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## **Emergency Cold Weather Shelter 3<sup>rd</sup> Party Oversight**

### **Weekly Report for Week 18**

**Project Name: 3<sup>rd</sup> 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 March 18 - 24, 2024**

**Date Submitted: March 26, 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 18. This report is for the period March 18 - 24, 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).

2. Key topics:

A. **Client engagement.** As has been reported in the past weekly reports, RRS engages with ECWS clients (1) by having RRS's name and contact information posted at each ECWS site so clients can voluntarily contact RRS, and (2) through the use of the RRS Client Questionnaire. Client concerns that are reported to RRS include safety issues with other clients at the ECWS site they are at, frustrations because they have been discharged from one of the non-congregate sites for failure to follow site rules and policies, etc. Each concern is forwarded to the shelter operator and noted on the daily call log. Clients have also contacted RRS to report positive experiences such as getting an ID, a job, or being accepted into a housing program. RRS also visited each ECWS site during this reporting period and conducted Client surveys. The general sense of clients continues to be that the shelter system is meeting their expectations.

2 points of interest:

1. Some clients interviewed at CWS were first-time users of shelter services. 2 clients stated that CWS had been recommended to them by friends. One client stated he had been living outside in Midtown all winter and only learned of CWS in the past 10 days. He was very happy to be at CWS and stated he had wished he had learned about CWS sooner. The take-away from this for RRS is that the ECWS system is getting a reputation amongst the unhoused population that it is an option. With weather warming, clients can now start to make choices on whether to use ECWS or not and many are staying engaged, which is one key goal in addressing homelessness. The longer clients stay engaged, the better the outcome.
2. ECWS clients are now beginning to trust the shelter operators and RRS to the extent that they are disclosing unhealthy behavior by other clients and potential predators. Key to solving challenges is knowing what the challenges are. RRS appreciates both clients and shelter operator staff identifying challenges and making recommendations on how Anchorage's ECWS can improve in years to come. RRS will more fully discuss some of the systematic challenges and potential solutions in its Final 360 Report.

**B. All 3 ECWS sites are well-operated.** All 3 sites are being operated well. Shelter operators have been responsive to requests for information in a timely manner. All clients that contacted RRS had an overall sense that the 3 shelter sites were meeting their expectations. One concern related to potential drug activity at the Aviator that shelter operators actively looked into and as of March 26, 2024 had no evidence that substantiated this concern.

**C. Review of exit data by RRS.**

Alex Hotel has reported that there were 9 exits to housing during this reporting period. This includes that 8 that were mentioned in last week's report and 1 additional move-out.

The Aviator has reported that there have been no exits to housing during this reporting period.

CWS exits were primarily to the Alex and Aviator. This integrated process continues to be beneficial to clients and, even after the ECWS sites close, RRS recommends integration between homeless service providers be encouraged.

**D. Decompression of ECWS Sites**

RRS, the shelter operators, and AHD has agreed to include ECWS Decompression Updates in RRS's Weekly Report. The current plan, as of March 26, 2024 is that of the 574 shelter beds/cots, all will be available April 1, 2024. In the month of April, CWS will remain at 200, Alex will remain at 100. The Aviator will begin decompressing. Currently there are 274 spots at the

Aviator. Through the month of April, the shelter operator will begin reducing the number served so that by May 1, 2024, 170 beds will be available.

E. **Client Call Log** – This workbook continues to be used as the daily call log and contacts for RRS. It is submitted to AHD daily.

F. **Incidences** – No overdoses have been reported at the Aviator, Alex, or CWS.

### **C. Shelter Operations**

#### **1. Alex – Non-congregate**

No additional information to report at the Alex. The Next Step program continues as planned and scheduled.

#### **2. CWS – Congregate Shelter**

CWS continues to be well-run. During RRS's client surveys, all clients interviewed stated CWS met their expectations. A few who have been at various shelters in the last several years stated CWS staff was more approachable and respectful than in other shelters.

#### **3. Aviator – Non-congregate.**

The Aviator continues to be well-run. With weather warming, the Aviator is seeing some clients not returning to their rooms prior to curfew. Being downtown, there is also more access to unhealthy street behavior and street drugs. This is being recognized as a challenge that needs to be addressed more fully.

### **D. Recommendations, Conclusions and Summary**

RRS continues to recommend that ECWS stakeholders build positive momentum around shelter services, exit plans and solution-based practices. Closure of ECWS is currently set for April 30, 2024 unless extended by AHD and the Assembly.

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**