



NAACP

Fairfax County

July 28, 2022

Contact: Karen Campblin, president@fairfaxnaacp.org

Fairfax NAACP Branch

RESOLUTION approved by NAACP Executive Committee, July 18, 2022; by membership, July 28, 2022

Requesting Fairfax county to provide cooling resources to homeless people this summer

Whereas

Summer temperatures and storm frequencies are increasing due to climate change, thus homeless people are at greater risk of health impacts and even death;

In Fairfax County, extreme heat events are projected to increase. [By 2050, Fairfax County could experience an additional month and a half of days above 90 degrees Fahrenheit per year](#), according to the Resilient Fairfax draft report;

Heat [was the no 1 weather- related cause of death in 2021](#), as well as for the 10-year and 30-year averages, according to the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#);

Around the country, heat contributes to some 1,500 deaths annually, and advocates estimate about half of those people are homeless;

In January 2022, [1,191 people were in emergency or transitional housing or unsheltered in Fairfax County](#), many of whom are elderly, disabled, or in poor health;

Thousands of other very-low-income residents in apartments or mobile homes lack adequate home cooling capacity or transportation to cooling centers;

Heat stress can lead to stroke and organ and brain damage, and is especially severe for people with pre-existing co-morbidities including several types of heart disease, diabetes, chronic kidney and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, according to [studies at the University of Washington](#);

The county has a serious lack of affordable housing, especially permanent supportive housing, to meet the need of homeless people. Unhoused people with mental health issues are inadequately service by both county housing and supportive services;

Fairfax County's homeless population is disproportionately African American (50%) compared with the county population (10%) and this disparity may be linked to a similar disproportionality in the criminal justice system, which also results in the inability of returning citizens to rent or buy housing;

A 2022 paired-testing report showed continuing disparate treatment of Blacks and Whites in Fairfax County's rental housing market;

Fairfax County offers daytime cooling centers at public buildings and the Department of Health and Human Services does offer cooling assistance to low-income clients who are housed, but the only overnight services for unsheltered people are to sleep on the floor at homeless shelters;

The Board of Supervisors passed a board matter on April 12 for the Department of Housing and Community Development to update Fairfax County's homelessness strategies to decrease the number of unhoused residents;

Although a larger-scale program modeled on the winter hypothermia project could be set up for next summer, **some relief is necessary now and can be accomplished by piloting and interagency Heat Emergency Plan this summer, as has been implemented in DC.**

In response to NAACP advocacy, the Board of Supervisors' Health and Human Services Committee directed the Department of Health and Human Services to present by July 29, 2022 the current plan for dealing with heat emergencies for homeless and low-income residents, how it is communicated to these residents, and how it could be enhanced.

Be It Resolved That:

NAACP participate in reviewing the plan and if the plan is insufficient or lacks coordination, suggest more ways appropriate agencies could work together to provide relief now to homeless people. For example, they could pilot a program that takes effect when the daytime heat is over 95 degrees, modelled on the [2022 District of Colombia Heat Emergency Plan](#). The services are posted on a website and homeless people and others are notified by text when there is a Heat Emergency. In Fairfax, services could include:

- Distributing free cold-water bottles as well as personal battery-operated fans, umbrellas, hats, sunscreen, insect repellent, and sunburn lotion at District Government Centers, Neighborhood Community Centers, and emergency shelters, as well as cooperating faith communities and non-profits.
- Posting the locations of daytime cooling centers located in public buildings and in newsletters.
- As in winter, instituting a no-turnaway policy at existing homeless shelters.
- Providing vouchers for cooperating motels to house homeless individuals and families on Heat Emergency nights.

The county could also work through the faith communities involved in the hypothermia program to distribute information about [how to help homeless people suffering from summer heat](#) and how to connect with the pilot project services.

Be it also resolved that the Board of Supervisors insist on a longer-term plan that both increases the supply of permanent supportive housing and also sets up a permanent summer Heat Emergency program until homelessness is eliminated.