



March 30, 2023

Salt Lake County Council of Governments
Salt Lake County Council of Mayors

RE: Required Winter Response Task Force and Plan for Salt Lake County

Dear Councilmember Dugan and Mayor Hall,

Subject to the requirements of Section 35A-16-502, the council of governments of Salt Lake County is required to annually convene a winter response task force in order to prepare and submit a winter response plan to the Office of Homeless Services on or before **August 1, 2023** to address the winter emergency shelter needs for the period of October 15, 2023 – April 30, 2024. Salt Lake County will provide administrative support to the task force.

The task force shall:

- a. select officers from the task force's members as the task force finds necessary; and
- b. meet as necessary to effectively conduct the task force's business and duties as prescribed by statute.

Prioritize:

- a. a site(s) located more than one mile from any homeless shelter;
- b. a site(s) located more than one mile from any permanent supportive housing, as verified by the office; and
- c. a site(s) in a municipality or unincorporated area of the applicable county that does not have a homeless shelter.

The task force may establish one or more working groups as is deemed appropriate to assist on specific issues related to the task force's duties, including a working group for site selection of temporary winter response shelters. The attached packet outlines the required members of the task force.

Targeted Winter Response Bed Count

The Salt Lake Valley Coalition to End Homelessness (SLVCEH), in coordination with the State Office of Homeless Services has determined the need for the winter of 2023-2024:

- **600** additional emergency shelter beds are needed for individuals including youth
- **Non-congregate shelter for 100 families and** resources to support up to 30 families in motel rooms as needed.

The bed count was determined through an in-depth analysis of Utah Homeless Management Information System data, utilization of programs related to emergency shelter access during the winter of 2022-2023, and the 2023 unsheltered homelessness Point in Time count.

SLVCEH acknowledges that permanent emergency shelter and supportive housing projects funded over the last year will be implemented over the next several months with the goal of providing additional capacity for individuals experiencing homelessness. However, the timing and effects on the shelter system of these projects as well as the inflow of people into homelessness are unknown so SLVCEH recommends planning for the current demonstrated need in our community.

Code Blue Response and Bed Count for Individuals

In addition, the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) will be monitoring for code blue events. A code blue event will be determined by evaluating forecasts and advisories produced by the National Weather Service. If it is predicted that temperatures will be 15 degrees Fahrenheit or less, including with wind chill, or other extreme weather conditions established by DHHS, a code blue event will be announced. In the case of a cold blue event being determined, the task force must have a plan in place to provide emergency shelter for an additional **200** individuals experiencing homelessness. Per code blue statute:

- Homeless shelters in affected counties may expand the capacity limit by up to 35% of conditional use permit and in compliance with building and fire code;
- Emergency shelters shall implement expedited intake procedures in coordination with the SLVCEH;
- A homeless shelter may not deny temporary shelter to any individual experiencing homelessness who requests access to the homeless shelter for temporary shelter unless the homeless shelter is at the capacity limit described in the 2023 H.B. 499, or if the individual presents a danger to the homeless shelter's staff or guests;
- Any indoor facility owned by a private organization, nonprofit organization, state government or local government entity may be used to provide temporary shelter as long as it is within building and fire code, and is exempt from licensure requirements for the duration of the code blue alert and seven days following the day on which the code blue alert ends;
- Homeless shelters, state and local government entities, and other organizations that provide services to individuals experiencing homelessness shall coordinate street outreach efforts to distribute to individuals experiencing homelessness any available resources for survival in cold weather, including clothing items and blankets;
- If no beds or other accommodations are available at any homeless shelter located within the affected county, a municipality may not enforce an ordinance that prohibits or abates camping for the duration of the code blue alert and the two days following the day on which the code blue alert ends;
- A state or local government entity, including a municipality, law enforcement agency and local health department may not enforce an ordinance or policy to seize any personal items used for survival in cold weather including clothing, blankets, tents, sleeping bags, heaters, stoves and generators; and
- A municipality or local government entity may not enforce any ordinance or policy that limits or restricts the ability for the provisions above.

Nothing in the code blue statute prohibits a municipality from issuing a safety alert based on other environmental conditions that present a substantial threat to the health or safety of individuals experiencing homelessness.

Available State Funding

To ensure a successful winter response, adequate funding to support the proposed plan is critical. As in past years, all the partners including the State, Salt Lake County, and municipalities will endeavor to support the necessary funding.

Office of Homeless Services funding available for winter response plan implementation:

- \$1,600,000 Homeless Shelter Cities Mitigation Reform Restricted Account funding to support a municipality's emergency services including safety, police, fire, etc. This funding will be available to eligible municipalities throughout the state on a per bed basis. It is likely that a substantial amount of this will be available to cities within Salt Lake County that have a qualifying winter response emergency shelter.
- \$2,000,000 to support operations of the winter response plan in Salt Lake County.

Hours of Operation

It is recommended that sites operate 24 hours a day. Last winter, anything short of 24 hour operations resulted in significant logistical challenges around coordinated entry, transportation among the winter response options, clients experiencing complexities and frustration around entering shelter, and onsite capacity management. The 24/7 approach will not support as many unduplicated individuals over the course of the winter, however, the increased stability of clients and programming results in more efficient delivery of services and diminished burden on service providers and the communities they serve.

We understand the complexities of planning for a winter response, which requires bringing together a suitable location, funding, a willing owner, and other logistical considerations, making it a difficult endeavor to coordinate. Thank you for coming to the table to ensure that individuals and families experiencing homelessness have a safe and warm place to be this upcoming winter season. We look forward to working with you through the planning process.

Sincerely,



Rob Wesemann
Co-Chair
Salt Lake Valley Coalition to End
Homelessness



Shawn McMillen
Co-Chair
Salt Lake Valley Coalition to End
Homelessness



Wayne Niederhauser
State Homelessness
Coordinator
Office of Homeless Services