

HESP



HELENA EMERGENCY SHELTER PLAN

Providing Safe, Warm spaces for our Neighbors

Currently and historically, Helena has struggled to provide a low barrier shelter to meet the needs of our unsheltered neighbors. Ideally a space offering warmth, safety, and trauma informed care for persons whose lives require some assistance is the ultimate goal. For now, the Tri-County COAD (Community Organizations Active in Disaster) the City of Helena, and several grassroots organizations including nonprofits, faith communities, and the United Way, have developed a plan for the approaching winter, to utilize available spaces as overnight shelters during extremely cold weather events. (10 degrees) We continue to recruit partners and will offer trainings in September and October with activation as early as October. If you are interested in volunteering or joining us in this effort, please reach out to us at the United Way. (Contact info below)

As this project grows, there are several ways groups can be involved in this important effort.

1. Choose to be a Shelter Site (Materials Available upon request)
2. Offer parking space for “Safe Parking” (Materials Available)
3. Provide volunteers for Host sites (Training Available)
4. Offer funding for resources to host our neighbors.



Your group's decision to be a part of this plan is one that should be approached thoughtfully and in a well-informed manner, which is why we have drafted documents to assist you in the decision-making process. We can also visit with your leadership team as you consider ways to engage in this important community effort.



- STEP 1. Express Interest – Receive Planning Documents
- STEP 2. Determine as a group, your level of involvement
- STEP 3. Submit Information and attend training events
- STEP 4. Complete an Application through the City
- STEP 5. Work with the team to establish a schedule to open

Achieving the greater good in our community requires the engagement of everyone. John Stuart Mill said, “The true test of a society is how it treats its weakest members.” This grassroots effort has been presented to our city and county commissioners, and we will continue to work with them as momentum grows and as specific needs for support and cooperation grow. **For further information about this plan contact Jeff Buscher at the United Way of the Lewis & Clark Area: jeff@unitedwaylca.org 406-442-4360**

TRI-COUNTY COAD



COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS
ACTIVE IN DISASTER



Ways organizations can support our unsheltered neighbors...

BE AN EMERGENCY SHELTER...

The Tri-County COAD, Community Organizations Active in Disasters, is partnering with the United Way to recruit potential sites for emergency, overnight lodging for our most exposed population. Faith communities, nonprofits and businesses are provided with guidelines and requirements to become a part of the network of sites for temporary sleeping during severe weather. (Extreme cold for now, in the future we may be able to address heat and excessive smoke events) The Red Cross, and others will provide training, each setting will recruit volunteers and sign on to be available for a month at a time during times that severe weather may likely. We piloted this program last Winter and determined 10 degrees or colder posed dangerous situations for our unhoused neighbors.

A general information meeting will be held: Tuesday, Sept. 22nd at 3pm at The United Way Offices 75 East Lyndale Ave.

PROVIDE SAFE PARKING...

During the 2026 Point-in-Time Survey, over 40 vehicles were occupied across the community. Cars, trucks, and campers are unfortunately where people are sleeping. Several of these folks have jobs, they just can't afford a place to live yet. Law Enforcement often ask people to move their vehicle in the middle of the night. Parking lots (or sections) could be made available to persons needing to park safely for three or four days at a time. A designated site could determine their level of engagement, whether they want to offer a time for people to use restrooms, port-a-potty, electrical power access, etc. For more information about this ministry, contact Jeff Buscher.

CONTRIBUTE FUNDS...

Many of these efforts require funding and support for incidental expenses. Cots, Snacks, Resources for Volunteers, Resources for unsheltered neighbors, etc. If your group wants to be involved, you are invited to consider making a financial donation to the "Helena Emergency Shelter Program" through the United Way website, or via mail or phone. www.unitedwaylca.org 75 E Lyndale Ave. Helena MT 59601 406-442-4360

SPECIAL PROJECTS...

Several Faith Communities have initiated specific efforts. Some have come together to raise money to purchase sleeping bags. Another group contributes to our annual Backpack Program with donations. One church is looking into purchasing small, free-standing tents that will survive a snowfall. Another group has put together "Emergency Survival Kits." That include food, water, basic toiletries, and maybe a card for a coffee shop. Whatever "fits" your groups abilities and capacity.

VOLUNTEER...

These efforts require people with caring and compassionate hearts, willing to extend a warm hand to a neighbor in need. We are organizing this network, and one piece is a pool of willing persons who may be available for a brief training and have time for projects lasting anywhere from 2 hours, or as much as an overnight stay at a facility to be sure our guests are safe and warm. To be a trained or to volunteer... Contact: Jeff at the United Way. jeff@unitedwaylca.org 406-442-4360.