2 year rent subsidy with case management*
- Prevention and diversion programs
  - *Keep at-risk households from becoming homeless*
- Increase economic security for low-income households
  - *Increase incomes, promote financial literacy and stability*
- Permanent supportive housing
  - *Subsidized housing with case manager support in scattered sites or at staffed buildings*
- Interim housing
  - *Shelters for people seeking permanent housing*

### **How can I help?**

- Volunteer and/or donate to one of the local non-profits working to end homelessness
- Advocate to elected officials for more resources to address homelessness and the shortage of affordable housing
- Attend Whatcom County Coalition to End Homelessness meetings on the first Thursday of even-numbered months at the YWCA in Bellingham from 3:30-5:00pm