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## **Snohomish County Executive and Sheriff Sign Partnership Agreement**

*They also announce the joint launch of the SCOUT and Office of Neighborhood programs*

**SNOHOMISH COUNTY, Wash., February 21, 2023** – Today, Snohomish County Executive Dave Somers and Snohomish County Sheriff Adam Fortney signed a [Partnership Agreement](#) covering the deployment of Snohomish County Human Services Social Workers as they help address homelessness, behavioral health, and public safety concerns with both the Snohomish County Outreach Team (SCOUT) and Office of Neighborhoods (OON) programs.

OON is a program within the Snohomish County Sheriff's Office (SCSO) that partners with Snohomish County's Human Services social workers. The program was paused in June 2022 due to law enforcement staffing shortages. In response, Human Services developed a new program, called Snohomish County Outreach Team (SCOUT), to ensure their social workers were able to continue to serve people in need. OON was relaunched in January 2023, and the Partnership agreement between these agencies will allow for both of these programs, OON and SCOUT, to work simultaneously, providing additional opportunities to help some of the most vulnerable people in our community and improve public safety.

"Public safety remains Snohomish County's top priority, and as a compassionate community, we want to use all of the tools available to us to address homelessness, behavioral health needs, and accompanying challenges to public safety," said Executive Somers. "With these innovative programs and this partnership agreement, we can more efficiently deploy resources and ensure we are reaching people in need across the County. I appreciate the collaboration with the Sheriff's Office and our other law enforcement partners."

"We know that a well-trained social worker when partnering with a deputy can help a broader cross section of people and ensure they get any needed assistance," said Sheriff Fortney. "The Office of Neighborhoods has been a proven success at moving people from one of the worst possible situations, living on the streets, to something more sustainable, improving lives and reducing street crime in the process. I appreciate the fact that the Office of Neighborhoods is helping us save lives, improve safety, and reduce suffering."

The 2022 Point-in-Time (PIT) count identified 1,184 people in 953 households residing in shelter, transitional housing, or living without shelter in Snohomish County the night of February 21, 2022, the highest number since 2012. The PIT count for 2023 will be released later this year.

Snohomish County has created one of the most innovative approaches to homelessness in the country. In 2017, the County opened the Diversion Center to give people experiencing homelessness a safe place they can go to get off the

streets. The County then opened the Carnegie Center next door to give service providers one space to work with those experiencing homelessness on job training and placement, accessing health care, securing housing, getting veterans' benefits, and other support programs. Snohomish County is also aggressively working to increase the number of facilities for housing those experiencing homelessness. The entire system has been strained by the significant number of people impacted by the scourge of fentanyl, behavioral health, and homelessness.

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