Winter Shelter Planning During the Pandemic

This resource was designed for system leaders and planners to help congregate shelters maintain reduced capacity to prevent the spread of COVID-19. Communities should maximize Alternative Spaces for Winter Sheltering and increase Diversion Strategies to reduce the need for congregate shelter.

1 Supporting Alternative Spaces for Winter Sheltering

- Utilize hotel/motel rooms or other non-congregate shelter options
- Increase Alternative Sheltering Options
- Expand medical respite programs
- Maintain active outreach to encampments to ensure survival and safety. Provide the following:
  - Assistance in winterizing tents
  - Food and water
  - Hygiene and disinfection supplies/equipment
  - Connections to non-congregate shelter or housing

2 Strengthening Diversion Strategies

- Expand Diversion programs that help people resolve housing crises instead of entering the homeless system
  - Flexible cash assistance
  - Connections and mediation with family/friends
  - Connection to benefits and community based resources
- Consider a dedicated hotline to triage needs

3 Sustaining Congregate Shelters at Reduced Capacity for COVID-19

- Congregate shelters must have referral options and resources to maintain reduced capacity
  - Maintain low barrier access
  - Provide funding for short term motel vouchers for people seeking shelter to maintain reduced shelter capacity
  - Provide transportation to alternative shelter space