

How do we help address the issue of Commercial Sexual Exploitation in our daily work?

Group Discussion Summary • Tacoma Pierce County Coalition to End Homelessness • 5.26.23

Tired

I am so tired of waiting,
Aren't you,
For the world to become good
And beautiful and kind?
Let us take a knife
And cut the world in two-
And see what worms are eating
At the rind.

— *Langston Hughes*

WOOT: “Resilience shouldn’t be so fucking necessary. Speak out when we have the freedom to do so.”

Observations

- This is all a giant, intermingled issue. All women living on the streets are so vulnerable.
- People need to get sleep and there are not enough places for women to go.
- Not nearly enough available for single women. Tacoma Rescue Mission 30 bed site always full.
- Normalized for women to hook up with a “protector” male. Street survival alternative is to stay up all night and catch sleep as possible during the day.
- DV and sexual exploitation of women (survival sex) is common in homeless encampments.
- For those who have not experienced sexual exploitation, it may be that it is more difficult to recognize the signs of exploitation.
- Not being in a safe place puts people in vulnerable places and at risk for violence, including sexual violence and trafficking.
- It’s so difficult to follow up with people who are vulnerable with the sweeps going on.
- All of those in our group have seen evidence of commercial sexual exploitation in the context of street encampments. May be less visible in Tacoma than Seattle.
- Many women leaving incarceration have had early sexual trauma and the intersections between this and incarceration are clear.
- Where there are generational trauma issues, when children have been sexually abused early in life, or where DV has happened, it becomes difficult to know how to advocate for oneself or understand what is happening and how to get help.

Problems and Solutions

- The collaborative presented on today's call is really exciting.
- Where we have relationships of trust, we have to have conversations about survival sex, especially where it comes to getting in out of the cold.
- Legal aid is drastically, chronically lacking. If we funded legal aid for people experiencing sexual violence/trafficking and DV, it would go a long way to addressing the cycle of violence to homelessness.
- In the school system, the position that identifies and addresses issues for homeless children in the school system (23,000 students) is grant funded. This is ridiculous. Most of these children are unaccompanied youth.
- School sex education that features abstinence only does a disservice to those who don't know things could be different.
- Human Services at the County get no real support. This needs to change - we need to advocate for this department to be supported. Healthy people make a healthy community. We need to make a more coherent and big picture argument to the council.
- Dr. Jarvie's family shelter at risk due to lack of county funding.

Notes and Resources List

New and Notable

The new direct line to The Salvation Army JMFL shelter is (253) 341 4674. The general number for all of our programs is (253) 572 8452. If you are having trouble reaching anyone, my extension is 111, or email me at Douglas.Jarvie@usw.salvationarmy.org

NAEH Data on homeless racial inequity.

<https://endhomelessness.org/resource/racial-inequalities-homelessness-numbers/>

Lunch & Learn (Zoom), Comprehensive Plan update for City of Lakewood, Tacoma Pierce County Affordable Housing Consortium, June 6, noon – 1 pm.

<https://www.affordablehousingconsortium.org/events/comprehensive-plan-update-climate-change-middle-housing-in-lakewood-wa>

Association of Fundraising Professionals in Pierce County for help with grant writing and other sources of income. <https://community.afpnet.org/afpwasouthsoundchapter/home>

Richard Dorsett is collecting paperback books for Portland's Street Books.

- Fiction: literary, westerns, science fiction, horror (think Stephen King or Dean Koontz) and thrillers (like James Patterson).
- Work by underrepresented writers: books by BIPOC and LGBTQ writers are popular and hard to keep in stock.
- Nonfiction: history, spirituality, self-help, wilderness survival, foraging, herbal guides, etc. Also needed are new puzzle books and adult coloring books.
- Spanish language: fiction, poetry, nonfiction, children's books.

Please donate if you are able (porch delivery is perfect). We will deliver to the street librarians on June 5. And if you get a chance, read Ben Hodson & Laura Moulton's "Loaners: The Making of a Street Library."

Announcement of "All In" federal plan to reduce homelessness by 25% by 2025.

<https://www.hhs.gov/about/news/2022/12/19/biden-harris-administration-announces-plan-to-reduce-homelessness-25-percent-by-2025.html#:~:text=Today%2C%20the%20Biden%2DHarris%20administration,reducing%20homelessness%2025%25%20by%202025>

Full plan can be downloaded here: https://www.usich.gov/All_In.pdf

Community Spotlight Opportunity: Tell the coalition about your organization's good work. Contact tpdrutis@nctacoma.org to schedule a brief presentation. 😊

Recent Press

Settlement reached in Portland sidewalk encampments ADA lawsuit

<https://www.king5.com/mobile/article/news/local/homeless/portland-settlement-ada-lawsuit-camping-sidewalks/283-01ff9696-2e96-47fa-9485-c54545aab366>

In depth report from the National Review on the Portland camping crackdown

<https://www.nationalreview.com/news/portland-to-crack-down-on-homeless-camping-following-legal-settlement/>

Bellevue Safe Parking program seeks operator.

<https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/eastside/bellevue-has-a-safe-parking-lot-program-but-no-one-to-operate-it/>

The Bin in LA offers solutions for street storage.

<https://spectrumnews1.com/ca/la-west/housing/2021/10/08/safe-storage-options-present-opportunities-for-unhoused>

Ongoing Resources and Needs

Need good street shoes. No more sad feet. Nativity House, St Vincent DePaul, TRM all need shoes. Shoes have a hard life if the feet are in them 24/7.

Free Food & Resources Market, Greater Heights Church, 4819 South 12th St., Tacoma WA 10-12 Saturday 5/12/23. Everyone welcome. You can pick up for others.

Housing Alliance Advocacy Links

WLIHA Advocacy pages - Take Action Now! <https://www.wliha.org/take-action>

Advocacy resources: 2023 Public Policy Priorities <https://www.wliha.org/advocacy/2023-public-policy-priorities>

Join the weekly advocate calls on Fridays, 2-3pm on Zoom:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZUsdumvrDMtHtSqWteCBB4VlDeAoIIrNuCl>

<https://leg.wa.gov>

<https://tvw.org>

Catholic Community Services Safe Parking at Holy Rosary, a 90-day program to work on housing, opened this week. Need to call for screening, no drive ups. Referral phone: (253) 719-9333, 9 AM to 5 PM Monday – Friday. Eligibility:

- City of Tacoma residents
- Submit to background check (specific crimes against persons screened out)
- Driver's license and proof of ownership of car
- Families or individuals welcome
- No RVs or trailers at this time

Priority referrals taken from City of Tacoma HEAL team, or outreach teams from The Rescue Mission and Comprehensive Life Resources

Pierce County Comprehensive Plan to End Homelessness can be found here:

<https://www.piercecountywa.gov/7309/Comprehensive-Plan-to-End-Homelessness>

Please sign up to the inclement weather listserv at

<https://www.pchomeless.org/Home/Listserv>