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## MEMORANDUM

**TO:** Thomas, A. Golden, Jr. 

**FROM:** Lisa Golden, Director of Health and Human Services

**CC:** Maura Fitzpatrick, Director of Homelessness Initiative

**DATE:** December 13, 2022

**SUBJECT:** **MOTION RESPONSE – 12/6/22 - C. Jenness - Req. City Mgr. Have The Proper Department Provide Report On Progress Of Implementation Of The Winter Protocol Plan For Individuals And Families Experiencing Homelessness Within The City**

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Over the last several years, the City has worked with homeless service providers to develop a Winter Weather Emergency Plan, also referred to as a “winter protocol.” The winter protocol typically goes into effect during periods of extreme cold weather or heavy snowfall. The protocol has not yet been triggered this season, however the City has worked extensively with providers to update the plan and to circulate it amongst agencies that frequently contact individuals experiencing homelessness to ensure preparedness for the winter months ahead.

The winter weather emergency plan is outlined in the attached document, which has been disseminated to partner agencies. As described, all individuals who wish to come inside are to be referred to the Lowell Transitional Living Center (LTLC), which triages requests and attempts to identify bed space, either at the shelter or through the non-congregate hotel program. Bed capacity at LTLC and through the hotel program is expanded during winter weather emergencies. These added beds are meant to be short term, and are not sustainable long term options due to staffing, funding, and safety-related factors.

The City works alongside service providers throughout the year to monitor the population of outside sleepers in Lowell. The number of individuals living outdoors, as well as their locations is discussed in weekly coordinating meetings. Outreach teams, including CO-OP staff and LPD engage with many of these individuals on a routine basis. The long term objective is to provide permanent supportive housing and wraparound services to these individuals. Additional outreach is conducted to all known encampments by City personnel and other providers in the lead-up to extreme winter weather events to make unhoused individuals living outdoors aware

of shelter opportunities. These efforts provide a basis for understanding how many additional beds will be required during winter protocol.

It is important to note that while the winter protocol is placed in effect only under limited circumstances, colder temperatures during winter months may impact the volume of individuals seeking shelter. Outside of the winter protocol, LTLC remains the main point of contact for these individuals, and will work with them to identify immediate alternate house arrangements and connect them to financial resources.

As reflected in the attached document, the Eliot Day Program provides warm space for unhoused individuals between 8:00 AM and 2:00 PM. In past years, this program has not seen an increased head count during winter weather emergencies, but has observed an increased demand for clothing, blankets, and hot food items.

While the City and its partners work diligently to bring unhoused individuals inside to ensure their safety during extreme winter weather events, there generally remains a number of individuals that are unwilling to come inside. The ability of outreach workers to take worthwhile action in these situations is limited.



# 2022-2023 WINTER WEATHER EMERGENCY PLAN

**Lowell Transitional Living Center will be the primary destination for any individual adult seeking shelter, and will serve as the front door for emergency winter overnight services.**

Anyone looking for placement should call the shelter at **(978) 458-9888** before taking guests to the building to ensure an appropriate disposition. Once there, they will be triaged for a bed at LTLC.

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**If LTLC is full, staff there will conduct a referral to the non-congregate hotel program.** Again, a referral to a hotel will only take place if the shelter is at full capacity.

**Individuals should NOT be referred directly to hotel program** during an emergency event, nor should they be sent to “get a hotel room”.

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**If an individual needs a warm place to wait** while a bed is being determined, the **Eliot Day Program** will be open from 8am to 2pm. In the event of significant snowfall, they may delay opening by one hour to allow for snow removal.

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If you encounter an individual who appears to be in distress related to the cold, and who seems to be significantly impaired by mental illness, a Section 12 may be appropriate. You can call the Lahey Emergency Services Program for evaluation support. (978 455 3397 or 800 830 5177)