

COUNTY OF MILWAUKEE
Inter-Office Communication

Date: February 18, 2022

To: Marcelia Nicholson, Chairwoman, Milwaukee County Board of Supervisors

From: Shakita LaGrant-McClain, Director, Department of Health and Human Services

Subject: An informational report from the Director, Department of Health and Human Services, regarding the potential set-aside use of emergency shelter beds for women being released from incarceration

File Type: Informational Report

REQUEST

This informational report is being submitted in response to Amendment 1A027 adopted as part of the 2022 DHHS Adopted Budget. The amendment stated that the Housing Division, in conjunction with the House of Correction (HOC), shall work with network emergency shelter providers funded by the County to ensure that 30 percent of emergency shelter beds are dedicated to women transitioning into the community from incarceration. The Housing Division shall provide the County Board of Supervisors a written report during the March 2022 meeting cycle regarding bed usage and populations served.

BACKGROUND

Milwaukee County has a wide range of emergency shelter options for those who are homeless. This network of shelters serves different populations ranging from youth, families, and unaccompanied men and women. Attachment 1 contains the Housing Inventory Worksheet submitted by the federal Housing and Urban Development (HUD) that includes all emergency shelters as well as the population served. While there are existing shelters that serve women as well as women and children, implementing a set-aside for women being released from incarceration would be quite challenging for several reasons.

Shelters across the county that are affiliated with local Continuum of Care systems operate under the concept of a vulnerability index. Shelter systems prioritize their beds based on the immediate needs of the individual based on the severity of his or her need. Typically, those who are currently unsheltered (sleeping on the street) receive first priority for beds. This is often governed by various funding sources. Shelters receive funds from various levels of government and philanthropic sources which can make it very difficult for one unit of government to prioritize particular populations. Currently, Milwaukee County contributes \$718,000 annually in tax levy to area homeless shelters.

Milwaukee County continues to see sharp declines in homelessness since 2015. Overall, homelessness has decreased over 40 percent and the unsheltered count from the “2021 Point In Time Count” was the lowest in the nation based on population size. One of the main reasons for this success has been the community’s focus on permanent housing as the solution to homelessness.

The Housing Division would propose this same approach to reentry programming and investments in housing resources. In the 2022 budget, there has been a Community Intervention Specialist position created in the Housing Division in partnership with the HOC. This individual will be placed directly at the HOC and will assist with discharge planning. The goal of the position is to ensure housing placements can be secured in advance of someone getting released. The priority will be securing permanent housing to ensure better outcomes for those who were involved in the criminal justice system.

Related File No’s:	
Associated File No’s (Including Transfer Packets):	1A027
Previous Action Date(s):	

ALIGNMENT TO STRATEGIC PLAN

The coordination and leveraging of Emergency Shelter Services in Milwaukee County is aligned with determining what, where, and how we deliver services to advance health equity.

FISCAL EFFECT

This item is informational and has no fiscal effect.

TERMS

N/A

VIRTUAL MEETING INVITES

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PREPARED BY:

James Mathy, Administrator, Department of Health & Human Services – Housing Division

APPROVED BY:


Shakita LaGrant-McClain, Director, Department of Health & Human Services

ATTACHMENTS:

Housing Inventory – Emergency Shelter Listing

cc: County Executive David Crowley
Sup. Felesia Martin, Chair, Health Equity, Human Needs, Strategic Planning Committee
Mary Jo Meyers, Chief of Staff, County Executive's Office
Kelly Bablitch, Chief of Staff, Milwaukee County Board of Supervisors
Steve Cady, Research and Policy Director – Comptroller's Office
Allyson Smith, Committee Coordinator, Office of the County Clerk
Pam Matthews, Budget Analyst – DAS
Lottie Maxwell-Mitchell, Research & Policy Analyst, Comptroller's Office