

How many shelter beds are currently available in Longview? In the area (Kelso/Longview or Cowlitz County) ?

There are 3 shelters in the Kelso/Longview area totaling 196 shelter beds. 2 of the 3 shelters are located in Longview totaling 146 shelter beds.

Shelter Program	Number of Beds	Population Served	Location
Community House on Broadway	90	Primarily families but also singles	Longview
Emergency Support Shelter	56	Domestic Violence	Longview
Love Overwhelming	50	Adults Only	Kelso

It is important to note that each of these shelters serves a different target population and that there are not 196 shelter beds available for the entire homeless population. Additionally, each program may have specific rules that don't allow some homeless clients to access those services or have requirements for how long a client can stay at that specific shelter.

During the annual Point in Time Count (January 28, 2016) 167 shelter beds, 118 households, were occupied. That means that 29 shelter beds were not occupied on that night. These open beds may have been located in rooms that were partially occupied by a family, which doesn't necessarily mean that 29 beds were available. However, there were 134 individuals, 106 households, that were unsheltered on that night also. Unsheltered means that a household was living on the street, in their car, or in a place not meant for human habitation. So even if all of the shelters were at full capacity there would still have been 105 individuals unsheltered on that night.

There could be numerous examples of why those 29 beds were not occupied. Potentially a family living in a car did not want to stay in a shelter but instead decided to sleep in their car for the night. An individual may not have met program eligibility for a shelter or did not want to follow program rules. Additionally, as of August 11, 2016 there were 70 single households and 10 families that were seeking some type of shelter. This data is updated daily through Coordinated Entry.

What is their vacancy rate? Turn-away rate? i.e. are there currently enough beds

Maybe, but not right now.

I don't have precise vacancy rates for shelters since it changes from day to day and some shelter providers do not participate in Coordinated Entry or enter data into Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) but it is safe to say that the vacancy rate is relatively low. There are a couple factors to consider in determining whether or not our system has enough beds. First, if we look at outcomes we see a wide variation in length of time that individuals stay in the 3 shelters. For some households it could be one day for others it may exceed two years. A high performing shelter is defined as having an average length of stay of around 20 days (HUD) with that person exiting to a more permanent housing option. My last analysis determined that for all shelters in Cowlitz the average length of stay is between 30-50 days, excluding extremely long stayers, some of which are over 2 years. More recent data indicates that this average may be higher now. Shelter by definition limits how long a household can

stay to 90 days or less. So by averaging a greater amount of time in the shelter there is a lower turn-over rate, ultimately making fewer shelter beds available.

Second, each shelter has specific program criteria or barriers to entry. Some have more barriers, some have less but regardless a program barrier limits part of the homeless population from accessing shelter beds. Program barriers also play a role in slowing the turn-over rate for shelter beds. Some of the program barriers currently in some of the shelters include:

- No registered sex offenders
- Must have an ID or be willing to work towards obtaining an ID
- Can't have a service or companion animal
- Must have a negative urinalysis
- Can't have a criminal background
- Must be a married couple to stay together

And finally, there are limited options for households exiting shelters. Cowlitz County does not have enough funding to adequately support programs such as rapid rehousing or more permanent options like permanent supportive housing. Additionally, the lack of affordable units or landlords willing to rent to homeless clients limits successful outcomes for homeless households. Essentially, with the combination of higher length of homelessness in shelters, program barriers to entry, and limited resources for households exiting shelters we see more households coming into the system than successfully exiting. Shelter capacity is one of the bottlenecks currently identified in our system. In short, if our homeless system improves outcomes then we may have an adequate number of beds but with current system constraints we are not able to meet current demand for shelter beds.

Source: Sam Rubin, Cowlitz-Wahkiakum Council of Governments