



# **Emergency & Transitional Housing Plan: Working Document**

**Adopted by the Blaine County Housing Authority, August 2023**  
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# Executive Summary

## The Challenge – Over 200 people experience homelessness in Blaine County on any given night

**Blaine County Point In Time Count:** 139 individuals experiencing homelessness

- 14 unsheltered (outside and in vehicles), 125 sheltered (in shelter and transitional housing)

**Blaine County Public Schools:** 114 homeless or unstably housed students

- 4% of the students in the district
- 40% of the homeless students are English language learners

**Emergency Shelter and Motel Stays:** 158 individuals served from November to March

- 99 adults and 59 children

## Blaine County Point in Time Count: 139 individuals experiencing homelessness



## Blaine County Public Schools: 114 homeless or unstably housed students



## Emergency Shelter and Motel Stays: 158 individuals served from November to March



## Case Studies

Rural communities have traditionally relied on the faith community to house unsheltered populations, but with the growth of homelessness local government is increasingly involved. Most often, winter shelter operations are funded by counties or cities but operated by nonprofit partners. Several rural communities are also trying out innovative solutions like tiny homes and safe parking sites.

## Long Term Recommendations

1. Implement a regional, systems-level approach to homelessness planning.
2. Establish and track shared goals to improve the performance of the existing system.
3. Increase access to permanent solutions.

## Short Term Recommendations

1. Execute winter shelter plan.
2. Expand regional transitional housing supply.
3. Provide housing-focused case management for those in shelter and transitional housing.

# Introduction

## How did we get here?

A lack of affordable housing is the primary driver of homelessness (Quigley and Raphael, 2004). Homelessness stems from both an inadequate supply of affordable housing and household incomes far below the cost of available housing.

In Blaine County, an affordable housing shortage was compounded by the arrival of a surge of new immigrants in the summer 2022. These new community members arrived looking for work and security, but often lacked the means and family connections to find safe and stable housing (Hunger Coalition Influx Report, 2023).

The nonprofit and faith communities and the City of Ketchum rapidly pulled together a community response, establishing temporary shelters at various locations. These shelters housed over 100 households between November 2022 and March 2023.

## Objectives of this Plan:

While last winter's community response effectively addressed a crisis, it was not a sustainable or comprehensive strategy to address homelessness. This Plan: (i) scopes the size of the need; (ii) recommends the scale of an appropriate response and (iii) suggests long and short term strategies to address homelessness in our community.

## Emergency Homeless Responses

Nationally, unprecedented numbers of unsheltered individuals and explosions of encampments are intensifying pressure on government to find immediate and safe solutions that do not financially impact existing systems. Jurisdictions are being called on to come up with swift solutions, but there are no existing best practices for funding, standing up, or prioritizing individuals into managed encampments, including safe parking programs or tiny home villages.

Thoughtfully developing consistent programming and processes for an emergency response can reduce harm to both the unsheltered population and neighboring residents and businesses. Response actions can include:

- Prioritization
- Sheltering-in-Place, particularly in substandard conditions
- Clear, concise and consistent messaging to unsheltered individuals, the public, and providers
- Consistent and trauma informed process for entry or enrollment
- Engagement with other systems (law enforcement, schools, etc.)
- Siting property for emergency sheltering projects
- Supervision and staffing of emergency shelter programs
- Exit strategies for moving individuals into permanent housing

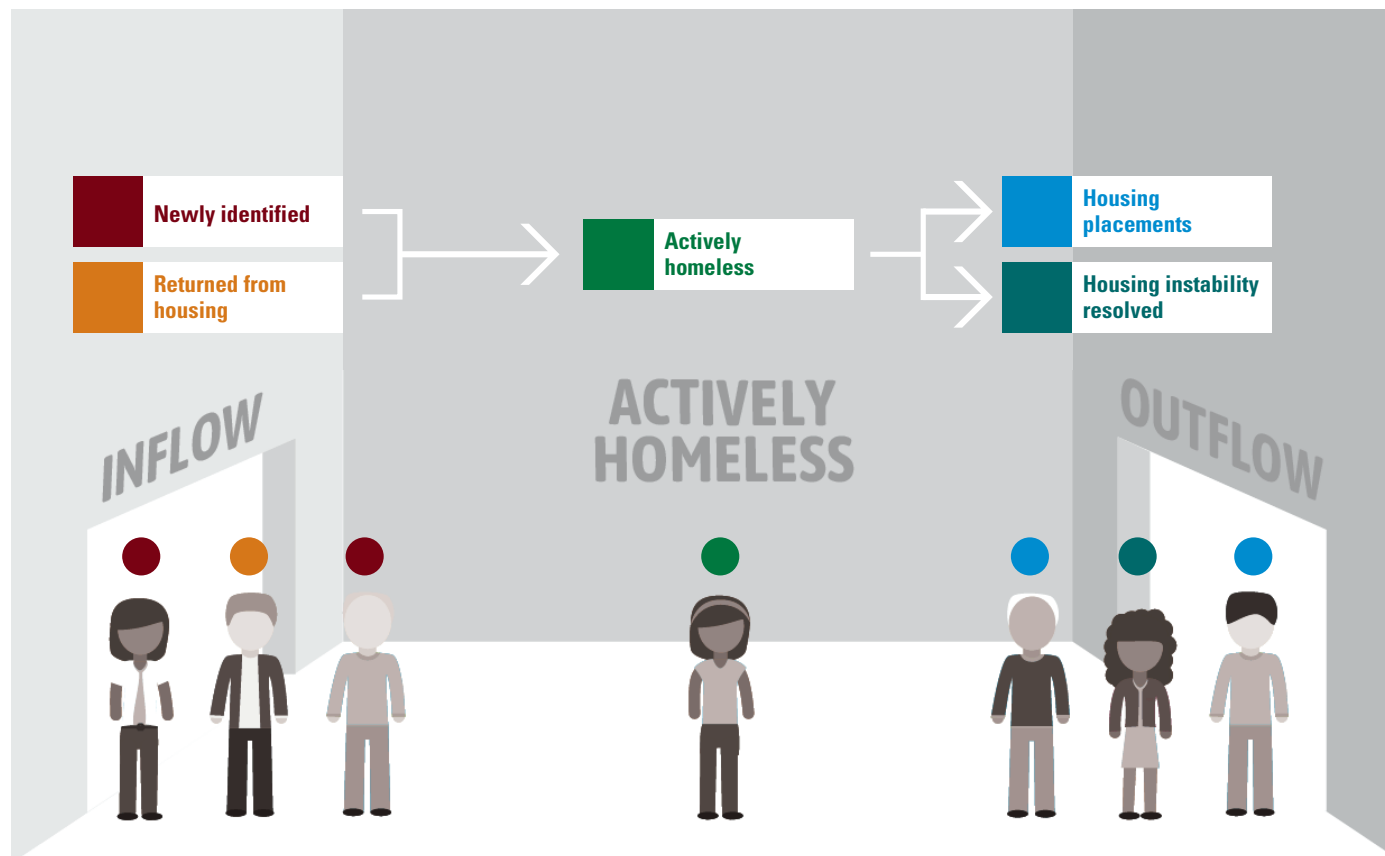
These options were contemplated in the development of this Plan.

## What does success look like?

The goal is not to eradicate homelessness, but to put systems in place to make homelessness **rare, brief, and non-recurring**. This is called functionally ending homelessness or “functional zero.”

Ensuring homelessness is rare and brief requires systems that can help people exit homelessness quickly and positively (outflow) and prevent people from becoming unhoused in the first place (inflow). In making projections and decisions regarding necessary capacity, this plan considered how a broad range of changes and improvements within our systems could impact need and demand for emergency shelter, including increased emphasis on diversion strategies and reductions in the length of time it takes for guests to move from shelter to permanent housing.

## System Flow



Source: Community Solutions

## Key Features of Effective Communities

Communities that have designed a resilient, effective, and dynamic homeless response system share a few key features.

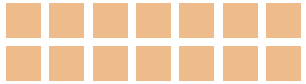
	Feature	Status in Blaine County
1	A shared aim and belief that homelessness is solvable	Minimal awareness or engagement of homelessness as an issue
2	A collaborative, community-wide team that is accountable for reducing and ending homelessness	Exists among service providers and some government actors, but team came together reactively not affirmatively
3	High-quality data systems that support a culture of continuous improvement	No
4	An aligned and effective coordinated system whereby all providers 1) allocate housing and services through a single process and according to shared protocol (also known as a coordinated entry system) and 2) participate in recurring, problem-solving efforts to collectively remove barriers to housing (also known as case conferencing)	No coordinated entry; yes case conferencing
5	Establishment of a racially equitable homeless response system	No
6	Policy mechanisms to clear structural and administrative barriers to ending homelessness	Some
7	Strategic, data-driven investments to reduce homelessness long-term and flexible financial resources to clear immediate barriers to housing	Some

Source: Community Solutions

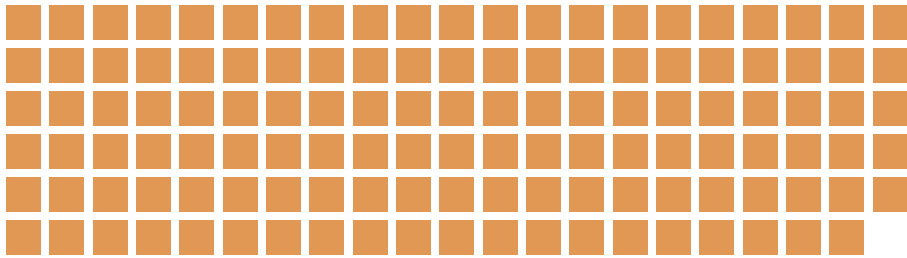


## Data

### Blaine County Point in Time Count: 139 individuals experiencing homelessness



14 unsheltered (includes those living in vehicles)



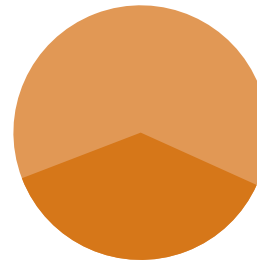
125 sheltered (in shelter, transitional housing or permanent supportive housing)



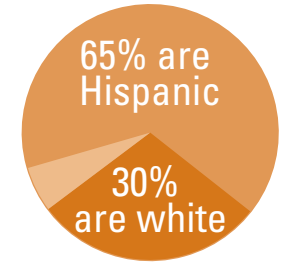
**70**  
in DV shelter  
and transitional  
housing on  
a typical  
night

Source: Point in time Count, January 26, 2023 plus additional information from The Advocates

### Blaine County Public Schools: 114 homeless or unstably housed students Roughly 4% of the students in the district



40% of the homeless students are English language learners



19% have disabilities

11% are unaccompanied (without a parent or guardian)

Source: Edfacts March 2021

## Measuring Local Action

### Emergency shelter and motel stays:

158 individuals served between November and March



Average length of stay: 71 nights

Average cost: \$6600 per household

source: Blaine County Charitable Fund

### Prevention: Rent Assistance

155 households served with emergency rental assistance

Average cost: \$2600 per household

source: Blaine County Charitable Fund

### Prevention: Housing Subsidies

29 households have Section 8 Vouchers



29 additional households are on the waitlist for Vouchers

source: Idaho Housing Finance Association

**Could more people avoid shelter?** A key part of a homeless response is reducing the inflow of people into shelter by offering prevention or diversion programs. However, service providers in our community were in agreement that individuals were only using the shelter as a last resort, sometimes only after being convinced by caseworkers to leave unsafe or substandard living conditions. Providers believed that shelter residents were so vulnerable that a flexible pool of diversion dollars that could help pay for transportation to relocate or reunite with family, would not successfully divert a significant number of people from a local shelter.

**Where did people go when they left shelter?** We did not collect exit destination information in a systematic way, but anecdotally we know some families found housing outside of Blaine County, and some individuals are crowding into shared motel and transitional housing rooms. Some people also returned to overcrowded rentals, unwinterized RVs, unheated or poorly insulated outbuildings, and cars.

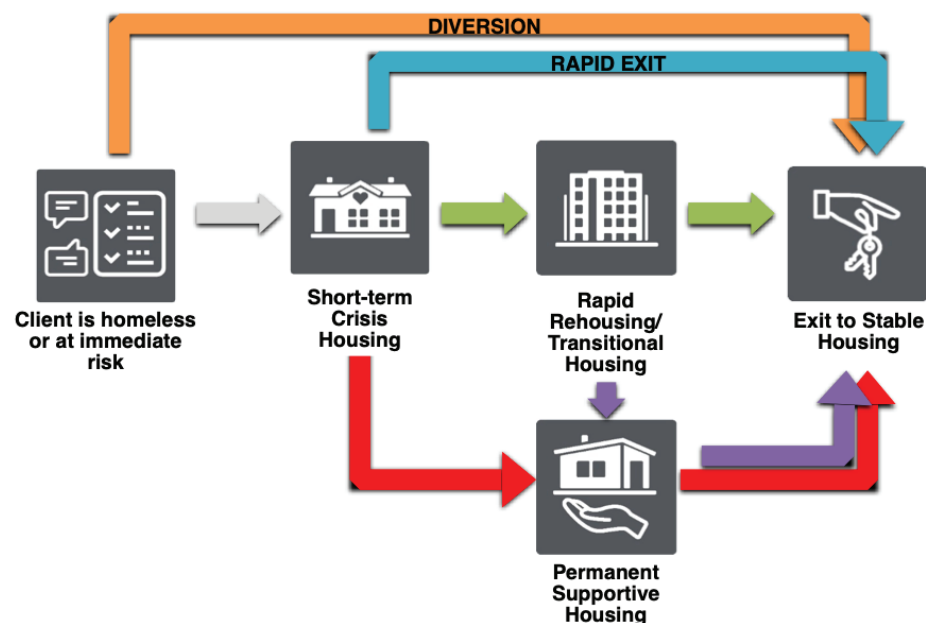
**Could people move on from shelter faster?** The average length of stay for guests in the shelter and motels this winter was 71 nights, which is brief compared to shelter stays in large cities but is likely a reflection of the shelter closure. In a well-functioning system of truly emergency shelter, a stay would be a maximum of 7-10 days. To increase the speed at which exits occur, we need to focus efforts not just on pathways out of shelter but pathways out of transitional housing and the supply of permanent affordable housing. As units of transitional housing open up, new units could be prioritized for shelter residents, thereby enhancing overall system flow.

As local cities focus on producing affordable housing, we must consider how to leverage these units to support families across the housing spectrum. We should also make sure we are considering all types and funding sources for affordable housing, including HUD funding for permanent supportive housing.

## Diversion

Diversion is a strategy that prevents homelessness for people seeking shelter by helping them identify immediate alternate housing arrangements and, if necessary, connecting them with services and financial assistance to help them return to permanent housing.

## Paths to Housing





## Improving our Data Systems

Our ability to assess last year's success and plan for the future is hindered by the limited data we collected. If we pursue HUD funding as a community (see later sections for details on funding opportunities), we will likely need to adopt the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS). This tool effectively measures programmatic compliance for federally funded programs, and provides big-picture system patterns.

HMIS does not provide the comprehensive, person-level data needed to connect individuals with housing and equitably reduce homelessness. For this reason, many communities also use case conferencing and "by-name lists" to manage homelessness at the individual level.

Our community is already engaging in the national best practice of case conferencing, and just needs to tweak some of our processes to ensure we are doing so in the most appropriate and productive manner. Moving forward, we just want to ensure we receive consent from all clients to be part of case conferencing (this will be part of HMIS protocols, if and when we launch an HMIS system) and that data is maintained in ways that are HIPAA compliant.

## Coordinated Entry

To receive some types of funding from HUD, our community would be required to participate in a Coordinated Entry system. Most simply, this means a single organization completes a common assessment of a housing-seeker, where they are entered into a pool for housing resources. If a local housing resource became available, that individual would be "matched" with the local nonprofit offering the housing. The Coordinated Entry lead for our region is South Central Community Action Partnership.

## Who does what?

- Continuums of Care (CoCs) are administrative entities defined by HUD that coordinate local homelessness services and funding, including maintaining lists of people experiencing homelessness who are seeking housing assistance.
- The Idaho Balance of State CoC is also known as the Idaho Homeless Coordinating Committee.
- Blaine County is in Region 4 of the Idaho Balance of State CoC.
- The nonprofit South Central Community Action Partnership (based in Twin Falls) serves as the single point of entry or "coordinated entry" partner for Region 4.



## Case Studies

### Case Study 1 / Martha's Vineyard

Population: 17,000

- Transitioned from volunteer-run shelter to nonprofit-run shelter during Covid to protect seniors who volunteered
- Shelter now run by paid overnight staff, supported by volunteers
- A third church operates a warming center, where caseworker works during the day

The Homeless Prevention Caseworker funded by the County:

- provides individualized assistance in completing applications for rental assistance and/or subsidized housing programs
- provides resources and referrals
- facilitates referrals to shelters on and off island
- screens chronically homeless individuals for the regional permanent supportive housing waitlist
- attends regional meetings
- works collaboratively with community agencies to provide support services
- maintains a database that tracks all intakes and disaggregates the data by multiple factors to inform community about the profile and needs of homeless residents

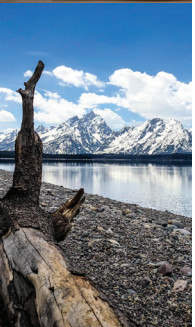
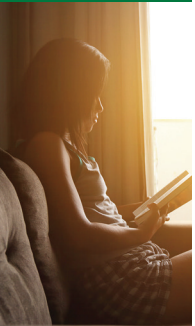
**What: winter shelter for singles; motel rooms for families**

**Where: winter shelter rotates between two churches**

**WHO,  
WHAT  
&  
WHERE**

**Who: Harbor Homes MV, an affordable housing developer nonprofit operates the shelters**

**Gov't Role: County funds homeless prevention caseworker who is nonprofit employee**



## Case Study 2 / Jackson Hole

Population: 11,000

- About \$50,000, or 13% of operating budget comes from charging dorm fees (\$12 a night) to shelter residents
- Higher barrier shelter (clean and sober, working or looking for work)
- Paid shelter staff
- No family shelter

**What: 35 bed year round shelter for single adults**

**Where: nonprofit-owned building**

**WHO,  
WHAT  
&  
WHERE**

**Who: Good Samaritan Mission-religious nonprofit**

**Gov't Role: small dollar grants from local government**



### Case Study 3 / Aspen

Population: 7,000 / 17,000 countywide

- Permanent shelter and winter overnight shelter that rotated between churches both closed in 2021
- Day shelter operates out of County's Health and Human Services building
- Safe encampment site for up to 25
- County received over \$1 million in COVID relief dollars to address homelessness
- Coalition of housing stability stakeholders including County officials, law enforcement and health care providers set goals and initiatives



## Key Learnings from Case Studies

Many comparable towns are struggling to address the interrelated issues of housing affordability and rising homelessness. The additional factor of a surge in asylum seekers has been widely documented in the Southwest and in urban centers, but is still a new challenge without a best practice response. But in general, models from other towns with a strong likelihood of success in Blaine County include:

- Switching from a volunteer-run shelter model to a staff-operated/volunteer supported model
- Increased involvement and investment by local government
- Regional coordination on federal funding
- Innovative pilot projects like safe parking sites and asset conversion

## Homelessness among Migrants

Forced displacement and marginalization can create additional challenges in securing safe and stable housing for migrants, with many experiencing homelessness at some point in their resettlement process. (Pottie K, Martin JP, Cornish S, et al., 2015) The magnitude of visible or hidden migrant homelessness is largely unknown and what little evidence exists is of low quality, which limits the development of policies, programs and services that address homelessness among migrants.

Field research suggests that the risk of migrant homelessness increases with cuts to social programs, persistent health issues, and lack of affordable housing. Mobile migrants are also at risk for frostbite, infectious diseases, soft-tissue infections, traumatic injuries and chronic illnesses (e.g., diabetes, cardiovascular disease). Migrants may suffer from common mental illnesses, including posttraumatic stress disorder and depression.

# IV.

## Long Term Recommendations

<b>Recommendation 1:</b>	<b>Implement a regional, systems-level approach to homelessness planning.</b> To date, planning has been done by an ad-hoc group responding to the humanitarian needs of people experiencing homelessness.
<b>Action steps:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Establish a formal, cross-agency structure for regional collaboration and governance, such as an Interagency Council on Homelessness.<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Δ This should include 7-10 key community partners to participate in quarterly reviews of progress on the Emergency &amp; Transitional Housing Plan.</li><li>Δ The purpose will be to problem-solve when challenges arise, identify funding/resources for implementation, and create an appropriate level of both accountability and insulation from political issues.</li><li>Δ At least one member of the Council should have lived experience with homelessness.</li></ul></li><li>• Apply collaboratively or regionally for funding through IHFA.</li></ul>
<b>Outcome:</b>	Coordination across municipalities and organizations; identifiable community leadership.

<b>Recommendation 2:</b>	<b>Establish and track shared goals to improve the performance of the existing system.</b> Moving from project-level thinking to system-level thinking requires us to look beyond individual program outcomes to collective definitions of success.
<b>Action steps:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop system-level metrics that can be monitored at least quarterly to review conditions of the system overall. For example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- number of unsheltered people seeking shelter</li> <li>- number of people exiting transitional housing or shelter to permanent solutions</li> <li>- length of stay in shelter or transitional housing</li> <li>- number of people returning to the homeless system after exiting</li> <li>- point in time count (annual)</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Develop and implement funding priorities that reflect both system-level and project-level performance targets. For example, increasing Ketchum’s transitional housing beds (project-level target) to decrease length of time people spend in shelter in Blaine County (system-level target).</li> <li>• Select a lead data collection agency and invest in system-wide training on practices necessary to have quality regional data.</li> <li>• Commit to data solutions and embrace HMIS and case conferencing processes.</li> </ul>
<b>Outcome:</b>	Better ability to track progress through performance targets and data and, over time, positive improvement of these targets.

<b>Recommendation 3:</b>	<b>Increase access to permanent solutions.</b> A lack of affordable housing options is related to both the inflow into the homeless system and the ability to permanently house those who are experiencing homelessness.
<b>Action steps:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support affordable housing production targets identified in the 2017 Housing Needs Assessment Allocation of Housing Choice Vouchers (Section 8) in Blaine County</li> <li>• Work with local cities to ensure supply of deed restricted housing units is scaling up</li> <li>• Advocate for an expanded allocation of Section 8 vouchers in Blaine County</li> <li>• Pursue funding for Permanent Supportive Housing through HOME-ARP HUD funds and other funding streams</li> </ul>
<b>Outcome:</b>	Reduced entry into, and expanded exit options from, the homeless system.



## Upcoming State and Federal Funding Opportunities

Agency	Application Release	Description	Competitive?
Idaho Commerce	Released - due June 5	<b>US Dept of Agriculture Rural Housing Preservation Grants.</b> Funds to rehab housing for very low and low-income housing.	Somewhat
IHFA	Late June for funds beginning Oct 2023	<b>HUD Emergency Services Grants (ESG).</b> Funds emergency shelter or motel stays if no shelter is available. Can also fund short-term rental assistance, mediation, case management, prevention and diversion.	Highly
IHFA	June/July for funds beginning July 2024	<b>Continuum of Care Rapid Rehousing funds.</b> Used for rental assistance for up to 24 months.	Not very
IHFA	Summer	<b>HUD HOME-ARP.</b> Permanent Supportive Housing/ rental housing development funds.	New funding source but likely highly
FEMA via United Way Worldwide	March 2024	<b>Emergency Food and Shelter Program- Humanitarian Relief.</b> Funds emergency services for new migrants. Preference for proximity to the southern border. \$12.50 per diem shelter reimbursement rate or hotel/ motel actual costs.	Highly

## Recommendations for Immediate Implementation

### A. Execute Winter Shelter Plan

Action Step	Potential Lead	Outcome
<b>Pursue diverse funding.</b> Increase capacity system-wide by identifying and applying for a range of funding sources.	BCCF BCHA BCHF Noble	Expanded bed capacity for unsheltered people.
<b>Identify local government funding to serve unsheltered people.</b> RFP the funding out to identify nonprofit provider leads.	County Cities	Expanded shelter capacity. Predictability for and engagement of nonprofit partners.
<b>Identify public or private funding to continue sheltering vulnerable families in motels,</b> while focusing on expanding transitional housing. (see Recommendation B)	County Cities Philanthropy	Maintaining bed capacity for unsheltered people.
<b>Identify potential building/ units for master leasing opportunities.</b>	County Cities	Expanded bed capacity for unsheltered people at lower cost.
<b>Negotiate master leases with motels.</b>	County BCHA	Expanded bed capacity for unsheltered people at lower cost.
<b>Negotiate rates for RVs and provide support for RV winterization</b>	Nonprofits	Expanded safe shelter capacity at lower cost.
<b>Develop sustainable rotating shelter bed schedule.</b> Avoid burnout among congregations and volunteers.	Faith community	Expanded bed capacity for unsheltered people.
<b>Explore conversion of a large deed-restricted or city/county owned home into transitional living units for single adults.</b>	City County	Expanded bed capacity for unsheltered people.
<b>Identify lead staff person for regional shelter operations.</b> This could be within local government staff or funded at a nonprofit, but should be designated, mutually agreed upon paid staff person.	County City BCHA	Greater coordination, administrative oversight and sustainability of shelter programs.

### Shelter Costs and Resources

**Existing funding:** Funding streams deployed by Blaine County Charitable Fund in 2022-23 to pay for motel rooms have expired and are currently not set for renewal.

**Replacement funding options:**

- This summer we should prepare a collaborative application for ESG funds through IHFA, though these grants are highly competitive. A lead applicant must be identified.
- Seek out new private and public funding streams, including county or city funds.

**Cost:**

- In 2022-23 the average cost per household housed in a motel in our community was \$6,600.
- The most comprehensive study of shelter costs, completed by HUD in 2010, revealed that emergency shelter is the most expensive form of housing for families, at an average of \$46 -\$123 per night. (Spellman et al. 2010)

**Scale:** Based on this year’s demand, we recommend planning to support 50 families and 30 single adults with shelter options.

**Staffing:** Staffing costs for motel vouchers are low, as existing case management staff from key partner organizations provide support. Administrative costs to run the program are significant, however.

**Execute Winter Shelter Plan, continued**

<b>Once Rapid Rehousing (RRH) program is established, establish link between motel guests and RRH exits.</b>	Nonprofit RRH lead	Improved through-put of shelter system.
<b>Establish clear and consistent policies for shelter stays, communicated to guests at outset.</b> Best practices include using a common intake form, securing consent for case conferencing, offering diversion resources to every unsheltered household, communicating expectations around financial contributions and work expectations, setting maximum length of stay.	Shelter operator(s)	Improved through-put of shelter system.
<b>Link winter shelter response to shelter response for extreme heat and/or poor air quality.</b>	County	Development of a coordinated regional hazard sheltering plan.

**B. Expand Regional Transitional Housing Supply**

Action Step	Potential	Outcome
<b>Pursue funding to launch a Rapid Rehousing initiative.</b> There is underused funding within our Continuum of Care for Rapid Rehousing. Pursue this funding stream when applications open in summer 2023, for use starting in summer 2024. Identify a regional nonprofit to lead the work and collectively support their application for funding.	BCHA? Advocates?	Expanded transitional housing resources. Improved through-put of shelter system.
<b>Acquire or develop property to use as transitional housing.</b> During Covid several counties throughout the country purchased motels or inns to safely shelter homeless individuals.	County City Affordable housing nonprofits BCHA	Expanded transitional housing resources. Improved through-put of shelter system.
<b>Identify locations for 2-6 tiny homes for transitional housing.</b>	Faith community City of Hailey County	Expanded transitional housing resources. Improved through-put of shelter system.

### C. Provide Housing-focused Case Management for those in Shelter and Transitional Housing

Action Step	Potential Lead	Outcome
<b>Provide housing navigation services.</b> Help guests apply for transitional housing, affordable housing and housing subsidies (vouchers).	Nonprofits BCHA	Improved through-put of housing system.
<b>Continue case conferences and sharing resources</b> between BCHA staff and other case managers to ensure there is not duplication or overlap of services.	Nonprofits BCHA	Improved through-put of housing system.
<b>Support providers and staff capacity to deepen impact of services.</b> Front-line service providers who witness the suffering and struggles of their clients often experience stress, compassion fatigue, and secondary trauma. To ensure that providers have the capacity to show up and provide compassionate, trauma-informed treatment to clients, the mental and emotional wellbeing of providers must be prioritized. As well, the behind the scenes work of coordinating regional shelter infrastructure should fall on government, not line case management staff.	Nonprofits County Cities	Enhanced service delivery.

### What is Rapid Rehousing?

Rapid Rehousing provides short-term rental assistance and services. The goals are to help people obtain housing quickly, increase self-sufficiency, and stay housed. It is offered without preconditions (such as employment, income, absences of criminal record, or sobriety) and the resources and services provided are tailored to the needs of the person.

The core components of rapid rehousing are housing identification, rent and move-in assistance, and case management services.

Under HUD requirements, communities can provide rapid rehousing services for 3-24 months.

# Cost and Outcomes of Various Program Models for Families

● **Emergency Shelter**

● **Transitional Housing**

(a housing subsidy plus supportive services, for up to two years in a residential setting, ranging from scattered site apartments or project-based apartments to congregate living facilities)

● **Rapid Rehousing**

(supportive services and rent assistance for 3-24 months)

## National Average Cost:

**Emergency Shelter** \$1,380 - \$3,690 per month

**Transitional Housing** \$1,200 - \$4,470 per month

▲  
\$1,300 per month on average for Blaine County services in 2022-23

**Rapid Rehousing** \$2,480 - \$6,000 total

## National Median Length of Stay:

**Emergency Shelter** 28 nights

**Transitional Housing** 157 nights

**Rapid Rehousing** varies by program model, but up to 2 years, with long subsidies prevalent in higher-cost rental markets

### Outcomes:

Only about 35% of exiting families can find unsubsidized permanent housing when exiting transitional housing. Many are able to exit because they receive a housing choice voucher or enter permanent supportive housing. Although Rapid Rehousing is the lowest cost housing model, studies in some cities have shown that 30-40% of rapid rehousing participants return to homelessness once their rental subsidy ends.

**In all cases, the costs to house individuals and families in homeless programs for extended periods are significantly higher than rental subsidies based on Fair Market Rents for an equivalent period. However, the methodology used by HUD to set Fair Market Rent (FMR) doesn't capture the realities of Blaine County. For example, the FMR for a two bedroom in Blaine County for 2023 was set at \$1,207 (rent + utilities). Though lower than the costs of the shelter and prevention programs provided to the community last year, most rental units cost twice this FMR.**

Sources: Spellman et al, 2010, HUD 2013, Taylor 2013, Walton et al. 2018, Burt 2010

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