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## **Emergency Cold Weather Shelter 3<sup>rd</sup> Party Oversight**

### **Weekly Report for Week 10**

**Project Name: 3<sup>rd</sup> Party Emergency Shelter Oversight**

**Submitted to: Anchorage Assembly, Anchorage Mayor's Office, Anchorage Health Dept., and Shelter Operators (Henning, Inc. and The Alaska Hotel Group)**

**Date: Reporting period January 22 - 28, 2024**

**Date Submitted: January 31, 2024**

**Submitted by: Cathleen McLaughlin, JD/MBA**

**Monica Gross MD, MPH**

#### **A. Background**

As required under Contract #2023003145, fully executed on November 17, 2023, RRS submits its Weekly report for Week 10. This report is for the period January 22 - 28, 2024.

#### **B. Actions and Events During this Reporting Period**

1. RRS focus is on operations at the 3 Emergency Cold Weather Shelter sites (CWS, The Alex Hotel, The Aviator) and the warming sites at CWS, Aviator and Golden Lion.

2. Key topics:

A. **Warming Sites** – All 3 warming sites were opened over the weekend of 11/27-1/28. Henning, Inc. is staffing CWS and Golden Lion. Aviator is staffing its warming site. Capacity at these sites is a total of 85 (30 at CWS, 30 at Golden Lion, and 25 at Aviator). CWS and Golden Lion are 24/7. Aviator is open 8 p.m. – 8 a.m.

1. On Friday, January 27, 2024, RRS joined Henning, Inc. for their weekly staff meeting to discuss a plan, places, and benefits of warming sites. The 3 locations selected are appropriate since the warming areas are in existing programs (less costly, staff are already trained, and some clients can transfer from warming to shelter).

2. Shelter operators can use the warming sites to keep individuals out of the extreme cold but also, to feed the existing ECWS programs by offering individuals that come in an opportunity to get into shelter and housing services.

3. Prior to the opening of the warming sites, APD, the hospital waiting rooms, the airport and the Anchorage Safety Center were operating at or near capacity to get and keep individuals out of the cold. Due to the extreme cold weather in the next 10 days, and

Standing up any new project in 24 hours is imperfect but RRS and the shelter operators are highly-motivated to use this opportunity to enhance Anchorage's safety net for those most at risk. A more-detailed report on warming sites will be provided in RRS's next report since all protocols and processes around usage and transportation, have not been fully fleshed out.

#### **B. Next Step – Alex Hotel**

During this reporting period, a total of 19 clients have been placed into permanent supportive housing or are in the process of moving out of the Alex. There is a great deal of positivity at the Alex because clients are being incentivized, by seeing each other move forward, to find plans for themselves. The weekly townhalls have been well-attended and RRS, program managers, staff, and clients are having very open and honest conversations about safety within the Alex, healthy choices outside the Alex and how to build safety nets around each person as they move forward.

#### **C. Incidences & Overdoses**

Since last week, there has been a decline in overdose events at all sites. There was 1 overdose at CWS, 3 at Aviator, and 0 at Alex. Narcan is at all sites and the Aviator is holding Narcan classes for clients regularly.

Exits for rule violations is occurring. There is a system, that continues to be re-evaluated, to fluidly move clients from one location to another based on capacity and need. Approximately 17 clients at Aviator were discharged or returned to CWS for curfew or rule violations, with the understanding that they could go to CWS to re-set, but also the opportunity to move back to Aviator at a later date. As noted in previous reports, RRS strongly supports this process because it inherently holds clients accountable to follow house rules, but offers them a safety net.

RRS was not made aware of any serious incidences at any of the locations during this reporting period. Individuals who were asked to leave due to unhealthy or violent behavior, were appropriately discharged. Several of these individuals have a long history of being high-users of emergency services and are not capable of managing themselves. By default, they are being served through Anchorage's emergency services providers (APD, hospitals, Anchorage Safety Center, Dept. of Corrections).

**D. Client Transportation** – Client transportation needs continue to be a big issue for clients. RRS understands the AHD and the shelter operators are addressing this need by discussing bus passes and Lyft rides to and from each shelter location. (Note: RRS and Henning, Inc. made a joint recommendation regarding client transportation in RRS’s Week 9 report)

RRS spoke with a client at the Aviator on Friday, January 26, who uses a wheelchair due to frostbite on both feet (which occurred in December 2023). Despite needing follow-up care, the client has chosen to do nothing to care for his feet for the stated reason that he had no transportation to and from his medical provider. Aviator staff immediately starting working with him after he disclosed this. The point of this example is – many clients are not good self-advocates and, unless they are aware of a service because it is embedded in a program, they will not ask for it.

### **C. Shelter Operations**

1. **Alex – Non-congregate**

As noted above, the Alex is operating well.

2. **CWS – Congregate Shelter**

CWS continues to operate at or near capacity. With the warming site, located in the community room, there is little space on the 1<sup>st</sup> floor for clients to be other than on their cots or milling around the entrance area. RRS will be meeting with Henning leadership to discuss potential options to utilize the CWS space to give staff and clients a bit of ‘elbow room.’ The benefit of a 30-person warming area at CWS is, after a cot audit is done, the individuals needing cots are already at CWS and can move from the warming side to the shelter side, if the warming client is capable of following shelter rules.

3. **Aviator – Non-congregate.**

The Aviator staff has put into place a bed audit process. Aviator staff identifies if a person has not used a bed for 3 days in a row, and then discharges that individual from the Aviator to CWS. After approximately 20 were discharged due to failure to use their beds or violate house rules, this process is causing clients to be more compliant. The extreme cold weather has also encourage clients with beds to use their assigned beds.

### **F. Recommendations, Conclusions and Summary**

RRS recommends that, during the next reporting period, ECWS stakeholders (shelter operators, AHD, and RRS) shore-up the warming site processes and protocol, and continue to manage the 3 shelter sites in a way that builds positive momentum, and stabilization of programs.

Any questions, please contact RRS through phone, text, or email at any time.

**Respectfully Submitted, Cathleen N. McLaughlin, J.D./M.B.A. Monica Gross MD, MPH**