

Camp Hope news update April 12

New snapshot on-site count available for Camp Hope encampment

As part of work to permanently close the Camp Hope encampment, a new on-site snapshot count shows continued progress in shrinking the site. The previous count was conducted the week of March 29. The new count, completed the week of April 3, tallied:

- 52 estimated* people (compared to 55 people the week of March 29)
- 38 tents/structures (compared to 42 the week of March 29)
- 9 RVs* (same number as the week of March 29)
- 0 vehicles (same as the week of March 29)
- 0 sites tagged for removal (compared to 2 sites the week of March 29)

* Some people may be off site working, receiving treatment, etc. and were not counted (residents may return within 7 days), so this number could increase slightly. Those individuals will still receive the services they need to secure more permanent, improved housing options and services.

This continued decline is a sign of moving in the right direction compared to an initial 467-person count this fall and the estimated 600+ people living on site this summer.

This is the latest independent count conducted by i2-Strategies, working with Empire Health Foundation, as part of a contract with the state Department of Commerce to conduct outreach at Camp Hope. The counts will now take place weekly as we continue downsizing and nearing the closure of Camp Hope.

The first count identified 198 residents, 120 tents/structures, 27 RVs and 5 vehicles in the encampment during the week of Dec. 12. The overall number of people living at the encampment has decreased 74 percent – or by nearly three-quarters – from the Dec. 12 count to the April 3 tally. Overall, this is nearly a 90% decrease in population since the initial needs assessment identified 467 people at the site.

While this is encouraging news, more work lies ahead to ensure residents get the support and best chance to be successful moving inside. Some of the more easily placed residents have moved off site or found other lodging options, while some of those remaining may have multiple challenges or barriers to permanent housing. Outreach groups will do intensive work to find the best options among the available housing for these high acuity individuals.

Camp Hope footprint continues to shrink: west boundary fence moved; east side fence to be moved next

The fence along the west side of the Camp Hope was moved last week and good progress is being made on moving in the east side fence as well. As the population of the encampment has decreased, remaining residents are asked to move structures inward in order to shrink the overall footprint. Moving the fence lines is another sign of the continued effort toward downsizing and eventually closing the encampment.

More Camp Hope residents transition to Catalyst program

As of April 10, there were 89 participants enrolled into the Catalyst emergency supporting housing program, reflecting individuals who have moved from Camp Hope into the program. Five additional people are scheduled to move in or are being contacted and offered a space, all of whom are currently living at Camp Hope.

In addition to emergency housing, Catalyst participants receive meal and laundry services, case management, employment and behavioral health services, all aimed at creating pathways to stable housing after their stay at Catalyst. Medical providers are on-site weekly helping participants address emergent health needs, and project staff are working with participants to plan for longer range wellness. Recovery groups and addiction education sessions are also being facilitated on-site each week, in addition to provision of outpatient substance use disorder treatment services.

Catalyst is run by Catholic Charities Eastern Washington and was funded with \$15 million in state Right of Way Safety Initiative dollars as part of efforts to close the encampment site, which funded site acquisition, building rehab and first-year program operations.

Many types of housing options still a key need

While work continues to develop housing options, information about all shelter/housing options – and transportation to these sites – is shared daily with Camp Hope residents.

The state Right of Way Safety Initiative funding requires an offer of shelter/housing that is “meaningfully better” than their current situation be made to everyone at the encampment as part of the work to close the site. The most successful housing and homelessness efforts – nationally and elsewhere in Washington – include the availability of different housing options. A variety of available housing options is ideal for moving a large encampment because of mental health, domestic violence security, privacy and other concerns that prevent some residents from functioning in a congregate shelter.

The Spokane housing need also exceeds just the Camp Hope encampment, making the housing need even more critical. The most recent point-in-time count by the city of Spokane counted 1,757 people experiencing homelessness throughout Spokane County on a single night in February 2022, with 823 individuals living outside. A nationally recognized supplemental state system that cross matches homeless data from multiple assistance programs finds a comprehensive count of more than 5,200 people experiencing homelessness (living in a shelter or unsheltered) in Spokane County.

Sign-up for future email updates

If you would like to receive regular communication about what’s happening at Camp Hope, please sign up for our email listserv:

https://public.govdelivery.com/accounts/WADOT/subscriber/new?topic_id=WADOT_706

Camp Hope and the State Right of Way Safety Initiative

As part of continued work to close the Camp Hope encampment, WSDOT and its state, local and nonprofit partners continue to make visible progress stabilizing Camp Hope as part of the state [Right of Way Safety Initiative](#). This joint effort includes work from WSDOT, the state Department of Commerce, the Washington State Patrol and on-the-ground resource provider Empire Health Foundation (working under a contract with Commerce) and other partners, who are all working toward the shared community goal of closing the encampment.