

# ***Restorative and Reentry Services, LLC***

***Cathleen N. McLaughlin***

***3734 Mount Blanc Circle***

***Anchorage, Alaska 99508***

***Email: cathleen@restorativeentryservices.com***

***(907) 342-5380***

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## **2<sup>nd</sup> Report Out to the Assembly and Administration to Keep Sullivan Arena As a Low Barrier Shelter for a Short Period after April 30, 2023**

**Project Name: MOA Housing & Homeless Services Grant to provide Emergency Shelter Oversight and Client Support**

**Date: April 18, 2023**

**Submitted by: Cathleen McLaughlin, JD, MBA**

**Monica Gross MD, MPH**

### **A. Background**

On April 10, 2023, RRS recommended the Sullivan Arena remain a low barrier emergency shelter after April 30, 2023 but close no later than May 31, 2023, due to unplanned severe weather, vulnerability of at-risk clients if unsheltered, and community risk. On April 11, 2023, the Assembly voted unanimously to close the Sullivan Arena Emergency Cold Weather shelter on April 30, 2023. RRS was then asked to determine, of the clients housed in the Emergency Cold Weather Shelters (Sullivan, Aviator and Alex), how many were at-risk if the low barrier shelter closed. RRS oversaw a very intense review of clients at the Emergency Shelter sites and determined 174 were at-risk if the low barrier shelter sites closed April 30, 2023.

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 submitted its 4th weekly report on April 17, 2023.

### **B. Facts and Community Concern to Consider When Addressing Closure of the Sullivan Arena and Non-Congregate Emergency Shelters**

1. RRS is mandated under the terms of the Grant to investigate and report on facts so that the decisionmakers are equipped to make informed decisions with respect to emergency shelter operations and next steps. The work RRS has done to date is detailed in the 4 Weekly Reports, Action Item Lists, 360 Assessment, and April 10, 2023 recommendation to the Assembly. Focus is now on demobilizing the Emergency Shelter sites.

2. There are 3 distinct options/paths to take with respect to closing Emergency Shelters in Anchorage:
  - i. Close all emergency shelter sites on April 30, 2023.
  - ii. Close the 2 hotel non-congregate sites on April 30, 2023 and step-down use of the Sullivan Arena, for closure no later than May 31, 2023.
  - iii. Keep Sullivan Arena open as a low-barrier emergency shelter until a plan is operationalized to replace it.
3. With the Assembly voting to close the emergency shelter sites on April 30, 2023, RRS is working with the Shelter Operator, ACEH, community providers and clients to operationalize the closure plan. Concerns about a full closure of all sites on April 30, 2023 have been expressed in RRS's April 10 report and will not be re-iterated here.
4. RRS continues to support a step-down closure of the Sullivan Arena, with the warming area closed at 2 p.m. on Monday, April 24, 2023 (which AHD supports) and the Sullivan Arena close as a low-barrier shelter no later than May 31, 2023. RRS suggested the Sullivan Arena remain open after April 30, 2023 for the most at-risk, which was estimated to be around 174 as of April 17, 2023.
5. Based on meetings with members of the Fairview Community Council, community providers, stakeholders, and existing clients, there is community support for keeping the Sullivan Arena open until another low-barrier shelter plan is in place and operationalized.
6. As of April 18, 2023, approximately 600+ individuals are impacted by the closure of emergency shelter.

### **C. Realities and Collateral Consequences**

Under the Grant, it is essential that RRS acknowledge the realities around the closure of the Sullivan Shelter, whether it be on April 30, 2023, through a step-down closure no later than May 31, 2023, or through a more deliberative and strategic plan. The 600+ being served now will be impacted by decisions made by policy makers. Some will self-resolve, others will live outdoors within street family communities or return to car camping, others will be outside and hope for the best, and others have little to no capacity to handle daily living without low-barrier shelter and are at great risk.

There is no magic formula RRS can point to with respect to perfectly gauging who needs low-barrier shelter to survive. RRS has reported out that, based on a review of the approximately 600 clients in the shelter system as of April 1, 2023, the Sullivan should remain open after April 30, 2023 for up to 190 of the highest need clients. Even under this recommendation, 410 clients will be out of shelter as of April 30, 2023. This, in and of itself, will have an impact on the community. The next questions are, (1) what will be the impact on the community when those 410 (plus possibly another 190 of the most vulnerable) clients currently served through low-barrier shelters exit, and (2) how can that impact be mitigated?

**D. Summary**

Many using the Sullivan Arena are highly-vulnerable and are not equipped to live outdoors. Closure of the only low-barrier shelter in Anchorage will put the Anchorage community at-risk because it is not equipped to safely address the needs of the unsheltered who are at higher risk.

RRS's work under the Grant is being done based on the realities of what is. 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](mailto:cathleen@restorativeentryservices.com)  
[monica@restorativeentryservices.com](mailto:monica@restorativeentryservices.com)