



MEETING NOTES
Emergency Cold Weather Shelter

Task Force Meeting

Wednesday Aug 24, 2022

11:30 am – 1:30 pm

Meeting Objectives:

- Establish planning assumptions to be used during process: how many people, different populations that will be served, etc.
- Discussion and decision points on how to organize the work.

Meeting Agenda:

- Welcome
- Review Revised Task Force Charter
- Define Emergency Shelter Needs
- Organizing the Work
- Engagement & Communications

Updates

- Update that Mayor Bronson vetoed the Task Force after it was approved by Assembly. Discussion that Task Force still has value and will continue to meet for all participants who would like to be part of it.

Review Revised Task Force Charter

- The charter's purpose section has been updated to note that the Task Force is focused on emergency shelter for the winter. A separate group is working on immediate emergency shelter needs for adults.
- The charter now has an updated milestones and deliverables section, including addition of public engagement session(s) into the timeline.
 - o Deadline is September 27, 2022 for presenting recommendations to the Anchorage Assembly and Mayor's Office.
- The updated charter will be posted as the final version following today's meeting, with no dissent from the group.

Define Emergency Shelter Needs

- Discussion questions posed by Belinda (facilitator):
 - o *What data and trends do we have to describe the needs of unsheltered adults by capacity, population, historical inflow/outflow for winter shelter, etc.?*
 - o *What is the anticipated impact due to other system changes, such as the closure of the Aviator non-congregate mass care?*

- Decision point: What planning assumptions will we use to define needs for this winter? Number of people, demographics/who will be served, etc.
- **Estimating number of people experiencing unsheltered homelessness:** Approximately 350 unsheltered individuals in our community now. This estimate includes the approximate count of people at Centennial (200) and those who street outreach have encountered.
 - Comment: This number is the best we have, but does not include people who are couch surfing or doubling up.
 - Comment: The number also does not include potential inflow, including people who might lose their housing after rental assistance ends or if existing facilities like the Aviator close.
- **The group noted that surge capacity factors will be important to consider:**
 - Temperature, including the 10-degree mark.
 - Upcoming changes in rental assistance.
 - Note: HUD has a matrix, as part of its winter shelter planning tool (p. 3 and 4), to help plan for surge capacity.
 - Identifies facility changes, staffing, transportation, etc.
- **Understanding demographics/characteristics of people experiencing unsheltered homelessness today:** Current data does not separate out unsheltered homelessness from the overall population experiencing homelessness.
 - The group reviewed ACEH's dashboard: <https://aceh.org/data/>
 - Question: does the general ACEH dashboard still feel relevant to estimating the demographic characteristics of unsheltered individuals?
 - Comment: The full community dashboard likely underestimates racial inequities, and highest needs, for unsheltered individuals.
 - Comment: Beans Café data shows that 70% of people using day shelter services are Alaska Native.
 - Comment: If there isn't more detailed data available, agree with using this data.
- Next steps:
 - Come back and talk through Plan A (Projected Need), Plan B (Marginal Surge), and Plan C (Substantial Surge) in the HUD matrix on Monday.
 - Should factor in local guidance on shelter provision:
 - No site can have over 150 people per MOA shelter ordinance.
 - AHD also published a document about minimum requirements, with three differences worth highlighting:
 - Open from 8am-8pm, doesn't require 24 hours.
 - A warm drink and snack is required, but a meal is not.
 - No showers are required on-site.
 - Comment: We need to have 24 hours availability, meals, showers.
 - Comment: Understand that this is the bare minimum, but as a CoC I would like to see us propose something more robust. Would advocate for day

services somewhere, showers are a must. Given that we're a cold weather city, would like to see daytime options and more than a warm drink and a snack.

- Comment: 24 hours of service doesn't necessarily have to be in the same facility. If separate facilities, transportation must be taken into account.
- General agreement in the room:
 - Emergency sheltering should be a 24-hour operation that offers meals and showers.

- **Decisions:**

- **Task Force will use 350 for the estimate of people experiencing unsheltered homelessness.**
- **Task Force will use HMIS data on characteristics of the full population experiencing homelessness to estimate characteristics of unsheltered individuals as a starting point, but will go back to Beans Café data and others to identify adjustments.**
 - This data will be used to identify demographics, disability status, and substance misuse rates.
 - Ask: If anyone is equipped to help ACEH with the data work, there is an open invitation to help.
- **Task Force will use a modified version of HUD's Winter Shelter Planning Tool matrix to capture surge capacity.**
 - **Action:** ACEH to create an updated modified version to bring back to the Task Force.
- **Task Force agrees that emergency sheltering should be a 24-hour operation that offers meals and showers.**

- HUD guidance on how to go about this work:

- Three step approach:
 - 1. Supporting alternative spaces for winter sheltering (
 - Covenant House has proposal to increase capacity for 18–24-year-olds
 - BFS to increase to 100 beds on 9/1 and 120 beds on 10/1, from 76 today (increase of 24 and then 44).
 - Is there anywhere else where we can expand capacity in existing facilities/programs?
 - 2. Strengthening diversion strategies
 - The more people who can move from unsheltered status into housing, and prevent inflow, the less need for emergency shelter.
 - Explore rental assistance within the Municipality that hasn't been activated; emergency housing vouchers.
 - **Action:** ACEH to create list of those existing resources, and what impact they might have on unsheltered population and bring them back to the group.
 - Sustaining congregate shelters at reduced capacity for COVID-19

- With congregate shelters, must maintain low barrier access and identify transportation to alternative shelter space.

Organizing the Work

- Context: Plan A and Plan B likely needed given there are 350 people who will need shelter.
 - Likely need at least two locations/facilities given the estimated need.
 - Comment: If two places needed, could have different locations for different populations. Could use this to our benefit to serve people with highest needs in one place and folks who are closer to housing could be at another location.
 - This is one approach. Also need to keep in mind ADA regulations.
 - It is often difficult to separate people by needs.
- Brainstorming ideas for meeting the need, from meeting participants:
 - Would like to see one site that is non-congregate. Master lease a hotel that has sufficient space.
 - Important that we partner with faith groups but also need to consider the history there too.
 - How do hotels translate budget-wise? There are so many empty spaces in Anchorage – what are we doing with some of these buildings? How do we use existing empty spaces rather than buying a building, building something, etc.?
 - Retrofitting spaces quickly, such as pallet shelters indoors, to quickly and/or temporarily remodel current spaces. Self-contained, heated, lockable structures.
 - Question: Do these structures work with our climate?
 - Sala has talked with other places that have used this model in comparable cold climates where they've been successful.
 - 30-unit facility could be stood up in less than a week. Matson has offered to ship them up for free.
 - Something in-between congregate and non-congregate. Try to maintain support system for unsheltered individuals, who have social connections and community to maintain.
 - Location that has access to food and day services that doesn't require an overnight place to stay.
 - Should think about reasons people don't currently go to overnight shelter: animals and couples.
 - Specific populations to consider: Elder and disabled, survivors of domestic violence, behavioral health needs, disabled individuals who aren't Elders.
 - Consider detox beds as part of the strategy too.
 - Consider replicating model of men's house and women's house, and bringing in traditional approaches.
 - Consider designated camp. Note that HUD says that designated camps are not emergency shelter because they are not shelter.
 - Bring in partners who do remote camp setup/logistics – organizations that set up structures, showers, etc.

- Should think about how we're bringing in community councils sooner rather than later. Could consider spreading this across Assembly districts/neighborhoods rather than concentrated in one.
- Update: Alaska Native Heritage Center has received \$1.5 million to bring cultural programming into shelters, jails, and day centers to add healing component. ACEH and ANHC to follow up about how to collaborate here.
- Specific locations to consider (list could be inclusive of locations that have already been looked at, and might be revisited):
 - Johnson Tire location
 - Northway Mall
 - Alaska Club on Tudor Rd.
 - Rec centers – have showers, spread out around town, etc.
 - Fairview Rec Center was used as overflow for Sullivan
 - Rec center also have outdoor space that might be usable with a pallet shelter too.
 - Pacific Northern Academy's old school lot could be a lot for tiny homes.
 - Former Gary King's sporting goods warehouse (202 E. Northern Lights)
 - Former Sam's Club in Tikahtnu
 - Tent that's coming up for the navigation center, located somewhere else for the winter
 - Sullivan Arena, or the Sullivan parking lot
 - Eagle River could be a good location given movement between Anchorage and the Valley
 - Egan Center
 - Stolt (?) building on 4th Avenue
 - BP building in Midtown
 - Old La Mex building on Spenard
 - Old Sears furniture shop
 - 5th Avenue Mall
 - University Mall
 - Area near old DMV location
 - Camp Gorsuch
 - Blockbuster on Debarr
 - Denny's in Midtown
 - Old Body Renew on Northern Lights
 - Fencing Center next to Serrano's
 - Alaska Railroad – land inventory
 - Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority land
 - Storefronts in strip malls – is there a list of vacancies?
- Next meeting will have breakdown of locations/facilities that have been looked at over the last year.

- Recommendation to connect with someone deeply versed in the commercial real estate market in Anchorage, who knows who's moving in and out of different spaces.
 - **Action:** Subgroup to combine new ideas from today with list of locations in the inventory from the last year. Updated list will be brought back at Monday's meeting.
- Question: Do we first find what's available, or do we decide on approach and number of facilities and then identify locations?
 - Given the urgency of the issue, likely need to do both concurrently.

Engagement + Communications

- How to incorporate people with lived experience?
 - ACEH Outreach Coordinator to work with Street Outreach to distribute survey to people with lived experience.
 - Want to understand what people with lived experience see as barriers, opportunities, preferences for shelter and incorporate the information into the planning process.
 - Street Outreach goes out 5 days a week by zip code and has a pop-up at Centennial once per week, and will distribute the survey.
 - HRAC will also be included.
 - Participation in the Task Force is also welcome. ACEH has funds for transportation and a small stipend.
 - Communications committee to form as part of Task Force.
 - Will include communication + outreach to community councils.
 - **Action:** ACEH will circulate a sign-up sheet for sub-groups.
- How can we learn from other communities?
 - What are some specific examples from other places we want to investigate? Meg with ACEH identified the following approaches:
 - 1. Turning on non-congregate locations, particularly leveraging empty apartment buildings or availability of hotels.
 - 2. Using rapid rehousing instead of shelter, assuming you have units or hotel rooms, etc.
 - 3. Repurposing buildings into congregate locations. Tiny home option is being used, especially in warm climates.

Data Dashboard Issues and Opportunities

- How will we keep track of availability/capacity in real-time, especially for entities not using HMIS?
- Current process for tracking capacity

- ACEH did quick survey when Sullivan was closing down to understand availability. Sent an email every other day, asking providers to update capacity, and used this to track.
- Started with agreement that it was important to be honest about actual capacity, because a bad referral is worse than no referral.
- ACEH has continued to do this, turning it into a Google spreadsheet. Twice/week emails are sent.
 - Note that this is different from the MOA dashboard.

Wrap Up and Next Steps

- Key decisions
 - Planning assumptions:
 - 350 people
 - ACEH/HMIS dashboard to inform population characteristics
 - Locations limited to 150 max per MOA shelter ordinance
 - 24-hour operation, meals, and access to showers
 - Decision points:
 - Task Force will use the HUD matrix
 - Follow up
 - Next meeting will lay out proposed lanes of work + sub-groups:
 - Inventory/site evaluation; communications
 - ACEH to bring draft of the survey + information on lived experience incentives to the next meeting
 - ACEH to share documents that AHD published on procedural steps for operating emergency shelter
 - Data from Aviator and other non-congregate sites, to see if there are similar flows in and out of non-congregate shelter as congregate shelter. ACEH to run same analysis on the Aviator and bring it back to group.