

COALITION ON HOMELESSNESS, SAN FRANCISCO

Recommendations to Transform Shelter Access in San Francisco

The Coalition on Homelessness has extensively analyzed system failures and deciphered the definitive steps that need to be taken to correct the system and ease access for shelter clients. This set of recommendations is a response to on-going concerns about the Byzantine shelter reservation system, and combines our own advice with recommendations from various policy bodies working on these issues. We hope to transform the system to match its intent; to provide *emergency* shelter that is able to respond to *housing emergencies* in a way that is efficient and accountable.

Recommendation #1: Give a minimum shelter reservation of six weeks with stays up to six months. (currently it is 7 days with extensions possible). This would allow for stabilization of homeless people, decrease lines at resource centers, and provide more equity with non-resource center beds.

Recommendation #2: Help people with mental disabilities to obtain bed reservations. Once they have obtained a bed reservation, allow them to keep the reservations for at least six months, subject to renewal.

Recommendation #3: People who have housing date within a reasonable amount of time, should be able to extend on a month-to-month basis after time is up.

Recommendation #4: Extensive engagement and training of shelter monitors and shelter reservation desk clerks must take place whenever changes are made to shelter reservation policy. Staff training should also include crisis intervention training, recognizing and responding appropriately to symptoms of mental disabilities, and addressing needs of the mentally disabled and trauma survivors.

Recommendation #5: Cap the ratio of CNC beds to total shelter beds at the equivalent proportion of CAAP recipients to the total number of homeless in order to limit the number of one night shelter stays and ensure equitable access.

Recommendation #6: Ensure that vacant beds are released and made available to those waiting for shelter, and develop an accountability system to ensure that shelters appropriately release beds.

Recommendation #7: Fix broken CHANGES computer reservation system, assess reason for dropped reservations, frequent breakdowns and inaccuracies.

Recommendation #8: Ensure Minimum Standards legislation with regards to transportation are followed. Have all MAP vans equipped with wheelchair lifts, and if a van is unavailable, provide clients with two Muni tokens (in order to provide for return trips).

Recommendation #9: Allow individuals to call in to meet bed check times, and call reservation desk when reservation is dropped due to system error (staff or computer makes mistake).

Recommendation #10: Allow shelter seekers to make reservations at shelter site they have been sent to when their reservation has been dropped due to system error. If no bed available, shelter must locate alternative bed and provide transportation.

Recommendation #11: All shelter reservation centers should have access to all vacant shelter beds in all publicly funded shelters.

Recommendation #12: Only those with supervisor level clearance or higher should have the authority to drop reservations.

Recommendation #13: Ensure the Standards of Care Legislation is enforced. This includes adequately staffing the Shelter Monitoring Committee so that it can respond to noncompliance with fines through the DPH.

Recommendation #14: Systematically track and report turn-aways at shelter reservation sites. This should be monitored by the Shelter Monitoring Committee.

Recommendation #15: Post weekly updates regarding shelter and resource center information (hours of operation, curfew, number of beds, meal information, accessibility, location, phone numbers) on a centralized website and in various locations (resource centers and shelters).

Recommendation #16: Multi-Service Center South shelter beds should be open 24 hours, as funded by the Board and Mayor.

Recommendation #17: Ensure new residents receive orientation to shelter rules and how to access case management. This is not occurring in most shelters since July 1st changes.

Recommendation #18: Track homeless deaths in San Francisco and analyze preventable deaths to ensure responsive homeless programs.

Recommendation #19: Human Service Agency is now denying due process for single adults through the Shelter Grievance for the first 21 days of stay. Grievance Procedure rights should be re-instated, as people are frequently losing their beds because of shelter and computer error.

Recommendation #20: Maintain current level of shelter beds in San Francisco, including re-opening 150 Otis as funded by the Board and Mayor. If possible, increase number of beds to 2004 levels.