



Department of Commerce

Homeless Certification Pilot Program

Pursuant to ESSB 6002 Section 127(28)

December 2016
Report to the Legislature
Brian Bonlender, Director

Acknowledgements

Washington State Department of Commerce

Diane Klontz, Assistant Director, Community Services and Housing Division

Tedd Kelleher, Senior Managing Director, Housing Assistance Unit

Kathy Kinard, Manager, Housing Assistance Unit

Kathy Kinard, 360-725-2939
Washington State Department of Commerce
Housing Assistance Unit
1011 Plum St. SE
P.O. Box 42525
Olympia, WA 98504-2525
www.commerce.wa.gov

For people with disabilities, this report is available on request in other formats. To submit a request, please call 360-725-4000 (TTY 360-586-0772).

Executive Summary

Background

In the 2014 supplemental operating budget, ESSB 6002 Section 127(28),¹ the Legislature directed The Department of Commerce (Commerce) to:

“...establish a pilot program to provide a certification of homeless status for persons who may need a physical or mailing address for purposes of employment... [and] ...report to the appropriate legislative committees ... the number of persons who filed a homeless status form, the involvement of partners within the community in implementing the program, and an evaluation and recommendation of the opportunities and impediments for extending the program statewide. The evaluation and recommendation should include input from statewide homeless and housing service provider networks and business associations.”

Selecting a Grantee

Commerce released a homeless certification pilot program funding application in June 2014 to the state-funded Consolidated Homeless Grant (CHG) lead agencies. Both CHG lead agencies and subgrantees were eligible to apply to administer the pilot program. Although several entities expressed interest in the pilot, only the Catholic Charities House of Charity program of Spokane applied, and they were awarded the grant. Eligibility criteria included:

- Helping people experiencing homelessness get proof of address for job applications.
- Experience using the Homeless Management Information System.
- Serving a metropolitan area larger than 15,000 people.

Implementation and Reporting of the Pilot Program

House of Charity convened public meetings with community leaders and businesses to solicit recommendations for a program to create a homeless status form, which would allow homeless persons to claim an emergency shelter as a physical and mailing address, and assist people with obtaining identification for the purpose of employment. House of Charity advertised the program as the “ID Assistance Program” throughout Spokane County.

House of Charity submitted its report, which includes pilot outcomes, involvement of community partners, an evaluation of the pilot, and recommendations for expanding the pilot. That report is in Appendix A, and contains further detail about the pilot program.

The policy recommendations in House of Charity’s report, which are summarized below, were made available for public comment. A summary of the public comments received are included

¹ Washington State Legislature, “ESSB 6002, Operating Budget,” (2014), <http://leap.leg.wa.gov/leap/budget/lbns/2014Omni6002-S.SL.pdf>

in this report in the “Policy Recommendations” section. The Statewide Advisory Council on Homelessness presented the recommendations to expand the pilot program statewide to the Governor’s Office, the Department of Licensing, and to the legislator who provided the language for this pilot program in the 2014 supplemental operating budget.

Summary of Pilot Program Outcomes

Following is a summary of pilot program outcomes reported by House of Charity. For more detail on the methodologies used to collect data, and the impact of the pilot program, see House of Charity’s report in Appendix A.

- 173 persons were enrolled in the homeless certification pilot.
- 72 persons filed a homeless status form.
- Among persons completing a program exit survey, seven reported obtaining employment during the pilot period (the majority of surveys were not returned).
- 109 participants reported seeking employment with ID cards obtained through the pilot.
- 92 participants reported seeking housing using ID cards obtained through the pilot.
- 67 participants reported using ID cards obtained through the pilot for other reasons, including applying for disability benefits, attending school, and opening a bank account.

Summary of Policy Recommendations

Following is a summary of recommendations provided by House of Charities. Refer to the “Policy Recommendations” section for more detail, including a summary of public comment on the recommendations. House of Charity’s report in Appendix A includes even more detail on the following main policy recommendations for extending the pilot statewide:

- Provide free or reduced price state identification with homeless certification.
- Provide free or reduced price birth certificate with homeless certification.
- Allow photocopies and out-of-state ID cards to be used as identity documents.
- Provide in-person assistance with obtaining identification.

Community Partner Involvement

A variety of community partners assisted House of Charity in the development and advertising of the program, and in developing recommendations. For more information about the role of community partners in the design and implementation of this pilot program, see the House of Charity's report in Appendix A. The following community partners had roles in the design and implementation of pilot program:

- Shannon Birchler, Express Employment Professionals
- Shannon Booth and Dirk Vastrick from WorkSource Spokane
- Spokane Police Department
- Representative Kevin Parker and his Legislative Assistant Mary McAleer
- HMIS Coordinators Sheila Morley and David Lewis from Community, Housing, and Human Services
- YWCA
- Volunteers of America
- Goodwill
- Truth Ministries
- Union Gospel Mission
- City Gate
- Salvation Army
- Blessings Under the Bridge
- Catholic Community Services of Western Washington
- Gilbert De Leon from the Department of Licensing (DOL)
- The Washington State Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS)

Policy Recommendations

The House of Charity developed the following recommendations. Commerce believes these recommendations deserve consideration by the Legislature, but are not implementable by the Department of Commerce. Therefore, Commerce cannot recommend without qualification that these be implemented, only that they be considered with input from the Department of Licensing and any other entities that would be impacted should the recommendations be pursued.

Summary of Public Comment on Recommendations

Commerce posted the summary recommendations for public comment and received five responses. Four expressed support for and agreement with the recommendations. Another commenter expressed support and caution when considering how to keep survivors of domestic violence personal information confidential.

Recommendations for Expanding the Pilot Program Statewide

Free or Reduced Price State Identification with Homeless Certification

Lack of identification is a barrier for many homeless households. Some common situations where a lack of identification is particularly challenging include:

- Accessing means-tested benefits through the Department of Social and Health Services.
- Obtaining housing.
- Obtaining employment.
- Accessing disability benefits through the Social Security Administration.
- Accessing shelters at some organizations.
- Accessing subsidized health care through Washington Apple Health.
- Some clients interviewed as part of the study reported being denied drug and alcohol treatment due to lack of identification.

Free or Reduced Price Birth Certificate with Homeless Certification

A birth certificate may be used when obtaining a Washington identification card. At a cost of \$20 per Washington birth certificate, it adds a significant expense for those with limited means. Issuing this document for free or at a reduced price to the homeless would significantly reduce the financial burden of obtaining an identification card. An example of this type of legislation is California's Assembly Bill 1733.² The bill took effect in July of 2015, and allows homeless persons who can verify their status to obtain free copies of their birth certificates and free state identification cards.

² California Assembly, "Assembly Bill No. 1733," https://leginfo.ca.gov/faces/billNavClient.xhtml?bill_id=201320140AB1733

Allow Photocopies and Out-of-State Identification Cards to be Used as Identity Documents

Gathering the necessary documentation to obtain a first-time identification card can be an expensive and daunting process for homeless persons. Allowing photocopies of certain documents, such as Social Security cards, birth certificates, and out-of-state identification cards to be used as identity documents will help eliminate some of the costs associated with this process. One way this might be accomplished is using Department of Social and Health Services photocopies of clients' identification cards with an official stamp on it to serve as identity documents at the Department of Licensing.

Provide In-Person Assistance With Obtaining Identification

Many of the individuals served in the Homeless Certification Pilot Program required in-person support to obtain identity documents and state identification cards. This was especially true for individuals born outside of Washington. Efforts to assist homeless persons with obtaining identification will likely be most effective with some form of widely available in-person assistance.

Appendix A: House of Charity Report on Pilot Program



The Homeless Certification Pilot Program

Pilot Summary and Recommendations for Project Expansion

A Report by Kathleen Moloney

June 2015

PO Box 2253
Spokane, WA 99210-2253

www.catholiccharitiesspokane.org

FAX: 509.742.3463

I. AN INTRODUCTION TO THE PROBLEM: THE BARRIERS FACED BY HOMELESS PERSONS TO OBTAINING IDENTIFICATION

In late September of 2013, Kevin Parker became the first, and to this date, the only politician to ever hold a town hall meeting at the House of Charity, a homeless shelter operated by Catholic Charities in downtown Spokane. The House of Charity is not the easiest place to hold this kind of gathering. By the end of the month, it is usually packed and noisy, full of people who are not necessarily inclined to listen to a politician—a person helping create regulations and policies that have not helped them in the past. But Kevin Parker was there to listen, and he had a purpose: to ask the patrons of the shelter what obstacles prevented them from accessing the help they needed to leave homelessness behind. The group agreed, almost unanimously, that identification, or rather the lack of identification, was their single greatest difficulty.

The obstacles that homeless persons without identification face are numerous. Without an ID card, a homeless person is unable to obtain housing, a job, DSHS benefits, or health insurance. Some form of identification is necessary to sign up for Washington DSHS benefits for the first time, to enroll in Washington Apple Health, or to do anything at the Social Security Administration. Since some shelters require an ID card to check in, lack of identification can even exclude a homeless person from having a safe place to sleep. The Union Gospel Mission, for instance, which runs some of the best-known shelters in Spokane and Seattle, requires an ID card to stay there. I also had several of my clients inform me that they were denied entry to a drug and alcohol treatment program because they lacked identification. Most importantly, it is impossible to escape homelessness without an ID card, as it is necessary to obtain employment and housing.

Though obtaining a state ID card seems relatively simple, it can actually be a complex and daunting process for a homeless person. The most obvious obstacle is financial: obtaining an ID card in Washington State can be quite expensive. Without the DSHS Identocard voucher, it is the most expensive ID card of all 50 states. The DSHS voucher reduces the cost to \$5, but is not available to all. Only those who qualify for and are actively enrolled in Basic Food benefits in Washington State can receive the voucher; everyone else must pay the full price of the ID card, \$54. Because proof of identification is required to enroll in DSHS benefits, a homeless person who lacks identification and is not actively enrolled in those benefits would be required to pay the full cost of a Washington ID card. Men and women on federal work release are not allowed to access DSHS benefits, and are thus not eligible for the voucher, meaning they must pay the full cost of the ID card as well. Since they are required to find employment as part of their release agreement, they need to obtain their ID cards as quickly as possible. Finding \$54 to pay for identification after spending an extended time in prison can prove difficult for these men and women.

Even those who can access the DSHS Identocard voucher are not always aware that the vouchers are available, as their existence is not very well-publicized. Some clients reported to me that they were denied a voucher, or told that the vouchers no longer were being given out. Even with the voucher, an ID card can be financially out of reach for a homeless person without income.

Though the financial barrier to obtaining identification is quite large, the task of gathering and maintaining all the documents necessary to obtain a first-time Washington ID card is even larger. Those experiencing homelessness usually lack a safe place to store their things, meaning their documents are often stolen or lost. Four forms of identification are usually necessary to be issued Washington identification, and the Department of Licensing does not accept photocopies of any of these documents. This means ID card applicants need to locate original copies of their birth certificates, transcripts, and other identity documents they wish to use. They often are forced to pay a fee to obtain these original copies; a birth certificate, for instance, can be anywhere from \$20 to nearly \$50.

Furthermore, some states and institutions require a government-issued identification to obtain a document. An ID card might be required to obtain a birth certificate, but the birth certificate is necessary to obtain an ID card. A Social Security card can also be used as a form of identification at the Department of Licensing, but obtaining a Social Security card requires two forms of original identification. Thus, many homeless persons trying to obtain an ID card are caught in a conundrum: without an ID card they cannot obtain any documents, and without documents, they cannot obtain an ID card.

For example, one man who wanted to stay at the Union Gospel Mission in Spokane was told he needed to obtain his ID card if he wanted to stay there. He had been born in New York, a state which requires government-issued identification to obtain a birth certificate. The only state he had ever held an ID card in was New York, and he had lost the only copy of that ID card. Since he was unable to obtain a birth certificate or an ID card, he also could not obtain a Social Security card, and was stuck without any documents to identify himself. He began trying to gather his documents in January, and as of June, he had not been able to obtain anything but a copy of his high school transcript—far from sufficient documentation to be issued an ID card in Washington State. This is just one example of numerous cases in which it is all but impossible for a homeless individual to obtain identification.

II. THE HOMELESS CERTIFICATION PILOT PROGRAM

A. Development of the Pilot Program

In an effort to examine the obstacles that prevented homeless persons from obtaining identification, and hopefully alleviate some of those obstacles, Kevin Parker began proposing several projects to the legislature. After the town hall meeting at the House of Charity, a proposal was made to create a special Washington ID card for homeless individuals. However, this proposal was rejected, in part because some service providers felt that this ID card would stigmatize homeless persons. Thus, the current project was proposed, whose aim is to make it easier for homeless persons to obtain a regular state ID card. This project called for the development of a homeless certification form to be used across Washington State, which would allow homeless persons to claim a shelter as a mailing and physical address.

The funding for this project was a grant of \$26,000 from the Washington State Department of Commerce. This grant created a designated position at the House of Charity to assist our clients in obtaining identification and helped pay for those clients' documents and identification card fees.

The hope of providing this assistance was that once clients had obtained their IDs, they would use them to access services, housing, and employment. Our target client population was men and women over the age of eighteen who were experiencing homelessness. This is the demographic served by the House of Charity. To define homelessness, we referred to the HUD definition, which includes persons:

1. who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence.
2. with a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not designed for or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings, including a car, park, abandoned building, bus or train station, airport, or camping ground.
3. living in a supervised publicly or privately operated shelter designated to provide temporary living arrangements (including hotels and motels paid for by Federal, State, or local government programs for low-income individuals or by charitable organizations, congregate shelters, and transitional housing.)
4. who reside in a shelter or place not meant for human habitation and who are exiting an institution where they temporarily resided.

5. will imminently lose their housing, including housing they own, rent, or live in without paying rent, are sharing with others, and rooms in hotels or motels not paid for by Federal, State, or local government programs for low-income individuals or by charitable organizations.¹

This program was advertised as an “ID Assistance Program” to homeless providers and homeless persons themselves around the community. I promoted the program by meeting with service providers and by distributing a flier about the program around the community. A stipulation of the grant was that I hold meetings with community groups that I determined would be valuable stakeholders, including other homeless providers, employees of the Community, Housing, and Human Services division of the city, and others. These stakeholders assisted me in developing the Homeless Certification Form and in creating the recommendations for program expansion. Below is a complete list of the stakeholders:

1. Shannon Birchler from Express Employment Professionals
2. Shannon Booth and Dirk Vastrick from WorkSource Spokane
3. The Spokane Police Department
4. Representative Kevin Parker and his Legislative Assistant Mary McAleer
5. HMIS Coordinators Sheila Morley and David Lewis from Community, Housing, and Human Services
6. Other Homeless Providers in Spokane:
 - YWCA
 - Volunteers of America (VOA)
 - Goodwill
 - Truth Ministries
 - Union Gospel Mission
 - City Gate
 - Salvation Army
 - Blessings Under the Bridge
7. Catholic Community Services of Western Washington
8. Gilbert De Leon from the Department of Licensing (DOL)
9. The Washington State Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS)

¹ See < <https://www.hudexchange.info/resources/documents/HomelessAssistanceActAmendedbyHEARTH.pdf>>.

B. Implementation of the Pilot Program

The clients who were served by this pilot program can be divided into two categories: those who had a Washington State ID card that was issued in 2003 or later, and simply needed financial assistance to obtain a new copy, and those who never had a Washington State ID card or had it issued before 2003, and needed help gathering other documents as well. (In 2003, the Washington State DOL began keeping digital records of all the identification cards they issued, which is why the differentiation between ID cards issued before 2003 and after 2003 exists.)

In the first case, the DOL had a photo and identification for the client already in the digital system, and he or she could just go to the local office to have an ID card reissued without presenting other documents. In this instance, the process involved referring them to see a DSHS worker to receive the Identocard voucher, then providing them with \$5 to cover the rest of the cost. The easiest and most efficient way to pay for clients' ID cards was to have \$5 checks ready to give to clients when they come in requesting assistance. Coordinating a time to meet clients at the Department of Licensing (which would have allowed me to pay with a credit card) was difficult, and the DOL also charges a service fee of \$2 for the use of a credit card, so this was costly as well. If I waited to request a check until the time the client came in, it often took at least a week to get there, and many clients did not follow up to come pick up the check or could not wait that long to get their ID card.

For the second case, those who had never had a Washington State ID card or had it issued before 2003, the process was much lengthier. Usually, they needed four different forms of identity documents; a list of what qualifies can be found on the Washington DOL website at: <http://www.dol.wa.gov/driverslicense/idproof.html>.

The first document I would usually try to assist them to obtain was a birth certificate. There is a centralized website where birth, death, marriage, and divorce certificates from most states can be ordered. This site charges a processing fee, but it offers the option of verifying the clients' identities through series of questions, rather than the submission of an ID card or other documents. This system has been extremely helpful, considering that most clients came to their first appointment with me without even a photocopy of their identification. The website is: <https://www.vitalchek.com/>.

Some states, however, do not use the Vital Chek website. For the states that do not use this site, or that still require identification to obtain a birth certificate, I often had the clients try to get a copy of their ID from DSHS or any other agency that might have made a photocopy of their ID card. If no one had a photocopy, the birth certificate was unobtainable, and we had to resort to trying to obtain other forms of documentation. The success with this was widely variable. For clients who had been in prison, their Department of Corrections release papers and ID cards served as an identifying document. Yearbook photos and high

school transcripts were also commonly procured, as well as marriage or divorce certificates and medical records.

If it was impossible to gather enough documents for a client, I referred them to Gilbert De Leon at the Department of Licensing, who specializes in helping applicants for Washington State ID cards that are struggling to gather sufficient documentation. Gilbert is available at Community Court at Spokane Public Library every other Monday, or Monday through Friday at the Spokane Valley Office of the DOL. He has the ability to request an electronic copy of an ID card that a client has held in another state, and this electronic copy can serve as one identity document. After Gilbert had obtained this digital record of a client's ID card, I only had to assist in obtaining a birth certificate or some other identity document to complete the ID card application. I referred 30 of the clients I worked with during this pilot to see Gilbert, and all of the clients I referred to him would have been absolutely unable to get an ID card Washington State without his assistance.

Not all states are willing to send digital identification records to Washington, however, and if a person was unable to obtain a birth certificate as well, he or she was nearly impossible to identify. This was the case with the man from New York I discussed previously.

III. DATA COLLECTION AND OUTCOMES

Though the original intent of the project was to assist clients in obtaining their ID cards in order to help them gain employment, accessing housing and benefits are arguably equally important outcomes, as keeping steady employment is difficult without housing or access to other services. Therefore, I collected data on employment, housing, and other beneficial outcomes for my clients.

I used several methods to track this data. Beginning in October, I entered all consenting clients' information into Homeless Management Information System (HMIS). Along with allowing me to view basic demographic information about each of my clients, this allowed me to see if a client had enrolled in a housing or employment program after they received assistance through the ID program. Most of the programs that use HMIS are oriented towards finding clients housing, meaning that HMIS was a useful tool mainly to see housing outcomes.

In total, I enrolled 173 clients in HMIS in the Homeless Certification Pilot over an eight-month period—between October 24, 2014, when the Homeless Certification Pilot first became an active program in HMIS, and June 24, 2015, when I did my final data tally. Of these 173 clients, 81 (or about 47%) enrolled in some kind of program to help them find housing after they received an ID with our assistance. 27 of those 81 clients that enrolled in housing programs had been successfully housed and were no longer homeless. In other words, nearly 16% of the clients that I enrolled were verifiably housed within an eight-

month period, a pretty incredible ratio. Though the original aim of this project was to track employment outcomes, housing is arguably a more beneficial outcome, both in terms of stability for the client and economic savings for the city.² Additionally, one client accessed a program to assist with monthly bus passes and another client enrolled in a treatment program. These were just the outcomes that I was able to find in HMIS, meaning there were likely more success stories than I was able to see.

I also used HMIS to track how many birth certificates I ordered for clients and how many clients completed the Homeless Certification Form that I developed.³ I assisted 84 clients in obtaining their birth certificates, and 72 clients filled out the Homeless Certification Form. (The Homeless Certification Form was not available in HMIS until April 10, 2015, which is why not all HMIS-enrolled clients completed the form.)

If a client did not consent or was fleeing a domestic violence situation, I did not enter him or her into HMIS, and did not collect any data on him or her. To maintain a count on the client total that I served that included these people, I kept all the stubs from the checks I issued to clients and counted these. In total, I assisted 255 clients with obtaining a Washington State identification. 24 of these clients did not qualify for the DSHS Identocard voucher, meaning their ID cards were purchased at full price, \$54.

I also placed surveys for my clients, usually about 3 to 4 weeks after they met with me, in the mail system operated by our shelter. The survey asked if a client had received a job, housing, or any other form of benefit after receiving their Washington State ID card.⁴ This was an imperfect system, since not all of my clients checked their mail at the House of Charity, and not all those that did check the mail here filled out the survey and brought it back.

In total, I placed about 100 surveys in the House of Charity mailing system, and I received 21 surveys back. Of these 21 surveys, 4 participants reported that they had not yet received any benefit after obtaining their ID; 12 reported accessing DSHS, Social Security, or another program; 12 reported obtaining housing; and 7 reported obtaining employment. Though the amount of clients that participated in the survey was rather small, the data is still compelling: over half accessed housing, a third were able to find employment, and over half accessed some other benefit.

My final method of data collection was to ask clients at the time of our appointment their intended use of their new ID cards. Though I had no way of verifying that they actually

² Larimer, Dr. Mary, et al. (2009) [Health Care and Public Service Use and Costs Before and After Provision of Housing for Chronically Homeless Persons With Severe Alcohol Problems](#). Journal of the American Medical Association. April 2009, 301(13):1349-1357.

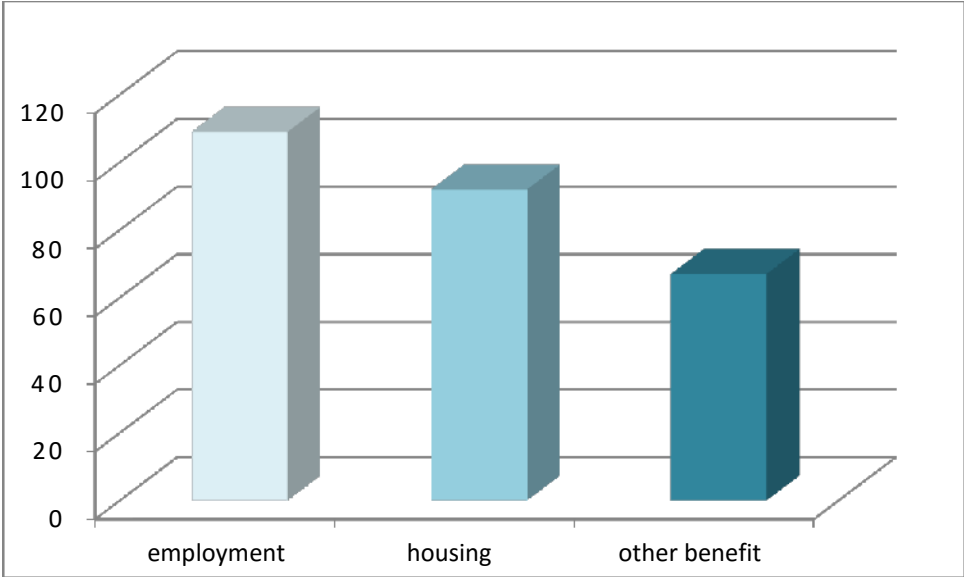
³ See Appendix A.

⁴ See Appendix B.

used their ID cards for the purpose they reported to me, this method was valuable because it allowed me to collect responses from every client I met with.

I asked 169 of my clients what their intended use of their new ID card was, and recorded their responses in a chart. 109 of them (about 64%) reported to me that they intended to search for a job with their ID, 92 (about 54%) reported that they intended to obtain housing, and 67 (about 40%) stated that they intended to use it for some other benefit (see graph below). The benefits listed in the other category included being able to stay at the Union Gospel Mission, donate plasma, cash a check, attend school, open a bank account, buy a bus pass to Chicago, apply for SSI, pick up food from a food bank, and to simply “identify myself to the cops.” The diversity of the responses in the other category paints a picture of just how essential identification is to complete so many of the activities of daily living, and how difficult life is without it. Several of my clients did not know how to respond when I asked them about their intended use for their ID card. A response I heard often was, “Everything. What do I *not* need an ID for?”

Client’s Intended Use of their ID Cards (Self-Reported)



IV. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PILOT EXPANSION

After spending ten months studying the difficulties that homeless persons face to obtain an identification card in Washington State, I have developed the following recommendations:

1. The Washington State Homeless Certification Form created by this project should be used to qualify homeless persons for a free Washington State identification card.

The DSHS Identocard voucher should continue to exist for those who qualify for Basic Food benefits and are not homeless, but homeless persons should be able to use only the Homeless Certification Form to qualify for a Washington State ID card at no cost. Under the current system, my clients had to come to the House of Charity for a \$5 check, then visit a DSHS worker for the Identocard voucher, and finally make a trip to the nearest DOL office to be issued identification cards. This is three stops, all just to pay for the cost of an identification card. If a client was applying for a first-time identification card and needed to gather documents as well, the process involved even more trips.

The House of Charity, DSHS office, and DOL office in Spokane are all geographically quite distant from each other. The nearest DSHS office is 2 miles from our shelter, and the nearest DOL office is nearly 5 miles—a long walk for a healthy individual and an impossibly long trek for the physically handicapped and elderly. Making all these stops required several bus trips, another added expense and an incredibly inefficient process.

The use of the DSHS Identocard voucher for homeless clients is a waste of DSHS employees' time as well. For stably-housed DSHS clients, using the Identocard voucher is logical: they have a safe place to store personal belongings, and thus are far less likely to need multiple ID card replacements within a short time frame. Homeless clients, however, tend to lose ID cards more frequently because they lack a safe location to store their belongings. As a result, many homeless persons return to DSHS workers several times a year just to be issued another Identocard voucher. One of my clients, an elderly lady suffering who sleeps outside every night, has been issued four DSHS Identocard vouchers within ten months because her ID card has been lost or stolen so frequently.

Eliminating the DSHS Identocard vouchers for homeless clients and replacing them with the Homeless Certification Form could actually save money, in the sense that it would eliminate a process that wastes DSHS employees' paid time. The DSHS employees I spoke within the city all reported to me that they frequently saw clients only to issue them an Identocard voucher, and were all resoundingly in favor of the idea of implementing a Homeless Certification Form in place of the voucher.

Illinois has used a Homeless Verification Form since 2010 to qualify homeless persons for a free state ID card (the Illinois Homeless Verification Form is attached to the end of this report). The form is filled out by the applicant, a service provider who certifies that the applicant is homeless, and a notary (many homeless shelters there have a notary on staff). Since implementing this system, Illinois has seen neither a significant drop in the issuance of fee ID cards nor a significant increase in the issuance of no fee ID cards, meaning the state has not lost a significant revenue source (see tables below). Additionally, the slight increase in the issuance of no fee ID cards could also be attributed to an increase in the number of people over the age of 65, as Illinois offers free ID cards to this population as well. Thus, the program can be considered a success: extremely beneficial to the homeless without being hugely expensive to the state. The data from Illinois can serve as a model for how a similar program would look in Washington State.

ID Card Issuances in the State of Illinois, 2009-2013

FEE ID CARDS⁵	
2013	3,228,106
2012	3,257,225
2011	3,223,435
2010	3,247,211
2009	3,244,753

NO FEE ID CARDS	
2013	112,871
2012	110,427
2011	101,497
2010	94,080
2009	87,269

⁵ Data courtesy of Mary Riseling, Office of the Illinois Secretary of State.

Note that the Illinois Homeless Verification Form requires notarization; as stated previously, many shelters there have a notary on staff or easy access to one. Washington could also require notarization of its form as well, if we ensured that most shelters had a notary on staff or one to whom they could easily refer clients.⁶

2. The Homeless Certification Form should also qualify homeless persons for a free or reduced-cost birth certificate.

A birth certificate was the most commonly-used identity document to be issued a first-time Washington ID. At a cost of \$20 per Washington birth certificate, it adds a significant expense to an already expensive process. Issuing this document for free or at a reduced price to the homeless would significantly reduce the financial burden of obtaining an ID card. An example of this type of legislation can be found in California's Bill 1733.⁷ This bill will take effect in July of 2015, and allows homeless persons who can verify their status to obtain free copies of their birth certificates. An additional section of the bill will take effect in January of 2016, and will permit homeless persons to obtain free state ID cards as well.

3. The Department of Licensing should be allowed to accept photocopies of certain documents, such as birth certificates, Social Security cards, and out-of-state identification cards, as identity documents.

As stated previously, gathering the necessary documentation to obtain a first-time ID card can be an expensive and daunting process for homeless persons. Allowing photocopies of certain documents, such as Social Security cards, birth certificates, and out-of-state ID cards to be used as identity documents will help eliminate some of the costs associated with this process. Many of the copies of birth certificates issued by government agencies are essentially photocopies themselves, so allowing clients to submit their own photocopies of birth certificates, in the very least, would reduce the financial burden without posing an increased security risk. Additionally, since DSHS keeps photocopies of clients' ID cards on file, an ID photocopy with a DSHS stamp on it could securely serve as an identity document at the DOL.

4. The state should continue to fund an ID assistance position in Spokane, and the program should be expanded to create one such position in every urban center.

The vast majority of the clients that I assisted in ordering birth certificates were born outside of Washington State. Without regular access to a computer or phone, ordering out-of-state birth certificates, or even finding information on how to order them, can be nearly impossible. Even if clients are able to find a method to order these certificates, the costs can be exorbitant. For instance, I assisted one client in obtaining his Michigan birth

⁶ See Appendix C.

⁷ See <http://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/billNavClient.xhtml?bill_id=201320140AB1733>.

certificate, which cost \$46 for the document alone, excluding shipping and processing fees. Funding an ID assistance position to provide logistical and monetary support to homeless clients attempting to obtain these certificates is absolutely essential.

V. CONCLUSION

Under the current policies, ID cards in Washington State are still quite difficult for homeless persons to obtain, due to both to financial and logistical barriers. The changes suggested above will make ID cards easier for homeless persons to obtain, and save homeless providers and government agencies valuable time and resources. Making the process of obtaining an ID unnecessarily difficult, as the current policies do, prolongs the time homeless persons remain without employment, shelter, and other resources, benefitting neither them nor the state.

Though the data presented in this report presents a compelling argument for the suggested policy changes, I find the individual client stories even more compelling. The service provided by this pilot program may seem inconsequential when compared to programs that provide housing or other forms of support to homeless persons, but the level of gratitude expressed by many clients demonstrates just how vital the ID assistance program is. I had many clients who fell out of contact for a several months, and then later called or came back into the House of Charity to thank me for the assistance with getting their ID cards.

One woman who I had sent a survey, but who never filled it or brought it back, came in two months later requesting another copy. She not only answered the yes or no questions on the survey, but also wrote four paragraphs about the various ways that having an ID card had helped her improve her life. (I have attached a scan of her survey, as well as several other notes of gratitude from clients, to the end of this report.⁸)

Another man, who I helped renew an ID card back in early April, called me in late June, just to say thank you. He said he was “doing really well”; he had a full-time job that paid well and was living in the Oxford House, a sober-living community here in Spokane, of which he had recently been chosen to be the leader. He said he had enough money now to donate the cost of his ID card back to the House of Charity, and asked me what the best way to do so was.

There are many practical reasons to allow changes that make it easier for homeless persons to obtain ID cards, such as that it allows faster employment and entry into housing, which saves government money. But beyond those reasons, we should allow these changes because they give homeless persons a sense of dignity. A woman with a traumatic brain

⁸ See Appendix D.

injury should not be denied a bed at the Union Gospel Mission because she is having difficulty obtaining a state ID, as one of my clients was. People should not have to pass up job placements because they could not afford the cost of replacing their ID cards in time to start. Homeless individuals who are expected to present ID cards when questioned by the police should be able to obtain those without great personal expense. As one client told me, before she obtained her ID, “people doubted that [she] was who [she] said [she] was.” Simply being able to prove identity provides a sense of self that all deserve.

