



Montgomery County
Department of
Health and Human Services



YOUR WAY HOME
MONTGOMERY COUNTY

MONTGOMERY COUNTY, PA CODE BLUE SHELTER AND HOMELESS SERVICES REVIEW

2023-2024



What is Code Blue?

In periods of extreme, life-threatening weather, defined as overnight temperatures or wind chill at or below 32 degrees Fahrenheit for two hours or more, multiple county agencies and private health / social organizations will provide temporary shelter, food and clothing to those without adequate shelter. The Office of Public Health is responsible for recommending Code Blue emergencies to the County Commissioners based on monitoring of National Weather Service forecasts. Code Blue declarations will be issued for a specific duration, usually based on 24-hour increments, and will end as initially declared unless formally extended by the Office of Public Health.



About the 2023-2024 Code Blue Season

In the 2023-2024 season, Montgomery County saw an increase in the number of individual organizations who participated in providing Code Blue sheltering throughout the county. Ten (10) individual agencies provided emergency sheltering, as well as short-term hotel stays through Your Way Home's Street Outreach.

Effective on December 18, 2023, the Code Blue threshold was changed to be declared when overnight temperatures or wind chill are at or below 32 degrees Fahrenheit for two hours or more. The County Commissioners made the decision to raise the temperature threshold in response to feedback from community partners and national best-practices. As a result, individuals were able to access shelter more regularly, however a greater strain was expressed across the shelter system and provider network.

This report will summarize the impact and lessons learned from the 2023-2024 Code Blue season. **The information utilized in this report was provided directly from Code Blue providers utilizing a digital survey**, regular feedback as well as the data entered in the County's Homeless Management Information System. During the season the Your Way Home Program Manager and Code Blue partners met weekly to discuss shelter operations and to help resolve any needs or concerns. Discussions from those meetings informed the data collected for this report.

Code Blue Declaration Summary



2022-2023: Montgomery County Department of Public Safety declared Code Blue for **38 total nights**. The first declaration was made on November 17, 2022 and the final declaration was made on March 17, 2023.

2023-2024: Montgomery County Office of Public Health declared Code Blue for **83 total nights**. The first declaration was made on November 20, 2023 and the final declaration was made on April 24, 2024.

- 74 declarations were made after the updated declaration expectations began on December 18, 2023.
- There were 55% more declarations made in the 2023-2024 season

First Year (New) Code Blue Shelter Providers

Church on the Mall - Plymouth Meeting (Eastern Region)

Address: 500 W Germantown Pike Entrance #3 Plymouth Meeting PA

Primary contact: Gail Plant, CAARSEA Shelter Lead Liaison

Capacity: 35 single adults

Operation hours: Monday-Thursday 8pm – 8am

Funding provided: \$9,500 in philanthropic funds from the Office of Housing & Community Development (OHCD) for shelter operations

Maximum Capacity	35 adults
Total Operating Nights	56
Total Unique Clients Served	155
Total Bed Nights Provided	736
Average Guests Per Night	27
Highest Enrollment	27
Lowest Enrollment	1

Activity Summary

- Operated 17 nights when the County did not officially declare Code Blue
- Volunteers: 156 community members volunteered at the shelter
- Meals: The shelter provided meals to guests each night they were open
- Incidents: There were approximately 15 situations that necessitated assistance from outside agencies such as Montgomery County Mobile Crisis, police, EMS and Street Outreach

Haws Ave United Methodist Church - Norristown (Eastern Region)

Address: 800 N Marshall Street Norristown PA 19401

Primary contact: Brandon Law, Community Outreach Director

Capacity: 40 single adults during County declarations only

Operation hours: Code Blue declarations 7pm-7am

Funding provided: None requested

Maximum Capacity	40 adults
Total Operating Nights	86
Total Unique Clients Served	40
Total Bed Nights Provided	2795
Average Guests Per Night	29
Highest Enrollment	40
Lowest Enrollment	19

Activity Summary

- Partnered with Norristown Fire Chief Tom O'Donnell for fire safety and code enforcement
- Operated 3 nights when the County did not officially declare Code Blue
- Volunteers: Hopeworx staff and church volunteers, totals not reported
- Meal: The shelter provided meals to guests each night they were open
- Incidents: There were approximately 2 situations that necessitated assistance from outside agencies such as Montgomery County Mobile Crisis, police, EMS, Street Outreach

Lower Merion Code Blue Pilot - Houses of Worship (Eastern Region)

Address: 755 East Lancaster Ave, Ardmore PA 19003

Primary contact: Shawn Kraemer, Township Commissioner

Capacity: Provided beds for up to 5 single men during County declared Code Blue nights

Operation hours: Code Blue declarations 9pm-9am

Funding provided: \$2,000 offered by OHCD, non-profit partner Eldernet withdrew participation

Maximum Capacity	5 men
Total Operating Nights	58
Total Unique Clients Served	6
Total Bed Nights Provided	unavailable
Average Guests Per Night	2
Highest Enrollment	4

Activity Summary

- Referrals were provided directly from Lower Merion Police Department
- Volunteers: 100 community members volunteered at the shelter
- Meals: The shelter provided about 90 meals to shelter guests this season
- Incidents: There were 2 situations that necessitated assistance from outside agencies such as Montgomery County Mobile Crisis, police, EMS, Street Outreach

Lansdale Life Church (Eastern Region)

Address: 407 N Broad St, Lansdale, PA 19446

Primary contact: Pastor Chris Bonner

Capacity: Provided 20 beds for single women during County declarations only

Operation hours: Code Blue declaration 9pm-9am, Limited days

Funding provided: None requested; received Your Way Home supplies from Governing Board including pillows, blankets and bed bug protection covers

Maximum Capacity	20 women
Total Operating Nights	12
Total Unique Clients Served	5
Total Bed Nights Provided	9
Average Guests Per Night	1.5
Highest Enrollment	5
Lowest Enrollment	0

Activity Summary

- Non-ADA accessible space
- Opened only during the month of December 2023 during County declarations
- Volunteers: 32 community members volunteered at the shelter
- Meals: 24 meals were provided throughout the Code Blue season
- Incidents: None reported

Lansdale Life will not be returning as a Code Blue provider for the 2024-2025 season due to the low utilization rate.

Returning Code Blue Shelter Providers

Norristown Hospitality Center at St. John's Episcopal Church (Eastern Region)

Address: 23 E Airy St, Norristown, PA 19401

Primary contact: Michael Kingsley, Shelter Director

Capacity: Provided 25 beds for single adults

Operation hours: Code Blue declarations 8pm-8am

Funding provided: Received \$45,000 in Homeless Assistance Program (HAP) funding from OHCD

Maximum Capacity	25 adults
Total Operating Nights	83
Total Unique Clients Served	210
Total Bed Nights Provided	1893
Average Guests Per Night	23
Highest Enrollment	29
Lowest Enrollment	5

Activity Summary

- Volunteers: 15 community members volunteered at the shelter
- Staff: 5 Code Blue Staff Members
- Meals: The shelter provided over 2,000 individual meals to shelter guests
- Incidents: There were approximately 7 situations that necessitated assistance from outside agencies such as Montgomery County Mobile Crisis, police, EMS, Street Outreach

Trinity Lutheran Church (Eastern Region)

Address: 1000 W Main St. Lansdale, PA 19446

Primary contact: Mark Lanan, Lead shelter contact

Capacity: Provided 22 beds for single men

Operation hours: 8pm-8am, self-declared and County declarations

Funding provided: None requested

Maximum Capacity	22 men
Total Operating Nights	86
Total Unique Clients Served	98
Total Bed Nights Provided	1371
Average Guests Per Night	16
Highest Enrollment	26
Lowest Enrollment	5

Activity Summary

- Created Code Blue Manual, and offered trainings to providers
- Shelter is not ADA accessible
- Operated 4 nights that were not official County declarations
- Volunteers: 92 community members volunteered at the shelter
- Meals: The shelter provided 157 unique meals to guests.
- Incidents: There were approximately 8 situations that necessitated assistance from outside agencies such as Montgomery County Mobile Crisis, police, EMS, Street Outreach

Pottstown Beacon of Hope - Various Churches - Pottstown (Western Region)

Address: Check-in Location located 316 E High Street Pottstown PA 19464

Primary contact: Tom Niarhos, Executive Director

Capacity: Provided an average of 29 beds to single adults

Operation hours: 7pm-8am, November 1- April 30

Funding provided: None provided

Maximum Capacity	29 adults
Total Operating Nights	211
Total Unique Clients Served	unavailable
Total Bed Nights Provided	3,497
Average Guests Per Night	21
Highest Enrollment	35
Lowest Enrollment	9

Activity Summary

- Volunteers: Over 200 community members volunteered at the shelter
- Meals: The shelter provided over 250 unique meals to guests
- Incidents: There were 20 situations that necessitated assistance from outside agencies such as Montgomery County Mobile Crisis, police, EMS, Street Outreach

The Salvation Army Norristown; Emergency Code Blue (Eastern Region)

Address: 533 Swede Street Norristown, PA 19401

Primary contact: Jacqueline Hines, Emergency Housing Supervisor

Operation hours: Provided as needed stays for 1-2 families during official County declarations

Funding provided: Received \$170,000 in Community Development Block Grant funding from OHCD for year-round Emergency Shelter operations, including Code Blue

Maximum Capacity	1-2 families
Total Operating Nights	28
Total Unique Clients Served	38
Total Bed Nights Provided	100
Average Guests Per Night	3
Highest Enrollment	7
Lowest Enrollment	2

Activity Summary

- Volunteers: No volunteers provided services to Code Blue families
- Staff: 2 shelter monitors were employed to staff the Family Shelter in addition to Code Blue guests
- Meals: The shelter provided 150 individual meals this Code Blue season.
- Incidents: No reported incidents occurred.

The Salvation Army- Norristown; Women's Winter Shelter (Eastern Region)

Address: 533 Swede Street Norristown, PA 19401

Primary contact: Jacqueline Hines, Emergency Housing Supervisor

Capacity: Provided beds for 18 women nightly

Operation hours: 8pm-8am nightly- January 1- March 31, 2024

Funding provided: Received \$81,059 in Homeless Assistance Program funding from OHCD

Maximum Capacity	18 women
Total Operating Nights	90
Total Unique Clients Served	59
Total Bed Nights Provided	1,262
Average Guests Per Night	14
Highest Enrollment	18
Lowest Enrollment	5

Activity Summary

- Volunteers: No volunteers provided services to Code Blue families
- Staff: 2 shelter monitors were employed to staff the Family Shelter in addition to Winter Shelter guests
- Meals: The shelter provided meals for each guest
- Incidents: There were 2 situations that necessitated assistance from outside agencies such as Montgomery County Mobile Crisis, police, EMS, Street Outreach

The Salvation Army- Pottstown; Emergency Code Blue (Western Region)

Address: 137 King St, Pottstown, PA 19464

Primary contact: Ludie Louis-Juste- Housing Resource Manager

Capacity: Provided as needed stays for 1-2 families during official County declarations

Operation hours: 8pm-8am

Funding provided: Received \$181,154 in Community Development Block Grant funding from OHCD for year-round Emergency Shelter operations, including Code Blue

Maximum Capacity	1-2 families
Total Operating Nights	18
Total Unique Clients Served	28
Total Bed Nights Provided	58
Average Guests Per Night	3
Highest Enrollment	6
Lowest Enrollment	2

Activity Summary

- Volunteers: No volunteers provided services to Code Blue families
- Staff: 2 shelter monitors were employed to staff the Family Shelter in addition to Code Blue guests
- Meals: The shelter provided meals for each guest
- Incidents: No reported incidents occurred.

Shelter Overflow and Emergency Hotel Stays

Access Services Inc.

Address: 4070 Butler Pike, Plymouth Meeting, PA 19462

Primary contact: Colleen MacNamara; Director of Housing Services

Capacity: As needed for those unable to get to shelter

Operation hours: Code Blue declarations; overnight hoteling until declaration ends

Funding provided: Access Services received \$240,000 in Homeless Assistance Program (HAP) funding from OHCD. \$51,717.25 was spent on hoteling during the Code Blue season.

2023-2024 Code Blue Season Access Services Hotel Overflow Data

Total Clients Enrolled	175
Total Bed Nights Provided	763
Highest Enrollment	14
Lowest Enrollment	1

Activity Summary

- Completed safety planning with all overflow shelter guests
- Provided directions to shelters locations for all callers
- Provided lifesaving gear and supplies

Agency Concerns

- New declaration threshold created an increased strain on volunteer base
- Increase in those experiencing homelessness caused shelters to fill up more quickly
- Not all individuals are able to access hotels. Households need- ID, the ability to rent from a participating hotel (have not been removed previously due to damage or behavior), and to access the hotel during their previously established check-in parameters
- Hotels have begun to push back against their use as short-term housing
- Funding availability cannot keep up with the increased need for overflow hoteling

Coordinated Entry/Call Center Operations

Montgomery County Community Connections

Address: 1430 DeKalb Street, Norristown, PA 19401, (610) 275-3522

Primary contact: Francesca Kelly; Coordinated Entry Supervisor

Operation hours: Weekdays 7am-7pm

Access Services Mobile Crisis + Street Outreach After Hours

Note: Street Outreach managed all after-hours calls until January 18 2024, then partnered with Mobile Crisis when the volume of calls exceeded the staffing capacity.

Address: 4070 Butler Pike, Plymouth Meeting, PA 19462; (855) 634-4673

Primary contact: Colleen MacNamara; Director of Housing Services

Operation hours: 7pm-7am; all weekend hours

Funding provided: Access Services received \$240,000 in Homeless Assistance Program (HAP) funding from OHCD. \$51,717.25 was spent on hoteling during the Code Blue season

United Way - PA 211

Address: 1250 Penn Ave, Pittsburgh, PA 15222

Primary contact: Michele Breisinger, Senior Director, PA 211 Southwest

Operation hours: 24 hours a day; 7 days a week

After-Hours Calls Received by Month

Montgomery County Coordinated Entry and Call Center providers received a total of 1,597 calls from consumers requesting information about Code Blue sheltering during the 2023-2024 season.

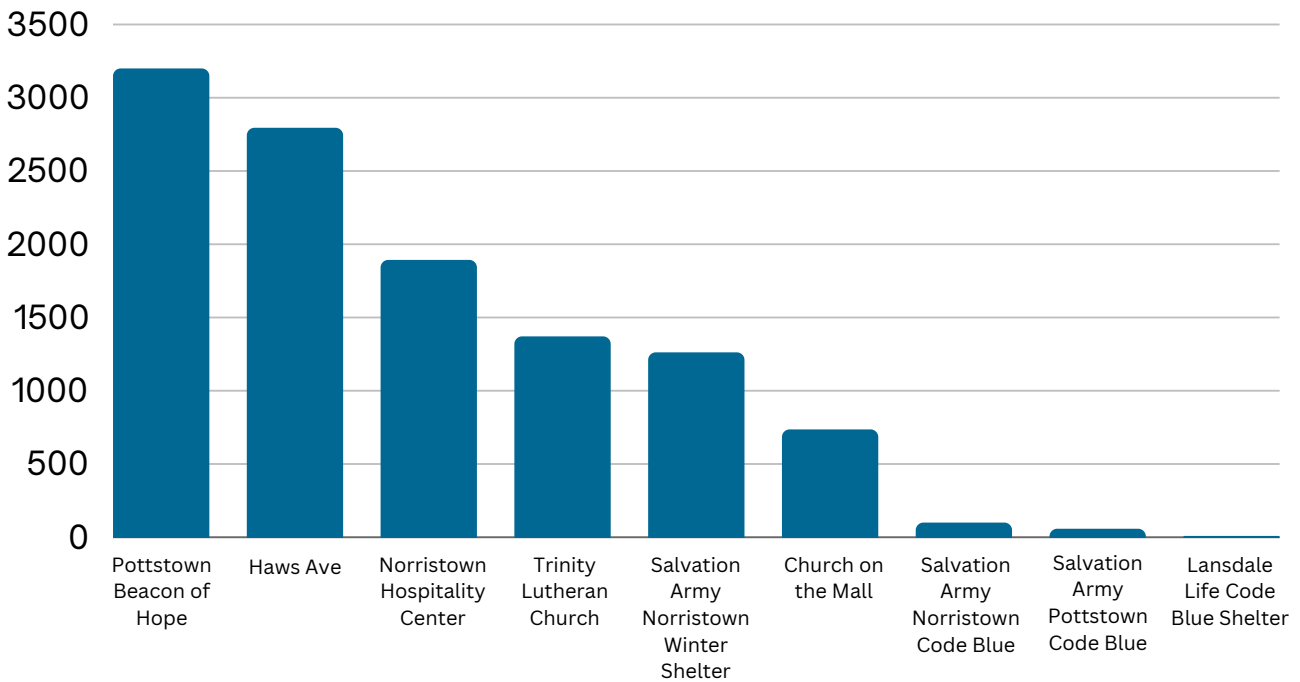
	Community Connections	Access Services-After Hours and Mobile Crisis	United Way-PA211
November	Not Available	27	111
December	Not Available	41	225
January	31	131	418
February	48	187	65
March	34	113	19
April	12	116	16
TOTAL	125	615	857

Utilization Summary



Montgomery County partners provided 11,424 total Code Blue beds during the 83 official Code Blue declarations, for an average of 138 individuals utilizing shelter during each official County declaration made. A total of 638 individuals utilized Code Blue shelters in Montgomery County during the 2023-2024 season.

■ Total Enrollments by Shelter, 2023-2024



Reported Monthly Operating Costs

Montgomery County partners provided 11,424 total Code Blue beds during the 83 official Code Blue declarations, for an average of 138 individuals utilizing shelter during each official County declaration made. A total of 638 individuals utilized Code Blue shelters in Montgomery County during the 2023-2024 season.

Code Blue Provider

→	Access Services Code Blue Hotel Overflow
→	Norristown Hospitality Center
→	Haws Avenue United Methodist Church
→	Church on the Mall
→	Trinity Lutheran Church
→	Lansdale Life Code Blue
→	Lower Merion Code Blue
→	Pottstown Beacon of Hope
→	The Salvation Army- Norristown Women's Shelter
→	The Salvation Army- Norristown
→	The Salvation Army- Pottstown

Monthly Operating Totals

→	\$7,388.25
→	\$7,073.70
→	\$6,428.57
→	\$1,731.71
→	\$1,067.86
→	\$410.88
→	Not Provided
→	Not Provided
→	\$27,019
→	\$14,166**
→	\$15,096**

**indicates total funding provided for year-round Emergency Shelter operations including Code Blue; monthly Code Blue budgets are not available

Summary of Unmet Needs and Barriers

Based on feedback provided by current shelter providers:



Transportation & Transportation Costs

Two (2) shelters identified the need for transportation to assist guests in getting to the shelter, or in going to another shelter if necessary



Bed Space/Shortage

Two (2) shelters and the Street Outreach team identified a need for additional space and more beds as they “had to turn people away often.”



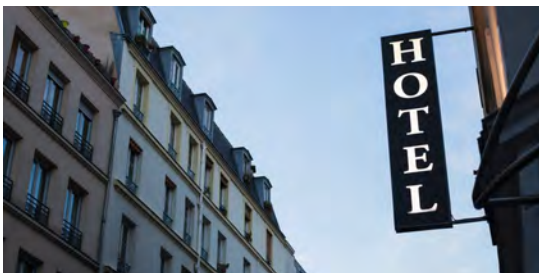
Laundry Services

One (1) shelter identified struggling to get laundry done on an ongoing bases



Zoning Approval

One (1) provider who hopes to open next season stated struggles with zoning and borough approval as a need



Hotel Partnerships

One (1) Street Outreach identified the need for supportive hotel partnerships

Suggestions Provided by the Code Blue Partners for the 2024-2025 Season

- Create Standard Operating Procedures for Code Blue shelter delivery
 - Conduct County-wide orientation at the start of each season
- A more robust volunteer training plan and orientation for all shelters at the start of the season, as well as ongoing training opportunities. The training should include:
 - General shelter operations and expectations
 - De-escalation training
 - Trauma Informed Care
 - Shelter operations training such as volunteer recruitment, registration, background checks and staffing shelter shifts
- Infrastructure for houses of worship who wish to provide Code Blue sheltering- ideally create a manual to use for all shelters
- Further outreach to local houses of worship and municipalities - smaller faith-based shelters would be most successful
 - Especially needed in the Norristown area and other places most accessible by the homeless population
- Identify community warming centers for when shelter or hotels aren't available
- Confirm that religious organizations cannot be subject to zoning restrictions based on [RLIUPA](#) protections
- Identify and define data needs and expectations for all shelter providers at the start of the season
- Communicate set budget and identify unique shelter needs at the start of the season
- Further discussion and review of the declaration process from County leadership
- Increase the number of shelter providers with access to Clarity HMIS to assist in data collection and monitoring
- Provide further clarification regarding County entities and their roles and responsibilities throughout the season
- An identified outdoor space for those sleeping outdoors or in cars where they can remain safely
- Clear communication with those experiencing homelessness relating to Code Blue sheltering and the related needs/expectations:
 - The need for identification to utilize hotels
 - Pursue indoor solutions earlier in the evening during declarations
- Encourage the donation of camping gear to support those who need to remain outside overnight
- Create an internal communication mechanism for shelter providers such as Whatsapp group

Contact Us



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