

**Eastside Men's Shelter  
Frequently Asked Questions  
Homelessness and Shelter Operations  
October 19, 2016**

**The questions below have been posed by community members via email and at the September 29<sup>th</sup> Community Meeting. They address homelessness, shelter operations and supportive services and permanent supportive housing.**

**What does it mean that homelessness is a “regional issue”?**

The Eastside cities are working as partners to find an Eastside solution to an Eastside problem. The homeless population east of Lake Washington tends to stay on the Eastside. The Cities of Bellevue, Redmond and Kirkland agreed on who can best serve each population - Kirkland will shelter women and families, Redmond, youth and young adults and Bellevue, single adult men. Each will serve the entire Eastside region for their population.

**What services will be available for women and children as part of this investment?**

The Bellevue shelter is for single adult men only. The other regional shelters will provide similar services for women, youth, and families.

**What are the various types of shelters?**

CFH has a diverse offering of shelters to meet the diverse needs of those currently experiencing homelessness. For overnight shelter, CFH offers a program shelter and a winter shelter. The program shelter is an abstinence intended, addiction supportive environment that offers intensive case management for those who are ready and committed to working on reducing their barriers to housing. The winter shelter is a “come as you are”, harm reduction shelter that is behavior based for those who do not have a shelter option during the winter. CFH also offers a day shelter, providing meals, shower, laundry, and connection to supportive services.

**What is a low-barrier shelter?**

A low-barrier shelter accepts people based on their ability to be behaviorally appropriate. The shelter does not screen out people for any other reason other than behavior that puts staff, clients, or the wider community at risk. This means that people can access the shelter and day center who may be under the influence of drugs or alcohol or have criminal records.

**What is the screening criteria for allowing men in?**

Each man completes an application that includes question on age, race, military service, disability, how long homeless, where stayed the night before, etc. Admission to the shelter is behavior based. Men are allowed to come as they are and can stay as long as they are respectful and follow the shelter code of conduct. Men are required to be respectful of the other clients, staff, volunteers, and the wider community. The men will be held to the same standards as the wider community. Aggressive behavior, threats, theft, and internal use of substances in or near the shelter will not be tolerated.

**What kind of men will be using the shelter?**

The shelter and day center are open to any adult man who is seeking shelter or day services. The vast majority of men who access these services are experiencing homelessness. The programs are tailored to men experiencing homelessness to give them access to services and supports that will enable them to find a path out of homelessness.

**Are there sex offenders?**

These programs will accept sex offenders. Historically only 1 to 2 percent of the men we have served are registered sex offenders. When men come in, CFH staff does a search to see if they are registered sex offenders, and if so, Bellevue Police are notified to make sure they are complying with the law.

**Is there drug and alcohol testing?**

As a low-barrier program we do not conduct drug or alcohol tests. We do monitor the men to make sure they are not bringing and using drugs and alcohol on or near the premises. Our goal is to engage men relationally, meeting them where they are, and helping to connect them to addiction support services if and when they identify this as an issue in their lives. These supportive services will be offered on-site.

**If they are drunk or on drugs, will they be denied entry?**

No. They are not denied entry if under the influence of drugs and/or alcohol. Their stay is based on behavior.

**Are drug addicts or mentally ill clients required to get addiction recovery services or mental health treatment?**

We recognize those struggling with addiction or mental health issues, and outside of addressing behavior issues with consequences, we connect those individuals to our case manager(s). The case manager works to build the trust necessary to help them address and overcome the condition. We do not force a requirement to get addiction recovery or mental health services. This requirement on a broad basis would be a barrier that subjects men who are experiencing homelessness to the harsh elements of winter. Once we move towards year round shelter, we will be revisiting this as an opportunity to influence change in the lives of those struggling with addiction and mental health issues.

**Refusal to show ID, failed background check?**

We will not turn an individual away for these reasons.

**What will be the operating hours of the shelter? I've read 24/7 as well as 8am-5pm.**

The goal is to have the shelter and day center open 24 hours a day 7 days a week, 365 days a year.

**What are the rules? If they break the rules, what happens?**

We promptly address the issue(s). If rules are broken, we want to understand why. Is there an opportunity to provide support that can help an individual be in compliance with the code of conduct? If there is an all-out defiance, there are consequences that range from limiting access, to the services and safe, warm space(s), that we offer, to being arrested and trespassed.

**Once in for the evening, can they leave during the night?**

Yes. We do not force any of the men to stay against their will. But, our code of conduct, which they sign on admission, states that anyone who leaves is not allowed to return.

**Will 100 beds be enough to serve all the homeless men on the Eastside? Are there other shelters for Eastside men?**

For the past three years Bellevue and CFH have operated a low barrier shelter in the city. The capacity has been 100 men. Our average population has been 70-75. In addition, with the services available in the day center, men should more rapidly transition to permanent housing. If a time comes when more than 100 men come to the shelter we will take them in and help find them another shelter the following night. We have not had an issue with needing more capacity all the years we have run the shelter. Much analysis of past data was done to set the capacity at 100 men. This will meet the needs of the Eastside community. There are no plans to increase the facility.

**Where does the overflow of the people go?**

CFH will make sure that no one is turned away in the surrounding neighborhoods. If we exceed capacity we will work with other shelters to send excess clients.

**What happens when an individual is turned away for any reason?**

Our aim, which protocol supports, is to not turn anyone away into the streets. We have this intent for a number of reasons, most importantly to avoid death by exposure to the harsh elements of winter. We will allow them to stay overnight, under close supervision from staff. In the morning, we inform them of what we will need going forward. We offer support by connecting them to a case manager, street outreach worker, and/or provide transportation assistance. If any incident escalates to a need for support of law enforcement, we contact Bellevue Police.

**Is there a limit to how long someone can stay without taking steps to end his homelessness?**

No. There is no limit but this type of environment is influential in motivating individuals to make changes in their lives.

**How do you deal with someone causing repeated issues?**

We work with them to overcome those issues, by holding them accountable for their actions with consequences and connecting them to supports that help to get to the root of the issues. We work towards healing and transformation in these men's lives, and we know that the greatest impact of healing and transformation is relationship.

**Would shelter bring in more people?**

A vast majority of people experiencing homelessness are connected to specific geographical communities just like those who are housed. People experiencing homelessness often have a daily routine and a community of support in a particular location. They prefer to stay in that geographical area. A majority of the clients that CFH serves have become homeless while living on the Eastside and continue to have substantial connections to the Eastside. The Eastside has several hundred people experiencing homelessness who are camping, couch surfing, sleeping on the streets, or living out of their car who will utilize the shelter/day center.

Last season, we averaged 75 men per night at the overnight shelter. We anticipate a similar number this season. This new site allows us to have day services offered to the men as well. The day center will hold the average number of men that we serve. The day services will include meals (breakfast and lunch), showers, laundry, and connection to supportive services such as addiction recovery support, veteran services, employment services, medical and mental health services, life skills classes and the like. With day services, individuals will not need to leave the site. There are a number of men who get up early and leave for work, others leave for appointments, or family obligations. With day services offered and people going about the business of their lives, the traffic flow will be a trickle throughout the day. The

day services will end at 3pm, with the shelter reopening at 7pm. From our experience, 98% of the men leave the site without lingering or loitering because their livelihood (shelter and services) are in jeopardy if they do so.

**Are any of the “residents” pan handlers?**

There is a chance that a very small percentage of the men accessing the shelter and/or day center are pan handling.

**What is going to stop people from hanging around waiting for shelter space? Loitering in parking lot?**

It is part of the code of conduct agreement to not linger or loiter. They risk access to needed services (safe, warm space where they are welcomed, feel like they belong, and access to community) if they linger or loiter. CFH staff does regular perimeter checks after closing, during the time they are closed, and before they open to address any loitering. CFH also partners with our neighbors to know who, when, and where loitering may have occurred and to address it with the individuals and the group during weekly community meetings.

**Will people be loitering in the area like Pioneer Square or Westlake?**

No! The culture is totally different in Seattle. The vast majority of our shelter residents are from the Eastside or have a connection to the Eastside and stay here because of the culture. Our clients are protective of the Eastside and its culture. They are afraid of and more importantly openly exposed to dangers that those without a vested interest in the community can impose.

**How do you plan to keep crime down?**

CFH is committed to the safety of the entire community, but it is unrealistic to say that we can prevent crime from happening at all. However, in the last three years of operating a shelter of this size, we have not seen an increase in crime over normal background levels. Conversations are already underway to determine areas to improve neighborhood safety and to coordinate between the different security and police personnel surrounding the potential shelter location to improve surveillance of the area.

**Will this be considered for a second King County city for “Safe Use”?**

There have been absolutely no conversations and no plans to consider this as a “Safe Use” site.

**Will there be something like the Therapeutic Health Services here?**

Therapeutic Health Services and other service providers may provide addiction counseling at the shelter. There will not be a Methadone Clinic anywhere near the shelter.

**What is your rate of success to move people off homelessness?**

CFH has had between a 63-68% success rate, in the past 5 years, of men transitioning from homelessness to stable permanent housing from the year round program run in Bellevue.

**What measures or statistics do you have from other places where you have operated?**

In each area where the CFH shelter has been located we have worked with the neighbors, police, and businesses. We tracked issues and when any came up we took immediate steps to address the issues. The police track crime statistics, we track internal issues and neighborhood concerns, and make sure we use neighborhood concerns to learn from, and to make sure that the programs we offer work for the clients, staff, and the wider community.

**Are there special safeguards to reduce risk?**

CFH employs professional staff to manage the shelters. Staff are trained in CPR, De-Escalation, Conflict Resolution, Motivational Interviewing, Companionship, mental health training, addiction training, trauma informed care, harm reduction, and diversity and inclusion training. These tools allow CFH staff to maintain and build upon a culture of respect within our community (residents, staff, volunteers, donors, and guests, which include children). We staff adequately, based on site/community need, best practices, and years of shelter operation experience, to handle shelter management around the clock. We have rules around conduct in the shelter and in the neighboring area. Many of the men we serve truly care about our community and take pride in helping to make sure that the stereotypes of those who are experiencing homelessness are not perpetuated. We have weekly meetings to discuss issues in and around the shelter and call men to action in taking responsibility for addressing issues within the shelter and in the neighborhood. We make ourselves known in the neighborhood in order to understand the needs and expectations and make ourselves readily available to promptly respond to the needs and issues of our neighbors. CFH also has a good relationship with local law enforcement. This partnership allows us safely remove and/or trespass those who do not want to comply with the code of conduct.

**How will a permanent shelter benefit homeless men?**

The Shelter/Day center will provide a place for men experiencing homelessness to find a safe, empowering community to rest, rejuvenate, and launch from. The shelter/day center will offer breakfast, lunch, dinner snacks and drinks, showers, laundry, hygiene items, bus tickets, clothing donations, and computer access. In addition, one-on-one and group support by trained professionals and qualified volunteers will be offered for addiction, mental health, life skills, employment needs, etc. The shelter will provide a place and supportive services for men to walk a path to housing and self-sufficiency.

Homeless men feel a high level of stress and anxiety about where they will sleep that night, how to get food and where to keep their belongings safe. A shelter provides answers to those needs. Secondly when a man has assurance that those needs are met and starts to trust staff and the community in the shelter, they are able to begin the steps to leave homelessness. Our services will make it even easier for the men to get the help they need to begin living a normal life.

We offer safety. We offer supportive community connections. Most importantly, we offers stability. We provide a welcoming place to belong and work towards improving their quality of life.

**Who is building the permanent supportive housing and what will it look like?**

Imagine Housing will be the operator of the permanent supportive housing. The general contractor will be selected through a competitive Request for Qualifications. We anticipate that there will be four to five levels of affordable low income housing built above the shelter and parking, with approximately 60 to 80 studio/one bedroom units.

**What are the criteria for the clientele for the apartments?**

The criteria for selecting the residents for the permanent housing has not yet been determined, however the housing is permanent and there are not time limits on occupancy.

**Will the housing have rules and/or supportive services available?**

Residents will be required to comply with the terms of their lease. Imagine Housing will also provide professional on site management and maintenance of the community. There will be supportive services on site that are designed to meet the needs of the residents to foster housing stability. Case managers

also assist residents in connecting to the health, education, benefits, and employment services that they need. Imagine Housing also provides community activities such as monthly community meals to encourage resident engagement both in and outside the community.