

Restorative and Reentry Services, LLC

Cathleen N. McLaughlin

3734 Mount Blanc Circle

Anchorage, Alaska 99508

Email: cnmclaughlin@jeffnet.org

(907) 342-5380

MOA Housing & Homeless Services

Weekly Program Report #3

Project Name: Emergency Shelter Oversight and Client Support

Date: April 10, 2023

Submitted by: Cathleen McLaughlin, JD/MBA

Monica Gross MD, MPH

A. Background

As required under the Grant, dated March 21, 2023, entitled “Municipality of Anchorage Agreement with Restorative and Reentry Services, LLC (RRS) For Emergency Shelter Oversight and Client Support”, p. 18, RRS submits its third weekly report. This report is for the period April 4, 2023 – April 10, 2023.

B. Actions taken during this Reporting Period

RRS has and will continue to regularly go to the 3 shelter sites as well as meet with clients, community providers, concerned community members, and others who contact RRS. Specifically, during the past week, RRS has:

1. Facilitated the first Client Townhall meeting on Tuesday, April 4, 2023 at Sullivan. This Client Townhall will continue each Tuesday until the Sullivan is demobilized.
2. Addressing concerns surrounding the emergency cold weather warming area. RRS facilitated a Teams meeting on Tuesday, April 4, 2023 at 1 p.m. with AHD and community service providers regarding closure and demobilization of the warming area. 53 community members attended. A second Teams meeting will occur this Tuesday, April 11th at 1 p.m. to continue the conversation around the warming area with the benefit of a report out from RRS regarding its current use.
3. Scheduled a client townhall at The Alex for 5:30 p.m. Monday, April 10, 2023 to directly discuss client concerns and next steps for clients currently housed by MOA at this site.

4. Facilitated a staff townhall at Sullivan for Henning, Inc. staff on Wednesday, April 5, 2023 regarding expectations, enhancement of services, and proactive worksite culture.
5. Received and reviewed client surveys from the 3 Emergency Shelter sites regarding client expectations, plans and concerns after Emergency Shelter beds are demobilized.
6. Facilitated communication between community providers who are now coming inside the Sullivan to directly locate and work with clients in real-time.
7. Worked with APD and individuals coming to the Sullivan parking lot to openly address predatorial and unsafe behavior.
8. Met with Operator leadership to create and improve on the Good Neighbor policies and communications.
9. Periodically met with clients in the warming area to learn more about who is using the warming area, why and where clients will go when it closes.
10. Reviewed data processes and recommended changes in order to provide more robust information to housing specialists and community providers to stream-line exit process.
11. Met with Aviator property manager and housing specialists to define level of need for housing of Aviator clients after April 30, 2023.
12. Addressed client concerns received from clients from all 3 sites and create opportunities to resolve. During this reporting period, RRS received 13 client calls, 2 community concerns, and 1 family member of a client concern. All were resolved in real-time without further action needed.
13. While connecting with community providers, RRS began identifying and addressing gaps in homeless services that directly impact those who are needing to be or should be served.

Of the 13 areas of focus stated above, the 3 emergent areas of attention are:

1. The use and closure of the warming area at the Sullivan Arena,
2. Addressing risky activity in and around the Sullivan Arena, and
3. The realistic placement of emergency shelter clients in other places and programs on or before April 30, 2023, and the impact on the community when some clients return to camping and unsheltered lifestyles.

1. Warming Area Closure – RRS Does Not Recommend Closure of the Warming Area Until At Least April 22, 2023

a. Observations and Facts to Consider –

A warming space is necessary in Anchorage every year when temperatures are less than 45 degrees. This year, the space was a small section of the Sullivan Arena

at its NW entrance. The warming area has been an area of unhealthy and unstable activities which has caused great concern on many levels. Because of the proximity to those housed at Sullivan (who are given a cot), and the reality that those with predatorial behavior are drawn to low-barrier shelters, the need for, and use of, the warming area has been discussed in recent weeks.

An initial decision was made by AHD to close the warming area on April 5, 2023. That decision was discussed at a community meeting on April 4, 2023 which was attended by 53 stakeholders. At that meeting RRS agreed to investigate the actual usage of the warming area and make a recommendation on next steps by April 10, 2023. After RRS investigated, it is the recommendation of RRS that the warming area NOT be closed at this time and be considered for closure on or after April 22, 2023.

RRS has been monitoring the warming area intermittently since April 4, 2023 to understand actual usage of the space. RRS can provide more details but the key realities are:

1. Individuals utilizing the warming area are:
 - a. Waiting for bunks because they did not make curfew or were asked to take a 'time out' due to unhealthy behavior,
 - b. Dropped off or find their way to Sullivan but can't have, or be accommodated at Sullivan because of physical and/or mental health disabilities, or do not want a bunk at the Sullivan,
 - c. The indefinitely trespassed from the Sullivan who cannot and should not get a bunk because of intentional unhealthy, illegal and/or predatorial behavior, and
 - d. 18-25 year old individuals whose intentions are to live on the street but need to warm up and rest for a minute.
2. The reality – If not the warming area to rest, then where?
 - a. Despite the fact it is April and snow this time of year is not typically a significant factor for those who choose to live outdoors in our community, this year it is. Some who use the warming area need to because of the extended low temperatures and snowfall. They do not want to be at the warming area but, there is no other option for a place to rest indoors that does not cost or where they have or are at risk of getting trespassed.
 - b. Some individuals only come to the warming area as a default, ie., they have nowhere to go except for public areas such as the Anchorage Airport, libraries, ANMC lobby, hospital stairwells,

etc. These individuals need a place to rest as they continue living lives of restlessness.

- c. If a client has housing but gets disoriented, where are they dropped or where do they go? RRS learned, while at the warming area, that a community program had lost track of a high-risk/high-needs client. A program manager came to the warming area and found the client (who was disoriented, non-communitive and somewhat belligerent). The point – the warming area has become a spot for reunification for some to existing services.
- d. On April 8, 2023 at 4 p.m., RRS informally hung out in the warming area. 35 individuals were there. 10 were waiting for cots which they had lost because they missed curfew or needed a ‘time out’ but, would get a cot that night. The remainder were indefinitely trespassed from the Sullivan Emergency Shelter side due to behavioral challenges or young adults choosing the street-life. In speaking with the group unable to get cots, the question asked was – if you were not in the Warming area, where would you be? The answers varied – from the streets, to someone’s couch for a few hours before being asked to leave, or to places that were being used for criminal activity.

b. Recommendation – The warming area is in use for a variety of reasons. It will continue to be used to hold individuals inside who are waiting for cots, even if it is not a warming area. But for the individuals who are indefinitely trespassed, or others who do not fit into the emergency shelter process, they would be lost into the community if the warming area was closed. If that were to occur, the community as a whole, at this time, would suffer. To state it another way, the warming area, is a place for those who are prone to participate in bad behavior to go and rest and at least, during that time, there is some degree of community benefit. Although RRS would like the warming area to close to enhance safety at Sullivan, it is a harm reduction tool for the community as a whole.

Having the warming area puts more risk on the Sullivan emergency shelter side because of the use of that area as a segway for unhealthy behavior. And, it does not benefit the Fairview community because it is a magnet for individuals who prey on our most vulnerable. That is troubling. (RRS does not factually know whether these predatory individuals would remain and linger in the Fairview area even if the warming area closed).

In weighing the risks and benefits of keeping the warming area open at this time, it is the recommendation of RRS to NOT close the warming area until at least April 22, 2023.

It is also beneficial for the community to continue the Tuesday 1 p.m. Teams meetings regarding this topic and the demobilization of the Emergency Shelters with all stakeholders in order to candidly address this issue.

2. Addressing risky activity in and around the Sullivan Arena

Since working under this Grant, RRS has observed the activities in and around the Sullivan parking lot. As stated above and in prior Weekly Reports, some progress has been made to proactively address groups and individuals who are coming to the Sullivan for unhealthy purposes. More needs to be done.

During the week of April 3, 2023, RRS met with several individuals who were selling cigarettes, alcohol, and other items on site. Based on these conversations and more to follow, RRS is actively working to reduce the risk of bad influences. Nothing is perfect but there continues to be a need for more proactive enforcement.

3. The realistic placement of emergency shelter clients in other places and programs on or before April 30, 2023, and the impact on the community when some clients return to camping and unsheltered lifestyles

It is essential that RRS acknowledge the realities around the closure of the 3 Emergency Shelter Sites and the expected impact this closure will have on the Anchorage community. To best understand client options after the emergency shelter program closes, RRS has received surveys from clients, reviewed the inventory of timely housing options for shelter clients, and client capacity and/or willingness to move forward.

Due to several factors, including abnormal inclement weather, availability of options outside the emergency shelter system, the potential negative community impact of hundreds of clients moving out of shelter without some mindful process, and some alternative community low-barrier safety net, it is RRS's recommendation to keep a stepped-down emergency shelter open at Sullivan for a short time, after April 30, 2023.

To quickly assess how to measure the need for a low-barrier shelter after April 30, 2023, RRS will work with the Shelter Operator and community providers to expeditiously provide a report on April 17, 2023, or before on what stage of houselessness current warming area and emergency shelter clients are at. The 5 stages of the Houselessness that will be looked at for this expedited work will be:

1. Situationally Homeless. Able to self-resolve with minimum supportive., able to get into, or return to, stable and sustainable housing, with or without supportive services, based on the client's need)
2. Working, work ready and/or purpose-driven. Able to exit emergency shelter with minimum to medium supports.
3. Homeless as a result of substance abuse, unresolved trauma, lack of stable supports, etc. Able to exit emergency shelter with medium to high-medium supports.
4. Chronically unstable; ie. Those who live with significant health and mental health challenges and need some level of supervision.
5. High-risk lifestyles that include living on the streets, camping, couch-surfing either by choice or by default, ie. Those who have characteristics of this type of lifestyle are continually in survival mode and are not willing or able to leave the lifestyle.

The goal of this process of engagement and measurement of where clients are is simply to attempt to gain an understanding of whether there is a community need to have a low-barrier shelter in Anchorage after April 30, 2023, and for what section of our shelter population. Simultaneously, the emergency shelter sites should be actively moving clients out of emergency shelter to other existing programs that have funding and can accept them into their programs.

C. Action Item Report, Process and Plan (What has been Accomplished as of April 10, 2023).

The March 27, 2023 and April 3, 2023 Action Item Reports list 31 immediate action items regarding operations. The Operator and RRS has proactively worked on the 31 items. All have been addressed either completely or are in process. The overarching goal of these 31 action items is to improve the optics and culture at each of the Shelter sites as well as enhance the quality of client supports as demobilization of the 3 Emergency Shelter Sites nears. Below is a brief update on the April 3, 2023 Action Items.

The April 3, 2023, Action Item Report listed 10 action items (#22-31). The overarching goal of doing these 10 action items is to continue to improve the optics and culture at each of the Shelter sites as well as to help clients find stability during the demobilization process.

To identify challenges and find opportunities to enhance shelter services, RRS provided the Operator with a '360 Assessment Challenges and Opportunities Log Sheet' to keep track of identified challenges, ways to find solutions, and time-line from identification to resolution. This Log Sheet is being used by Operator staff at all 3 sites.

Actions Taken During the Week April 3-10 for Sullivan, Aviator and Alex

22. Operator staff pick-up trash in and around Arena while doing rounds. Engage Clients to do the same.
 - In process and on-going project

23. Actively engage in vehicle traffic that comes to Arena without proper purpose, and target those who are participating in predatorial conduct.

- An RV that was actively selling drugs to Sullivan clients was removed from the parking lot with cooperation and collaboration between AHD, APD, RRS and Henning.

24. Continue proactively cleaning inside and actively encourage showering and good hygiene.

- In process

25. On-going training of Operator staff on processes.

- RRS facilitated meeting with Henning staff on April 5th to discuss operational challenges and processes. Approximately 30 Henning staff attended. Meeting was held at the VIP room at the Sullivan. One concern has been that staff are not consistent in communicating policies and procedures. This was discussed and remedial action was enacted so that policies are understood by all staff and communicated consistently. Staff needed to know specific operational processes that are in place so that they can have consistency in communication.
- Meetings with staff will continue weekly Wednesdays at 2:30-3:30

26. Continue process of 'showing' not 'telling' about health and operations of Shelter sites.

- In process, on-going project

27. Continue process of inviting and opening campus to all stakeholders at all times.

As part of grant deliverables RRS is to provide recommendations and guidance to service providers and is working with shelter staff to provide options and guidance to address any challenges, gaps in services, and/or community collaboration. To this end:

- RRS facilitated Teams meeting with over 50 service providers and AHD attending on April 4 to discuss demobilization timeline. A second meeting is scheduled for April 11.
- RRS is working to increase collaboration with CSS 3rd Avenue Navigation center resources. A meeting with CSS Navigation center leadership is scheduled for later today, April 10. Dave Rittenberg and Ariel will be coming to Sullivan for a tour and will meet with RRS, and Henning staff. Currently a small van is coming to Sullivan 3 times per day to transport clients back and forth to the Navigation Center. CSS will start bringing a larger van this week.
- ACEH came to Sullivan 3 afternoons last week to meet with clients and enroll them in AKHMIS. They plan to come 3 afternoons this week as well (T, W, Th 1:00-4:00).
- AHFC will come to Sullivan 3 afternoons this week to help clients do paperwork to get on voucher lists.

- SCF will be coming to Sullivan regularly as well.
- Key to the success of the project is open communication with all stakeholders and commitment to address situations in real time.

28. Enhance proactive interaction between Operator staff and clients.

- RRS is enacting this by communicating this to Henning loud and clear but also by using “show not tell” method. RRS is actively interacting with clients in the Sullivan, Aviator and Alex and Henning staff is expected to do the same.
- RRS will be working with Henning Housing Specialists to be more proactive in their work with clients.

29. Schedule and conduct regular town halls every Tuesday at 11 a.m. for clients and encourage community partners to come.

- First Townhall occurred April 3 and next is scheduled for April 10. About 40-50 guests at the Sullivan attended the first Townhall, as well as AHD and ACEH. Clients expressed concerns around food (not enough breakfast), safety (stuff gets stolen), losing stuff in Pandora (site that holds client’s personal belongings if client leaves the Sullivan). The demobilization timeline was discussed, and clients were encouraged to engage with Housing case workers to start process to plan for demobilization.

30. Focus on data and deliverables at all locations for demobilization, including proactive work with clients and engagement of community partners.

- See notes from #27.
- In the last week RRS has put considerable energy working on Grantee deliverable 2), including outreach to homeless service response providers, assessment of challenges, gaps and community collaboration, and open communication with all stakeholders to amend processes and address situations.
- The homeless services response in Anchorage includes many agencies including:
 - Alaska Behavioral Health
 - Alaska Housing Development Corporation
 - Alaska Kindness Network
 - Alaska Mental Health Consumer Web
 - Anchorage Coalition to End Homelessness
 - Anchorage Health Department
 - Anchorage Housing Initiatives
 - Beans Café
 - Catholic Social Services
 - CHOICES
 - Choosing Our Roots

- Christian Health Associates
- Cook Inlet Housing Authority
- Covenant House
- Downtown Hope Center
- Henning Inc
- Neighbor works
- Partners for Progress
- Resurrection Lutheran Church
- Rural Alaska Community Action Program
- Salvation Army
- Southcentral Foundation
- Volunteers of America
- These agencies all report into the Homeless Management Information System (AKHMIS). RRS is actively working to engage these agencies in proactively making Sullivan demobilization timeline transparent and giving these agencies opportunities to engage with Sullivan guests.
- There are many other organizations that provide services that also benefit houseless individuals, that do not report into AKHMIS and also are part of the homeless response, including healthcare organizations (Providence, Alaska Regional, ANMC), the ARC, Veteran Affairs, Medicaid, ADRC, etcetera and these organizations also will be included in an integrated homeless response demobilization system to the extent possible in the limited timeframe.
- RRS is meeting with AKHMIS leadership this week to work on processes to streamline the referral process from Henning to other service providers.
- RRS is engaging other providers both at a Municipality level and a state level to widen the homeless response.

31. Implement an effective Good Neighbor policy.

- In process and it is an urgent need to create and enhance this policy and practice. (RRS has again added it to this week's Action Item list because of the attention it needs)

New Actions To Be Taken For the Period April 11 – April 17, 2023

- 32. Actively address Sullivan Parking Lot Unhealthy Behavior
- 33. Enhance open campus approach by actively connecting with and inviting community providers into the Sullivan Arena.
- 34. Utilize a simple 5 stage approach to determine a level of service need to warming area clients.

35. Identify the most vulnerable at each of the 3 Emergency Shelter sites by April 15, 2023.

36. Implement a more effective Good Neighbor policy.

37. Hold Client Townhall at The Alex on Monday, April 10, 2023 and encourage clients to be proactive in finding solutions for housing after April 30, 2023. This will include more one-to-one communication with all remaining Alex residents. 75 clients surveyed in the last 2 weeks. All 75 that they would be interested in having their own place or another hotel. None had a firm commitment by a case manager that they were in any queue for immediate housing after the emergency shelter hotel rooms were closed. There is an immediate need to determine specific needs, as has been done at The Aviator, for this group of clients.

38. Support stabilization and exit plans for clients at The Aviator. 70 clients remain at the MOA non-congregate emergency shelter side of the Aviator. A very detailed plan to demobilize has been submitted by the property owners and housing specialists. Between 15-20 of the 70 clients are highly-vulnerable and difficult to place expeditiously in other programs. More robust conversations and commitments to next steps with respect to these high-risk clients needs to occur in this next week.

39. Outreach to community partners and providers must occur quickly. RRS has identified several community partners that have resources to serve emergency shelter clients but have not proactively worked with those currently using emergency shelter. RRS will reach out to these entities to request they engage in providing services immediately.

40. Begin assessment of reducing client population at Sullivan Arena. Create a plan and process to decompress the Sullivan from 360 to a lesser number.

Recommendations and Conclusions

As stated above, RRS will continue to focus on the realities of the 3 emergency shelter sites and the clients that are utilizing them. The focus now is to enhance safety at the Sullivan Arena, enhance community provider presence at Sullivan, and to candidly address how and when the emergency shelter sites should be demobilized. RRS will aggressively research and provide information and recommendations pursuant to the terms of the Grant.

Summary

The key to moving forward is for the Shelter Operator, community providers, and clients to be proactive in facing the fact that the 3 Emergency Shelters sites are being demobilized. Now is the time to be realistic, be proactive, and be bold in taking action. RRS Actions Items for this week are attached.

RRS's work under the Grant is being done based on the realities of what is, not colored by politics or agendas. RRS will continue to report out with an objective and solution-based approach.

Respectfully,
Cathleen N. McLaughlin, J.D./M.B.A.
Monica Gross M.D./M.P.H.
Restorative & Reentry Services, LLC
907-342-5380 (Cathleen cell)
909-957-0542 (Monica cell)
cathleen@restorativeentryservices.com
monica@restorativeentryservices.com