

New Plans in Place for New Bedford's Extreme Weather Shelter

The City of New Bedford's Homeless Service Provider Network (HSPN), in partnership with Catholic Social Services (CSS) today announced a new set of protocols governing the operation of an overflow shelter for unsheltered New Bedford residents during extreme winter weather in an effort to minimize illness and exposure.

"We have worked closely with our HSPN member agencies including CSS to develop a new plan that provides our unsheltered residents a safe, warm environment where they can enjoy a hot meal and a warm shower during extreme winter weather events when the regular emergency shelters are full. I want to thank CSS its staff and volunteers for the work they do year round to address episodic and chronic homelessness in our community," said Mayor Jon Mitchell.

The Mayor added, "The new operational approach this winter builds on the major capital investment the City made in the Sister Rose and Grace House last year. The more than half a million dollars contributed by the City to help with construction costs has transformed the way our community provides shelter and support services."

The City's Overflow Shelter Plan was developed by the City of New Bedford Mayor's Office, the City's Department of Planning, Housing & Community Development, the HSPN and Catholic Social Services. The plan establishes a clear set of protocols for the operation of an overflow shelter in New Bedford by Catholic Social Services at the Sister Rose House during extreme weather events when the existing two shelters for males and females, respectively, are full. CSS will provide

the overflow shelter with private funding and financial assistance from the City of New Bedford and the City's HSPN Committee, RISE Up For Homes.

In order to provide shelter to accommodate New Bedford's unsheltered residents during extreme weather events, the number of shelter beds and supplementary services at the Sister Rose House at 75 Division Street will expand when the regular shelter reaches capacity.

Sister Rose House is CSS's 25-bed shelter for men which operates year-round and was officially opened at its new location on Division Street in March of 2016. (Click here for a video tour of the Sister Rose House)

CSS also operates the Grace House, an 11-bed shelter for women experiencing homelessness located next door to Sister Rose House in the former St. Hedwig's rectory.

As the Mayor noted, the City of New Bedford contributed \$240,000 in funding to assist with building acquisition and site development costs of the Sister Rose House and provided \$280,000 for the acquisition and rehabilitation of the nearby Grace House for Women.

In prior years, the City-funded emergency overflow shelter was operated by Mercy Meals and More at Pilgrim United Church on Purchase Street at the direction of the City's Department of Emergency Management. Last winter, the City of New Bedford arranged to co-fund an emergency shelter at PAACA on Coggeshall Street in partnership with private funders with the intention of transitioning the overflow shelter to CSS' Sister Rose House this coming winter.

This year, Catholic Social Services staff will make a decision to activate the overflow shelter when the existing shelter is at capacity and the temperature is predicted to be at or below 28 degrees; or the wind chill temperature is predicted to be at or below 25 degrees; or if blizzard conditions are

predicted.

The emergency overflow shelter has already been activated once this winter on November 22, 2016 and successfully served a total of five unsheltered residents—four males and one female.

The City of New Bedford coordinates a comprehensive response to homelessness using a “Continuum of Care” methodology through a local network known as HSPN. A Continuum of Care (CoC) is a community’s plan or strategy to organize and deliver housing and services to meet the specific needs of persons in the midst of a housing crisis and/or experiencing homelessness as they move to stable housing and maximum self-sufficiency.

The HSPN holds monthly public meetings to proactively address the most pressing issues around the complexity of homelessness. Anyone interested in learning more about the work of the HSPN is encouraged to visit www.nbhspn.com.

Earlier this year, Mayor Mitchell announced that New Bedford was awarded \$1,575,909 in homeless assistance funding by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) as part of a competitive grant program. This grant funding is helping to support six local programs that are working to end homelessness. Funding is also supporting “1-800-HOMELESS”—a hotline that local families and individuals may call to access services and shelter. 1-800-HOMELESS is a single-point-of-entry for those seeking assistance in New Bedford with immediate and long-term housing and access to community and mainstream resources they need to stabilize in housing.