



COMMUNITY SAFETY
CITY OF DURHAM

Having a HEART for Our Unsheltered Neighbors

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Overview & Background



- Durham Community Safety Department (DCSD) was established as a new public safety department in July 2021 by Durham City Council.
- DCSD works to enhance public safety through community-centered approaches to prevention and intervention.
- After nearly a year of careful planning, DCSD launched four new crisis response programs that aim to connect people experiencing non-violent mental health crises or quality of life concerns with the right care by sending new responses that better match residents' needs.

HEART: 4 Programs



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HOLISTIC EMPATHETIC ASSISTANCE RESPONSE TEAM

- Crisis Call Diversion
- Community Response Team
- Co-Response
- Care Navigation

Our Approach to Homelessness



- We are all neighbors
- HEART serves all of our neighbors, including the most marginalized
- If we want to know what people need, we should ask them, listen to their answers, and respond accordingly

3 Pilots Focusing on Our Unsheltered Neighbors



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- Surveys to identify barriers to shelter
- Listening Sessions to identify needs of the homeless population
- Cold Weather Tent and Warming Center

Surveys with Unsheltered Neighbors



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- Goal was to identify barriers to shelter
- 50 neighbors actively living unsheltered or with a history of unsheltered homelessness were interviewed, and compensated

Surveys with Unsheltered Neighbors



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Barriers to Accessing Shelters	
Barrier	Number of Responses
No space at the shelter	29
Have to enter at a certain time	27
Time limit on staying there	23
Can't stay at shelters during the day	18
Bed given away before I could get there	17
Don't have phone access to receive call about bed	16
Don't have an ID	12
Unsure how to access	10
Language barriers	8
Location of shelter	6

Shelter Rules and Restrictions	
Barrier	Number of Responses
Shelter makes couples split up	15
Shelter won't let me return	14
Disabilities	11
Can not enter if drunk or high	9
Shelter doesn't allow families	9
Medication is not allowed	8
Pets are not allowed	6
Gender restrictions at shelter	5
Shelter is not welcoming to LGBTQIA+ folks	4
Immigration status	3
Can not drink/use drugs there	1

Barriers identified by neighbors as reasons they were unable or unwilling to enter a shelter, and experienced unsheltered homelessness as a result.

Shelter Components	
Barrier	Number of Responses
Possibility of getting sick	31
Cleanliness of shelter (ex. bed bugs)	29
Group setting	19
Robbery/theft of personal items	17
Safety concerns	16
Bullying/harassment from other people at the shelter	16
I don't think that anything I can do will change things	13
Embarrassment	11
Other shelter rules (list below)	7

Listening Sessions



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- Listening sessions performed with different demographics:
 - Unsheltered neighbors
 - Homeless families
 - Veterans
 - LGBTQ
 - Individuals who use substances

Listening Sessions Quotes



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- I stayed one night and then they didn't let me stay no more. And you just get tired of being rejected. So for me, I give up. Now I sleep on the streets.
- It's not fair. It's like I'm forever going to be blamed for who I was as a teenager. It's been almost a year since I've worked. I just got a job. Today will be my second day working, thank you lord. And the only reason is because he doesn't do background checks.
- It's nights that I go hungry. The shelter, them little portions - kids meals - that they give over there is not enough... So you go to bed hungry.
- Some nights I don't even want to deal with the [shelter] with all them guys. I have my mental illness but I take my meds every day to keep me sane... I continue on taking my meds because, I know where I where I will end up: in prison. So you know like it's, I sleep outside.
- It's just hard. It's really hard. I got really desperate one night, I hadn't eaten in two days. I had been the same clothes for three days. I was frustrated. I was ready to go for real. And I had relapsed... I just wanted to die.
- We lost our housing and tried to get into the shelter. We were told we had to sleep on the streets for one night first. I have a severely disabled child and he had to sleep on the streets before we could get help.
- I can't get out of this shelter until I get an apartment. I can't get an apartment until I get a job. I can't get a job until I have childcare. I am stuck in this shelter because I don't have childcare.

Emergency Warming Tents



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- Initiated in response to an arctic blast, went from conception to implementation in one week
- Shifted the paradigm of cold weather response from "homeless services" to "emergency services"
- Partnership between City, County, and NGOs

Emergency Warming Tents



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Cold Weather Tent Warming Center

All are welcome. Come as you are. Just show up.



HOLISTIC EMPATHETIC ASSISTANCE RESPONSE TEAM

This weekend only:

FRIDAY, JAN 19, 2024

Opens at 6pm

Overnight tent: 7pm–8am

SATURDAY, JAN 20

Warming center: 8am–7pm

Overnight tent: 7pm–8am

SUNDAY, JAN 21

Warming center: 8am–7pm

Overnight tent: 7pm–8am

There will be two heated tents located on the multipurpose field at East End Park
1200 N Alston Ave, Durham, NC 27701

Amenities provided: Snacks, portable toilets, and outlets to charge devices.

Emergency Warming Tents



Thank You!

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