

## **Efforts Underway and Recommendations from HOMEWARD for the Closing of the Non-Congregate and Inclement Weather Shelters**

### **Efforts Related to NCS + IWS Closings**

The following items are specific actions that the GRCoC and Homeward are taking to assist those individuals and families who are currently guests in the Non-Congregate and Inclement Weather Shelters:

- GRCoC is convening shelter and rapid re-housing providers to plan and troubleshoot issues so that our network can maximize post-pandemic resources. No single agency can address homelessness and this collaboration helps providers to leverage the expertise of our partners and have maximum impact.
- Homeward has been leveraging our City Housing Trust Fund grant to provide flexible funds for GRCoC partners to assist with payments (i.e., security deposits, etc.) needed for shelter guests to access permanent housing. This is a very effective strategy and more funding to implement this would be a significant support for Richmond households experiencing homelessness.
- Rapid re-housing providers have been creatively using federal waivers to engage more private market landlords in their efforts to find housing for individuals and families experiencing homelessness.
- GRCoC partner agencies worked with the City Office of Community Wealth-Building to connect families in these shelters to the Richmond Resilience Initiative (guaranteed income pilot.)
- Homeward continues to engage with providers to leverage a large private grant Homeward received to address family homelessness. Some of this funding is being used to support households moving out of the pandemic response Non-Congregate Shelter.

### **Efforts to Address Homelessness More Broadly**

In addition to the work outlined above, GRCoC partner agencies continue to engage in efforts to address the challenge of homelessness in our region more broadly. These efforts are targeting all of our most vulnerable neighbors, including individuals and families in the NCS and IWS:

- Twice weekly case conferences to coordinate moves to housing and resources for families with children and unaccompanied adults.
- Implementing the new Emergency Housing voucher program (part of ARPA) to connect prioritized households to this resource. With significant unfunded support from Homeward and GRCoC providers, we are approaching 50% lease up — more than double the national lease up rates. [[https://www.hud.gov/program\\_offices/public\\_indian\\_housing/ehv/dashboard](https://www.hud.gov/program_offices/public_indian_housing/ehv/dashboard)]
- Homeward has been working with affordable housing and PSH providers to understand the potential of an investment with HOME-ARP funds from our regional partners as well as the Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development. Our goal is to identify a project that would ADD new permanent supportive housing units (and the services needed by the future tenants) that could be fast-tracked because of the availability and flexibility of financing.
- Homeward is working with our partners to review and enhance our processes that support our service coordination.

## **How the City Can Help**

I've outlined below some specific steps the City can take to help support GRCoC's efforts to address homelessness and serve households in the NCS and IWS. These are my expert recommendations based on client data and conversations with providers.

- Provide flexible funding to GRCoC shelter and housing providers (CARITAS, Commonwealth Catholic Charities, Daily Planet Health Services, HomeAgain, Housing Families First, RBHA, Salvation Army, St. Joseph's Villa, Virginia Supportive Housing, and YWCA) to
  - Support unmet staffing and operational needs. During the pandemic we saw the impact of increased operational funding on increased services and hours for people in need of assistance. Much of federal and state funding has strict requirements on eligible expenses and flexible funding can accelerate the implementation of these programs and new programs.
  - Provide landlord incentives in this tight housing market. Modest landlord incentives can help expedite a connection to housing for people moving into the private housing market, to use a voucher, or to safely reunite with family members or supportive roommates.
- Provide supportive services for residents and potential residents in Permanent Supportive Housing projects. Additional supportive services funding would increase access to this vital resources for those with the longest histories of homelessness and a need for ongoing supportive services.
- Provide flexible funding to Coordinated Outreach providers so that they can respond immediately to urgent needs of unsheltered individuals. Members of the Coordinated Outreach team include: CCC, Daily Planet Health Services, RBHA, and St. Joseph's Villa.
- Support GRCoC efforts to fast-track new PSH developments (with supportive services) to meet the need for an additional 350 units of PSH to address chronic homelessness.