Mission Statement

DESC works to end the homelessness of vulnerable people, particularly those living with serious mental illnesses or substance use disorders. Through partnerships and an integrated array of comprehensive services, treatment and housing, we give people the opportunity to reach their highest potential. At DESC, uncommon efforts produce uncommon results that eliminate homelessness one person at a time.

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Thank You

Your support makes our work possible

For every tenant safely housed in supportive housing, every guest accessing shelter and health care in an emergency program, everyone in crisis who needs immediate help,

thank you for not looking away.

All numbers cited in this report are annual totals from 2018 unless otherwise stated. All names of clients have been changed to protect their privacy.
Our Work

Thanks to decades of experience and research, we know what works for chronically homeless people: robust services that begin with a “Housing First” approach: providing housing as a first step and then surrounding tenants with voluntary treatment and health services.

Although participating in treatment programs is not a requirement to stay in DESC housing, 75% of our tenants choose to enroll in additional services with DESC once they’re housed.

People want safe places to live and they want to improve their lives.

The Next Frontier

It’s hard to access preventative health care services when you’re living without shelter and with severe and persistent mental illness. So, it’s not surprising that most people who experience chronic homelessness get most of their medical care in emergency rooms, often after routine conditions have become matters of life and death.

There’s a better way.

Bringing health care services into our housing and shelter programs allows people to access care much more easily, from people they know and trust. Routine treatments are given before ailments become life-threatening. Expensive emergency room visits and hospital stays are avoided.

We provide better care at a lower cost, and emergency rooms can be used as intended—for emergencies. It’s a win-win-win for our clients and our community.
Meeting Medical Needs

We’ve spent the last year heavily investing in connecting housing and health care for our clients.

We created a new position to oversee nursing staff and coordinate care. We’ve also added more nursing staff – more than doubling the number of Registered Nurses on staff over the last two years. We’ve added a pharmacy to one of our clinics, and improved processes for tracking clients’ medications to make sure clients are getting the medicine they need, including helping 140 people access long-acting injections of psychiatric medications.

More than 200 people who are receiving nursing services from us would be resistant to receiving them elsewhere, which speaks to how important it is for service providers to meet people where they are.
Our Partners

DESC and our partners provide hundreds of medical services for our clients every day.

Harborview Medical Center
We partner with Harborview to provide primary care in our main shelter, in our behavioral health clinic in Pioneer Square and at our 1811 Eastlake supportive housing program. They also provide health care for residents at The Estelle, another supportive housing program where fifteen homes are set aside to be filled by Harborview. The partnership creates homes for people who are ready to leave the hospital but cannot be discharged because they don’t have a safe and healthy place to live.

Neighborcare Health
Neighborcare health has primary care providers located at eight of our supportive housing buildings: Aurora House, Canaday House, Clement Place, Cottage Grove Commons, Interbay Place, Kerner Scott House and The Morrison.

Department of Veterans Affairs
Medical staff from the VA provide onsite care at DESC.

Medication Management
If you’ve helped an aging relative to take their pills at the right times each day then you know how critical medication management can be. Sometimes, a bit of help in this area means that a person can live independently instead of moving into a nursing home or managed care setting.

DESC staff help clients take prescribed medication an average of 55x each hour every day.

DESC & Harborview
Partnering to provide low-barrier health care for 34 years and counting

1985
Harborview begins providing medical services in DESC’s main shelter

2005
The partnership expands to our 1811 Eastlake supportive housing where a nurse provides care for DESC clients onsite

2010
Harborview starts to provide care at DESC’s downtown behavioral health clinic

2018
The Estelle opens with 15 rooms set aside for Harborview patients

2019
Harborview begins care at The Lyon and The Union, two of DESC’s supportive housing programs in Pioneer Square
Responding to a National Crisis

A lack of affordable housing is the key driver of homelessness in our region and across the West Coast of the US.

Every day more than 130 people across the US die from an opioid overdose. Washington state is not immune – our overdose death rate is 34th out of 50 states.

Local media seeking simple answers to the complex issue of homelessness have suggested that opioid use is a primary driver of the increased number of people experiencing homelessness in Seattle.

Their numbers don’t add up. West Virginia has an overdose rate five times higher than Washington, yet their rate of homelessness is one fourth of ours.

Substance Use Disorder Treatment

This opioid crisis demands a compassionate and evidence-based response

DESC will never turn people away or deny services because of their substance use disorders.

We have expanded access to the overdose-reversal drug naloxone across the agency, and trained staff from other agencies how to use the drug effectively.

Our treatment programs are voluntary, not coercive, and are offered to people seeking this type of help across agency programs and locations.

57
overdoses reversed by DESC staff using naloxone

4,181
substance use disorder counseling sessions for individuals

930
substance use disorder group-counseling sessions
Medication-assisted treatment (MAT) is a promising way to treat opioid use disorder.

MAT combines the use of medication with counseling and behavioral therapies to support people in their journeys of recovery.

In 2018 we launched a MAT treatment program with the lowest barriers in King County. Our program is designed for people who can’t travel to the same location each day or use traditional clinics. Treatment is available to people in our emergency shelters, those in outpatient programs, and people in supportive housing.

The program expanded in early 2019 so that we can provide services for even more people moving forward.
Integrated Services

Several programs at DESC are comprised of interdisciplinary teams of mental health, substance use disorder and medical professionals. Working together, they interrupt cycles of homelessness and instability. This work provides smooth transitions to services and housing and gives people the tools they need to stay housed.

Peer Services

Peer Pathfinder Team

The more trauma you’ve experienced, the more important it is to hear these words on your path to recovery. That’s why we’ve grown our Peer Pathfinder team to serve more people in need.

Through consistent outreach efforts—going directly to wherever clients are—they can reach people who are unlikely to visit traditional service providers. Many people won’t engage right away, so team members visit repeatedly and share their own stories to build rapport and trust.

The team connects people to substance use disorder treatment, including MAT, helps to place people in housing and connects them to income, health care and food benefits.

Peer Counselors on the Pathfinder team and on other teams across the agency are an integral part of DESC’s work, and a big reason we succeed in meeting people where they are.

47,161 individual case management sessions

71% of DESC clients are enrolled in multiple DESC programs
HOST

Homeless Outreach Stabilization and Transition

Our HOST team takes to the streets to deliver critical survival and support services and intensive case management to our city’s most disorganized and ill residents. HOST clients often live with untreated schizophrenia, bipolar disorder and other serious mental illnesses and frequently have co-existing substance use disorders. When left unengaged, people cycle through hospitals and jails and then back to the street. These are the most visible, vulnerable and costly individuals in Seattle. They are frequently exploited on the streets by other people.

1.5 referrals to HOST per business day from 40+ community partners including the Seattle Police Department and the Department of Corrections

309 people served

214 of those were newly enrolled

52 clients housed

COAT

Community Outreach and Advocacy Team

DESC’s COAT team provides services for Trueblood class members—people unjustly impacted by legal competency services and the criminal legal system. Our team is composed of mental health professionals, outreach case managers, RNs and a prescriber who provide wrap-around services and care.

The team works in partnership with the LEAD program, REACH, Community House, Public Defender Association, the Seattle Police Department and King County.
Alice* had been living in her car for several years before connecting with DESC’s SHARP team. She began to experience chronic homelessness after a traumatic brain injury. Cognitive impairment from the injury led to difficulty managing funds and keeping a job. Her co-occurring mood disorder made her struggle to express frustration and anger in socially appropriate ways. Sometimes, overcome by frustration, she wouldn’t show up for scheduled appointments, making it difficult for her to obtain medical help or safe housing. She avoided seeing her family during this time because she didn’t want them to see that she was experiencing homelessness.

It took time for DESC staff to form a trusting relationship with Alice as she was very wary of engaging with care providers. She found accepting services to be so stigmatizing that she would often sneak in a back door to avoid being seen.

DESC’s SHARP team was able to help Alice secure affordable housing outside of DESC. Intimidated by staff at her new home, she failed to pay rent for her first few months. She coped with this situation by walking away from her landlord whenever she saw him. The SHARP team worked with her to develop life-skills necessary to cope with unpleasant situations—like seeing your landlord when you’re behind on rent. They also helped her to develop a payment plan for her rent and avoid another eviction.

The stability of safe housing has greatly improved Alice’s health and outlook. She regularly sees her family and is looking forward to working with DESC’s Supported Employment program to find part-time work. If you ask Alice why she wants to return to work, she’ll tell you: she wants to be able to spoil her grandkids.

*Names and identifying information have been changed to protect client privacy.
DESC operates one of the three PACT teams in King County. The program serves people who are high utilizers of emergency services and those discharged from Western State Hospital. 2018 saw a 49% increase in referrals to PACT teams county-wide.

The PACT model includes intensive outreach and a team-oriented approach where the entire team is responsible for every client. Rather than sending participants to a variety of providers for assistance, the team provides most – if not all – of the services each client needs.

SAGE offers comprehensive, low-barrier outpatient mental health care. SAGE case managers provide counseling, medication management, and outreach on behalf of clients to other agencies and organizations. A third of SAGE clients have opted in to payee services through DESC, meaning their case manager helps manage their money and assists in paying for essentials such as rent, utilities and food.

SAGE case managers also coordinate with DESC’s Substance Use Disorder, Supported Employment and Peer Services teams to provide wraparound care.
Crisis Solutions

The Crisis Solutions Center is staffed 24/7 by nurses, psychiatrists, peer providers, social workers, substance use disorder specialists and case managers who provide supportive care for people who have experienced a behavioral health crisis in public. DESC staff provide trauma-informed care and help people to connect with ongoing services they need to thrive.

DESC’s Mobile Crisis Team (MCT) is a resource for police, firefighters and EMTs when they are called to the scene of a person experiencing a behavioral health crisis. Unlike most emergency responders, who are trained in first aid for physical health ailments, MCT professionals have the education, skills and experience to assist someone who is having a behavioral health crisis.

Often the solution is to bring the person to DESC’s Crisis Solutions Center where they can stabilize and be connected to longer-term services that will meet their needs.

DESC’s MCT team is made up of 40 professionals and provides services throughout King County. They’re based in Seattle’s Central District with satellite offices in Federal Way and Bellevue to enable faster response time throughout the county.

Gary,* who lives with a severe hearing and speech impairment, has a job and enough resources to stay safely housed. He used to rely on his father and girlfriend to help him pay bills. After they both passed away, he was close to losing his home to foreclosure and became suicidal. He didn’t know where to turn for help and called first responders threatening suicide.

DESC’s MCT team referred Gary to the Crisis Solutions Center. CSC staff helped him make arrangements with his work to be out long enough to deal with his financial issues. They encouraged him to have a conversation with his brother, letting him know about his situation and connecting Gary to another support system. He had been scared to contact him before, not wanting his brother to know how bad things had gotten. They also connected Gary to ongoing mental health care and talked him through getting his finances back in order. Fourteen days of support saved his life and got him on the right track to live independently with additional resources for support when he needs help.

*Names and identifying information have been changed to protect client privacy.
Housing First

DESC was a pioneer in the Housing First movement. We continue to develop low-barrier housing as fast as possible to meet the growing need. With an ambitious schedule of one 100 unit building each year, we create the housing Seattle needs from the ground up.

Learn more at desc.org/what-we-do/housing/housing-first

Innovative Funding Sources

As state and local governments work to better align efforts between housing and health care (including behavioral health services), DESC has been involved in many discussions to advocate for our clients’ needs. One example is in the development of the Foundational Community Supports (FCS) program. FCS is part of Washington State’s five-year Medicaid transformation project. FCS, which is administered by Amerigroup, allows service providers like DESC to bill Medicaid for services related to getting and keeping supportive housing for qualifying beneficiaries.

Examples of how DESC is leveraging this new benefit:

- Hiring a supplemental case manager to support clients who are experiencing housing instability by helping them identify and overcome barriers to housing retention;

- Extending the life of DESC’s SHARP program by providing supplemental funding after federal funding sources ended; and

- Adding another shelter outreach position to help shelter guests to find housing placements.

Today

13 buildings and scattered site

489,691 nights of supportive housing provided

1,369 tenants in DESC housing

Tomorrow

two projects underway with a total of

347 homes under development

Examples of how DESC is leveraging this new benefit:
Survival Services

The best intervention for a person experiencing chronic homelessness is supportive housing.

As we work to create a city where enough housing is available, emergency shelters save lives by providing a safe indoor space. Our low-barrier shelters also allow us to forge relationships with clients to help them access available benefits, housing and services.

As long as the lack of affordable housing means our clients are left outside unprotected, we’ll continue to work with the city and county to provide this critical survival service.

162,618 bed nights of shelter provided

Training and Consultation

Sharing what we’ve learned over the last 40 years with other agencies results in better services, greater housing success and a faster end to homelessness.

While our priority is to provide services and create opportunities for vulnerable people in our community, we also make ourselves available for consultation and technical assistance services nationally and internationally.

DESC is an approved training provider for the U.S. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. We have also been contracted by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development to deliver training to their grantees. We have provided independent systems transformation consultation to dozens of communities across the U.S., and to the Canadian Observatory on Homelessness.

To learn more, reach out to info@desc.org.
2018 Awards

- DESC’s Mobile Crisis Team was recognized by the city of Auburn as an outstanding local agency in the area of treatment and recovery.

- DESC’s supportive housing program, The Estelle, won the Puget Sound Regional Council’s Vision 2040 Award. The award recognizes contributions to affordable housing and healthcare.

DESC Board presented with the Vision 2040 Award.

In-Kind Gifts

You’ve donated $1,423,985 in warm meals, clothing, furnishings, and so much more. These items are sometimes lifesaving and always appreciated!

Thank you to the clients whose photos are featured in this report:

- Cristina Chavez
- Joy Lehman
- John Richardson
- Attila Toth
- Charlie Williams, IV
Nearly 700 volunteers donated more than 12,084 hours. Some worked on one-day projects with a community group or employer, others completed recurring shifts throughout the year. From cooking meals and serving coffee to sorting and folding clothes and painting throughout the agency, their work is critical to our clients’ success.

Thank you 2018 Volunteers

Greg Anacker
Brock Bradley
Erika Brink
Molly Brooks
Katherine Brown
Christine Bumpous
Peter Caron
Lois Cassidy
Jeff Cooperman
David Culp
Doug Dossrtt
Meredith Durbin
Richard Eastlick
Barb Essep
Brody Evans
Molly Fischer
Nancy Garcia
Santiago Godoy-Echeverry
Rose Goodhue
Jeremiah Grams
Kelsey Gray
Kathie Grigg
Mary Louise Halm
Tate Higgins
Kyle Holohan
Julia Hood
Connie Huffine
Andrew Janiuk
Kasia Jarmolowicz
Lori Jarrett
Yohan Kang
Margaret Klockars
Arlys Kruse
Lorraine Kunimoto
Raquel Lackey
Laura Larson
Agnes Lee
Jason Lee
Richard Lippold
Susan Mallotte
Gayle McKool
Shane Millhouse
Donald Mitchell
Nichole Montinola
Carol Mooney
Sophie Moore
Sarah Parkhurst
Claudia Patton
Michael D. Pierson
Suzie Poffenbarger
Stele Polyak
Edward Reed
Adele Reynolds
Eli Richardson
Jessica Rosenberger
Aditi Saluja
Andrew Smith
Noble Smith
Timothy Smith
Dylan Sonett
Liz Sutton-Cooper
Hung Tran
Mary Vickers
Marco Walker-Lawrence
Staci White
Mathew Wiese
Lauren Wilson
Alex Witt
Mariamawit Yilma
Julie Zander
Bill Zook
Consolidated Statements

Statement of Financial Position-DESC & Related Partnerships

Assets
- Cash & Cash Equivalents: $3,226,393
- Accounts Receivable & Prepaid Expenses: $6,151,049
- Restricted Assets & Housing Reserves: $13,077,874
- Land, Buildings, Furnishings & Leasehold Improvements (Net): $125,732,497
- Notes Receivable, Construction in Progress & Other Assets: $22,190,877
- Total Assets: $170,378,690

Liabilities
- Accounts Payable: $4,651,622
- Client Custodial Accounts & Other Liabilities: $4,217,103
- Notes Payable: $517,655
- Total Liabilities: $95,001,177

Net Assets: $75,377,513
Total Liabilities & Net Assets: $170,378,690

The information presented above is based on DESC’s 2018 audited financial statements. If you have any questions, or would like a copy of the full report, please contact Megan Mayes, Director of Fund Development, at 206-515-1553.

Statement of Activities-DESC & Related Partnerships

Revenue
- Contributions: $3,485,712
- Contributions In-Kind: $1,423,985
- United Way of King County: $441,941
- Public Grants & Contracts: $33,083,561
- Housing Rents & Related Income: $5,661,300
- Medicaid & Other Health Insurance: $5,113,582
- Interest: $53,519
- Real Estate Development Income: $1,015,170
- Other: $1,025,173
- Total Revenue: $51,303,943

Expenses
- Clinical Programs: $15,715,676
- Housing Programs: $25,858,642
- Real Estate Development: $368,767
- Fundraising: $517,655
- Management & Administration: $6,827,861
- Total Expenses: $49,288,601

Non-Operating Revenue and Expenses
- Depreciation, Amortization & Accrued Interest: $(6,726,498)
- Net Income (Loss): $(4,711,156)

For the year January 1 to December 31, 2018
Leadership

Board of Directors  As of October 1, 2019

Laura Inveen  Chair, Judge, Retired, King County Superior Court

Clark Kimerer  Vice Chair, Assistant Chief, Retired, Seattle Police Department

Veronica Kavanagh  Treasurer, Informatics Analyst, Swedish Medical Center

Sandeep Kaushik  Secretary, Partner, Sound View Strategies

Derrick Belgarde  Deputy Director, Chief Seattle Club

Susan Byrnes  Director of External Communications, Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation

Terrence Carroll  Distinguished Jurist in Residence, Seattle University School of Law

Patti Cole-Tindall  Chief of Technical Services Division, King County Sheriff’s Office

John Hayes  Captain, Special Victims Crime Section, Seattle Police Department

Nina Maisterra, M.D.  Family Medicine, UW Medicine

Peter McGough, M.D.  Medical Director, UW Neighborhood Clinics

Jon Scholes  President and CEO, Downtown Seattle Association

Larry J. Smith  Attorney

Sheryl V. Whitney  Partner, Whitney Jennings Management Consulting

Ron Wright  AIA, Principal, Ron Wright & Associates/Architects, PS

Programs

Supportive Housing
- 1811 Eastlake
- Aurora House
- Canaday House
- Clement Place (Opened in 2019)
- Cottage Grove Commons
- The Estelle
- Evans House
- Interbay Place
- Kerner-Scott House
- Lyon Building
- The Morrison
- Rainier House
- The Union Hotel
- Scattered Sites
- Keys to Home

Clinical/Health Services
- Crisis Solutions Center
- COAT (Community Outreach and Advocacy Team)
- HOST (Homeless Outreach Stabilization and Treatment)
- Onsite Medical Services
- PACT (Program of Assertive Community Treatment)
- SAGE (Support, Advocacy, Growth, and Employment)
- SHARP (Services and Housing to Access Recovery)
- Substance Use Disorder Treatment
- Supported Employment

Emergency Shelter
- Main Shelter
- Queen Anne Shelter
- Kerner-Scott Women’s Shelter
- Navigation Center
- West Wing Shelter

Need shelter?  Call 206-464-1570 x3033