

DuPagePads

Status of Services for People Experiencing Homelessness: We're Still Open!

1-4-2021

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, DuPagePads has continued to provide a spectrum of services for people experiencing homelessness in DuPage County. While our location of overnight shelter has changed to align with DuPage Health Department and CDC recommendations, we are not closed, and in fact, are providing more shelter, housing, and services than ever before. To provide the safest care possible for our clients, we have made continuous operational changes, including transitioning our Interim Housing (shelter) program to a hotel-based program and using a central triage process to access services.

An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure:

For the well-being of all people at risk of homelessness or who are experiencing homelessness, we are advocating that all entities in our community take all efforts to reduce the inflow of people into the shelter system. Even as DuPagePads has increased our shelter services by 33%, there simply is not enough shelter for everyone that asks. The National Alliance to End Homelessness, of which Pads is a member, recommends both Diversion & Prevention solutions.

- **Diversion:**

- **Good news: Anyone can do this with anyone.**
- The essential concept is intentional and assertive problem-solving to locate any reasonable and safe housing options, even if temporary. It generally involves answering two questions:
 - Whom can the person stay with? This can mean looking at extended family, friends, coworkers and employers, or other social assets.
 - What resources will it take (if any) to overcome any barriers? Common ones are:
 - Transportation to the host's home—This is usually the easiest to solve.
 - A host that needs household help (food, utilities, etc.)—This might work as an option, along with referral for community resources to make the situation manageable.
 - A host might be willing if they receive evidence of the urgency of the situation—They may simply need to hear that shelter is not readily available and COVID is still very real. We hear a lot of “I took them in during COVID (meaning the stay-at-home order), but that’s over.” It’s not.
 - Other issues can be more complex, but advocacy and negotiation (along with commitment by the client to do certain things) can go a long way.
- Some people can pay their own hotel room but haven’t identified or committed to it as an option.
- The lack of shelter capacity can also be leveraged to encourage people to seek appropriate residential care (i.e. nursing homes, addiction treatment, etc). In some cases, this not only solves immediate shelter needs, but is also the most appropriate and safest option for the person seeking help.

- **Prevention:**

- Homeless Prevention agencies provide financial assistance to keep people housed. The county’s Information and Referral service is the place to call, at 630-407-6500.
- We encourage everyone to get legal guidance (available from [Prairie State](#)) before vacating where they are living, especially with the current eviction moratorium(s).

Referrals:

First, a few requests:

1. Please let the individuals you are referring know that you are referring them for triage. Please do not tell them you are referring to us for a hotel stay, as that may or may not be possible.
2. Please do not direct people to the hotels even if you know the hotel locations. New referrals have to start with triage and cannot be sent to one of those locations.
3. Please try prevention and diversion efforts and know that we will try with anyone coming to us.

Triage Things to Know (in no particular order):

- All referrals go through triage which consists of information gathering, problem-solving, and decision-making.
- DuPage County residency is needed. Please refer people that are not DuPage residents to their home county. They are deprioritized here, so they will get faster help in their home county. The most common places are:
 - Kane Co (Hesed House for Aurora area, Lazarus House in central Kane, and Elgin PADS for Elgin area),
 - Will Co (Catholic Charities Daybreak program or Morningstar Mission),
 - Suburban Cook Co (Housing Forward or Beds Plus are closest or just see myentrypoint.org),
 - Cook Co (suggest going through their COC at allchicago.org)
- Backgrounds are reviewed:
 - No sex offenses or violent felony convictions. Being jailed here does not grant someone residency here.
 - We will reevaluate anyone on our Do Not Admit list.
- Prioritization and capacity
 - We shelter over 200 people nightly, which is 1/3 to 1/2 more per night than a year ago.
 - We are at our capacity of 115 hotel rooms daily, but we do have people exiting to housing regularly.
 - We go over capacity for families with children and referrals to our Medical Respite program.
 - Triage is not always 1st come, 1st served (i.e. person outside may be seen before person in a car).
 - When at capacity, people may be referred elsewhere, waitlisted, and/or served by our outreach team.

Triage hours:

- **Walk-ups are Monday – Friday from 8am-8pm, Saturday – Sunday (and holidays) from 8am – 4pm**
- **Phone triage – can call our main # 630-682-3846** and the first menu option is to our triage extension. It may go to a voicemail and a message should be left. We're increasing the number of live calls answered, and voicemails are returned as soon as possible.
 - Our separate Street Outreach hotline is voicemail-only and meant for community members to report people who are unsheltered. People who are unsheltered can self-report, but coming through triage is faster. Outreach staff conduct triage assessments in the community only for those in requiring outreach.

Location is at 703 W. Liberty, Wheaton – door is on the east side.



Current model of service:

Interim Housing is being operated out of 3 hotel locations.

- Rooms had been single-, family-, or couple-occupancy. We have started double-occupancy in appropriate cases to maximize capacity.
- Food and supplies are delivered weekly to those in need.
- We have offices on-site at each location where clients can receive on-site support, obtain basic needs items, and access a computer (i.e. for job searching).

Case Management is provided to all clients (largely by telephone) and focused on housing.

Career Employment Solutions program continues to support those seeking employment.

Street Outreach operates throughout the community responding to those that are unsheltered.

All Pads housing programs continue to move people into stable housing; we support 150+ apartments across DuPage.

*For hospitals interested in referring to our **Medical Respite** program, please contact us for details and procedures.*