

TO: Chair Vega Pederson; Multnomah County Board of Commissioners;  
Board Chiefs of Staff, Christopher Neal, Chief Operating Officer

CC: Stacy Borke, Department Directors for the Homeless Services  
Department (HSD), the Homeless Response System, the Health  
Department (HD), the Department of County Human Services (DCHS),  
Office of the Chief Operating Officer, and the City of Portland, Portland  
Solutions

FROM: Quinn Colling, Chief of Staff, Commissioner Singleton, Heather Lyons,  
Senior Policy Advisor for Housing and Homelessness

RE: Background for Shelter Work Session on April 15, 2025

DATE: April 9, 2025

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This memo and the attachments serve as background for the work session on shelters as requested by Commissioner Singleton. You will find information on requests for data that came primarily from HSD.

The information from the Departments for this work session will be focused on adult individuals as that is the system that has the most data to respond to the requests for the HSD, the HD, and the City of Portland. Information about DCHS is at the end of this memo and before the attachments.

Shelter for families with children, youth, and survivors of domestic and sexual violence cannot be pulled together at this time; the focus of these responses are for adult individuals. That information will be available in the future.

Please see the attachments for demographic and outcome information for individuals. They are broken up in the attachments in the following order:

Information on all shelter types going as far back as possible (Fiscal Year 2017) including:

- Total Participants
- Average Length of Stay
- Types of Exits
- Demographic Data (FY 2024 through 1st three quarters of FY 2025)
  - Gender Identity
  - Age
  - Race/Ethnicity
- Information by Unique Shelter Types
  - Total participants
  - Average length of stay
  - Types of exits

Specific information for each shelter type including:

- Total participants, average length of stay, and types of exits (as far back as possible)
- Demographic data on race/ethnicity (FY 2024 and 1st three quarters of FY 2025)

Some of the data for City sites that came from the City are different from what is provided by HSD. This is due to lack of time to reconcile information.

The cost per bed/unit per night are available as attachments as well. Please note that the information from HSD is not the same as what the City of Portland submitted. This is due to each office calculating the costs differently.

When determining the cost per unit for a given shelter type, the average cost across shelters of the same type is used. The methodology used by the county to determine shelter costs is based on operational cost and facilitates costs, instead of the number of beds that are occupied. In some instances, the operations budget may include rent and client assistance.

Conversely, the city calculates shelter costs based on bed nights. This is achieved by dividing the total shelter cost by the number of system-wide beds/units. The city also adjusts their unit count to include multiple occupancy of a single bed/unit. This adjusted unit count is calculated by applying a percentage increase to shelters where a proportion of units are often occupied by more than one person.

The two jurisdictions use different methodologies to calculate per unit shelter cost. The county uses an average of cost rates across sites, while the city uses total cost by total adjusted unit.

Shelter types are:

- Alternative Shelter (County only) - Typically village-style outdoor shelters where people sleep in individual sleeping units or tiny homes equipped with heating and cooling systems, with access to showers, community spaces and services in an indoor or outdoor shared space. Services include on-site case management, physical and mental health services and housing placement.  
102 units
- Alternative Shelter (City only) - See above. # of beds/units  
790 units
- Motel Shelter - Shelter providing stays in a motel room. Priority for motel room shelters is given to people in vulnerable populations, such as those who are at higher risk for severe consequences from COVID-19 or who have chronic health or disabling conditions.  
127 units

- Congregate Shelter - Facilities with multiple people sleeping in bunk beds or cots in the same room, often in rooms divided into private bays, with amenities like kitchens, bathrooms, case management rooms, community spaces, clinics and laundry rooms.  
1,041 beds
- Motel Shelter - Health/Behavioral Health Division - see above for motel shelter information.  
127 units

Regarding housing placement and other supportive services provided at sites, the data is broken up by type of shelter, not specific contracts or providers. That said, services do vary by different sites, not just different types. Types of services include housing navigation/placement, case management, and access to other services such as health and employment. Basic support like hygiene, food, transportation are also included.

#### Qualitative Information:

The County Departments and staff from the City of Portland's Shelter Services team regularly have conversations with shelter providers including through provider conferences. They will be able to share some insight in the Board Work Session.

Additionally, shelter provider workers, who are members of and staff from the City of Portland's Shelter Services team the City presented on perspectives of shelter providers on April 8th to Portland City Council's Committee on Homelessness and Housing. Staff from the Departments will be able to share their observations as part of the work session.

The County Departments and staff from the City of Portland's Shelter Services team regularly have conversations with shelter providers including through provider conferences. They will be able to share some insight in the Board Work Session.

Additionally, shelter provider workers who are members of the AFCSME Union (who organized this) presented their perspectives on April 8th to Portland City Council's Committee on Homelessness and Housing. Staff from the City's Portland Solutions team were not a formal part of that presentation, however they will be able to share their observations as part of the work session.

The Department of County Human Services (DCHS) provides some shelter for people they serve. However, most of it is very short term (a few days to a few weeks and usually with motel vouchers) and is considered part of a service package rather than something distinct. A diversity of people receive many types of support including this emergency shelter, including folks who are engaged with the Aging, Disability, and Veterans Services Division (ADVSD), Youth and Family Services (YFS), and the Intellectual Development and Disabilities Division (IDD).

DCHS also supports Emergency Management in the County's severe weather emergency sheltering strategy. This is especially relevant during severe weather activations. In February 2024, Multnomah County activated overnight shelter for 4 nights, serving nearly 1000 individuals. Multnomah County is responsible for staffing shifts, coordinating volunteers, and providing and providing the [ESF-6 mass care function](#), which provides oversight and coordination for shelters, including crisis management, supply orders, facility coordination, and volunteer and guest shelter balancing.

We appreciate the work of the Departments to pull this information in a short timeline, particularly HSD staff.