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Kathy Kershner

## WHATCOM COUNTY COUNCIL

# Homeless Strategies Workgroup

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## Friday, October 9, 2020 Meeting #29 Summary

Time: 1:30 p.m. – 2:50 p.m.  
Location: Remote online meeting

### Members in Attendance:

Barry Buchanan, Chair, Whatcom County Councilmember  
Michael Lilliquist, Bellingham City Council Member  
Hannah Stone, Bellingham City Council Member  
Riley Sweeney, City of Ferndale  
Michael Shepard, Port of Bellingham, Commissioner  
Mike Parker, Opportunity Council Representative  
Ann Beck, Whatcom County Health  
Dean Wight, Northwest Youth Services Representative  
Florence Simon, Bellingham Police, Deputy Chief  
Mike Hilley, Whatcom County EMS  
Guy Occhiogrosso, Bellingham/Whatcom Chamber of Commerce Representative  
Markis D. Stidham, Homeless Advocate  
Joel Kennedy, Homeless children and families  
Emily O'Connor, Homeless children and families  
Michael Berres, Special populations  
Lisa Marx, Schools

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**1) Welcome**, HSW Chair, Whatcom County Councilmember Barry Buchanan  
Councilmember Buchanan welcomed members to the meeting.  
HSW members approved Meeting Summary 28 – September 25, 2020.

### **2) Ideas for List of Alternative Strategies & Responses Chart (20 min)**

Emily O'Connor presented a draft document to consolidate the workgroup's goals, guiding principles, core values, and purpose. The document includes a chart of action steps, derived from the previous version of the Alternative Strategies & Responses Chart, and summarized and prioritized based on the Plan to End Homelessness.

HSW Members discussed the new chart and content, including statements of support for the new concise format and suggestions for including 'interim housing' and emergency housing. Several members will continue to update the chart outside of regularly scheduled HSW meetings and bring back an updated version at the next HSW meeting. A draft document is anticipated to be available to the public in the meeting packet for the October 23<sup>rd</sup> meeting.

### **3) Identify location and partner for safe parking**

Rick Sepler provided an update on safe parking, an RFP is out and closes October 30th. There are locations on lower Cornwall where RVs are parked. Some have handicapped permits and are allowed to stay in place, and other have a 72-hour parking limit. City of Bellingham provided waste receptacles and porta-potties with varying results at different locations. Some are being vandalized or inappropriate activities occurring inside. Areas around City Hall work fine, but areas near the library are problematic.

### **4) Year-round sheltering for families**

Emily O'Connor shared data collected from the Homeless Services Center including coordinate entry average days from intake to referral for families with children. There is an increase in emergency housing requests from families with children as well as emergency motel stays. Stays are on average 6 weeks, but some families staying 6 months. The total cost was just under \$300,000 for the time period from September, 2019 to August, 2020. Four out of 106 families left without connection to other housing or services. There is a significant rise of families with children experiencing homelessness. *(See data attached, provided by Emily O'Connor.)*

Emily O'Connor discussed funding status related to motel stays for families with children, detailing that much of the recent funding was COVID emergency funds from private foundations and were one-time donations. The community needs to be prepared for funding an increased need. Anne Deacon indicated there is additional funding this year and they are in better shape this year than in previous years. The bigger issue this year will be if there are enough motel units available.

Additionally, Emily O'Connor asked HSW members to think about what our community response look like if we spent \$300,000 a year on a different model to serve families, rather than using those funds on motel stays. Members discussed what a permanent facility for families with children might look like, including an interim housing option (not a 12-month lease apt) as a better option for many of these families.

### **5) Winter Shelter – temporary and emergency (5 min)**

Ann Beck shared an update on a partnership with Basecamp and Christ The King for additional shelter beds at the Drop-In Center. Previous shelter partners have limited capacity during the pandemic, and the county is not receiving responses from other partners to operate a winter shelter. HSW members discussed the temperature criteria for opening shelter is based on research and set at 28 degrees.

### **6) Additional Action Items (5 min)**

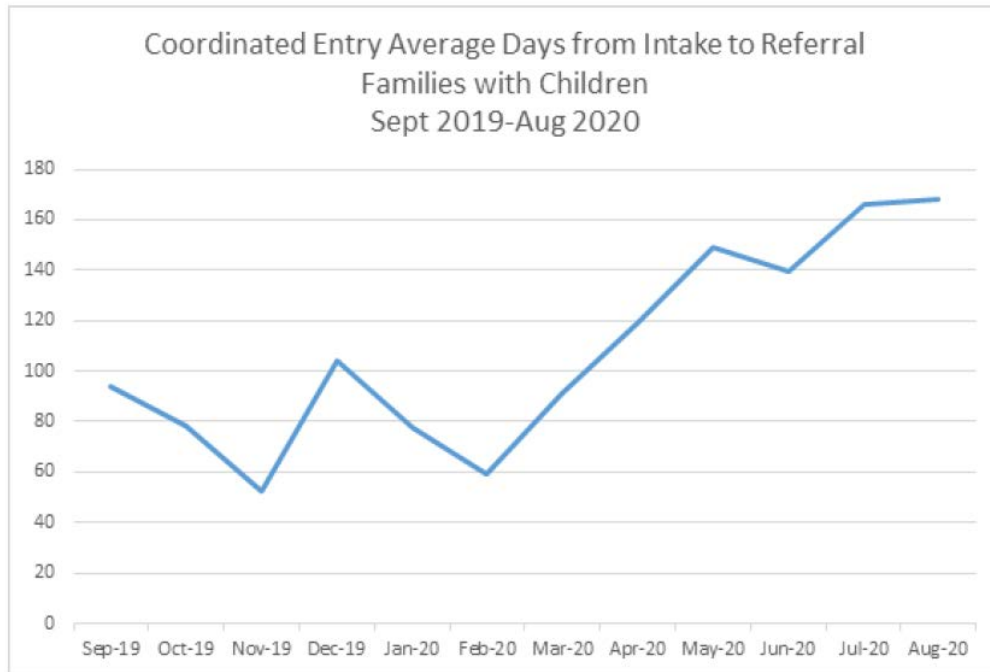
Markis Stidham asked for emergency shelter for all people on the street.

### **7) Public Comment (begins at approximately 2:30 pm)**

Comments were provided by the following:

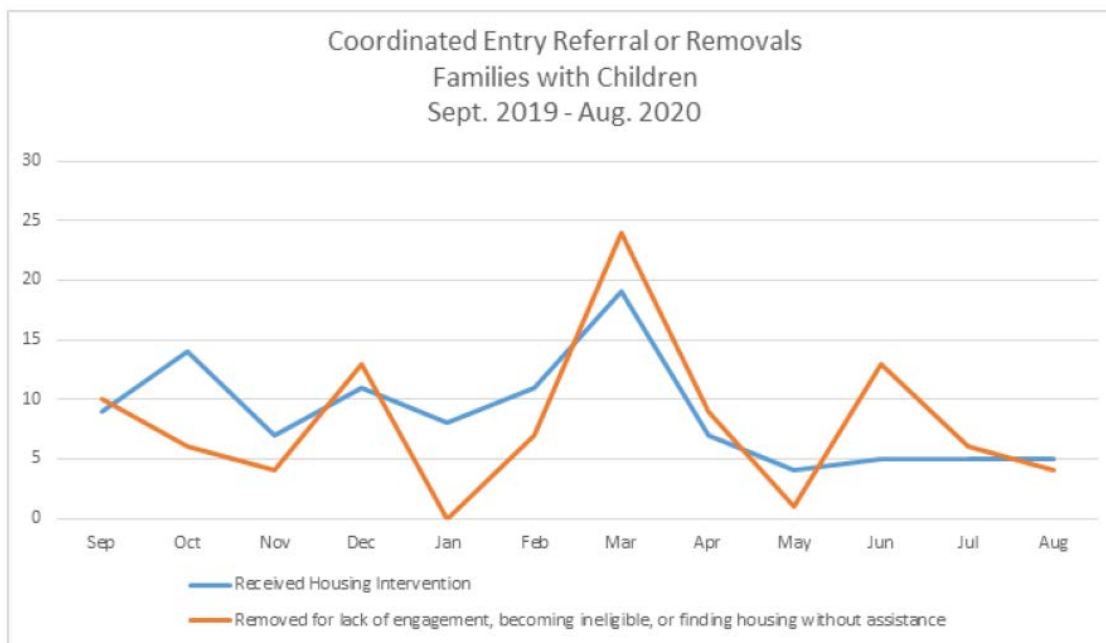
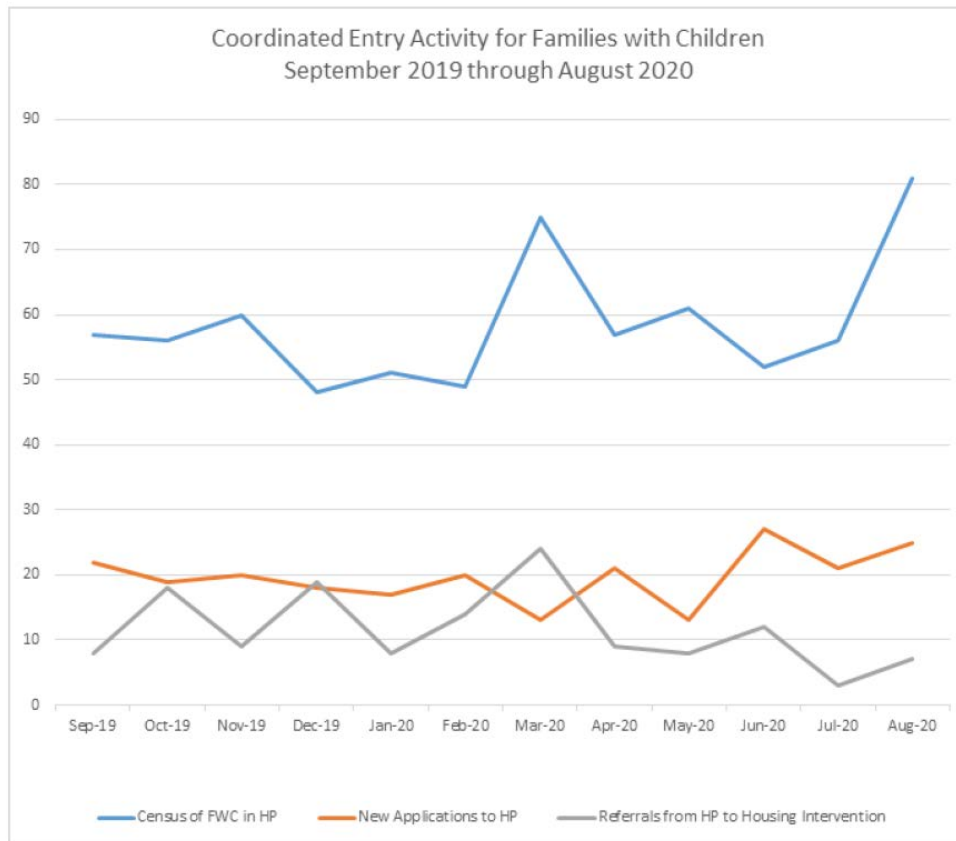
- Doug Gustafson
- JC Mansfield
- Melissa Gragg
- Dana Briggs
- Shari Lapoff
- Heather Katahdin

Data provided by Emily O'Connor via Homeless Services Center:



Coordinated Entry Average Days from Intake to Referral for Families with Children by Housing Intervention					
	Emergency	Deposit Assistance	Transitional	RRH	PSH
19-Sep				101	74
19-Oct	24			77	101
19-Nov				37	76
19-Dec	169		136	85	92
20-Jan	38			92	71
20-Feb	75		91	34	
20-Mar				87	161
20-Apr	129			135	86
20-May				149	
20-Jun	3	111	127	131	256
20-Jul			111	278	
20-Aug				125	233

Note: These are not de-duplicated - FWC may receive more than one referral to housing intervention, for example, families may be referred to emergency resources and also to a transitional or permanent housing intervention.



## Emergency Motel Stays

Families with Children

September 1, 2019 to August 31, 2020

# of HH	Org	Ave. Stay	Range	\$\$\$	PSH	RRH	HP	Unkn	TH	ES	F/F
76	OC	41	4-148 days	\$ 210,000							
20	LP	51	7-182 days	\$ 71,740	8	7	3	2			
10	DVSAS	17	3 - 46 days	\$ 11,288		2		2	1	3	2

106 HH                      3 days to 6 months      \$ 293,028