

**Safe Camp and Emergency Shelter
on the Nevada Cares Campus:
Service Plan and Recommendations**

Prepared for Washoe County, July 2021

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Executive Summary

Homelessness can be ended, but only when we design services and supports to meet the needs of vulnerable people and meet those individuals where they are. Washoe County, with the opening of the Nevada Cares Campus, has an unprecedented opportunity to shift the community's response away from managing homelessness and toward ending it.

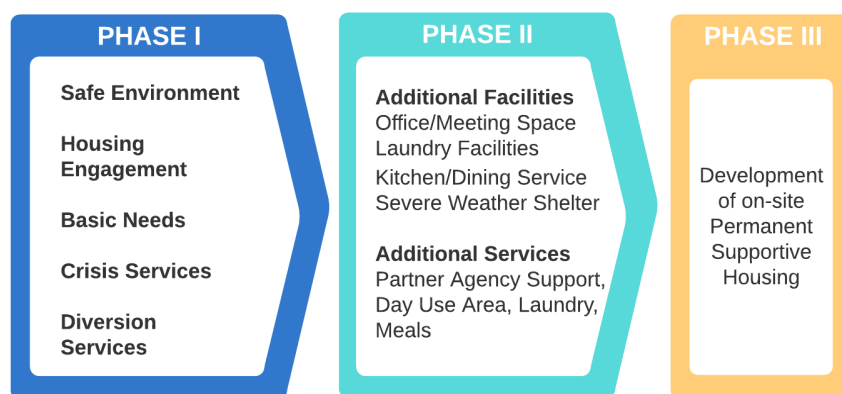
Since April, I have had the pleasure of working with Washoe County staff to develop a plan for the Cares campus. In May, I visited the campus and nearby service providers. The visit included one-on-one meetings with leadership, program managers, front-line staff, key stakeholders, and community advocates. I have since met with Washoe County staff to further refine the processes and systems needed to ensure the campus operates as effectively as possible.

I am pleased to present this service plan and recommendations report to support the long-term success of the Nevada Cares campus. This summary is intended to provide a high-level overview to key stakeholders.

The Cares Campus should be implemented to specifically address the needs of the 750+ unsheltered homeless individuals identified in the Northern Nevada Continuum of Care during the 2021

point-in-time survey (Northern Nevada Continuum of Care, 2021). This population is more visible, more vulnerable, and less able to access effective services than any other population. Failure to address the needs of long-term unsheltered homeless populations creates ongoing problems for service providers and newly homeless individuals.

Without a facility specifically targeting the needs of the unsheltered, they will continue to attempt to receive assistance from providers less equipped to meet their housing needs. And as the backlog of chronically homeless individuals grows, newly homeless individuals will find themselves queued behind hundreds of other people without housing. This leads them to



spend more time homeless, leading to exacerbated physical and mental health problems that greatly increase community costs (Culhane, et al., 2002).

Working within the phased implementation plan for the campus, Phase I should focus on creating a facility that can provide a safe environment, housing engagement, basic needs, and crisis and diversion services. This includes controlled entry/exit from the facility and capacity limits sufficient to allow front-line staff to meaningfully engage with shelter and camp guests. Above all, project leadership must take care not to attempt to solve each and every problem related to homelessness on the Cares campus. Rather, the campus should provide a specific intervention (housing placement) to a specific subpopulation (single adults). To expand beyond this will dilute the effectiveness of services provided.

Phase II focuses on expansion to bring services including meals, laundry, technology, and other basic needs on site. This includes creating space for day use, as well as hosting partner agencies whose services support the housing focus of the campus. The third project phase centers the development of permanent supportive housing (PSH) units. The current community inventory of PSH is inadequate to facilitate measurable reductions in chronic street homelessness. Developing PSH, and not transitional housing units, will provide opportunities for individuals to exit homelessness, with the additional benefit of creating additional space within the shelter and safe camp to bring in additional guests from the street and around the Truckee River. Overall, the greater an investment communities make in PSH, the greater the reduction in visible chronic homelessness (Byrne, et al., 2014).

This report outlines key service requirements for the campus and clarifies roles and responsibilities of funders and contracted operators. Primary project outcomes should inform funders of the success these providers have in ending homelessness through housing placements and diversions from shelter.

There are challenges ahead. The Nevada Cares Campus faces a serious risk of trying to start too big and too fast without taking the time to establish appropriate operational support and infrastructure. Taking on too much in the beginning will threaten the ability to develop and sustain support for the project, not only from local leaders and the housed community, but also from people in need of services. Further, as noted in previous examinations of the region's housing crisis response system, the lack of unified leadership and vision for homeless services has created a patchwork system of disconnected, disorganized responses with no clear expectations for effectiveness. And finally, the lack of appropriate rapid rehousing and permanent housing resources in the community will create difficulties in helping people exit homelessness.

There are also reasons to be optimistic about the work ahead. The recommendations outlined in this report establish clear boundaries around how the campus provides services, and to whom. The community is clearly committed to addressing this issue, and Washoe County has strong leadership capable of solving the problem. The overall approach of the campus has been shown to be highly effective in other communities. Based on initial data from a small sample of people without housing in the region, more than 9 out of 10 are interested in ending their homelessness, more than half are willing to try receiving services in the emergency shelter, and nearly 3 in 4 expressed interest in trying safe camp services (Lee, et al., 2021).

This report outlines ways to address the specific issues that might prevent people from wanting to engage with the campus by ensuring low barriers to entry, building on County staff's early accomplishments in lifting the project off the ground. We know that when we make programs fit the needs of the people they are designed to serve, those programs work. And even with the recent increases in unsheltered homelessness, the overall population is not so large that the problem is not solvable. The Cares campus has enormous potential to create a major shift in homelessness in the region. I look forward to supporting its ongoing implementation and to a return visit later this year to provide key trainings to improve service delivery.

Introduction & Overview

Homelessness, in all its forms, can be ended, one individual at a time, when we build systems and processes designed to provide appropriate interventions tailored to the needs of people in crisis. For many, emergency shelters are the first point of contact in a community's housing crisis response system. The policies and practices in place at shelters and safe camps can position them as the gateway to successful housing interventions for people in crisis.

Two critical policy decisions determine how effectively emergency shelters and safe camps end homelessness. Are they, in all of their policies, practices, and staff interactions with guests, designed to provide a high level of service with as few barriers to entry as possible? And once someone has entered these facilities, is the staff singularly focused on ending that person's homelessness as quickly as possible?

These policy decisions boil down to one key change: a shift away from managing homelessness, and toward ending homelessness. Right now, providers in the Northern Nevada Continuum of Care are spending substantial resources managing homelessness. Momentum toward housing is not expected, much less required.

Low-Barrier Services

The concept of low-barrier shelter has emerged as a best practice over the past decade. In short, it ensures that the people who most need shelter services can access them without having to meet requirements such as the ability to produce identification, the ability to demonstrate adherence to a mental health or substance abuse treatment plan, or the ability to provide evidence of having passed a police clearance. Low-barrier shelters design their policies and practices to "screen people in" to ensure they can serve the greatest number of people possible, while still providing an atmosphere of safety and security for staff, guests, and volunteers.

Safe Camps: New Opportunities for Unsheltered Homelessness

This same framework can be applied to safe camps. Safe camps provide the opportunity to deliver shelter services to unhoused people who can't, or won't, use the traditional emergency shelter system. Ultimately, it is helpful to consider safe camps, quite simply, as outdoor low-barrier emergency shelters. They must not be treated as a final destination. An unsheltered person moved into an emergency shelter or safe camp is still homeless, albeit in a different location. Instead, safe camps and shelters must be considered part of the process by which someone is assisted from homelessness into permanent housing. Throughout this report, we

discuss “shelter services” in reference to both services provided in the emergency shelter and in the safe camp.

With the 2019 *Martin v. Boise* ruling prohibiting cities from punishing people for sleeping on public land when no adequate shelter space is available, municipalities across the Ninth Circuit have scrambled to establish adequate shelter space for unsheltered individuals. As safe camps have become increasingly popular, communities must choose whether these facilities will be used as tools to manage homelessness - moving people to new locations without conducting the work necessary to get them off of the streets - or as tools to end homelessness. The debates on whether such sweeps represent coercive action, tough love, or final pushes to connect “service resistant” people with available resources notwithstanding, the only long-term solution to unsheltered homelessness is housing (Robinson, 2019).

With the above in mind, we have prepared the recommendations below to help Washoe County and contracted providers establish the systems to improve shelter outcomes, develop the staff expertise needed to provide high-quality services, and move away from managing homelessness and toward the policies and practices required to truly end homelessness. The recommendations include key changes needed to establish a strong focus on housing throughout the Nevada Cares Campus, reimagine policies and procedures to improve outcomes and free up valuable staff time, and develop the teams necessary to provide collaborative, effective services.

Process

Washoe County contracted with JDConsultancy in April 2021 to provide guidance and recommendations for the development of the Nevada Cares campus, including a campus-wide service plan, the establishment of a safe camp, and the provision of training and coaching for staff and leadership to support housing-focused services.

In the process of developing this report, JDConsultancy has:

1. Met regularly with County staff to work collaboratively on the development of policies and procedures for both the safe camp and emergency shelter.
2. Presented an overview of best practices for safe camps to the Community Homelessness Advisory Board (April 2021).
3. Conducted a full-day, in-person site visit of the Cares campus and other service providers in close proximity. This visit included one-on-one meetings with provider leadership, program managers, and front-line staff, as well as other key stakeholders, community advocates, and fundraising champions. I was able to tour the facility, review existing policies and procedures, observe general day-to-day operations, and meet with staff and teams directly (May 2021).

4. Interviewed unsheltered campers along the Truckee River and Wells Ave., specifically focused on what would encourage or prevent people from seeking shelter at the Cares Campus.
5. Reviewed previous consulting reports and community presentations, including those from OrgCode Consulting on homeless services, leadership thereof, and recommendations for improvements.

Service Plan for the Nevada Cares campus

The service plan outlined below establishes a phased approach to service implementation for the entire Nevada Cares Campus, including the low-barrier emergency shelter and safe camp facilities.

Target Population

Point-in-time counts from 2017-2021 in the region clearly demonstrate the need for Nevada Cares Campus services to target single adults, with an emphasis on the housing needs of long-term encampment residents. According to the Northern Nevada Continuum of Care, unsheltered homelessness has increased by more than 800% since 2017, despite relative stability in the total number of people experiencing homelessness (Northern Nevada Continuum of Care, 2021). This highlights the need for emergency shelter/safe camp services designed to target these individuals, including people with partners and pets.

Core Service Needs

Emergency shelter and safe camp services for homeless individuals, particularly those who have been homeless for extended periods of time, must focus on the following areas:

Safe Shelter/Camping

Above all, the Cares Campus must provide a safe environment for people to receive all other services. To be clear, “low-barrier” shelter services do not mean that there are no rules in place. To the contrary, there are minimal behavioral expectations designed to protect the health and safety of staff and guests.

The campus expectations below are designed to facilitate safe, respectful interactions with shelter and safe camp participants. Extensive lists of rules and expectations generally don’t promote a greater sense of safety and security. Rather, they tie up staff time by forcing employees to monitor and police behavior. This creates opportunities for conflict by presenting shelter users with a set of guidelines bigger than they can reasonably be expected to understand.

We recommend the campus expectations include only those guidelines that promote safety and clarify expectations around exiting homelessness.

1. Please respect the rights, property, and peace of everyone here.
2. Drugs, alcohol, and weapons are not permitted on campus.
3. Physical or verbal violence and threats are not permitted.
4. We do not allow gambling, sexual activity, or unwanted physical contact.
5. Personal property can only be stored in assigned lockers.
6. Please leave all spaces cleaner than you found them.
7. We require that all guests work toward their housing plan while utilizing shelter/safe camp resources.

These expectations lay out clear guidelines for use of the general campus. Staff should establish additional expectations for guests using emergency shelter or safe camp services. Sample shelter expectations are included in Appendix A. Annually, these expectations should be revisited with campus guests and staff in focus groups. The facilitator can explore whether staff and guests feel the expectations are effective, upheld consistently, necessary, and clear.

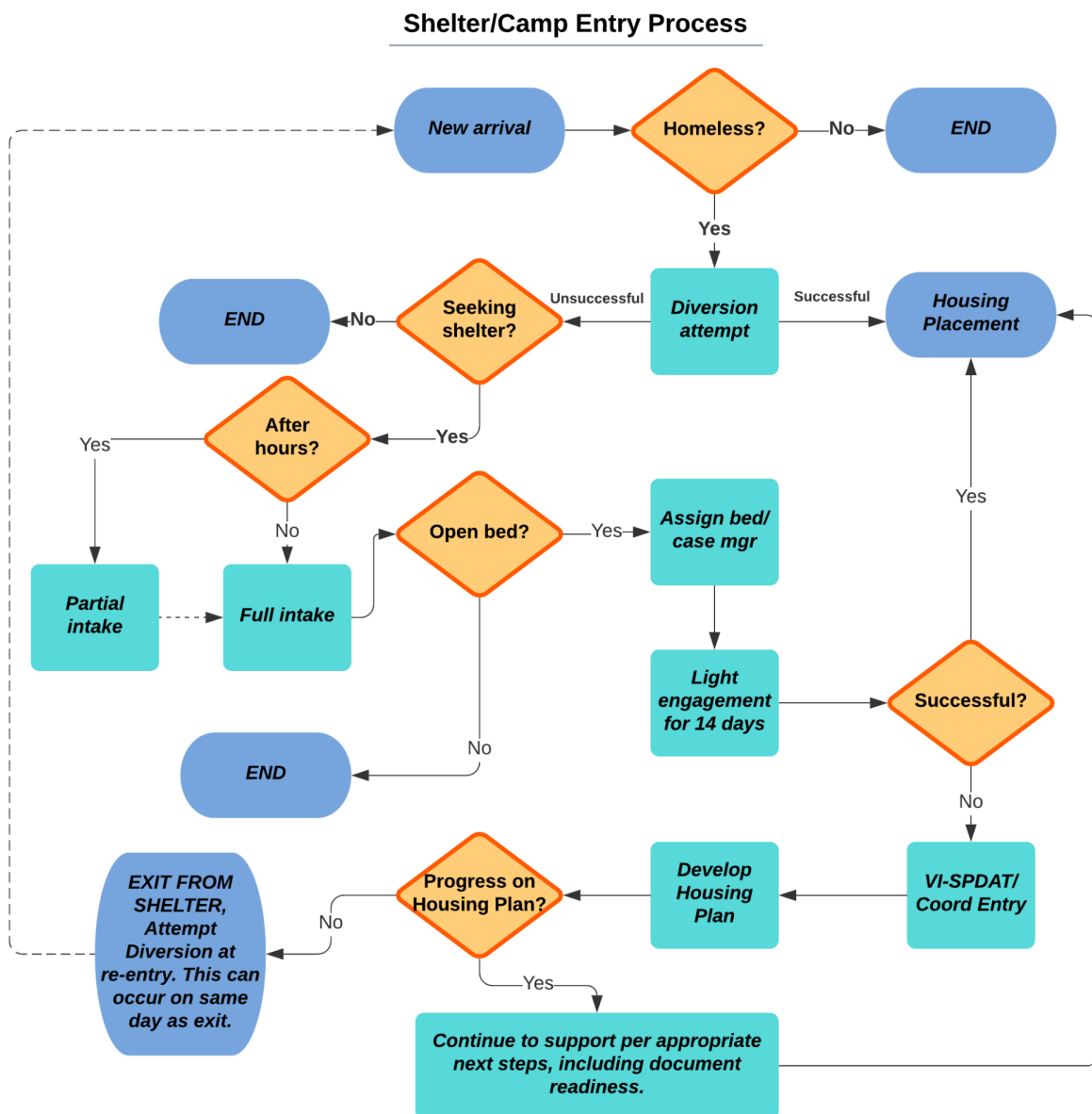
Housing Engagement

Emergency shelters and safe camps function best when they provide targeted interventions based on individual needs. Shelters can't provide the same level of service to each person and expect appropriate outcomes, but for years providers have attempted to do this, generally succeeding only when the shelter user's needs happened to match the array of services being provided. Instead, housing-focused sheltering aims to provide the right intervention to the right person, at the right time.

The time-based typology suggested by Kuhn & Culhane (1998) provides a framework to understand the different needs of shelter users. Kuhn & Culhane break shelter utilizers into three groups: transitionally homeless, episodically homeless, and chronically homeless. However, all shelter users require *some* intervention, as all present with serious problems (Goering, et al., 2002). These interventions must be personalized to their individual level of functioning, and that functioning needs to be assessed through development of rapport, professional expertise, and traditional vulnerability measurements.

The role of the emergency shelter changes depending on the appropriate intervention. For individuals requiring "light touch" support, a simple check-in for the first 14 days of shelter will be appropriate. As soon as the 14-day mark is passed the

VI-SPDAT (or other appropriate triage tool) is conducted and more targeted housing conversations begin. For those that have cycled through the shelter several times, fresh approaches and changes in staff can be effective in eliciting change. And finally, in instances where the ideal intervention is rapid rehousing or permanent supportive housing, shelter staff can help gather (and safely store) required documents to facilitate that process, including identification and birth certificates, and advocate on clients' behalf at the coordinated entry level. The Shelter/Camp Entry Process below shows the logical flow of engagement during shelter stays.



In the chart above, the process ends if no shelter bed is available. Maintaining a shelter bed waitlist is not recommended. Waitlists, when populated by people with limited or inconsistent contact information, are ineffective. They require excessive staff time to create and maintain equitably. Further, when a waitlist is in place, individuals may show up for an open bed and be told that they cannot enter the shelter until the people on the waitlist have been contacted first, even though a bed is technically available. This process can take hours each day, and is difficult to manage in a way that is fair. Instead, staff should enter individuals presenting for shelter into a bed immediately if one is available. If there are no beds available at the time, the individual should be told when to check back. Ideally, beds are made available at the same time each day, in order to allow shelter case managers time to exit people and operations staff time to pack up belongings and prepare the bed for the next person.

Basic Needs & Hygiene

The Nevada Cares Campus must support individuals' ability to meet their basic needs and maintain appropriate hygiene. Basic needs include any of the items or services individuals need to support their own well-being, including healthy meals, clothing, shower and bathroom facilities, toiletries and personal items, and the like.

More broadly, the definition of basic needs should be expanded to include additional services that support the housing process. This includes access to technology (phones, computers, and internet) to support guests' ability to apply for housing, employment, and benefit programs like food stamps, unemployment, and social security/disability. Likewise, the Cares Campus should provide, at minimum, bus passes or other transportation supports.

Crisis Services

Every individual seeking shelter on the Cares campus has experienced at least one traumatic experience - homelessness - and likely many more. Onsite staff must be trained in conflict deescalation, crisis intervention, overdose response and prevention, and trauma-informed care, as well as effective engagement strategies that build rapport and momentum toward housing.

Diversion Services

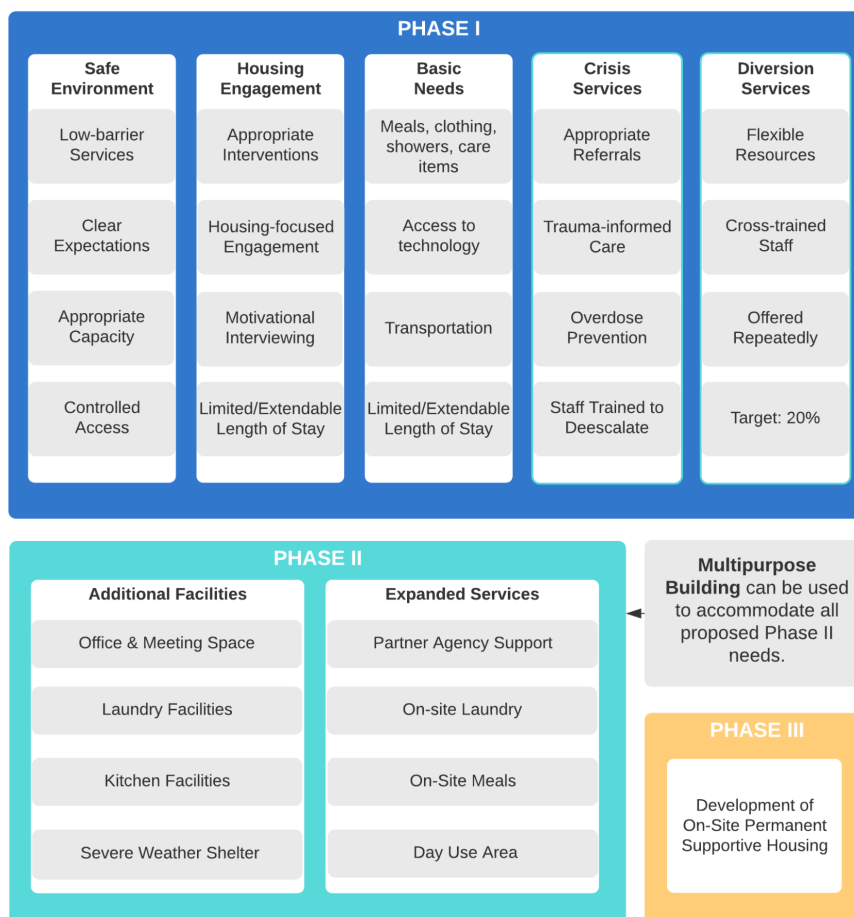
Diversion has two major impacts on decreasing homelessness - it prevents individuals from entering the shelter system unless they absolutely need it, and it frees up scarce shelter beds for those without alternatives. For each diversion, a shelter bed or camp site remains open for someone else to receive the full range of services needed to end their homelessness.

Successful diversions require staff having immediate access to the resources to solve the person's housing crisis. For some, this is a bus ticket to stay with a relative. For others, it includes assurance to the person they are currently living with that staff will provide case management to help them find another housing alternative if they can stay there while that process happens. For others, it involves providing grocery store gift cards to help with the food budget in their current location.

As this program evolves, leadership should look for opportunities to strengthen and improve the program while aiming for a goal of diverting at least 20% of all prospective shelter users (as opposed to the first-year benchmark of 15%). This will reduce in-shelter workload for staff, and facilitate expanded access to limited shelter space.

Note: JDConsultancy will provide in-person training to Cares Campus staff on (a) positive, respectful housing-focused engagement, (b) development of a diversion program, and (c) managing day-to-day campus operations in a safe, respectful manner, with an emphasis on developing protocols for dealing with difficult behavior. This training is tentatively scheduled for September 2021.

Nevada CARES Campus: Service Plan Implementation



Phase I: Safe Camp & Emergency Shelter

Minimum Required Services

1. Safe environment, with clear expectations for campus use
2. Overnight residential services
3. Basic access to hygiene facilities
4. Provision of basic needs
5. Housing engagement, housing-focused case management, and diversion
6. Access to computers, telephones, internet, transportation
7. Long-term storage for personal items that will not be needed while using safe camp or shelter services
8. Short-term private storage (i.e. lockers) that does not require staff to access
9. Staff trained in motivational interviewing, progressive engagement, conflict deescalation, housing-focused sheltering, HMIS use

Minimum Required Infrastructure

1. Sufficient signage to clearly show (a) expectations for campus use, (b) location of key services and staff members, (c) who to contact in case of emergencies
2. Adequate, commercial-grade residential, bathroom, and shower facilities sufficient for high-capacity use, including ancillary items (linens, blankets, toiletries)
3. Access to computers, telephones, internet, transportation
4. Ability to send and receive mail
5. Short- and long-term storage of personal items
6. Perimeter fence around property to limit access to only those guests who have a bed/tent at the facility.
7. Facility must be appropriately prepared for use, including sealing of concrete floors and - to the greatest extent possible - provision of offices and private meeting spaces for staff to have confidential conversations with guests

Key Decision Points

Capacity of Emergency Shelter and Safe Camp

Washoe County, in collaboration with the contracted operators, must determine the appropriate capacity for both the emergency shelter and safe camp facilities. The emergency shelter capacity should be determined based on staffing levels. At most, the emergency shelter facility should shelter no more than 100 individuals for every four front-line staff on shift. The Safe Camp should follow the same staff:participant ratio, with a minimum of four staff present on the

campground at all time. As it stands, the campus is understaffed, overwhelmed, and the provider is unable to do much more than deescalate conflicts and keep track of who is using the facility.

The safety of staff and guests is critical, in terms of employee retention, program success, community support, and the willingness of unsheltered people to consider using the facility. In the first week of operations, staff and security reported two major violent incidents. To respond properly to these and future incidents, staff (and security personnel, if they must be present) must be trained in trauma-informed care, crisis intervention, and conflict deescalation, at minimum. More importantly, clear policies must be in place outlining consistent staff responses to such incidents, and guests must be made aware at time of entry of the impact such behaviors will have on their ability to receive services and shelter. There will be conflicts in any congregate facility, particularly when each and every guest has experienced trauma and is currently in crisis. Giving shelter staff the time to implement the policies and trainings needed to respond constructively to these incidents will have far-reaching implications for the overall success of the campus.

Use of Space in Emergency Shelter

The sheer size of the Sprung structure housing the emergency shelter presents both opportunities and challenges for staff and guests. Program staff should work to compartmentalize the space further to enhance safety and the ability of the provider to build and maintain relationships with service users. In the same way walls separate the common service area from the residential area, the residential area should be split into smaller units. Rather than the 12 staff available at any given time being pulled across the entire facility, and being expected to maintain meaningful relationships with each of the 600 people using the facility, program staff can establish smaller zones that each employee or team is responsible for. In this scenario, a team of 4-6 could be responsible for managing a zone with 100 people in it. This will provide additional opportunities for rapport building, intentional conversations about housing, and awareness of the unique needs of each person in this smaller cohort.

Access to the Cares Campus

The campus must have a single point of entry and exit to and from the campus. This will allow staff to control inflow to the campus, limit access to those seeking shelter, and focus on delivering appropriate services only to campus residents. The current level of staffing is already low for a housing-focused shelter, with best practices calling for a 1:20 ratio of case managers to guests. The work the

current provider has done to manage the high volume of traffic on the campus is to be commended, but must be supported with additional staffing and the ability to limit use of the campus to those who have a bed. As an interim step, if the community intends to provide meals and other day services on the campus to the general unsheltered population, a fence must be constructed and non-shelter users must be directed to a common area at the edge of the campus, rather than on the campus itself.

Phase II: Safe Camp & Emergency Shelter

Minimum Required Services

All services noted above, with the addition of:

1. Begin hosting supportive service providers from agencies that can provide the following services:
 - a. On-site health care services, including crisis counseling, mental health care, and HIV/AIDS services
 - b. Assistance applying for mainstream benefits, including food stamps, social security and disability
 - c. Assistance obtaining photo identification, birth certificates, and social security cards
2. On-site laundry facilities
3. On-site meal service
4. Day use area
5. Severe/adverse weather shelter (for Safe Camp residents)

Minimum Required Infrastructure

1. Additional office spaces, either using existing space or by creating a multipurpose building sufficient to host these agencies
2. Laundry room with commercial-grade equipment
3. Commercial kitchen facilities including, at minimum, grill, stove with sufficient burners, ovens, food warmers and refrigeration, and dishwashing station, as well as walk-in coolers and dry storage
4. Adequate indoor conditioned space to facilitate safe sheltering of camp residents during severe/adverse weather (inc. wildfires and extreme heat/cold)

Key Decision Points

Uses of Multipurpose Building

A well-designed multi-purpose building can facilitate all of the above service and infrastructure needs, including kitchen and laundry facilities, partner agency office space, meeting spaces, a day use area, and severe weather shelter. The key decisions revolve around managing guest access to the multipurpose area. Much like the campus itself, this building should have a single point of entry/exit with space for staff to monitor ingress and egress. Program staff should be consulted in the development of this space to ensure the design adequately meets the needs of the program.

Phase III: Future Housing

The final phase of the Cares Campus plan must provide affordable housing solutions that meet the needs of the local homeless population. The Northern Nevada CoC has a large supply of transitional housing within its homeless housing inventory, but an inadequate supply of permanent supportive housing, which has shown to be the most effective housing intervention - in terms of stability and cost - for long-term homeless individuals with disabilities (Culhane, et al., 2002). Permanent supportive housing pairs long-term housing subsidies with supportive services tailored to the needs of the people in the program (National Alliance to End Homelessness, 2020).

From 2019-2020, Nevada saw a 96% increase in the number of chronically homeless people in the state - the largest percentage increase of any Continuum of Care in the country (HUD, 2020). Though there is sparse local data on the needs of long-term encampment residents, the Corporation for Supportive Housing has created a toolkit for estimating unmet need by housing type when all required data is not available (Corporation for Supportive Housing, 2005). Communities can reliably estimate that approximately 25% of their unsheltered population is chronically homeless (HUD, 2020). However, in communities where long-term encampments have existed, this rate can be 50% or higher. National data shows that approximately 30% of chronic homeless populations require permanent supportive housing.

The best evidence available shows transitional housing, on the other hand, is largely ineffective (Cunningham, et al., 2015). Transitional programs have high barriers to entry and screen out individuals with higher service needs. Even after limiting eligible participants to those who meet more restrictive criteria, roughly 1 in every 4 participants leaves before completing the program. In contrast, a well-run permanent supportive housing program provides housing stability for 90% or more of participants.

Overall, the research is clear on one thing: the costs of allowing chronically homeless people to continue living on the street are higher than the costs of moving them into housing (Byrne, et al., 2014; Culhane, et al., 2002). Broadly, communities spend as much as \$40,000 annually managing the homelessness of unsheltered individuals when considering public safety costs, hospital admissions, and stabilization services. PSH, conversely, can generate a cost savings of \$15,000-\$25,000 per year per person (CSH, 2018).

Supportive Service Design

This section clarifies roles and responsibilities of the entities involved in the Nevada Cares Campus, including Washoe County, Volunteers of America, and Karma Box. The provision of services on the campus should be a partnership between these key providers and the Northern Nevada Continuum of Care.

Partners and Their Roles

Washoe County

1. Overall program coordination and funding
2. In the anticipated role as lead agency of the Continuum of Care:
 - a. Consistently create opportunities for project partners to exit people from homelessness by creating additional units of permanent supportive housing, reallocating funding from low-performing existing providers, and developing an effective dynamic prioritization plan
 - b. Facilitate access to services and housing via Coordinated Entry
 - c. Facilitate collection of data, and use of this data to drive program and system outcomes, using the Homeless Management Information System
 - d. Evaluate community needs and determine appropriate application of dynamic prioritization for key subpopulations
 - e. Promote flexible use of available housing resources, including prioritizing rapid rehousing beds for highly vulnerable people as bridge housing into permanent supportive housing
3. Ensure provider meets minimum standards for health/safety through monitoring
4. Establish, in partnership with providers, key outcomes to measure performance

Volunteers of America

1. Volunteers of America will provide the majority of direct individual supportive services at the emergency shelter, including housing-focused case management and other services to homeless individuals
2. Participate in Coordinated Entry and HMIS

3. Use established coordinated assessment tools
4. Manage day-to-day operations of the emergency shelter, including:
 - a. Intake and admission
 - b. Orientation to building and services
 - c. Development of housing-focused case management plan for each guest
 - d. Provide a safe campus environment
 - e. Track and report key data to funders
 - f. Engage with all guests within 48 hours of project entry
 - g. Establish initial housing plan for guests in shelter for 14 days or more
 - h. Meet at least weekly with all guests with a housing plan
 - i. Provide basic hygiene services - clean bathrooms, showers, laundry facilities
 - j. Provide access to mail services, telephone, internet
 - k. Hire, supervise, and train all personnel
 - l. Operate a diversion program
 - m. Establish appeals process for individuals who have been asked to leave the campus for failure to follow campus expectations

Karma Box Project

1. Karma Box will provide the majority of direct individual supportive services at the safe camp, including housing-focused case management and other services to 50 homeless individuals.
2. Participate in Coordinated Entry and HMIS
3. Use established coordinated assessment tools
4. Develop and implement a managed campground on the Nevada Cares campus
5. Provide outreach and engagement services to unsheltered homeless individuals and manage inflow to facility in an equitable manner
6. Establish appeals process for individuals who have been asked to leave the campus for failure to follow campus expectations
7. Provide follow-up tracking (3 month, 6 month, 12 month) for all housing placements of safe camp residents
8. Manage day-to-day operations of the safe camp, including:
 - a. Intake and admission
 - b. Orientation to facility and services
 - c. Development of housing-focused case management plan for each guest
 - d. Provide a safe campus environment
 - e. Track and report key data to funders
 - f. Engage with all guests within 48 hours of project entry
 - g. Establish initial housing plan for all guests who have been on site for 14 days or more

- h. Meet at least weekly with all guests with a housing plan
- i. Provide basic hygiene services - clean bathrooms, showers, laundry facilities
- j. Provide access to mail services, telephone, internet
- k. Operate a diversion program
- l. Hire, supervise, and train all personnel
- m. Provide regular reports to funding agencies and oversight board

Project Performance Measures

To determine the impact of the Nevada Cares Campus, project leadership must establish key performance metrics to determine the effectiveness of the emergency shelter and safe camp programs. Initially, staff must establish a baseline measurement against which future improvement can be measured. These metrics include:

Emergency Shelter

Outputs

1. Provide safe shelter for up to 600 people a night in accordance with established CoC standards
2. Maintain an average shelter utilization rate of at least 90%
3. Provider will report monthly:
 - a. Total number of unduplicated people using shelter services
 - b. Bed utilization rate (calculated as total nights of shelter/total number of beds/days in the month). **Benchmark: Utilization ≥ 90%**

Outcomes

1. Provider will move a minimum of 600 (max capacity) people into permanent housing annually, including diversions
2. Provider will divert a minimum of 15% of people seeking shelter annually into alternative housing arrangements
3. Provider will maintain a housing retention rate of ≥ 80%
4. Provider will report monthly:
 - a. Number of individuals moved into permanent housing, by housing type, as shown in HMIS. **Benchmark: Housing placements ≥ 50/month**
 - b. Number of individuals diverted from homelessness
 - c. Diversion rate, calculated as total number of diversions/total number of intakes of individuals seeking shelter. **Benchmark: ≥ 15% diversion rate**
 - d. Average length of stay in emergency shelter program, reported as individuals staying ≤ 30 days, 31-60 days, or 61+ days. **Benchmark: Set baseline in year 1, and measure improvements in subsequent years**
 - e. Number of individuals who do not return to homelessness within the CoC within 12 months, calculated as total number of unique housing placements/total number of housing placements

Safe Camp

Outputs

1. Provide safe shelter to up to 50 people a night in accordance with established CoC standards
2. Maintain an average utilization $\geq 90\%$
3. Provider will report monthly:
 - a. Total number of unduplicated people using safe camp services
 - b. Bed utilization rate (calculated as total nights of shelter/total number of beds/days in the month).

Benchmark: Utilization $\geq 90\%$

Outcomes

1. Provider will move a minimum of 50 people annually into permanent housing
2. Provider will divert a minimum of 15% of people seeking safe camp placement annually into alternative housing arrangements
3. Provider will maintain a housing retention rate of $\geq 80\%$
4. Provider will report monthly:
 - a. Number of individuals moved into permanent housing, by housing type, as shown in HMIS. **Benchmark: Housing placements ≥ 50**
 - b. Number of individuals diverted from homelessness
 - i. Diversion rate, calculated as total number of diversions/total number of intakes of individuals seeking shelter. **Benchmark: $\geq 15\%$ diversion rate**
 - c. Average length of stay in safe camp program, reported as individuals staying ≤ 30 days, 31-60 days, or 61+ days. **Benchmark: Set baseline in year 1, and measure improvements in subsequent years**
 - d. Number of individuals who do not return to homelessness within the continuum of care within 12 months, calculated as total number of unique housing placements/total number of housing placements

Additional Recommendations

JDConsultancy has provided substantial policy and procedure recommendations directly to Washoe County staff over the past several months. These recommendations have already been incorporated into the standard operating procedures for the campus.

In addition, the following recommendations will improve program outcomes on the campus:

Alignment of Safe Camp/Shelter Policies

To the greatest extent possible, both the safe camp and the emergency shelter should implement identical policies and procedures. With respect to client-facing policies (curfew, if any; expectations; housing focus) these should be identical to eliminate “shelter shopping” in which guests move back and forth between locations in an attempt to find the most lenient staff and policies.

Prioritize Work That Ends Homelessness

For programs to be housing-focused, all engagements must be centered around ending homelessness. Having staff who are encumbered by a constant need for rule enforcement or basic needs provision not only fails to meet the housing needs of people seeking assistance, but can create an adversarial relationship between staff and guests. Staff can help individuals meet their basic needs to the greatest extent possible, but should always prioritize those interactions that focus on ending a person’s homelessness. In conversations with front-line staff, I observed a strong desire to focus on helping people meet their daily needs. This is a critical piece of service provision, but ineffective at obtaining appropriate housing outcomes. All staff that encounter guests on a daily basis must be competent in positive engagement and motivational interviewing in order to move guests through the stages of change. Staff must support guests as they move through the shelter and exit into housing (Culhane & Metraux, 2008).

This support is a collaborative process, wherein staff focuses on the strengths of each guest, rather than the deficits, and emphasizes the power people have to change their situation. That said, working in service to others can easily devolve into a power-over relationship considering staff are, unavoidably, gatekeepers to services, resources, and information. Helping professionals must be aware of this dynamic and work toward a collaborative relationship. There must be a zero-tolerance policy for any staff holding power over program participants. We have to meet people where they are. That includes having housing conversations in the shelter, in the courtyard, at the tents, and while people are waiting in line. Training to develop competency in trauma-informed care must be required of all staff. This will help staff recognize that shelter users are experts in their own lives, maintain awareness of the collaborative nature

of required solutions, and reduce conflicts with participants who have experienced disempowerment in other social service settings.

Ultimately, this boils down to one thing: Be good at what you're good at. Emergency shelters must address the needs of different people in different ways. At the core, all users of shelter should be able to expect access to safe, clean shelter and basic needs; and coordination with other service providers through the Continuum of Care. Beyond that, higher-needs people receive a different type of service that facilitates their connection with rapid re-housing and permanent supportive housing providers in the community.

Implement and Enforce a Length-of-Stay Policy

An effective emergency shelter plays a key role in the *process* of ending someone's homelessness; it is not, however, a destination. Without a length-of-stay policy, shelters quickly become hostels at best and assisted living facilities at worst. Other shelters in the community have become long-term destinations for people without housing. Shelter utilizers can become acclimatized to the environment. This can foster complacency and comfort in their homeless routines.

Without a time-bound goal and emphasis on moving forward toward resolution of their homelessness, there is no incentive or motivation to leave the Cares Campus. A 30-day limit with a potential extension to 90 days with week-by-week extensions fosters urgency and an atmosphere that shows that ending homelessness is not only possible but likely for even the most hard-to-serve guests.

Collaborate Across Teams to Promote Housing

The goal of ending homelessness for people using Cares Campus services requires a collaborative approach across teams. Intake/Diversion staff, Case Managers, and Direct Service staff should use consistent messaging related to housing expectations with guests. The leadership team has abundant opportunities to leverage the strengths of each team in a way that promotes greater collaboration.

The proposed shelter entry/exit process below outlines a way forward that involves shared housing goals across all teams. Frequently, direct service staff feel left out of the housing process, and without appropriate collaboration can begin to feel resentful of the more "glamorous" nature of the housing work while feeling relegated to an enforcement role.

The process also promotes collaboration between teams. Housing staff can coordinate with direct care staff to remind guests of upcoming appointments or tasks they need to complete. Direct care staff can communicate directly with guests about the housing process ("I heard you

went to speak to a landlord today - how did it go?") and share information back to the housing team. Direct Care staff can provide critical information to the diversion/intake team that they pick up in conversation as they complete their daily rounds ("Did you know that client X has a brother in Las Vegas? He knows he would help him, but he's reluctant to call").

Clarify Employee Expectations

As both contracted operators move forward with new policies and practices to improve housing outcomes, there will likely be some resistance from staff who have grown accustomed to doing things in a certain way. This is to be expected, and while you can provide opportunities for learning, growth, and service improvements, not everyone will want to take advantage of this, instead preferring to stick to "the old way."

Leadership can directly address some of these issues by clarifying the expectations of all staff going forward. We spend a lot of time informing program participants what we expect from them. Our teams deserve the same clarity. As a starting point, we recommend including the expectations below in your employee handbook (originally adapted from Crossroads Rhode Island):

1. Treat your engagements with each guest as a privilege
2. Know the mission, vision, and values of our organization, and put them into practice every day
3. Be non-judgmental in all your interactions, and never impose your own values and beliefs on guests
4. Make all of your engagements trauma-informed and actively work against re-traumatizing people
5. Engage in conversation with people, and never yell
6. Only share confidential information when you have consent to do so, and only when it increases the likelihood of that guest getting housing
7. Separate whatever may be adversely impacting your personal life from impacting your professional life
8. Be present in the lives of others. Demonstrate empathy in your engagements with people that use our programs
9. Keep engagements focused on permanent solutions to each person's homelessness

Establish Baseline Training

All staff, regardless of position in the organization, need a baseline understanding of how to communicate with and support the people they serve. At a minimum, this includes nonviolent communication, de-escalation techniques, trauma-informed care, and motivational

interviewing. Nonviolent communication training focuses on effective communication skills to make sure participants feel heard and understood, with an emphasis on depersonalizing interactions, fostering a rational detachment, and listening for the identification of unmet needs. Techniques for effective, non-punitive crisis intervention are critical. Staff must be equipped with de-escalation techniques to support people in crisis.

Underlying all of this, staff must view all of their interactions through the lens of trauma-informed care, a holistic, person-centered approach that shifts their perspective from “what’s wrong with this person?” to “what has happened to this person?” Motivational interviewing training fosters the collaborative, goal-oriented approach that utilizes the language of change in order to move through the stages of change and end their homelessness. And through it all, leadership should support staff’s embrace of self-care through awareness campaigns, workshops, and training on the effects of vicarious trauma and burnout.

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Appendix A: Sample Shelter Expectations

SAMPLE EMERGENCY SHELTER EXPECTATIONS

General

- Guests may stay in emergency shelter programs for up to 30 days. **Extensions will be granted for individuals who are making progress on housing.** Exits can occur before 30 days if no progress toward housing is being made.
- Please meet with your Housing Specialist within 48 hours of entering the shelter. If you have been in the shelter before, you will have the same Housing Specialist.
- No food or drinks (other than water) are allowed in sleeping areas.
- Guests must use beds and bedding provided.
- Guests may not switch or trade beds.
- No smoking is allowed in any emergency shelter areas.
- Volunteers of America is not responsible for the property of shelter guests.
- The sleeping areas are a “quiet zone.” Please use headphones when using devices.
- Guests must keep their sleeping areas clean, including sheets and blankets.
- Guests are responsible for maintaining their personal hygiene.
- Guests are assigned a locker and allowed **2** bags of personal effects

Check-in and Absences

- All guests must be in their assigned beds no later than 9 p.m. If you are working, please make sure your Housing Specialist knows your schedule so we can accommodate you.
- If you are not in your bed for check-in by 9 p.m., you may be exited so your bed can be assigned to someone else.
- If you are exited from shelter programs and do not gather your belongings, they will be packed up and held for 72 hours before being recycled or thrown away.

Guest: _____
Printed Name Signature Date

Staff: _____
Printed Name Signature Date

Note: Staff must read this entire document to guests at intake.

If you have any questions about any of these expectations, please ask your Housing Specialist at your first meeting.