

EMERGENCY SHELTER ASSESSMENT COMMITTEE ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- 1987 – United Way and City of Portland form ESAC
- 1987 – City opens 30 bed low-barrier Adult Shelter based on recommendations from ESAC
- 1988 – ESAC identifies need for adolescent shelter and advocates with State for funding of the Salvation Army Lighthouse Shelter
- 1989 – 1992 – Drastic decrease in shelter bed usage – ESAC meetings are held bi-monthly
- 1992 – Bob Ganley, City Manager and Meg Baxter, United Way, address ESAC and request that the committee continue to monitor shelter bed usage and respond to homeless issues. ESAC decides to meet on a quarterly basis.
- 1992 – ESAC forms a housing subcommittee
- 1994 – ESAC subcommittee developed to identify needs of homeless individuals with mental health and substance abuse issues
- 1994 – ESAC meeting devoted to overflow shelter usage – Oxford Street Shelter increases capacity from 50 to 62 beds
- 1995 – ESAC subcommittee formed to work with MSHA on submitting HUD Homeless Assistance Grant
- 1995 – Increase in shelter bed usage. ESAC requests the City expand shelter bed capacity – Oxford Street Shelter expands from 62 to 87 beds.
- 1996 – Portland HUD Homeless Assistance Grant Application (ESAC decides to apply separately from MSHA)
- 1996 – Based upon ESAC recommending Shelter Plus Care Subsidized Housing Application Grant is submitted to HUD
- 1996 – SSI laws change regarding substance abuse disability. ESAC forms task force to educate providers and conduct outreach to clients
- 1996 – ESAC Winter Overflow Plan developed – Arnie Hanson Center and YWCA both offer overflow space

- 1996 – City awarded \$600,980 HUD Homeless Assistance Grant
- 1997 – ESAC providers subcommittee developed to assist with HUD grant process
- 1997 – ESAC asked by City to establish subcommittee regarding Arnie Hanson Center Substance Abuse Shelter
- 1997 – Increase in shelter bed usage – Winter Overflow Plan – revised YWCA gym to be used as overflow
- 1998 – ESAC makes formal recommendation to the City regarding Arnie Hanson Center
- 1998 – Oxford Street Shelter occupancy increased to 110 beds based upon a request from ESAC
- 1998 – HUD Homeless Grant Application
- 1999 – HUD cuts homeless funds to Portland. ESAC advocates for return of federal funds
- 1999 – Homeless Substance Abuse Steering Committee formed
- 1999 – Annual HUD Grant completed
- 1999 - ESAC – Bayside issue - subcommittee formed to explore possible relocation of Oxford Street
- 2000 – ESAC participates in PHA Housing Plan
- 2000 – HUD Grant completed
- 2000 – ESAC presentation to DHS/MSHA representative regarding needs for permanent housing development in Portland area
- 2001 – HUD grant completed
- 2001 – ESAC meeting Women’s Shelter and future plans of YWCA
- 2001 – Winter Overflow Plan developed with Salvation Army Gym used for overflow space
- 2002 – Increase in shelter numbers – Permanent Overflow Plan developed (extension of Salvation Army plan)

EMERGENCY SHELTER ASSESSMENT COMMITTEE - YEAR END REPORT 9/88

In August of 1987, the United Way and City of Portland formed the Emergency Shelter Assessment Committee in response to concerns raised by advocates for Portland's homeless population regarding the adequacy of Portland's shelter network. This Committee was charged with monitoring the agreements made by the City of Portland and the Coalition for the Dignity of the Homeless and Poor in July, 1987 as well as to identify other needs of the homeless population and to find ways to address them.

During the past year the ESAC has monitored compliance with the agreement and Portland's shelter system by:

- * tracking the number of vacant beds in the shelter system each night;
- * meeting with shelter providers to ensure sufficient flexibility regarding admittance;
- * evaluating the after hours clearinghouse service provided by Ingraham Volunteers and;
- * communicating complaints regarding shelters to the appropriate person(s) involved.

In addition, the Committee identified needs of the homeless population within two broad categories - Adults and Adolescents.

Adults: Two major needs were identified:

- * Improved access to the Emergency Shelter Network and;
- * Additional low barrier, or safety net, beds.

In response to the first need the City of Portland has placed a social worker at the Preble Street Resource Center each weekday evening (5-9 PM). Who refers people available beds in community shelters.

Overall, the entire Emergency Shelter Network's flexibility has improved by eliminating the City voucher requirement.

To address the need for additional low barrier beds the City now operates a 30 bed shelter year round for homeless men and women.

The capacity to house families has been increased from 25 to 40 beds by adding a second building to the existing shelter network.

The three shelters operated by the City are located downtown making them accessible to social services and soup kitchens.

Many families and individuals have been successfully transitioned into permanent housing.

Adolescents: Early on in this process the ESAC realized that the existing adolescent shelter system was unable to respond to the special characteristics and needs of many homeless and at-risk of homelessness adolescents. In September the Adolescent Subcommittee was created to focus exclusively on these complex issues and make recommendations to the full Committee.

Needs identified were:

- * A State licensing rule requiring shelters serving adolescents to maintain 24 hour-a-day custody of clients acted as a barrier which shut children out of the system;
- * The community's lack of sufficient low barrier beds for adolescents pointed to the need for a new adolescent shelter program and funding for such a program.

After meeting with both the ESAC and Adolescent Subcommittee, the Department of Human Services instituted a rule change allowing some adolescent shelters to provide service at night only. With funding from DHS (a higher per diem rate for children in DHS custody and 2 social worker positions), Mark Stimson Associates, and space and administrative support from the Salvation Army, the Lighthouse Shelter opened on January 22, 1988.

Since then over 100 different children have been served at this 16 bed, nights only, adolescent shelter. With financial assistance from the Maine State Housing Authority, the Lighthouse Shelter has been relocated to a roomier house on Elm Street. MSHA funds, totaling \$48,598, are being used to pay shelter operating costs including rent and utilities. The Lighthouse is now open from 5 p.m. to 9 a.m. and has social worker coverage 7 days a week.

In order to stabilize state funding for a permanent low barrier adolescent shelter ESAC Chairman, State Senator Joseph C. Brannigan sponsored L.D. 2023. In April, 1988 this bill passed with an appropriation of \$150,000 for FY 88/89. RFPs will be submitted this summer and a provider chosen in September. Work is also being done to ensure that this funding is contained in future DHS budgets.

Starting this fall a four person team of social workers will work on the streets and out of the Lighthouse's new location with adolescents who have substance abuse or mental health problems. The Portland Area Homeless Children's Mental Health Project will be funded by a 2 year National Institute of Mental Health Grant awarded to the Department of Mental Health and Retardation.

The Committee/Task Force feels that the community now has an adequate number of shelter beds available to meet the need and will continue to monitor this situation.

Looking Ahead

In August, 1988 the ESAC met to discuss its future, because those tasks with which it was originally charged had been accomplished. The Committee decided to continue another year under the sponsorship of the United Way and City of Portland, monitoring Portland's adult and adolescent shelter system. In addition, the ESAC will focus on "next step" appropriate housing for homeless individuals residing in shelters with 0 - 50 percent of median income. In order to ensure broad community representation a membership review is being undertaken and a housing subcommittee has been formed to identify housing needs and propose solutions.

We would like to thank:

The Coalition for the Dignity of the Homeless and Poor for their active participation on the Committee identifying problems and developing solutions.

The State Department of Human Services for its continuous cooperation and assistance which has allowed us to respond so quickly to identified needs.

The Emergency Shelter Network for the cooperation and flexibility it has shown working with the Task Force to improve access to the system.

The Salvation Army for quickly stepping in to meet the immediate needs of Portland's adolescent homeless by opening a new 16 bed adolescent shelter.

ESAC HISTORY

BACKGROUND

In the summer of 1987, over one hundred (100) homeless persons established a tent city in Portland's Lincoln Park. The protest emanated from the closing of both the Cumberland County Jail Emergency Shelter and the Preble Street Resource Center Emergency Shelter. These programs had provided free shelter to homeless persons regardless of age, income or sex. The Coalition for Dignity of the Homeless, which organized the protest, said the closing of the shelters significantly narrowed the shelter options for Portland's homeless population.

The Coalition's assertion touched off a heated debate among social services providers and the homeless. The providers claimed sufficient beds were available to meet the needs of the homeless population and that the type of shelter advocated by the homeless was too costly and unstructured.

This was not the first time the emergency shelter issue had surfaced in Portland. In 1983, the City of Portland and United Way, Inc. formed the Emergency Shelter Task Force. The Task Force issued a report citing the need for more emergency shelter beds. The report also stated that, "...there is a direct link between demand for emergency shelter and the availability of affordable rental housing."

At the time of the Task Force report, there were fifty-three (53) emergency shelter beds available in Portland. By 1987, bed capacity had increased by over 200 beds. The 1986 Community Needs Assessment Update, published by United Way, said, "...as a result of recommendations made by the Emergency Shelter Task Force, the number of emergency beds increased and the response time for housing emergencies decreased. The balance, however, between the supply of and demand for emergency beds in our community is a precarious one."

The Coalition abandoned the tent city when the City of Portland agreed to reopen the Preble Street Resource Center Emergency Shelter and make adjustments in funding for shelters. A month after the agreement between the City and the Coalition was reached, United Way of Greater Portland and the City of Portland jointly formed the Emergency Shelter Assessment Committee.

The Committee, comprised of members of the Coalition, social service professionals and emergency shelter providers, was chaired by State Senator Joseph Brannigan. It was charged with overseeing the implementation of the agreement between the City and the Coalition. Also, the Committee was responsible for monitoring the emergency shelter system in Portland.