



ALLEGHENY COUNTY
DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES

NEWS

OFFICE OF COMMUNITY RELATIONS • HUMAN SERVICES BUILDING
FIRST FLOOR • ONE SMITHFIELD STREET • PITTSBURGH, PA 15222
DAN ONORATO, ALLEGHENY COUNTY EXECUTIVE • MARC CHERNA, DHS DIRECTOR
DHS WEB SITE: WWW.ALLEGHENYCOUNTY.US/DHS

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

November 24, 2009

CONTACT: Kathleen Burk 412-350-2777

Elaine Plunkett 412-350-6897

Linda K. Ross 412-578-6224

Severe Weather Emergency Shelter for Street Homeless

PITTSBURGH--The Allegheny County Department of Human Services, Office of Community Services, in partnership with Pittsburgh Mercy Health System's Operation Safety Net[®], is again operating a Severe Weather Emergency Shelter (SWES) program for the safety of the street homeless. During periods of excessively severe weather conditions the SWES will provide temporary shelter to the homeless population who normally live on the streets and who do not utilize the existing 12 shelters.

The SWES is located at the Smithfield United Church, 620 Smithfield Street, Downtown. Hours of operation are 7:00 p.m. to 7:00 a.m., through March 15, 2010, whenever the following conditions exist:

- Temperature is predicted to be less than 25 degrees Fahrenheit, factoring in the wind chill
- Conditions of freezing rain, heavy snowfall, severe wind chill factor, et cetera.
- During a National Weather Service declared blizzard/emergency weather situation.

The number of homeless individuals served by the Severe Weather Emergency Shelter ranges from 70-120 per night. Information about shelter activation can be heard by calling 412-779-1329. Please note: this phone line is not staffed; therefore messages cannot be left at this number.

Operation Safety Net[®] manages the shelter, including staffing and supplies for lodging, food, and services; medical and mental health care; case management, clothing, and support to homeless individuals. Anyone admitted to the shelter is required to abide by the rules established. On-site security is provided by Allegheny County Police.

The Severe Weather Emergency Shelter (SWES) is operated by the Allegheny County Department of Human Services, Office of Community Services, in conjunction with Operation Safety Net[®]; Shepherd's Heart, a partnership of the Anglican Diocese and the Veterans Administration Health Care System and Bethlehem Haven, which will provide shelter for the women at their Miryam's facility.

This project is made possible by funding from the Allegheny County Department of Human Services, Pittsburgh Mercy Health System, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), the Allegheny County and City of Pittsburgh Department of Economic Development Grant, Highmark Blue Cross and Blue Shield, and the Greater Pittsburgh Food Bank. The program's direct care services are available mostly through the generosity of time and expertise of area physicians, psychiatrists, paramedics, nurses and social workers.

In addition to health care professionals, Operation Safety Net[®] would like to recognize the following area community volunteer organizations who contribute to the Severe Weather Emergency Shelter by donating time, food, and supplies: Light of Life Rescue Mission, East End Cooperative Ministries, Bethlehem Haven, St. Paul's Episcopal Church (Mt. Lebanon), Bethlehem Haven, St. John Capistran Ladies of Charity (Upper St. Clair), Mother of Sorrows Youth Group (Murrysville), East Suburban Young Marines, Ladies Ancient Order of Hibernians, Northside Common Ministries, House of Crossroads, First Step Recovery, Michael's Place, Young Lawyers Group of Pittsburgh, Verizon Pioneers, and Passavant Memorial Homes.

For more information on the Severe Weather Emergency Shelter, please contact Linda Sheets, program director, Operation Safety Net[®] at 412-232-5739.

###

Follow DHS:
twitter.com/acdhs
facebook.com/acdhs