

Update #1: Boulder County Regional Homeless System Collaborative

Starting Oct. 1, 2017, Boulder County, in collaboration with the Cities of Boulder and Longmont, will begin a new approach for connecting single adults with homeless services. This approach is a coordinated system of services that integrates evidence-based practices, prioritizes low-barrier access to critical services, and provides clients with services that best align with their level of need.

Why Is the Approach Changing?

For several years, the community, service providers, and local governments have been working on developing a more coordinated approach to services for those experiencing homelessness in Boulder County and the cities of Boulder and Longmont. This has culminated in coordinated community plans, with new services and programs which will start implementation Oct. 1.

The previous approach that was often crisis-driven and focused on emergency interventions – such as overnight shelter, food, and clothing – has not resulted in sustainable changes for the county's homeless population.

A new model, based on existing best practices, was developed. The guiding ideas behind the model are to:

- Develop a regional approach to homeless systems management;
- Effectively use resources within a coordinated and integrated system;
- Consider the diverse and unique needs of individuals experiencing homelessness;
- Support individuals in obtaining and maintaining stable housing as quickly as possible; and
- Focus on housing as the goal of services and create housing exit opportunities.

Changes in Services

Beginning on Oct. 1, 2017, a variety of changes to the available services for single adults will take place. The goal of these service changes is to reduce the number of people in Boulder County experiencing homelessness by providing more prevention-oriented services, and short- and long-term housing and services that will more quickly help people out of homelessness.

- **Who will be impacted by the new service system?** Changes taking place on Oct. 1 will primarily impact single adults experiencing homelessness in Boulder County.
- **Are there services changes for other homeless populations, including families?** Homeless families, youth and people experiencing domestic violence will continue to use the services that are currently available in the community.
- **How can people access services?** People will access all homeless services through the new **Coordinated Entry System**. Clients will be assessed to determine if they are most appropriate for **Program-based Shelter (PBS)** at Boulder Shelter for the Homeless (BSH), or **Navigation Services**.
- **Where will Coordinated Entry and Navigation Sites be located?** Coordinated entry and daytime navigation services will be co-located at the same site in both Boulder and Longmont. Sites are under review and services may be located at temporary sites beginning Oct. 1. Specific locations will be announced in September.

- **What are navigation services?** Navigation services provide short-term support for lower-needs individuals who require limited assistance to get back into permanent housing. Individuals will work with a case manager to develop a housing plan and can receive mediation support, financial assistance, legal assistance, assistance reunifying with support networks, and links to county and other community programs as needed. Overnight sleeping space will also be available to qualified navigation participants who need a place to stay in the short term.
- **What is program-based shelter (PBS)?** PBS will facilitate housing entry for qualified moderate and high-needs individuals by providing overnight sheltering and wrap-around services on an extended basis. Those participating in PBS can remain at BSH until they have been successfully, permanently housed. This program will start on Oct. 1 at BSH.
- **When will PBS be available?** BSH is conducting a Good Neighbor process required to make some changes in its management plan. PBS program elements which can be implemented on Oct. 1 include:
 - BSH clients are screened and referred through the coordinated entry process; and
 - PBS qualified clients screened through coordinated entry may have a dedicated bed.

Daytime services for PBS clients, and sheltering PBS clients who may not yet be clean and sober between May 1 and Sept. 30, will not be allowed until after the new management plan is approved in early November.

- **How many people can access overnight sleeping spaces and PBS beds?** BSH will continue to provide 160 overnight beds. Those beds will now be allocated to people assessed through the Coordinated Entry system as moderate- to high-need individuals, with priority for people with a longer history in Boulder County. In Boulder, navigation services will provide up to 50 overnight spaces for people assessed through Coordinated Entry as low-need and who are participating in a navigation plan. In Longmont, the number of available overnight sleeping spaces will soon be determined once the navigation service provider has been selected. That selection process should be complete by mid-September 2017.
- **Will additional shelter be available during episodes of severe weather?** The City of Boulder will be providing additional sheltering during severe weather watches and warnings and similar severe weather conditions. In 2016, there were 21 days with watches or warnings. Severe weather shelter is in addition to the 160 beds at BSH and the 50 overnight spaces in the Boulder navigation program, and does not require assessment through Coordinated Entry. Further details, including locations for severe weather shelter, are still being determined. Longmont, plans for severe weather sheltering have not been determined. The decision about whether to offer severe weather sheltering will be made by mid-September once Longmont's navigation service provider has been selected.
- **How will meals work in the new system?** In Boulder, most meals will be part of navigation or PBS services. Those accessing meals will enter through Coordinated Entry. In Longmont, meal service will be determined by mid-September once Longmont's navigation service provider has been selected.

Who will oversee the new system?

A new governance system has been established to oversee the homeless service system for single adults. The Boulder County Regional Homeless Systems Collaborative Executive Board has been appointed by the Boulder County Commissioners to oversee the overall system and make final resource allocation and system design decisions. It is primarily comprised of directors of local government agencies involved in housing and human services. Directors of service-providing organizations serve on the Management Board, which meets monthly to provide feedback on system design and performance and determines recommendations for systems improvements. A small staff from Boulder County, City of Boulder, and City of Longmont serve on the Implementation Team, which meets weekly to monitor system performance and troubleshoot issues.

How will the new system be monitored and adjusted?

Because the homeless system for single adults includes the implementation of new service models and procedures, all operational areas will be monitored and regularly assessed. This information will be used to adjust services and address any issues that may arise. Specific monitoring strategies will be put in place to review Coordinated Entry screening data, and navigation services and program-based shelter service data once those services are operational. Stakeholders and governance groups will be convened on a regular basis to review system performance and vet potential improvements using real-time data. Annual evaluation reports will be prepared and distributed.

For more information on this effort, please contact:

- Boulder County: Jennifer Biess, Homeless Service Systems Manager, jbiess@bouldercounty.org
- City of Boulder: Wendy Schwartz, Homeless Programs Manager, SchwartzW@bouldercolorado.gov
- City of Longmont: Karen Roney, Community Services Director, Karen.Roney@longmontcolorado.gov