

# *One Childhood Study Findings*



*Snohomish County Counts*

*Community Leader Summit*

*June 14, 2002*

# One Childhood conducted a deep, local study

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May 2001- January 2002

Goal: Assess what services are needed for children experiencing homelessness across the housing continuum - in Snohomish County's emergency & transitional shelters and housing authority programs.

# Housing Agencies that Participated in our Study

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- Center for Battered Women
- Cocoon House
- Everett Gospel Mission
- Everett Housing Authority
- Housing Hope
- Interfaith Housing Network Shelter
- The Housing Authority of Snohomish County
- Tulalip Transitional House
- YWCA – Pathways for Women
- Volunteers Of America

# Method for Conducting the Study

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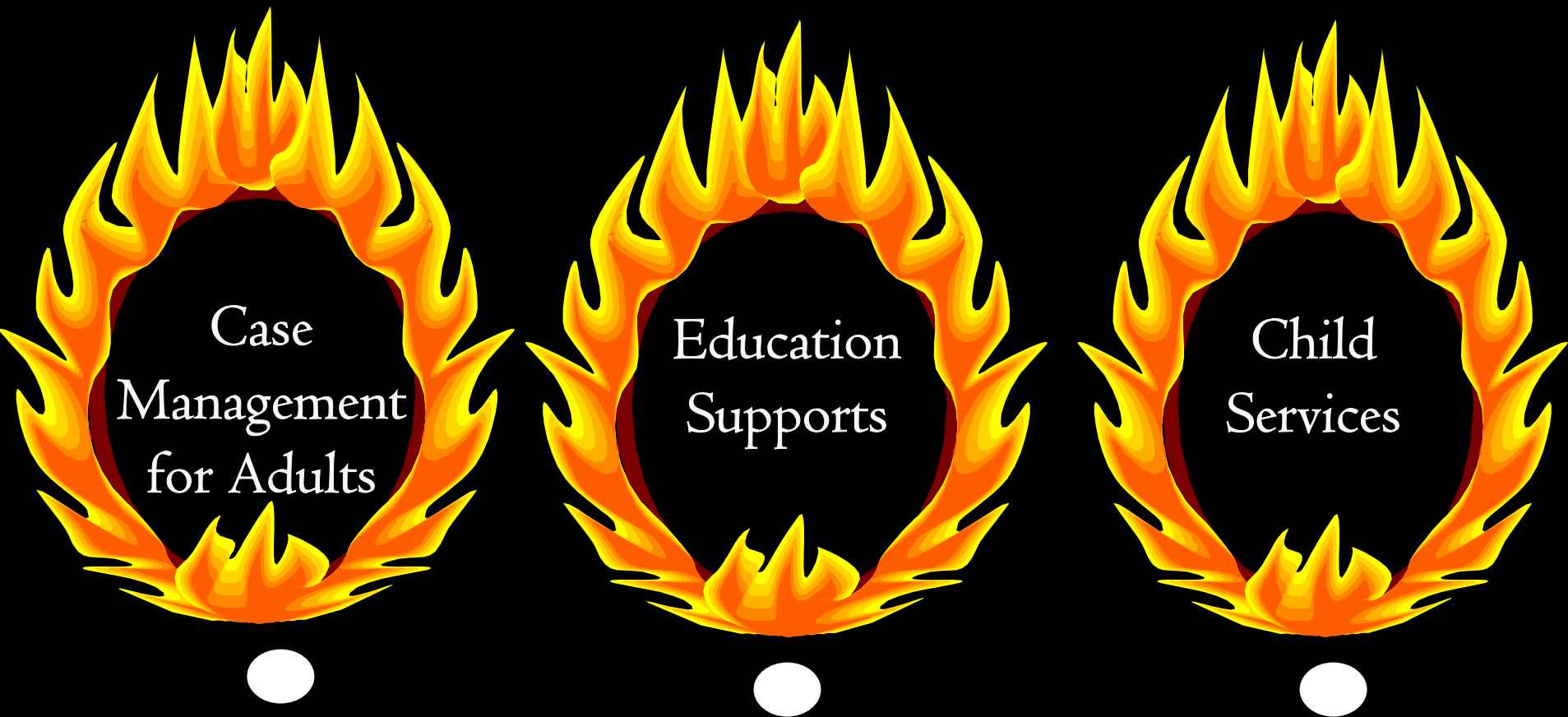
- ❖ Interviews were done with housing directors & case managers at each of the 10 housing programs.
- ❖ Non-housing service providers were also interviewed to find out how homeless children were connecting to their services (YMCA, ECEAP, Head Start, Early Head Start, First Steps & Public Schools).
- ❖ Finally, interviews were also conducted with 125 children (& their parents) who were living in shelters in Snohomish County.

Interviews were taped, transcribed, read & reread.

# Major Study Findings

- ✓ There were 1,771 children & youth living in emergency and transitional shelters in Snohomish County last year.
- ✓ These children and youth are extremely risk exposed.
- ✓ The needs of our community's homeless kids are often minimized & denied, & are largely unmet, and unplanned for.

In Snohomish County homeless children are  
on the fringe of systems...



These systems often present inclusion barriers for  
homeless children, and can feel like “flaming hoops”.

# Case-Management Model being used in Housing Programs is Outdated

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- ❖ Services only for adults.
- ❖ Use of this outdated model is part of a national paradigm (this model has been promoted by funders and government).
- ❖ Children and youth not seen as clients (except at Cocoon & T.T.H.Y.).
- ❖ Intakes not completed for children & youth. Play spaces for children were inadequate. Opportunities for healthy development were often missing.
- ❖ Housing programs embracing opportunity to update paradigms.

# Barriers to Education

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- ❖ No one's had their eye on this ball.
- ❖ Lack of understanding of best practices.
- ❖ Transportation.

Child & youth serving organizations have been largely unsuccessful at reaching homeless kids because of the following

## Recurring Problems:

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- No Transportation/ Lack of space
- Program Design Flaws
- Wrong Person Hired
- Insufficient Training
- Unqualified Supervision
- Too Volunteer Dependent
- Lack of Funding

# 1 Quote from Interviews

I am afraid my little sister will be taken away. CPS comes around because the rooms aren't clean. She is 8 years old but she has the mind of a three year old. I'm worried I'll be taken away from my Daddy. I'm scared someone will climb through a window and get me. I'm scared to get head lice. I have had to move schools again and people are teasing me and I'm not getting friends. I'm just afraid of losing my family. I'm scared of losing my kitties - having to take them back to the pound. I love the kitties because they never get mad at me.

- Age 11 / Girl

70% of the children and teens interviewed fear “terrible outcomes” for themselves:

- Drug addiction
- Homelessness as an adult
- Teen Pregnancy
- Failing out of school
- Jail
- Gangs

One Childhood is  
working to change the  
paradigms that have  
been operating within  
each of these systems.

# Housing Providers

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Paradigm Shift is: Moving away from the “oxygen-mask theory” towards a model where children are seen as clients.

## Support Mechanisms:

- One Childhood providing: training, books, consultation, recommendations & goal attainment strategies.
- 3 shelters getting new playrooms.
- Case managers beginning to do education intakes.

# Child Serving Organizations

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Child and youth serving organizations will need to create program design models that include homeless children.

## Example:

- YMCA Service Umbrella providing the 10 most needed services to children and youth in housing programs.
- Two years of assistance provided by O.C. to design, test, pilot, evaluate program models to assure they reach the population of children in housing.

# Education

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Moving towards a paradigm in which maintaining the educational stability of homeless students is viewed as an important goal.

## Support Mechanisms:

- Federal McKinney-Vento Act passed January 2001.
- Delegation went to Spokane to study their very successful, homeless education model.
- A workgroup has been formed with Everett School District and the housing providers (forum is planned to bring the other districts in).

# Funders and Government

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Moving away from a funding model that only targets resources for parents in shelter —→ towards a model that: Asks about children in housing programs, Notes patterns, Offers services, and Assures the targeting of resources.

Examples of foundations that have made the paradigm shift :

- The Medina Foundation
- The Apex Foundation
- Master Builders Care Foundation

# Nationally a Paradigm Shift is Occurring

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The National Academy of Sciences recent work on risk exposed children and youth shows:

- ❖ Communities need to address the needs of most risk exposed kids.
- ❖ **Focusing only on prevention hurts communities!**
- ❖ We cannot leave our most risk exposed children behind.
- ❖ **Snohomish County is poised to meet the challenge.**
- ❖ Effort & resources will be required in order to implement this paradigm shift in this county.

# RECOMMENDATIONS

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Target resources for children and youth living in emergency & transitional shelter and housing authority housing programs:

- ✓ Encourage coordination, piloting & evaluation of services under the *YMCA-OneChildhood-Housing Organization Umbrella*.
- ✓ Inspire a community value to work with children and youth who are multiply risk-exposed (fund trainings).
- ✓ Support educational stability for homeless children (Transportation to their “home schools”).