Behavior Based Criteria & Harm Reduction Principles

Department: Emergency Shelter

Approved By: Planning Team Issue Date:

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Policy

The Gateway of Hope emergency shelter will use behavior based criteria rather than abstinence based criteria to determine access to, or restriction from the shelter.

Procedure

In all cases, decisions to restrict access to the emergency shelter are based on behavioral standards, and not on absolute sobriety.

Behavior-based criteria allow a guest to gain admission to and maintain their bed in the emergency shelter if they are under the influence of drugs or alcohol, as long as they are not behaving in a way that would pose a risk to themselves or others.

If a person is acting aggressively, or is threatening guests or staff, the person may be turned away or discharged. Staff would first attempt to calm the guest and de-escalate the situation. If de-escalation does not occur, the guest would be assisted to access another shelter or alternate accommodation.

If a person is intoxicated to the point that they may be at risk of alcohol poisoning or a drug overdose, the person would be transferred to emergency medical personnel rather than be admitted to shelter.

Harm Reduction Principles

The Salvation Army Gateway of Hope uses harm reduction principles to guide emergency shelter service delivery. These principles are as follows:

* + - Respect: Staff treat guests with dignity and respect.
    - Understanding and Compassion: Staff understand that people who have experienced trauma in their lives or who are living with physical or mental health issues may rely on drugs or alcohol as a way to escape emotional, psychological or physical pain.
    - Non-Judgment: Staff recognizes that a non-judgmental approach is critical to the building of trust with guests that can lead to positive life change.
    - Practicality: Staff take a practical approach, making client safety the main priority.
    - Opportunity: Staff use the time a person is in emergency shelter to address housing needs and connect them to needed resources and services including those that address substance abuse.