



Tacoma Pierce County Coalition to End Homelessness

<https://pchomeless.org/> - info@pchomeless.org

How should the Coalition help coordinate the response to cold weather this winter?

Group Discussion Summary • Tacoma Pierce County Coalition to End Homelessness • 10.21.22

Proposed Coalition roles

- The Coalition needs to take the lead. The City and County should buy the supplies and get them to key areas. WE need to distribute them.
- Perhaps the Coalition could produce a bookmark, or something informing folks of what their rights are regarding belongings, sleeping, sweeps, etc.
- Like the idea of Coalition having a standing committee that allow sharing and coordination of actions by groups and individuals like Zev, Richard, Jeff, Ed, etc. Maybe Jan could lead? If nothing else it could be a weekly information clearing house.
- Discussed proposal to have a short regular agenda item for Fridays that asks people to say what they need and what they have to share.
- Collecting hand warmers and blankets now.
- Collaborating with St V de Paul for supplies. maybe we could have a formal coalition wish list that people could contribute to.
- Recognize that with quickly changing situations, it may not be very easy to coordinate distribution.

Advice for Pierce County cold weather preparations

- Concern that \$20K cold weather contract from County has not yet been awarded. More timely action is required.
- Set the standard for the county for inclement weather so that all organizations are on the same page.
- Have transportation available as needed for helping volunteers get to and from the warming sites.
- Have an access hub to share the information.
- Provide shelter flexibility for families, singles, couples, and pets.
- Do all weather planning ahead of time.
- An Inclement Weather Coordinator needs to step forward. It has been helpful to have "inclement weather" defined and declared from a central source and an inventory of resources available.

Other ideas to consider

- Perhaps churches could agree to respond in a "Freezing Nights" model.
- Food needs to be available from day one. Ready-to-eat meals, hot water for powdered coffee and hot chocolate. Have a distribution center for gathering said food and water.
- Outreach to bring resources to folks not entering the shelters.



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- Educating on what can happen if you're in extreme cold for too long (losing extremities, potentially!) to encourage engagement with the warming shelters.
- We'd prefer agencies to loan out employees so we don't have to only hire folks who may not have experience in this arena.
- Advantages of a warehouse setting discussed with military model of the "class one yard," and people can request and receive what they need for distribution.
- Wondered if the Presbyterian Church that is seeking proposals for use of their property might make a short-term commitment for storage of supplies. Still need to have someone to manage such a space if it would be available.
- Question about whether Salvation Army was still doing any coordination of supplies and that groups like south end neighborhood council may be good to seek coordination with.
- Serve People Tacoma has collected and is collecting inclement weather supplies to distribute. Needs an accessible storage facility where people can pick up supplies.

Problems to address

- People do not want to move. They want to hunker down and prepare for bad weather. You push us out, you don't have enough shelter. You expect us to travel to come to our services or sites for warming, etc. WE are always restarting and having to leave. OUR HUMANITY IS EQUAL, please treat us as equal.
- When peoples' tents are taken away, they lose their way to deal with cold weather.
- People who use drugs and are swept become less safe because they are alone now or in smaller groups.
- The response for cold weather always seems too late; we are never really ahead of it.
- Schools need to know about inclement weather resources for families that are unhoused.

A few off-topic thoughts for coalition leadership

- We'd like to hear more about Tacoma Mutual Aid in an upcoming spotlight.
- We've noticed that a lot of people disappear during the group chat. We should either encourage more people to not be shy and participate or set up bigger groups to compensate for non-participants.

And finally, a word from Northwest Justice Project ...

If anyone's getting cited or arrested who did not know they were in a banned location, I want to know about it. JenniferA@nwjustice.org