

SHSC 2023 Human Services Candidate Questionnaire

Seattle Human Services Coalition (SHSC) 2023 Candidate Questions

Email *

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What is your name? *

Preston Anderson

For which position are you running? *

Seattle City Council District 1

Seattle City Council District 2

Seattle City Council District 3

Seattle City Council District 4

Seattle City Council District 5

Seattle City Council District 6

Seattle City Council District 7

King County Council District 2

King County Council District 4

King County Council District 6

King County Council District 8

Other:

What is your understanding of Human Services? Which Human Service Providers are most familiar with? *

I got my start in the field of human services in 2008 with the Downtown Emergency Service Center as a case manager after getting my undergraduate degree in sociology. In 2012 I earned my Master of Social Work and Master of Public Administration. I began working as a clinical social worker at the VA Puget Sound Health Care System. I have worked in substance use disorder treatment, trauma treatment, inpatient psychiatric settings, and within homeless programs.

What do you think is the root cause of poverty? What do you think the role of Government has in *
addressing institutionalized poverty?

There is no one root cause of poverty. However, it is important for the government at all levels to create opportunities for communities and individuals to obtain work, quality education, affordable housing, and provide for a clean and safe environment.

What is your understanding of racism and its impacts? What do you see as your role in *
addressing systemic racism? What solutions, ideas, or examples of policies would you offer
toward ending the impact of racism and racial injustice?

I believe that our two-party system of governance contributes to the perpetuation of institutional/systemic racism. I support reforms to our process of elections such as introducing rank-choice voting to provide a more dynamic and less hostile representative body of elected officials.

I have family in Texas and I have lived in the Southeast of the United States. Racism is visible in the substandard housing and schools throughout the South. In 2019 I committed myself to live out my values and passion to fight against racial injustice by moving to South Carolina to get involved in fighting against voter suppression and Gerrymandering. It was one of the most rewarding experiences. However, my disappointment is that in "Blue-States" money and resources saturate an expansive ecosystem of progressive organizations. When I was in South Carolina there was literally only 3 prominent progressive organizations throughout the entire state. It doesn't have to be that way.

As an elected official, what steps would you take to understand community needs? What is your *
approach to partnerships between communities and government?

As a social worker I have facilitated plenty of groups where we dialogue amongst each other and create a safe space to process whatever is discussed. I would like to hold regularly recurring forums throughout District 1 where we discuss community concerns and identify viable ways of resolving issues impacting our district and our City.

What do you believe are the root causes of the on-going homelessness crisis? *

Lack of affordable housing, lack of clinically appropriate placement for individuals suffering from severe mental illness and/or substance use disorders, not enough resources for substance use treatment, not enough resources for psychiatric treatment, not enough capacity and resources for recuperative care for our disabled and aged homeless population. Also, I would say lack of drug free permanent supportive housing units--I have had many clients express a sincere desire to be placed in a "clean environment" so they can build upon their abstinence. However, the options are typically harm reduction only project based sites, and they ultimately end up succumbing to using again and then clinically spiraling downward.

What would you say are some examples of metrics of success when it comes to the homelessness crisis? *

The increased length of time spent in permanent housing following placement; minimal return to homelessness following placement in permanent supportive housing or other housing options; fewer Emergency Department Visits; fewer psychiatric hospitalizations.

Survivors of domestic and sexual violence frequently enter the criminal legal system due to their victimization, but criminal legal responses are problematic for most survivors for a variety of reasons. This is especially true for Black, Indigenous, and other survivors of color, refugee and immigrant survivors, and gender non-conforming survivors. What do you see as the role of the criminal legal system in responding to gender-based violence? Do you know of any community-based alternatives to responding to violence and how you would promote or support them? *

I am aware that the Seattle Human Services Committee has made an effort to expand funding into programs that support victims of gender-based violence. The responsibility of the criminal legal system is to support the victims of gender-based violence and to rehabilitate the perpetrators of gender-based violence. Further, it is our role as a society to educate our community about gender-based violence and emphasize the roles that we all have to prevent violence in our communities. This education starts in school for children and concurrently takes place for community leaders and liaisons to help integrate best practices for eliminating gender-based violence.

At least one-quarter to one-third of people in our community will experience gender-based violence in their lifetimes, yet solutions and responses to domestic violence, sexual assault, and trafficking are significantly under-funded. Given this, what specific solutions would you bring forward to address this systemic shortfall? *

As mentioned above the City of Seattle has a responsibility to designate liaisons and community leaders to provide outreach events and education on the scope of the problem--by making it more visible to the community, people will be more responsive to wanting to engage in ways in eliminating gender-based violence.

According to the GAO nearly half of all people over 55+ and approaching retirement have no retirement savings. When individuals begin to think about retirement, approximately 50% of them will have to depend solely on Social Security as they have no pensions. This is a big factor in the reason that more older adults continue working past expected retirement. What are some of your priorities in tackling elder poverty and ensuring that our older adults are taken care of? What are some actions elected officials can take to help prevent poverty for older adults? *

I believe that ensuring the success of the Social Housing Program in Seattle will provide a model for how to provide support for our aging population. I have been vocal throughout my campaign about the need to ensure the Seattle Office of Aging and Disability is adequately funding and is addressing growing issues like the one described above.

What do you consider as some of the priorities for older adults living in the Seattle/King County areas? *

Stable housing; access to recuperative care; increased access to adult family homes; increased access to subacute rehabilitation facilities; increased access/availability of shuttles for medical appointments, daily living activities, and recreation opportunities.

City officials and nonprofit leaders agree that wages for human service workers do not reflect the education required, difficulty, or value of their work to build well-being. A 2022 City of Seattle funded study conducted by the University of Washington School of Social Work found that King County human service workers are paid at least 37 percent less than workers with comparable skill sets in other industries. The report provides several evidence-based recommendations that the City of Seattle can implement now to begin closing the gap. *

The primary near-term recommendation in the report is an immediate seven percent increase to all City of Seattle funded human service contracts. This represents the minimum level of investment needed in the short term to address high rates of turnover and align human service worker pay with the rest of the labor market.

Will you support and prioritize funding for a seven percent increase in city-funded human service contracts to address systemic wage inequity?

Yes. I know from personal experience--I started at the Downtown Emergency Service Center making \$12.78/hr--I fought hard back then to help increase wages with my participation in union activities with the SEIU 1199.

Over the next few years, the City of Seattle will have an opportunity to build on these investments and support the substantial wage increases recommended by this report. We call on City leaders to work in concert with other public and private funders to identify the revenue necessary to pay the full cost of providing essential, lifesaving human services to all Seattle residents. *

Will you commit to partnering with SHSC and other human service funders to secure the additional revenue necessary to close the 37 percent wage gap that human service workers face?

Yes.

Many childcare workers struggle to afford childcare. Childcare workers in our coalition hesitate *
to accept promotions because they are concerned that higher pay might disqualify them from
receiving a childcare subsidy that they themselves rely on. This is causing quality childcare
providers to leave the profession altogether. In a recent survey of former King County childcare
workers, one of the main reasons cited for leaving the field was the need to provide affordable
childcare to their own children. A lack of access to affordable childcare has ironically created a
shortage of qualified early learning professionals. What solutions would you offer to make
childcare more affordable and incentivize childcare worker retention?

Better wages for those workers. However, many middle-income workers, myself included have foregone
childrearing because of the expense. This needs to be dealt with at the state and federal level to have any
equitable impact.

What are some ways that you would work to increase support available to folks struggling with *
mental health needs?

With the passage of the King County Crisis Care Levy we have an opportunity to build more clinics, and
especially residential facilities that are capable of stabilizing people suffering from the acute effects of their
psychiatric disorder. However, at the county level (King County) our Designated Crisis Responders are
woefully understaffed. As a consequence of that our most vulnerable in the community remain on the
streets. I will work to ensure that there are more clinically appropriate housing options--transitional housing;
group homes; housing that is able to accommodate those with significant behavioral challenges.

Food banks and free meal providers in the region have always struggled to meet the needs of *
the public. During the pandemic there was an increase in resources to local food banks. As the
pandemic has waned, the resources are also receding, yet the demand for food bank services
has increased, especially with cuts to SNAP benefits and inflation. What solutions would you
offer to continue to meet the needs of people struggling with food insecurity and ensuring that
neighborhoods across the City of Seattle have equitable access to the healthy, culturally familiar
food? How do you ensure reliable food support is available despite a much-varied landscape of
hunger relief organizations and mutual aid groups?

It would be necessary to survey the extent of food scarce homes to appropriately fund and structure a
response to the crisis.

Google Forms