Healthy housing is affordable, safe, and supportive

A healthy home is one where the physical, mental, and socioeconomic environment supports the well-being of household members. It is free from hazards like pests or structural deficiencies. It does not impose a cost burden, ensuring household income can be spent on other needs such as food and healthcare.

It should be possible for every South King County resident to live in a healthy home.

Healthy housing is critical to well-being

Research shows that affordable, healthy homes are positively correlated to physical and psychological well being.

- Poor housing quality is the most consistent and strongest predictor of emotional and behavioral problems in children and youth
- Households who spend less on housing are less likely to experience residential instability, which is associated with reduced mental and physical health outcomes
- Residential exposures are major contributing factors to serious illnesses

Hallmarks of Healthy Housing
- Dry
- Pest-Free
- Contaminant-Free
- Ventilated
- Maintained
- Adequate plumbing & kitchen
- Not crowded
- Affordable!
Impacts of healthy housing barriers in South King County

HUD’s defined housing problems include overcrowding, inadequate plumbing, inadequate kitchen facilities, and cost-burden. The National Healthy Housing Standard (NHHS) builds on these to include structural integrity, safety & security, heating & energy, moisture, waste, pest management and chemical agents.

- Injuries at home account for 4 million emergency department visits and 70,000 hospital admissions nationwide
- Leaky, saggy roofs & broken windows cause mold, increasing the risk for asthma and other serious health problems
- 40% of childhood asthma cases are attributable to residential exposures
- $2,584 Annual expenses for asthma related treatments per household
- 4.3 million Days of lost productivity due to asthma in Washington adults
- 2,900 South King County households have inadequate kitchen or plumbing facilities
- Nearly 4 in 10 households in South King County are cost burdened
- Families who spend less of their income on housing spend more on food and healthcare.
- The presence of pests can increase the risk of hospitalization by up to 3x
- 11,744 South King County households are overcrowded
- Over-crowding is linked to higher rates of infectious disease transmission
- Malfunctioning or poorly maintained HVAC systems pose safety and health risks including fire and exposure to carbon monoxide
- $5,600 1 year of medical & special education for a seriously lead-poisoned child

Barriers to Healthy Housing

49% of South King County households have a risk of lead exposure

Lead at any level has toxic effects on the nervous system and cognitive development, especially in children.

Updated March 2017.

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