



COMMUNITY, HOUSING, AND HUMAN SERVICES DEPARTMENT UPDATE – DEC. 16, 2021

Please see this week’s Community, Housing, and Human Services department update.

Operational.

Status:

- Jenn Cerecedes was [hired by Mayor Nadine Woodward](#) and unanimously confirmed by City Council as the CHHS Director starting Jan. 3, 2022. This caps a six-month search, and the department looks forward to her energy. Jenn previously managed homelessness and transitional housing programs for SNAP. She becomes the fifth employee to join the CHHS team recently. Jenn was introduced during Monday’s [Council Briefing session](#). (She is introduced at 13:35 in the video.)
- Three contracts to expand shelter capabilities during the winter surge were approved. A contract with The Guardians Foundation provides 40 hotel rooms a night – 20 opened Dec. 8 and the other 20 are expected to open soon. The rooms will be available when the city-owned Cannon Street shelter is at capacity. A contract with YWCA provides 190 nights for families and women fleeing domestic violence situations. A contract with Family Promise provides 19 spaces for families and 10 low-barrier spaces for individuals.
- Eric Finch met with the Homeless Coalition leadership twice this week to resolve topics related to the protest outside City Hall and find a positive way forward. A dashboard that tells shelter capacity each night is being developed.
- The 2022 City budget [approved by the City Council](#) Monday includes funding for a new homeless shelter that is expected to be built at a to-be-determined location outside of downtown.



- City resident Farrah Ismaiel and his family received the keys to their new home in the West Central neighborhood just in time for the holidays thanks to a Community Development Block Grant from the City. He spent at least 250 hours of sweat equity to obtain the home. It is the 355th habitat home dedication in Spokane County. The home was once abandoned and helps

revitalize the neighborhood. “I am very grateful for the dream home for my family,” he said. Photos of the celebration were posted on social media and the City’s [Community Update](#).

- The Way Out Center, which has a bridge housing program, is expected to open this week. Staffing hurdles are expected to initially limit capacity. It will add up to 60s bed in a referral-based, service-intensive program to move individuals who are ready to move out of homelessness. The center will not create night-by-night drop-in space at that location. It is expected to free up low barrier spaces in other shelters as individuals get transitioned to the Way Out Center.
- Collaborations with homeless outreach teams continue to find shelter solutions and transportation options.
- A request for proposals to administer upcoming emergency rent and utility assistance (ERA2) to those impacted by COVID-19 in Spokane is [online](#) and will be open through Jan. 3. The funds are intended to prevent evictions. Questions can be sent to chhsrfp@spokanecity.org. Funding distribution updates for the Emergency Rental Assistance Program have been posted on the [City’s website](#) twice a month.
- The City is applying for Washington State Commerce funds to support affordable housing development. K&H is representing property owner Proclaim Liberty to build 47 new units of affordable housing in the Perry District. This grant would help offset the infrastructure costs with developing on a rocky surface.
- Area cities and service providers are reviewing the coordinated entry prioritization process for permanent supportive housing (PSH) and will provide feedback to the CoC on possible ways to improve the system both short- and long-term.
- Shelter vaccine clinics at Cannon Street and House of Charity have drawn a lot of response.
- For key partners, the CMIS team continues to test the new Coordinated Entry Annual Performance Report. Working closely with community leads and HUD to finalize the report. This will take the team towards submitting the data for the CoC’s UFA APR. The CMIS Team continues to extend access to the CMIS database by onboarding new community partners and training new staff at current participating agencies.
- The team continues to look for ways to innovate and improve its internal and external data processing to better serve our partners. It has two projects underway, MDQR and Rental Assistance, with the goal to improve stability, consistency, reporting capability, and lower the time spent on manual data manipulation.
- Annual Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) grant contracts to provide funds for basic operation and administration salaries at four community centers and to purchase parking lot surveillance cameras at Northeast Community Center are being renewed.
- Built for Zero case conferencing meetings with providers continue and are on track for Jan.-Feb. for by-name list launch for single adults. Single adults case conferencing meets every two weeks with CMIS-participating providers to discuss clients who are in one of two priority areas, chronic unsheltered and chronic sheltered, and steps will be taken to move them toward housing. A similar meeting occurs for veterans on the opposite weeks of the month and for youth every Thursday. United Way will form in January a new lived experience advisory group similar for youth to advise Built for Zero. A similar group for veterans is also being explored.
- Better Health Together has activated its COVID-19 Housing Assistance Program. Agreements are in place with the following organizations to assist households directly impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic: American Indian Community Center, \$320,000; Carl Maxey Center, \$100,000; Health and Justice Recovery Alliance, \$500,000; Pacific Islander Community Association, \$500,000; Spectrum, \$150,000. The first applications were approved on Thursday.

Training and Team Building.

Status:

- Applications are being accepted for two [Program Manager](#) positions through Jan. 10.
- An accounting employee and a temporary employee who will work on the HOME Program started Monday.
- Recent department hires continue to be onboarded.

Policy and Planning.

Status:

- The recommendation by the Affordable Housing Committee of the CHHS Board to approve both contracts for SNAP's Single-family and Essential Repair Programs were approved by the City Council. The same funding and performance measures found in its 2021 contracts will be used in 2022.
- Point-in-Time Count planning continues for the annual event in Spokane County required by HUD that determines funding for homelessness services based on survey results. The count starts Jan. 27. Volunteers will be needed and a signup portal will be established soon.
- CHHS staff, in collaboration with the County and other regional organizations, is evaluating options to identify a sustainable solution for grant funding to cover ongoing operational needs.
- Leadership is exploring ways to proactively collaborate with all local groups and boards working on regional homelessness topics.

Communication.

Status:

- A [news release](#), [blog](#) and City Cable 5 [video](#) featuring the emergency rent assistance program's thankful recipients and distributions were posted on Tuesday. This information was also posted on social media and in the City's [Community Update](#). KREM aired a story.
- Communications team is planning housing success stories pertaining to the Community Development Block Grant, HOME and Head Start to Construction Trades programs.
- The handy homeless resource guide is being updated by SNAP, and it's expected to be ready to distribute to partners soon.
- Continuing meetings with stakeholders to ensure communication is better, concerns are heard directly, and answers are provided to specific questions or concerns.
- These weekly CHHS updates are archived and posted on the City's [website](#).

Reaching out.

To help us communicate better and more efficiently, especially with the staff transitions, we would ask you to use email distribution lists created to ensure the right individuals get the email and can respond quickly:

Providers – PLEASE send information to the CHHSreports@spokanecity.org email if you have been sending them to Cassi directly. They will be received and processed.

For leadership, status, or program level questions: CHHS Leadership (chhsleadership@spokanecity.org)

For contracts or financial related questions: CHHS Accounting (chhsaccounting@spokanecity.org)

For grant related questions: CHHS Grants (chhsgrants@spokanecity.org)

For RFP submittals or questions: CHHS RFP (chhsrfp@spokanecity.org)

For CMIS/HMIS related questions: CHHS CMIS (cmis@spokanecity.org)

Thank you for your continued interest and investment in the body of work the CHHS department provides our community. We are always open to questions and input.

CHHS Leadership Team and Staff

