



Memorandum

TO: SATPAL SIDHU, COUNTY EXECUTIVE

FROM: Ann Beck, Community Health & Human Services Manager

DATE: MAY 23, 2024

RE: PRESENTATION OF SEVERE WEATHER SHELTER AFTER ACTION REPORT

This presentation will share results of Whatcom County Health and Community Services severe weather shelter operations over the 2023-2024 season.

Since 2018 the number of individuals experiencing homelessness in Whatcom County has steadily increased, while simultaneously organizations that have previously provided increased overnight sheltering during winter months have stepped away for a number of reasons. As a result, Whatcom County Health and Community Services (WCHCS) has become increasingly more involved in the delivery of severe weather sheltering for our unhoused community members, primarily through contractual funding as well as providing limited logistical support and coordinating messaging.

The department operated Bellingham's severe weather shelter for the 2023-24 winter season despite the fact that direct operation of a shelter is not a typical WCHCS function. Staff had to work with community partners and other County departments to locate a suitable facility, develop operational plans, recruit and train staff and volunteers, and provide direct oversight of shelter operations.

This report is an after-action review (AAR) of WCHCS' direct operation of a criteria-based severe weather shelter (SWS) during winter 2023-2024. The purpose of this report is to help improve the County's response to sheltering during severe winter weather in the future.

This report is being shared as information to help inform future decisions around the County's role in providing shelter services.

Please call (Ann Beck, 360-778-6055) if there are any questions. Thank you.

