

**From:** [Katie Holmes](#)  
**To:** [Cathy Halka](#)  
**Subject:** Emergency Shelter  
**Date:** Thursday, November 19, 2020 11:10:17 PM

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Good morning,

Please send the following to the Homeless Strategies Workgroup:

I'm writing in support of emergency shelter to house homeless community members.

Despite the best efforts and intentions of the various agencies and organizations throughout Whatcom County, many of our citizens continue to fall through the cracks. You may remember in January, when [a man died of exposure](#) approximately 4 blocks away from the Lighthouse Mission Drop-in Center.

The services in Whatcom County are generally overburdened to begin with and have difficulty meeting the needs of all those they aim to serve. This winter there is an increased pressure on already strained services due to COVID-19. The [Washington State Department of health](#) predicts an increase in substance abuse/relapse in the coming months, an increase in mental health symptoms, a decrease in housing stability, and an increase in suicide. It's also important to acknowledge that those working in human services are also suffering as a result of the pandemic- and each organization's functioning capacity is likely impacted in some way. It is time for more government and community engagement on this issue. And it is time to support evidence-based [Housing First](#) approaches as a viable solution.

I believe that our community can partner to shelter ALL individuals- regardless of their circumstances- this winter. Whatcom county has proven its willingness to help the homeless community. Developing and funding services following the Housing-First model can only function as an opportunity for community growth. Most importantly, it breaks down many of the barriers standing between our most vulnerable neighbors and surviving this winter.

Thank you for your time,

Katelyn Holmes