

Homeless Services Department (HSD)
Response to several questions from CBAC members
UPDATED May 1, 2025

*Note: ** indicates a new response*

Q: How will the HSD approach these service cuts with providers? Will they be eliminating entire contracts? Reducing all contracts by a certain amount?

A: HSD took a program and service focussed approach to our budgeting decisions, rather than a provider-specific approach. We tried to maintain balanced investments across all major programs, like supportive housing, shelter, outreach, rental assistance, eviction prevention, and more. We also prioritized serving people who are already housed over funding new programs or services, and prioritized people of color, families and DV survivors. As a result of these program reductions, some providers will have their entire contract eliminated while others will just see programmatic reductions in specific areas.

****Q:** It is not acceptable to cut any program services unless the HSD thoroughly examines and substantially reduces its overhead and administrative costs. In any organization facing budget cuts, reducing overhead needs to be the first priority. Cuts to shelter programs, outreach and PSH units should be off the table unless this analysis has been conducted. Has this analysis been conducted?

A: In preparing our budget submission to the Chair, we conducted a comprehensive review of all department FTE and of our current organizational structure. In the Chair's budget, our departmental FTE will be reduced by 6%, from 122 to 115. This includes 2 executive level positions that are being eliminated due to a streamlining of our departmental management structure. Further organizational structure evaluation and consolidation is planned for this summer. Further details are available in the Chair's budget released last week.

https://multco.us/file/fy_2026_homeless_services_department/download

Q: The Homeless Response System IGA obligates Multnomah County to propose in FY 2025-26 the transfer of operational responsibility beginning on July 1, 2025 for the \$38,255,100 operational cost 7 shelter sites. Multnomah County has proposed to cover only \$10 million of these operating costs in FY25-26. Does Multnomah County and the HSD plan to honor the spirit and intent of the IGA and assume the full cost of operating these shelters?

A: The Intergovernmental Agreement (IGA) between the City of Portland and Multnomah County called for the City to transfer operational responsibility for its shelter sites to the County at the beginning of FY 2026. The IGA is silent on funding for those sites. The City recently asked the County to delay the transfer of those sites and the County has agreed to that delay. Details around the timing of that transfer and plans for funding City shelter sites remain under discussion between the City and County.

Q: Program Offer #302000-Safety off the Streets - Adult Shelter: This program offer was reduced by 230 congregate shelter units, five day centers and one property storage program. The program offer acknowledges that emergency shelter and associated services are vital to protect the basic health and safety of individuals experiencing homelessness. Why is the HSD cutting vital shelter services? Is there an analysis of the potential impact of these services on the impacted populations?’

A: Please see the [HSD transmittal letter](#) for a description of how we made difficult decisions in support of a holistic homelessness response system. As noted in that letter, we reviewed several factors, including performance items like who is served in a shelter, as we made our budget decisions.

Q: Last year we asked JOHS to commit to reducing the number of unsheltered people on the streets by at least one person by the end of 2025. JOHS did not make this commitment. Does HSD expect this to nevertheless be achieved this year? If not, when does HSD expect it to be achieved, if ever?

A: Reducing the number of people experiencing homelessness, and making homelessness rare, brief, and one-time-only, is the overarching goal of all of our work. HSD in the final phases of our work to produce monthly counts of the number of people experiencing homelessness, alongside inflow and outflow to homelessness. This data, which will be public this spring, will help us better overall impact of the region's efforts to reduce both sheltered and unsheltered homelessness.

Q: Why are we seeing declines in equity measures across multiple program offers, despite dedicating 7 FTE exclusively to equity work?

Q: Because I'm deeply committed to equity, I'm deeply committed to ensuring outcomes are equitable; I'm committed to preferring outcomes that are more equitable to those that are less equitable. Can you explain we see a decline in three we see three times as many program offers with a decline in equity measures than we see with an increase? Despite dedicating 7 FTE exclusively to equity work?

A: The HSD tracks overall equity outcomes, and uses such metrics to pilot new programming, as well as new metrics to understand our impact more effectively. As a result, some program outcomes will lag as they ramp up to full capacity, and others do not have accurate comparables year over year. When measuring impact we actually see that Housing programs generally meet equity metrics year over year. We continue to refine and focus programming to be more inclusive in an effort to ensure more equitable shelter, but also recognize system history requires solutions based on community input and feedback. An example of this is we are currently working with the Homeless Response System staff to convene culturally specific providers, community members, and leaders to discuss recent data showing disparities in shelter services for the Black, African American, and African communities. This engagement will inform solutions, future investments, and accountability in our system of services. Our Equity FTE that supports equity in the system of services includes 3.0 Training FTE on the Equity Team, 1.0 Equity Engagement FTE, and 0.5 FTE of the Program Technician role supported by and in collaboration with the 1.0 Equity Manager FTE. The remaining 0.5 FTE of the Program Technician role and the 1.0 FTE WESP Analyst, again in collaboration with the Equity Manager, are internally focused and aligned with the infrastructure outlined in the county wide Workforce Equity Strategic Plan. Some of the work our Equity Team supports in our system includes training, technical assistance, capacity building, and support/accountability to provider level equity work. As a funder, our main role in the system-wide goal of reducing and eliminating disparities in homeless services includes building and supporting the culturally specific capacity in our system while supporting and maintaining the culturally responsive capacity of our entire system. The Equity Manager is currently providing technical assistance (TA) and training to the HSD Program Team to support accountability with our providers on their equity work plans.

ALSO: please see the attached presentation pdf titled "HSD CBAC - Racial Equity Metrics & Comparison Groups."

****Q:** How is the departmental budget assembled, reviewed and submitted? How did this departmental budget get submitted with so many errors?

A: There was an error in the upload process of the FY 2025 Crosswalk. This document which cannot be completed until all decisions are made had an error uploading that pulls the FY 2025 numbers that are being funded into the correct FY 2026 program offers. This is not a 1:1 relationship and the upload causes much of the FY 2025 information in the program offers to be incorrect on the original upload.

****Q:** Why is there consistent underspending in multiple program offers (some spending only 11-32% of their budgeted amount by 58% of the fiscal year, according to the budget dashboard), and why are we allocating amounts higher than what we will likely spend in FY2025?

A: From a finance perspective: Many of the contracts based services have delayed invoicing, leading to a distorted view of potential spending by year to date. Historically, we have seen a large increase in invoices from CBOs during the last 2 quarters of the fiscal year, which would greatly increase overall spending. Furthermore, providers often operate on a 1-2 month lag minimum on invoices the county.

****Q:** Why do we see FTE increasing in several program offers with no corresponding increase in performance measures?

A: This is dependant on the program offer. For business services, the increase is related to reporting and quality management, which is not one of the performance measures.

Q: Are FTE being cut at all? If so, why are they being cut at a rate obviously much lower than the total budget reduction? How would you respond to a critic who would say that this is self-serving?

A: The HSD budget submission included reorganization and/or elimination of 10 positions, which is 8% of our in FTE. Importantly, HSD has spent the last few years building out an adequate structure to support our systems of care. As noted in a previous response, we regularly evaluate our organizational structure and needs with an eye to efficiency and equity, and this budget process was no different. Importantly, recent audits have a) suggested we add staff to support our administrative structure and b) acknowledged that, as this structure has stabilized, we have increased performance in vital areas, such as processing contracts and payments, and ensuring adequate data collection.

Q: The transmittal letter states that the budget includes '*funding for 2,548 shelter units in FY 2026*.' However, summing up the shelter units referenced in the performance measures for each PO, we get 2396 units (30200: 1402, 30201: 154, 30202A: 193, 30202B: 185, 30203: 150, 30204: 185, 30205: 85, 30207: 42). How are the 152 units accounted for?

A: The [HSD transmittal letter](#) includes 102 units funded in the Health Department that do not show up in our budget. The remaining 50 units are the 50 units we proposed to add in Phase 3 of the [Community Sheltering Strategy](#). These should have been

accounted for in 30200 and the PM will be updated if those units are in the Chair's proposed budget.

****Q:** Regarding PO #3003, The budget dashboard also reports that this PO spend only 6% of its contractual services budget – assuming no large expenditures in the remaining months of the year, at most we'll see spending of only 15% (about \$200k). However, this budget still asks for \$513k for contractual services. What is changing between this year and last that requires an additional ~\$300k in contractual services?

A: This PO considers all the things that the Data Team is having to pay for in FY 2026.

- Frequent User Systems Engagement Evaluation
- Homelessness Response System (HRS) Dashboard
- Rapid Rehousing – HMN/OAI/MiM Evaluation
- Pathways Through Shelter to Housing
- Annual Point in Time Count
- Inflow Analysis

****Q:** Regarding PO #30005, The FY2025 adopted budget includes \$1.15 million for contractual services for this PO, which is more than the entire budget listed for this PO last year. Can you explain the discrepancy?

A: I think this question is related to prior to the correction of the crosswalk by central budget office. In the current released, there is no discrepancy.

****Q:** Regarding PO #3006A, Why put any money into the reserve/contingency fund at all this year?

A: The amount here is related to the Regional Implementation Fund (RIF), which has very specific items that it is to be used for. The current amount programmed is related to the approved use of the RIF with \$626k remaining in contingency to be programmed at potential later approval from Metro.

****Q:** Regarding PO #30202B, For the 'percentage of exits to permanent housing' measure, why did the percentage decline from 33% in FY24 to 19% in FY25? Why are we targeting only 30% when this is below the outcomes for FY2024, and what changes have been put into place to allow us to target 30% for FY2026?

A: 1) increased rent assistance funding to place folks into permanent housing from these shelter sites, 2) higher percentage in FY 24 was due to various initiatives that specifically placed folks out of those shelter locations, 3) other factors that contribute to

finding permanent housing in our community, which include housing availability, rental amounts, the need for more Permanent Supportive Housing

****Q:** Related to PO #30203, We budgeted for 218 units in FY2025 but only achieved 106, the same as actual for fy2024. Why did we miss our target, and why does JOHS believe this budget will allow adding 44 units?

A: As of budget submission, the family system has not yet been able to open the units funded in the FY 25 budget, but we intend to open them as soon as possible, so are keeping that funding into FY 2026. One delay was an ask by the providers to spend more time on outreach and capacity building so that providers would be able to respond to the requests for more units. This work took up more time in FY 2025, which is why the units are not yet open, but we believe that upfront time will allow us to create more units in FY 2026, even since the added units.

****Q:** Related to PO 30205, This PO aimed to provide for 85 budgeted emergency shelter units in FY2025. However, the amount remained flat at 60, the same as in FY2023 and FY2024. Why did we not see the increase in emergency shelter units?

A: The 25 shelter units are the increased shelter units via the Community Sheltering Strategy. These units were funded in FY 2025 originally, which is why you don't see an increase between FY 25 and FY 25. They have not yet opened, which is why the FY Estimate was at 60. The culturally specific provider that is serving immigrant youth have expanded their day shelter hours and services. They are continuing to assess the strategy for overnight shelter specific to the community of youth that are being served through this program.

****Q:** The Multnomah Services & Screening Tool" (Coordinated Accesss Redesign) launched in October 2024 asks a question about LGBTQ+ status. Do we not yet have data on answers to this question?"

A: Focus Strategies completed an assessment of the first 3 months of the MSST implementation and it includes an assessment of this population's access to MSST assessment and prioritization. Between October 2024 and December 2024, 723 MSST assessments were completed and:

- 21% of adult-only households who completed a MSST identified as LGBTQIA2S+
- 32% of adult-only households in the housing priority pool identified as LGBTQIA2S+
- 10% of families with children that completed assessment included a LGBTQIA2S+ head of household

- 22% of families with children in the housing priority pool included a LGBTQIA2S+ head of household

Q: Confirm the 5 priority groups for JOHS programming

A: The [Homelessness Response Action Plan \(HRAP\)](#) identifies five prioritized Communities of Color: Black, African American or African; Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander; American Indian, Alaska Native, Native or Indigenous; Latina/Latino/Latinx/ Latine; Asian or Asian American. Other prioritized identities include people over 55 years old, as well as people who identify as LBGTQIA2S+. Other people specifically called out in the HRAP include: youth exiting foster system, people leaving carceral settings, people exiting medical/behavioral health facilities, people with substance use disorder and/or mental health diagnosis, and people without disabling conditions but with situational challenges such as loss of work (HRAP p11-12).