

Restorative and Reentry Services, LLC

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Request for the Assembly and Administration to Keep Sullivan Arena As a Low Barrier Shelter for a Short Period after April 30, 2023

Project Name: MOA Housing & Homeless Services Grant to provide Emergency Shelter Oversight and Client Support

Date: April 10, 2023

Submitted by: Cathleen McLaughlin, JD, MBA

Monica Gross MD, MPH

RECOMMENDATIONS- RRS recommends the Sullivan Arena remain a low barrier emergency shelter after April 30, 2023 but close no later than May 31, 2023, due to unplanned severe weather, vulnerability of at-risk clients if unsheltered, and community risk. RRS also recommends the Warming Area not close until at least April 22, 2023

A. Background

As required under the Grant, dated March 21, 2023, entitled "Municipality of Anchorage Agreement with Restorative and Reentry Services, LLC (RRS) For Emergency Shelter Oversight and Client Support", p. 18, RRS submitted its third weekly report on April 10, 2023. Two time-sensitive recommendations made are: (1) keep the Sullivan Arena open as a low barrier shelter after April 30, 2023 in a stepped-down state, and (2) keep the emergency shelter warming area at the Sullivan Arena open until further notice. A copy of the full report is available upon request.

B. Facts and Rationale this Recommendation is Based Upon

- a. It is essential that RRS acknowledge the realities around the closure of the Sullivan Shelter and the expected impact this closure will have on the Anchorage community. To best understand client options after the emergency shelter program closes, RRS has received surveys from clients, reviewed the inventory of timely housing options for shelter clients, and client capacity and/or willingness to move forward. Due to several factors, especially abnormal inclement weather,

availability of options outside the emergency shelter system, the potential negative community impact of hundreds of clients moving out of shelter without some mindful process, and some alternative community low-barrier safety net, it is RRS's recommendation to keep a stepped-down emergency shelter open at Sullivan for a short time after April 30, 2023, but no later than May 31, 2023.

- b. A warming space is necessary in Anchorage every year when temperatures are less than 45 degrees. This year, the space was a small section of the Sullivan Arena at its NW entrance. The initial decision was made by AHD to close the warming area on April 5, 2023. That decision was discussed at a community meeting on April 4, 2023 which was attended by 53 stakeholders. At that meeting RRS agreed to investigate the actual usage of the warming area and make a recommendation on next steps by April 10, 2023. After RRS investigated, it is the recommendation of RRS that the warming area NOT be closed at this time and be considered for closure on or after April 22, 2023.

Summary

The key to moving forward is for the Shelter Operator, community providers, and clients to be proactive in facing the fact that the 3 Emergency Shelters sites are being demobilized. Now is the time to be realistic, be proactive, and be bold in taking action.

The hard facts are that Anchorage is still experiencing severe weather that makes it untenable to live outdoors. Many using the Sullivan Arena are highly-vulnerable and are not equipped to live outdoors. Closure of the only low-barrier shelter in Anchorage will put the Anchorage community at-risk because it is not equipped to safely manage a higher level of unsheltered in the community.

RRS's work under the Grant is being done based on the realities of what is, not colored by politics or agendas. RRS will continue to report out with an objective and solution-based approach.

Respectfully,
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