

To: Mayor Snyder and Members of the Portland City Council
From: Kristen Dow, Director of Health & Human Services
Keith Gautreau, Fire Chief
CC: Danielle P. West, City Manager
Date: September 5, 2023
Re: Encampment Crisis Response Team Update #3



This memo is intended to provide an update on the purpose and progress of the City's Encampment Crisis Response Team (ECRT), established to coordinate resources among public and private partners to effectively transition as many individuals as possible into shelter or housing prior to the scheduled resolution of an encampment.

Since our August 14 update to the Council, the ECRT has continued its housing-focused efforts at the encampment along the Fore River Parkway Trail at Frederic Street. As of September 5, there were a total of 67 tents and approximately 48 individuals remaining at the encampment. City-wide there are currently 216 tents.

ECRT command staff and their sub-groups have continued to meet multiple times per week throughout the past three months. (Updates from the ECRT sub-groups are below.)

At the onset of the ECRT we stated that it was our goal to have some form of shelter or housing offered to those at the Fore River encampment. Between June 28 and September 6, over 170 shelter beds were offered to unhoused individuals at the Fore River encampment. Eighteen (18) individuals at the encampment have been placed in shelter and housing. As determined at the beginning of this process, the Fore River encampment will be resolved on September 6.

On September 18, the ECRT will next focus its resources on the encampment located at the MaineDOT Park & Ride lot, on Marginal Way. In the meantime, we will evaluate its performance at Fore River and, if needed, make operational or structural changes to improve future outcomes.

A resolution date for the Park & Ride encampment will be determined after the ECRT is active at that location and has conducted an initial evaluation.

1) Mobile Engagement Center

The Mobile Engagement Center continues its work to provide collaborative, organized, housing focused outreach amongst 23 group members representing four City of Portland departments and 10 different community partners. Since the last update, we have come together for one meeting with feedback and idea generation that continues to positively refine our efforts. From that meeting and a collaboration of the Basic Needs Group and the Mobile Engagement Center, a medical needs focused subgroup headed by Greater Portland Health was created and met. This group intends to complete focused work to address unmet medical and mental health needs in the encampments. Daily notification and collaboration across all of the outreach teams continues in real time regarding HSC bed availability and has been evolved to include real time feedback as beds are accepted and occupied. This work has helped in many of the successful placements across the ECRT into the HSC from the Fore River encampment. Continued feedback from group members on barriers to accepting shelter has led to a collaboration between

CommonSpace and the HSC to be able to move and store the personal belongings of encampment members accepting shelter at the HSC. Additionally, feedback and subsequent work has organized mental health and crisis resources leading up to and surrounding the September 6 resolution date. As we move forward, we will continue to meet and actively work on innovative ways to maximize information flow and collaboration amongst the many varied organizations to present consistent and effective housing focused outreach efforts.

2) Performance & Data Management

The Data Group has met recently and started talks with Maine State Housing on data that is available through HMIS and the Coordinated Entry Assessments. As we move forward the goal will be to create reports that can be pulled from HMIS in a streamlined process. The recent focus of the Data Group was to identify data points and metrics that could be used, the overall data points the group landed on are set up into 4 Areas of Performance: Number of Encampment Residents, Exit Destinations, Services Offered, and Cross-System Enrollments.

3) Case Conferencing

The Case Conferencing group consists of The Opportunity Alliance, Preble Street, Spurwink, Common Space (Amistad), United Way Southern Maine, Maine State Housing Authority, HUD TA, Northern Light Mercy Hospital, and City of Portland (Public Health and Social Services). We continue to hold two standing weekly meetings (Monday and Friday) with providers coming together to discuss housing opportunities and plans. The shared by name list is a live document that can be updated in real time as progress is made. The goal of this group is to create customized plans resulting in successful placements. We have been successful with assisting 11 individuals into the Homeless Services Center, 2 into Elena's Way and 3 others into housing.

4) Basic Needs

The Basic Needs section continues to coordinate food delivery, medical services, portable toilets, dumpster, and potable water on site. City staff have continued to offer regular dumpster service (as needed), and twice daily porta potty cleaning and restocking. Due to the decommissioning of the site and cleanup on September 6, the dumpster and toilets will be removed so they can be re-deployed at the next ECRT focus area.

5) Housing Inventory

The Housing Inventory Group has been meeting regularly with a standing weekly meeting. The group consists of individuals from CHOM, Preble Street, United Way of Southern Maine, the City of Portland (Social Services), Portland Housing Authority and HUD TA. We have continued much of the early work; maintaining a spreadsheet that tracks anticipated shelter housing placements. This sheet is shared with staff from each of the local shelters (HSC, Milestone, Elena's Way, Joe Kreisler, Florence House, & Through These Doors) with the ability to update in real time. The Inventory Team continues to organize weekly Housing Fairs on site at the Fore River location, with the most recent fairs occurring on August 16th, 24th and 31st. Partners from Greater Portland Health, Homeless Services Center, Public Health, Preble Street RRH, Spurwink, Mobile Medical Outreach, Portland Housing Authority, MSHA were in attendance. Staff were able to meet with 24 individuals, of that group 11 were added or reinstated to Portland Housing

Authority's centralized wait list, 8 applied for Public Housing with PHA, 3 BRAP and 14 other housing applications with various management companies completed.