



## Background

As our community becomes more engaged in the issue of housing and homelessness, it can sometimes be difficult for community members to recognize the differences between varying shelter types. Many sheltering terms have precise definitions set by the federal government and services providers that determine funding eligibility and service levels. To help you understand the terms most often referred to in our discussions around housing and homelessness, the Assembly has provided this fact sheet with the commonly accepted definitions.

## Common Shelter Types

- **Emergency Shelter** – An immediate and temporary place for people without a home to stay that provides support services and short-term stabilization for individuals and families; often the first place people go to avoid experiencing unsheltered homelessness. Sometimes more generically referred to as a **Homeless Shelter**.
  - **Low Barrier Shelter** – A location that has minimal requirements and expectations for entry.
  - **High Barrier Shelter** – A location that places requirements on guests, such as sobriety, curfews, church attendance, program participation, identification.
- **Types of Low and High Barrier Emergency Shelter:**
  - **Congregate Shelter** – A location where individuals and households are provided space in a common area with limited or no privacy, such as a gymnasium or auditorium.
  - **Semi-Congregate Shelter** – A location where each individual or household has space that offers some level of privacy, such as smaller rooms with fewer individuals and/or partitions.
  - **Non-Congregate Shelter** – A location where each individual or household has a private space with a door that separates them from other persons/households, such as a hotel room.
  - **Transitional Shelter** – A program that provides temporary residence, ranging from 6-24 months that includes supportive services to improve employability. This can also be referred to as **Transitional Housing**.

- **Mass Care** – The capability to provide immediate shelter, food, basic first aid, needed items, and related services to persons affected by a large-scale incident.
- **Housing First** – An approach to connect people quickly and successfully to housing without requiring transitional steps, service participation, treatment, or demonstrated sobriety
  - **Permanent Housing**- Fair market housing often secured with a lease, such as apartments seen advertised for rent via Craigslist and Facebook Marketplace.
  - **Other Types of Permanent Housing:**
    - **Extremely Low Income**- permanent housing for people at or below the poverty line or with incomes at 30% or less of area median income.
    - **Low Income**- permanent housing for people with incomes at 50% or less of area median income.
    - **Rapid Re-housing** – Rapid re-housing is the primary solution for ending homelessness. It is demonstrated to be effective for moving people quickly into a permanent housing unit using rental subsidies/assistance and supports.
    - **Permanent Supportive Housing** – Housing with voluntary and flexible supports and services to help people manage serious, chronic issues such as mental and substance use disorders.

*Note:* Our local laws require the Municipality to provide emergency shelter to individuals experiencing homelessness when the temperature drops to 45 degrees Fahrenheit or below (see AMC 16.120.020).

### **More Information**

The Assembly thanks the Anchorage Coalition to End Homelessness for providing background for this report. To learn more about the Assembly’s work on Housing and Homelessness, visit [www.muni.org/Departments/Assembly/Pages/FOCUS-Housing-and-Homelessness](http://www.muni.org/Departments/Assembly/Pages/FOCUS-Housing-and-Homelessness) or click on the Housing and Homelessness button on [www.muni.org/Assembly](http://www.muni.org/Assembly).