



PARTNERS IN CRIME PREVENTION

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LEESW— A NEW APPROACH TO CRIME PREVENTION

For a number of years homelessness has been a problem in Snohomish County. The homeless are the most visible at intersections and freeway ramps begging for cash. But they can also be seen in secluded wooded areas camped out with whatever makeshift shelter that they can piece together to stay dry in winter and "cooler" in summer.

The potential for crime is always a first concern of the public when the subject of homelessness comes up. There is always a potential for drug activity and theft among a homeless population. But the causes of homelessness are not exclusively from criminal activity. In a 2013 survey of the homeless in Snohomish County, job loss and unemployment (42.5%) and an inability to pay rent (30.5%) were the top two causes for people to be homeless. Drug and alcohol use (24.8%), mental health issues (14.2%) and conviction of a criminal offense (8.4%) are lower on the list of reported causes.

Deputies become aware of the homeless in following up on complaints about theft, drug activity, and assaults. Often a homeless person is sent to jail, goes to court, then serves some jail time, and then is released. But they may still have their addiction or mental health problem that is not treated so the individual goes back to his

or her old habits.

The Snohomish County Sheriff's Office has initiated a new one-year pilot program to motivate and facilitate frequent users of the jail, homeless, and others in need of social services to develop a more positive life style. To do this, the Sheriff's Office has installed a "Law Enforcement Embedded Social Worker" (LEESW) in the Office of Neighborhoods. Along with two dedicated deputies, the social worker will facilitate the delivery of social services to those who are homeless, experiencing alcohol/drug addiction, and/or mental illness.

The goals are to reduce crime and reduce repeated criminal offenses by certain individuals. In working toward this goal, the Sheriff's Office expects to help deliver social services more efficiently and as a result, help control the spending for public safety and human services by the county.

This is an approach to crime prevention that is being looked at by more and more local police agencies. For example, the Seattle Police Department has had a similar program called Law Enforcement Assisted Diversion (LEAD) for a few years.

While the LEESW will focus on low level offenders, the Sheriff's Office hopes that it will show that this approach truly reduces crime and improves our quality of life.



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HOMELESS SURVEY 2013–SOME STATISTICS

- *1,996 individuals listed as homeless.*
- *5 year average has been around 2,274 individuals.*
- *External factors contributing to homelessness include unemployment, low wage jobs, lack of affordable housing, lack of services to help with job training, mental health, substance abuse.*
- *Internal factors contributing to homelessness include family breakup, domestic violence, substance abuse, mental illness, medical problems, low job skills, criminal convictions, poor credit, and eviction history.*

Source:

<http://snohomishcounty.wa.gov/DocumentCenter/View/7270>

LEESW– FOCUS ON CHRONIC USERS

The social worker will concentrate on chronic users of the criminal justice system. They can be frequently in the jail, have frequent contacts with deputies, or even in local emergency rooms many times throughout the year.

The emphasis will be on those individuals who have an addiction, mental health issue, are homeless or who have committed no more than a petty crime. Individuals charged with felonies, such as sales of drugs, will not be part of this program.

The idea is to make sure that the frequent users of the law enforcement have basic and immediate needs that will take them out of the revolving door of the criminal justice system. This hopefully not only improves the quality of life for the frequent user, but also reduces the load on the county's public safety and criminal justice services.

An example of the type of person that the LEESW is looking for is RP. RP is 45 years old, been homeless in South Snohomish County off and on for the last 15 years. She admits to being a drug user and is addicted to alcohol. She has been jailed 43 times since 1999. Charges have included theft, criminal trespass, assault, prostitution, probation violations, making false statements, etc. Incarceration has not solved her addiction or her

criminal behavior.

What the social worker would hope to do is to ensure that RP has stable housing, and is receiving treatment for her addictions. Recovery can also include job skills training so she can support herself.

The social worker can facilitate the connections with the individual and the social service organizations that can help him or her. For some, handling bureaucratic details of applying for aid or applying for programs can be too much for someone with an addiction or a mental illness to cope with. The social worker can be the resource to steer these individuals to help that takes them out of the revolving door.

The key will be to have constant contact with the homeless so that deputies know them by name and know where they should be. By knowing the population the social worker and the two deputies who will be teamed up with them will be better able to persuade them to help themselves out of their situation.

The addicted want help. They frequently find it easier to slip back to their habits than to find that help. The LEESW and the deputies want to be around when they are motivated to get help.

LEESW- SOME RESOURCES

The social worker and the deputies can try to persuade homeless individuals to get addiction treatment or mental health help. They cannot force them into programs. For those with criminal charges, they can give them a choice between going to court and possibly jail, or entering a treatment program. But in the end it is the choice of the individual.

Services that can help include:

Everett Gospel Mission- The mission can offer emergency shelter, Life Skills Classes including anger management, parenting, employment preparation, substance abuse management and financial management and resource referral.

<http://www.egmission.org/>

Catholic Community Services/Catholic Housing Services- CCS/CHS can also give help with shelter and housing and addiction recovery. <http://www.ccsww.org/site/PageServer?pagename=homepage>

Evergreen Manor- Can provide drug and alcohol detoxification and treatment for domestic violence perpetrators. <http://evergreenmanor.org/mission-and-vision/>

Compass Health- Can help with housing, chemical dependency, and mental health. <http://www.compasshealth.org/>

Snohomish County Human Services- Human Services coordinates countywide efforts in housing, drug and alcohol dependency and mental health. <http://www.snohomishcountywa.gov/191/Human-Services>

Adult Drug Treatment Court- The Snohomish County Adult Drug Treatment Court supervises non-violent felony drug-addicted defendants in a rigorous program that connects the defendant with services that can help them out of their chemical dependency. <http://snohomishcountywa.gov/1404/Adult-Drug-Treatment-Court>

Mental Health Court- The Snohomish County Mental Health Court supervises individuals with a severe and persistent mental health diagnosis through a treatment program. On successfully completing the program, the court will dismiss any criminal charges. <http://www.snohomishcountywa.gov/577/Mental-Health-Court>



Mark Mulligan/The Herald

Sheriff's Lt. Rob Palmer looks into a tent in the woods where people are camping on private property.

211-THE NUMBER TO FIND HUMAN SERVICES

We all know to call 911 in an emergency. However, 911 is not prepared to give information about emergency housing, financial, health care, legal, or mental health or substance abuse help.

211 is a phone number that you can call if you find that you are in need of help. Operators can help you find the local organization that can best help you with your situation.

If you have a life threatening emergency or crime in progress, call 911. if you have a situation where you, a family member, or friend needs help call 211.

For more information about 211 go to:

<http://win211.org/>

THE HOMELESS- HOW YOU CAN HELP

Often when we see homeless people at a freeway ramp begging for money, or on the sidewalk, or see a homeless encampment on the side of the road, we may wonder how we can help them.

A first thought might be to give them money. Or maybe buy them a meal. But beyond that we might not know what to do.

Sgt. Huri, of the Snohomish County Sheriff's Office, Office of Neighborhoods, recommends that you not give money. Often the spur of the moment gift of cash will go toward alcohol or drugs, which is the last thing that the individual needs. Most people on the streets need longer term help than a few dollars can provide in the short term.

Sgt. Huri recommends that you donate to or volunteer with organizations that work with the homeless, mentally ill, drug dependent, etc. By donating your money or your time to organizations that are trying to help individuals in need, you can have a better effect on their lives.

To find volunteer opportunities go to the following organizations:

- Call 211 or go to <http://win211.org/>
- Contact the Volunteers of American of Western Washington at <http://www.voaww.org/>
- United Way of Snohomish County at <http://www.uwsc.org/>

Also, if you regularly see homeless near your neighborhood, or know of homeless hangouts in your area, let the Sheriff's Office know. You can call 911 or 211 with this information. You can also email Sgt. Ian Huri at neighborhoodwatch@snoco.org.

NEW WAY OF DOING BUSINESS- Other Communities with Similar Programs

Local police agencies trying this approach include:

- Seattle Police Department/King County Sheriff's Office- <http://leadkingcounty.org/>
- Everett Police Department- <http://www.heraldnet.com/article/20150522/NEWS01/150529746>
- Santa Monica Police Department- <http://www.seattletimes.com/nation-world/santa-monica-calif-extends-hand-to-its-homeless/>

OFFICE OF NEIGHBORHOODS

MAKING OUR NEIGHBORHOODS SAFER

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SHERIFF'S OFFICE CRIME PREVENTION WEB PAGE:

<http://www.snohomishcountywa.gov/289/Crime-Prevention>

NEWSLETTER INFO

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If you have questions regarding this newsletter or any articles that appear in it, please contact the editor at neighborhoodwatch@snoco.org

TIP LINES



Snohomish County Sheriff's Office: 425-388-3845

Online Tips: <http://snohomishcountywa.gov/303/Anonymous-Tips>

Crime Stoppers of Puget Sound: 1-800-222-8477