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Emergency Cold Weather Shelter 3rd Party Oversight

Weekly Report for Week 11

Project Name: 3rd Party Emergency Shelter Oversight

Submitted to: Anchorage Assembly, Anchorage Mayor's Office, Anchorage Health Dept., and Shelter Operators (Henning, Inc. and The Alaska Hotel Group)

Date: Reporting period January 29 – February 4, 2024

Date Submitted: February 7, 2024

Submitted by: Cathleen McLaughlin, JD/MBA

Monica Gross MD, MPH

A. Background

As required under Contract #2023003145, fully executed on November 17, 2023, RRS submits its Weekly report for Week 10. This report is for the period January 29 – February 4, 2024.

B. Actions and Events During this Reporting Period

1. RRS focus is on operations at the 3 Emergency Cold Weather Shelter sites (CWS, The Alex Hotel, The Aviator) and the warming sites at CWS, Aviator and Golden Lion.

2. Key topics:

A. **Warming Sites** – All 3 warming sites were opened over the weekend of 1/27-1/28. AHD determined 2 of the sites (Aviator and Golden Lion) would close at 8 a.m. Sunday February 4, 2024. CWS warming site will remain open at this time. RRS received multiple calls from Providence Hospital Social Workers, Anchorage Safety Center, Ombudsman's Office, and individuals on the street regarding how to access the warming sites. These calls were referred to the warming site locations. Community providers that transport were encouraged to call the phone numbers provided to RRS and to the public for each site to confirm the warming site had availability before transport of clients.

Because the warming sites were opened as a result of an emergency declaration, emergency service providers were allowed to transport individuals to each of the 3 sites during this time. This coordination worked well during the 7 days all sites were open. Aviator warming site team also reported to have thought the warming site went well. RRS visited CWS and Aviator warming sites and appreciated the process whereby warming site clients were signed up for cots and/or beds, when the cots and/or beds became available. For some clients, this was their first introduction to the Cold Weather Emergency Shelter system. RRS received no client complaints regarding the operation of any of the warming sites.

B. Re-Tooling of Third Party Oversight Duties and Responsibilities.

On February 1, 2024 AHD set a meeting with RRS and Henning, Inc. to discuss the duties and responsibilities of RRS under the Third Party Oversight contract. RRS can provide more details if necessary. The parties reached an understanding and agreed upon action items that were confirmed by email.

C. Rethinking Townhalls at CWS. RRS learned that CWS has a townhall at CWS every Wednesday. RRS's role is to support the work being done at the ECWS sites, not duplicate or confuse. As a result, RRS will attend CWS-led Townhalls to listen and learn. RRS will continue hosting townhalls at the other 2 locations until further notice.

D. Incidences - One death was reported at the Aviator. The death is being investigated. The preliminary report suggests that the death was due to natural causes due to underlying health conditions. There were no overdoses at the Alex. RRS does not have data regarding if there were overdoses at the other 2 locations.

E. Client transportation - This item continues to be a big issue for clients. RRS understands AHD and the shelter operators are addressing this need by discussing bus passes and Lyft rides to and from each shelter location. (Note: RRS and Henning, Inc. made a joint recommendation regarding client transportation in RRS's Week 9 report). Bus passes have been distributed at each location based on need and client purpose. RRS will expand on this item in next week's report

F. Food - AHD notified RRS that Spinz, the food contractor for one of the shelter sites will be ending its contract on February 15, 2024. ESS, who is the food contractor for the other 2 sites will now be providing food at all 3 locations.

G. Shelter Operator's Brief Weekly Update - None provided to RRS during this reporting period.

C. Shelter Operations

1. Alex – Non-congregate

Since beginning the 'Next Step' program at Alex Hotel, 23 exits to housing (completed or in process) were reported by the Alex shelter manager. A few clients were

discharged for program rule violations. No overdoses were reported. All complaints and concerns from clients at Alex were reported by RRS to Alex site management and resolved.

At the weekly townhall, a client suggested clients who are 'shopping' on their own for permanent housing have some document that explains 'Next Step' Housing program so that potential landlords are aware of the program. RRS and Alex staff concurred with the client that this would be beneficial and Alex staff was planning to take steps necessary for this to occur.

2. **CWS – Congregate Shelter**

As has been reported for the last few weeks, CWS continues to operate at or near capacity. During the extreme cold snap, individuals who had not been in the shelter system in the past did enter. RRS does not have specific data regarding how many new clients came to CWS through the warming and remained. As noted in the last weekly report, RRS believes there is an inherent benefit of a 30-person warming area being at CWS because it is a means to engage individuals who have been hesitant or not ready for shelter services in the past. RRS did receive a few calls from street outreach teams that appreciated this segway into shelter and housing programs.

3. **Aviator – Non-congregate.**

The Aviator staff continued the bed audit process and has now revised its process to discharge individuals who do not use their beds for 2 nights in a row unless there is a legitimate reason. As a result, Aviator was able to place between 17-20 individuals who used the warming site into vacant beds.

Aviator has begun a new 'Emotional Support Group' which is now part of its weekly programming schedule.

The Aviator management team also reported that there have been 26 exits to housing since opening Aviator in October.

F. Recommendations, Conclusions and Summary

RRS recommends that, during the next reporting period, ECWS stakeholders (shelter operators, AHD, and RRS) review the referral process between the 3 sites, provide more detail to each other to assist in enhancing existing programs, and build positive momentum around shelter services.

Any questions, please contact RRS through phone, text, or email at any time.

Respectfully Submitted, Cathleen N. McLaughlin, J.D./M.B.A. Monica Gross MD, MPH