

The Yellowstone County Continuum of Care (CoC) has taken several steps toward establishing a temporary low-barrier shelter for the winter season, beginning October 1, 2022 and ending March 31, 2023. Our intent is to be responsive to feedback from City Council, provided during CoC presentations on May 9, June 6 & June 20, 2022. The CoC has also relied on the text of the Rupsis Amendment, particularly Item 4, which says:

“The City Administrator should solicit input or proposals from agencies or firms that desire to provide seasonal low-barrier shelter and/or sobering center services for all or part of the period from October 1, 2022 through March 31, 2023. Input should include, but not be limited to, location, costs, implementation plan, and success metrics. Case management services would ideally be included as a factor of success for the program.”

Broad Coalition Support

During our Low Barrier Shelter Workgroup and General Membership meetings in July, the CoC:

- sought input from numerous coalition partners in a variety of ways;
- developed and circulated a questionnaire for parties interested in providing low barrier shelter this winter (see email attachments);
- conducted an electronic vote of the CoC General Membership to determine which option had the broadest coalition support.

Members voted overwhelmingly in support of the CoC proposal in partnership with the Community Crisis Center (CCC) and Billings First Congregational Church (BFCC), with 14 votes in favor. The questionnaires submitted by Montana Rescue Mission (MRM) and the newly-formed Off The Streets Corporation (OTSC) received two votes each. Moving forward, the CoC coalition will formally support and offer its limited operational capacity to the seasonal shelter proposal in conjunction with BFCC and CCC.

Memorandums of Agreement and Understanding

With the timetable for implementation narrowing in on just 9 weeks, the CoC has moved forward with drafting MOA/MOU's with partner organizations and agencies who are interested in helping meet the critical need for low-barrier shelter this winter.

- The CoC, BFCC, and CCC have tentatively approved an operational MOA (see email attachments) for seasonal shelter, pending legal review.
 - The intent of partners is to operate a *temporary* low-barrier shelter for a 12-hour period overnight, located on the first floor of BFCC, allowing for ADA accessibility.
 - Trained staff from CCC will be on site nightly at BFCC to provide guest screening, assessments, and diversion to the most appropriate service provider.
 - On-site security, janitorial and laundry services will be provided by BFCC through outside contractors, to be procured once funding is secured.
 - Transportation will be provided on a limited basis by CCC when a guest is beyond the scope of basic shelter at BFCC. If a guest is an extreme danger to themselves or others, 9-1-1 will be called.
 - Success metrics and outcomes will be closely monitored through the CoC's Coordinated Entry and Homeless Management Information System (HMIS).

The CoC Board of Directors is in the process of soliciting letters of support and generating partner MOU's to augment the seasonal shelter, such as:

- warm clothing and sober living accommodations through Gratitude in Action;
- outreach and treatment referrals by Downtown Billings Alliance HOT & MAAP programs;
- social services from Salvation Army, such as mobile meals and hygiene items;
- referral arrangements for YWCA, HRDC, CLDI, MRM, Family Promise, HomeFront and other community partners who wish to take part in seasonal shelter efforts this winter.

The CoC is also convening a workgroup of willing community partners to discuss how to best design and implement the care coordination component that is referenced in the final sentence of Item 4 in the Rupsis Amendment. We anticipate seeking support from the City of Billings for 3.0 FTE's to address gaps within the Homeless Crisis Response System by bolstering system engagement, wraparound supports, and assessment/diversion of unhoused clients within the CoC Coordinated Entry and HMIS Systems.

Total Project Budget: \$410,000

1. The CoC anticipates the need for a minimum award amount of \$200,000 (not to exceed \$240,000) to operate an overnight seasonal shelter for our community's non-sober and disabled adult population during the six coldest months of winter. This allowance includes the cost of facilities, staffing, contracted services, transportation, training, project management, coordinated entry, and administrative oversight.
2. The CoC anticipates the Care Coordination component of the program referenced in the Rupsis Amendment, which would operate year-round rather than seasonally, would cost \$210,000 to fund. The 3.0 FTE's we are seeking support for would be in the following areas of the ***Crisis Response System from the National Alliance to End Homelessness***
 - a. Diversion and Prevention
 - b. Coordinated Entry
 - c. Permanent Housing Supports

Visit <https://endhomelessness.org/ending-homelessness/solutions/crisis-response/> to learn more about the Homeless Crisis Response System

Conclusion

In addition to the project above, the CoC remains committed to continuing the ongoing work in its five-year Strategic Plan to pursue development of critical infrastructure that includes a *permanent* Low-Barrier Shelter (LBS) in Billings and additional units of Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH). Much of this discussion occurs in the two Task Forces and related workgroups convened by the CoC on LBS and PSH. We welcome participation from Council Members, City Administration, and others who desire to play an active role in helping the CoC tackle housing instability in Billings and the surrounding community.