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

### **Weekly Report for Week 22**

**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 April 15 - 21, 2024**

**Date Submitted: April 24, 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 22. This report is for the period April 15 - 21, 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).

2. **Key topics:**

A. Updated Information About the Decompression Plan – On April 18, 2024, RRS learned the Alex Hotel would be closing to all shelter clients **on May 7, 2024**. This decision was made by the owner of the Alex Hotel in conjunction with Henning, Inc. and AHD 1-2 weeks prior to this reporting period. RRS did a site visit at the Alex on April 19, 2024. Approximately 55 clients were at the Alex. RRS was told by the Alex on-site manager that all remaining individuals were connected to housing specialists and would be offered housing through the Next Step program or other housing programs. As of 4/24/2024, 52 shelter clients remained at the Alex.

During this reporting period, Alex Hotel shelter clients were moved from one section of the second floor into different rooms due to mechanical and water damage issues. With the on-

going decompression of the Alex shelter program, it is expected only 1 floor will be used soon for the remaining clients.

**B. Maintenance and plumbing repairs at CWS.**

On April 17, 2024, RRS was notified that the client toilets at CWS were clogged and the plumbing needed repair. Porta potties were ordered and set up in the parking lot at CWS for the men. It was believed that clogging of toilets was the result of activities in the men's restroom. The female bathroom remains open but the men are now required to go outside and use the 4 porta potties.

On April 18 & 19, 2024, RRS was at CWS. 4 porta potties were in the parking lot. The handwashing station remained in the men's bathroom.

As of the writing of this report, plumbing challenges at CWS remain. Porta potties, and the challenges associated with having them in the parking lot exist. RRS recommends that a more robust and planned solution to this on-going plumbing issue be considered, particularly if CWS continues to be the site of a low-barrier shelter.

**C. Client engagement, stabilization, and exit plans.** As noted in the decompression plan below, 2 of the 3 ECWS sites are slowly beginning to reduce usage.

During this reporting period RRS interviewed clients at CWS and the Alex, and accepted calls from clients in all locations. RRS received calls from clients at all 3 sites. RRS is also receiving increased calls from former ECWS clients who currently stay at camps or on the streets in Anchorage. RRS does accept calls from former ECWS clients because many of the individuals are fluid and come and go from CWS and have been part of the ECWS system at some point.

Most client concerns, when taken to their essence, relate to the frustration of not knowing where to go when the shelters close, whether CWS will remain open, where to establish a camp, how to get a vehicle towed and where to tow it so they can live in it, etc. Uncertainty breeds instability and for some, they sense they are stable now and do not want to lose that.

One reality of note - while at CWS, RRS spoke with several clients who have significant mental health issues. These individuals have a sense of stability at CWS and Henning, Inc.'s mental health advocate is very involved in keeping many of these individuals on track with medication and behavioral management. One question ECWS stakeholders need to address is, how this pocket of low-barrier shelter clients will be served and stabilized if there is no place for them to rest.

**3. All 3 ECWS sites are stably managed.** The one update is, the shelter manager at CWS left as of Friday, April 19, 2024. Henning, Inc.'s COO has stepped in as the CWS Shelter Manager. All 3 sites have policies, processes, and practices that are adhered to for keeping each site as stable as low-barrier shelters can be.

4. **Review of exit data by RRS.**

During this reporting period, 6 clients from the Aviator were housed, 4 returned to family and 1 left for employment.

5. **Decompression of ECWS Sites**

Under the decompression plan, CWS will continue to accept clients up to 200. The Alex and Aviator are decompressing with the census at Aviator, as of April 23, 2024 at 218 and Alex at 52. Neither location is accepting new clients except in extraordinary circumstances.

Decompression at the non-congregate sites continues to be by attrition. RRS supports this decompression process because it is the least disruptive.

6. **Client Call Log** – This workbook continues to be used as the daily call log for RRS. It is submitted to AHD daily. All matters brought to RRS’s attention by clients and community members were timely noted and addressed by RRS, AHD and the shelter operators.

7. **Incidences** – No overdoses or significant incidences were reported from CWS, Alex or Aviator.

**C. Shelter Operations**

1. **Alex – Non-congregate**

The Alex continues to de-compress and is operated well.

2. **CWS – Congregate Shelter**

As noted above, plumbing and sanitation are the focus of the shelter operator at this time. CWS is serving the purpose if was expected to serve, which is as an emergency cold weather shelter. Longer-term usage may require an enhancement in the infrastructure.

3. **Aviator – Non-congregate.**

The Aviator continues to be operated well. The census is now 218, approximately 35 less than Week 21. (Note: RRS cannot say whether this is coincidence or causation but on April 21, 2024, RRS was contacted by Providence ER social workers stating there had been a significant increase in Providence ER visits on April 20 and 21 of individuals experiencing homelessness.)

**D. Recommendations, Conclusions and Summary**

RRS continues to recommend that ECWS stakeholders build positive momentum around shelter services, exit plans, solution-based practices and a year-round low-barrier shelter.

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**