Safe Space Shelter Operations Plan

Background

Model Cities of St. Paul, Inc. is a 57-year-old 501c3 non-profit organization that provides services across the housing continuum. Our mission is *to promote social and economic prosperity by providing access to opportunities that stabilize and develop families and communities*. We envision an equitable community where all people have access to housing, economic opportunities, and culturally responsive services that help them thrive.

In November 2019, Model Cities, in partnership with Ramsey County began operating Safe Space Shelter. Originally, Safe Space operated only during winter months; however, Safe Space was expanded to a year-round shelter that serves nearly 2,000 adults each year. Safe Space is currently located at the Ramsey County Government Building at 160 East Kellogg Boulevard in St. Paul. The shelter has 64 beds and operates overnight from 10:00pm to 9:00 am, 365 days per year.

Model Cities received notice in Summer 2023 that Ramsey County would be preparing to sell the Government Center East building, where Safe Space has been housed and the shelter would no longer be able to operate out of the building after 2024. In May 2024, Model Cities' prior relocation partner revoked their agreement to house Safe Space, leaving the future of Safe Space and those that relied on its services unknown. Central Baptist Church responded to Model Cities' call to the community for help in finding a location to house shelter operations and their partnership with Model Cities was announced in October 2024.

Central Baptist Church had already been providing winter warming space for community in need and the congregation had expressed interest in expanding their emergency shelter services as they saw the critical need grow. Model Cities is incredibly grateful to Central Baptist Church for their generous partnership and use of 2 floors of their building. A lease has been signed between Model Cities and Central Baptist Church for a period of two years, with an option to renew for a third year. Starting November 4, 2024, Model Cities intends to begin operating the Safe Space overnight shelter every night at this location from 10:00pm until 9:00 am.

Shelter Reservations

All guests of Safe Space require reservations. The Ramsey County Shelter Entry & Diversion team (SHED) books shelter reservations for beds at Model Cities Safe Space. This ensures guests seeking shelter are guaranteed a bed each night, as long as they have a reservation and arrive at Safe Space upon our designated opening time of 10:00pm each night.

People in need of emergency shelter, as well as community partners, are encouraged to contact the team for assistance using one of the following methods:

- Phone: 651-266-1050
- Email: ShelterEntry@ramseycounty.us
- In-person: Saint Paul Opportunity Center, 422 Dorothy Day Place, Saint Paul, MN 55102 (Second floor)

Safe Space Shelter Overview

Safe Space is an overnight shelter for adults experiencing crisis. Individuals must be unaccompanied (with no children or other dependents with them). Individuals must be 18 years of age, ambulatory

enough to get in and out of bed on their own and take care of toileting/hygiene needs independently, and not previously trespassed from Safe Space.

The goal of Safe Space Shelter is to create pathways toward a better community, with a specific focus of not only providing a safe place for community members to sleep, but also a safe place to refocus and create a plan for making today better than yesterday. Safe Space Shelter provides beds for all gender identities to bridge the gap between homelessness and housing stability. At Model Cities, we believe that shelter is much more than providing a bed, it is providing hospitality to those in need.

Shelter amenities at the new location will include sleeping accommodations for up to 64 shelter guests, access to restrooms, and a shower. Model Cities will also provide basic hygiene items and clothing necessities such as socks, underwear and winter accessories.

To maintain a safe and clean environment, Model Cities also plans to add a commercial sized washer and dryer to accommodate daily laundering of bedding items that are provided to shelter guests. Model Cities also contracts with a local janitorial vendor to provide daily cleaning services (including, sweeping, mopping, cleaning of bathrooms & staffing areas, trash pickup of outside entrances and any other common areas utilized for shelter operations).

Additionally, bagged lunches are typically provided to guest 2-3 times/week (subject to volunteer efforts and through donations from Twin Cities Mobile Loaves). On days when bagged lunches are not provided, Model Cities typically provides guests with breakfast bars, coffee, or cocoa. Bagged lunches and snacks are only distributed during morning hours between 6 am - 9am as guests leave shelter.

Staffing

Our shelter team is typically made up of 10-12 individuals, including full-time and part-time Shelter Advocates, a program manager and coordinator. Shetler advocates are mainly responsible for providing on-site support to guests, ensuring bedding is laundered daily, collecting data for HMIS, and carrying out established processes and procedures to help maintain a positive environment for guests. The Program Manager (1.0 FTE) provides professional management of the Safe Space program, including staffing, community partner engagement, shelter resources and other day-to-day management activities. We also currently have one full-time Shelter Operations Coordinator to assist with onsite day-to-day operations during daytime hours (including coordination of staff coverage, janitorial services and security).

To support program growth and create better operating efficiencies, Model Cities plans to hire a second coordinator to support night-time shelter operation activities. Additionally, a Program Director position will be added to this team and will support both our shelter services and supportive housing programs. We anticipate at least 50% of responsibilities related to this new position will focus on shelter activities and the other 50% will be split between supportive housing services and general administrative tasks.

During night hours, guest intakes are completed upon arrival at the shelter, after which shelter staff provide each guest with a mat, pillow, and linens. Each guest has a clearly defined, separate sleeping space with adequate space between sleeping cots layered with mats, as well as access to bathrooms and showers, basic personal hygiene products (e.g., toothbrushes, toothpaste, soap, deodorant, pads, tampons), and water. Shelter staff provide first-time guests a copy of Model Cities' Privacy and Clients' Rights form, an HMIS release of information form (if they are not already in HMIS), and a brief orientation to shelter facilities, basic expectations, and available amenities.

During morning hours, shelter staff provide guests with coffee, tea, or water and bagged lunches 2-3 days/week, with a focus on creating a calming environment as guests prepare to start their day. Shelter Advocates engage with guests, provide access to basic hygiene or clothing items (upon request), and connect them to homeless services outreach workers (e.g., financial workers, public health, or other outreach staff) to facilitate access to existing community services and resources to move toward housing stability.

Security

For security services, we contract with two local firms to provide security monitoring and de-escalation services at Safe Space from 8pm until 10 am daily. There are typically two security guards onsite at Safe Space from 8pm - 12 midnight and one guard onsite from 12 midnight until 10 am. Upon approval of our request to expand from 25 to 64 shelter beds, Model Cities will look at increasing onsite security to two guards from 5 am - 10 am daily.

Our average staff/guard-to-guest ratio during awake hours (10:00 pm - 1:00 am & 6:00 am - 9:00 am) will be roughly 1:16 and the ratio during non-awake hours (1:00 am - 6:00 am) will be 1:21 (assuming we are at full capacity with 64 guests).

At least one staff person will always be on each floor during nightly check-in and during awake hours. Security staff will rotate throughout the space and between each floor, as well as the outdoor areas throughout their shift.

Discharge Guidelines

Model Cities' key shelter policies are designed to prioritize the needs and dignity of shelter guests, as well as the safety of guests and program staff. Whenever possible, it is Model Cities' intent to deliver services without exclusion or denial. Exceptions to this intent include the following restrictions and behaviors:

- Legally not permitted to use the shelter due to trespass or previous restriction
- Drug dealing on premises
- Exploiting or trafficking others on premises
- Physical or sexual assault of staff or another guest
- Incapable of caring for oneself (i.e., cannot use a bed or take care of toileting and hygiene independently)
- Medical requirements or risk of transferring infectious disease
- Intentional damage to property

In most cases, restrictions are not permanent and can range anywhere from 3 nights to 30 days depending on the severity and nature of the incident that led to the restriction. If a guest is asked to leave the shelter or denied services, Model Cities requires they be informed of the grievance process.