

Homeless Solutions for Boulder County Executive Board
April 10, 2020 8:00-10:00am
Remote Meeting

In Attendance: Jim Adams-Berger, Jillian Baldwin, Robin Bohannon, Sarah Buss, Vicki Ebner, Kurt Firnhaber, Heidi Grove, Karen Kreutzberg, Angela Lanci-Macris, Matt Meyer, Karen Roney, Annie Scott

COVID-19 Recovery Center Update

There are currently two managers in place at the COVID Recovery Center, and Boulder County has worked to hire and fill lead shifts. It is a 24/7 facility and houses approximately 10 to 17 individuals, most of whom are staying seven to 10 days. Additional support to clients is being provided by Clinica Family Health and Mental Health Partners. Approximately 2000 hours of volunteer time have been donated to the Center by community members and local government staff. Moving forward, all clients at the Center will be tested for COVID.

Sheltering Update

Client numbers remain fairly low at all shelters. Bridge House and Boulder Shelter for the Homeless have each lost six staff members during this time, and all shelters have seen a significant reduction in volunteers. Bridge House and Boulder Shelter for the Homeless are working to support each other's staffing needs and both are currently looking to hire additional staff; COVID Recovery Center staff will be able to assist with shelter staffing where possible. Transportation for 10-30 clients from the 30th Street location to Boulder Shelter for the Homeless has been taking place each night. The 30th Street location and HOPE Longmont have been providing limited daytime services including shower and restroom access; in Boulder, opening of public restrooms and water fountains is weather-triggered and has not yet taken place.

It was noted that clients from other communities are putting a strain on the Severe Weather Shelter census. Currently, there are three days of sheltering available for those who are Diversion-eligible, and the Board discussed the need to more quickly and effectively reunify these clients. Unified procedures are needed between Boulder Shelter for the Homeless and HOPE Longmont, noting that active Navigation clients and those assigned through Coordinated Entry should not be utilizing Severe Weather Shelter beds.

The following adjustments were recommended to the Board, effective during the COVID-19 pandemic:

1. Clients who are active participants and have been assigned to either Navigation or Housing Focused services will be sheltered at either Boulder Shelter for the Homeless or HOPE Longmont (based on location). These clients will not be permitted to shelter at Severe Weather Sheltering.

2. Clients who have been screened to Diversion services will no longer have access to sheltering at Boulder Shelter for the Homeless or HOPE Longmont but will be permitted to shelter at Severe Weather Sheltering if space is available.

3. Navigation clients who are employed and work odd hours, will coordinate with shelter staff and be permitted to arrive to Boulder Shelter for the Homeless, in accordance with their work schedule.

All Board members were in favor of the recommendations.

Encampment Update

Encampments continue to be a challenge throughout the County. While Longmont has not seen an increase in number of encampments, Boulder has continued to see additional encampments emerge and is spending significant funds on cleanup. Encampment residents are primarily those who are resistant to services; there is also high meth use among this population. The Board discussed considering the expansion of ranger capacity in the cities, as rangers have proven to be effective regarding this issue. Additional outreach personnel could also be utilized in conjunction with Public Safety.

Housing Update

Regarding current housing efforts, it has been challenging to fill new vouchers due to current restrictions, and the recent Housing and Urban Development waiver did not provide much assistance to alleviate these challenges. Discussions are taking place regarding creative use of funds to master lease units in order to house those who are medically frail and currently in shelters. Housing Authorities are experiencing financial strain during this time; Boulder Housing Partners will be suspending rents for the month of April or May and Boulder County Housing Authority is looking to balance rents with their own funds if clients are unable to meet rent requirements. It was noted that there are a number of community resources to financially assist clients affected by COVID-19, and Boulder County is creating a housing help line that will have housing specialists triaging calls; they will provide talking points to the City of Boulder and City of Longmont as well.