



**CITY OF PORTLAND**  
**Social Services Division**

**MEMORANDUM**

**TO: Members of the Health & Human Services and Public Safety Committee**  
**FROM: Chelsea Hoskins, Resettlement Coordinator**  
**DATE: November 9, 2021**  
**RE: Asylum Seeker Update**

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Since the October 12th HHS & PS committees meeting, The City of Portland has continued to see large numbers of New Mainers arriving in Portland. October, 2021 saw some of the highest numbers of newly arriving families on record for a one month period, comparable only to the summer of 2019 which was spent in the Exposition building. For the month of October, 2021, 45 families totaling 145 individuals presented to GA seeking shelter who reported being unhoused and in need of hotel placement. Of those, 39 families for 128 individuals were newly arriving families.

130 families of mixed family make-ups and backgrounds totaling 429 individuals are currently in hotels. An additional 29 families for 84 individuals are residing at the Family Shelter.

Since October 12th's HHS & PS committee meeting, some new curriculum and outreach has occurred across a few hotels. We have implemented triage case management at the Quality Inn and Comfort Inn. These informal triage workers consist of a Family Shelter staff member, interns from SMCC and Gateway Community Resources, and CHOWs from the City's Minority Health Program. These staff members meet with newly arriving families, provide an overview of area resources, and assistance in applying for essential benefits.

Medical outreach teams continue to present on site to the Quality Inn consisting of WIC, GPH, MMC, South Portland's Local Health Officer, City of Portland's Maternal Child Health Nurses and a new addition of Care Partners. South Portland's Local Health Officer and their Social Services Division staff member access Comfort Inn on Tuesdays to assist with orientation to resources and continue to offer connections to healthcare and other needs during these visits.

On Wednesday November 3rd, a pop-up vaccine clinic at the Quality Inn took place which occurred as the result of several area providers working collaboratively. This clinic offered both testing and COVID vaccinations. Providers on the ground reported that 16 individuals received

vaccinations, and those who arrived later in the day received referrals to MAIN's standing Friday Vaccine clinic. Ongoing meetings and conversations will be held to determine the necessity and frequency of future clinics.

An Opportunity Alliance SNAP-Ed staff member working alongside Preble Street's advocacy staff member, held a pop-up nutrition education class at the Comfort Inn where families received information related to nutrition education, proper food storage, microwave cooking, and SNAP benefit education. These two individuals plan to continue to outreach Comfort Inn again next week, and are planning on sessions to be held at the Quality Inn.

ILAP is working on materials for newly arriving families about the changes in immigration process and policy which require additional processing steps in some instances.

Prosperity Maine has dedicated to holding a twice monthly virtual education session on how to be a successful tenant, as families and individuals search for housing.

There has been a renewed energy in the community related to helping families since the last HHS & PS committee meeting. However, the vast majority of gaps in care presented at that time continue to exist. These gaps in care are primarily related to transportation, food access, and housing. Some hotels still do not have options for cooking or even microwave use and others do not have laundry options; families continue to be challenged by transportation to get into town for picking up prescriptions, going to appointments, grocery shopping, or even going to a friend's home to cook or use their washing machines when their hotel lacks these options. Even with many food service distributors and providers dropping off meals or non-perishables, there is still a huge need in relation to cooked and prepared meals. Unfortunately, staffing challenges across agencies continue to limit the collective capacity to cook and deliver prepared foods.

We have recently partnered with two property owners in Old Orchard Beach who opened up their properties as winter rentals that they generally close for the season. The benefits of these properties is that each unit has stove top burners and refrigerators. Families are moving this week and next. Many are excited about the opportunity to finally be able to cook for their families. 20 families for 61 individuals out of the above outlined hotel family numbers will be moving into the Old Orchard Beach units.

Although the distance from Portland is a challenge as many families are connected to Medical care in Portland and transportation will need to be sorted out, many providers have reached out to offer support for these families. A couple of local Pastors have offered to assist families with transportation into town. They and other Biddeford entities have also offered to start collections for quarters for families to be able to access the nearby laundromats in the town, as well as toiletries and diapers. Good Shepherd has offered to donate culturally appropriate foods and partnered with Youth Full Maine to deliver the food to the families at the properties. A few African grocery markets in Portland are also brainstorming how they might be able to bring families food purchased with their GA vouchers if transportation proves to be a barrier. Portland WIC has collaborated with YCCAC for a transfer of WIC services, and YCCAC has been a great

connector for other area resources. Biddeford community groups, their adult education office, MIRC, and WIONN have been very helpful as well in connecting to area providers and resources, as has the OOB Town Manager and Fire Chief, offering up services and asking how they can be helpful.

As the dust settles and families move in, the City's Resettlement Coordinator will continue to work with the above named providers to pull together an OOB team for correspondence, and a resource packet for families to be as prepared as possible as more services and offers to assist are received.

This transition of families to Old Orchard Beach has been heartwarming, and is fantastic to see the wraparound supports being offered and falling into place. One thing of concern remains; these are all temporary situations and families will still need to locate permanent housing, ideally before the end of their stay so they are not routed back to another temporary situation in a different hotel or the shelter.

More housing options which have area providers and resources within close proximity, and housing units which are fully outfitted, continue to be a great need. A more expansive and free, or affordable transportation system, would also greatly benefit all to be able to transition families to other towns while allowing them to stay connected to providers, their churches and get their needs met is in very high demand as numbers continue to rise.