

WARMING CENTER

Warming Center Program

Santa Cruz County

Plan and Protocols 2016

The main function of the Center is to provide a warm and safe space for people to sleep when it is extremely cold or wet outside.

Warming Center Program (WCP) is a temporary coldest and wettest nights emergency shelter hosted at various partner site-locations. To this point it has been an all volunteer, community supported program meant to serve the unmet need that exists during extreme winter weather events.

WCP shelter(s) open when weather forecasts reach trigger thresholds that may include specific temperatures and/or rain events.

This document includes some of the program basics and system elements that guide its management and operation. This document is also a public relations device to share information with the community. Some of the information contained within may change.

Elements of the Warming Center Program

Activation System

The program will open (activation) within a two-day forecast of the following:

- 35 degrees or lower
- 37 degrees following a day of rain (amount of rain is considered)
- Rain event algorithm:
 - One day of forecasted 1.0 inch of rain
 - Two days of forecasted 0.75 inch of rain
 - Three days of forecasted 0.50 of rain

Note: WCP often opens at slightly higher temperatures to account for forecast fluctuations. It should be known that forecasts will vary from actual temperatures.

Seasonal readiness

- Daily monitoring of weather forecasting service.
For downtown Santa Cruz area:
 - Weather Underground – A monitoring site closest to the ground elevation of the downtown area. We're currently using a monitoring location near Grant Park;
Elev 36 ft 36.99 °N, 122.02 °W
 - <http://www.wunderground.com/cgi-bin/findweather/getForecast?query=pws:KCASANTA581&MR=1>
- Maintain and store bedding and other materials
- Outreach/appeal to community for volunteers and blanket and monetary donations
- Identify facilities that may be used as site-locations; contact ownership/management
- Distribute Emergency Hotline wallet-sized card at local aid agencies and wherever people who experience homelessness are known to congregate
- Volunteer interaction and training
- Plan and host community meetings and fundraising events.
- Maintain WCP website, Facebook pages and Google Groups email list to help notify public about activation alerts, and other program related information
- Create additional materials: printed, video, fliers, data, and media announcements etc.

- Maintain and store shuttle van

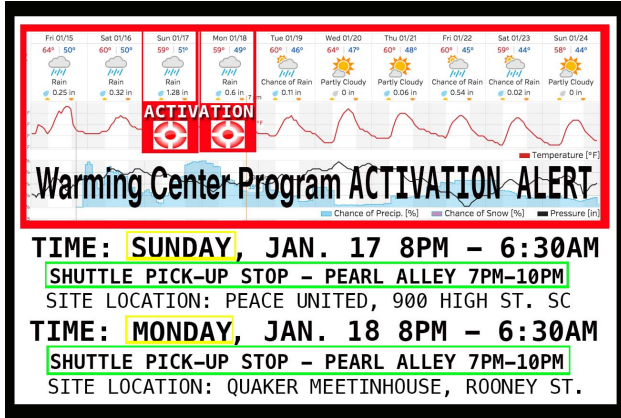
Alert Likely

When forecasts are enough to trigger activation but it is still more than 2 days from the forecasted event, an **Alert Likely** warning is put out to the Warming Center Program Facebook page, a short list of Team Member emails and sometimes to the Volunteer Team email list (Google Group) if the forecasted event is looming. This is meant to alert those paying close attention to the program so they can prepare themselves for a likely opening.

Activation

When a weather forecast is within two days of an event that reaches or surpasses temperature trigger thresholds, Warming Center Program **Activation** is announced.

- Site locations are contacted and one is chosen based on availability and frequency of use.
- Once a site location is confirmed the 211 Emergency Hotline is contacted to make the public aware of times and location of activation of WCP.
- The community is notified of WCP **Activation** with an info-graphic and a map.
 - Online via
 - Google Groups
 - Santa Cruz Progressive Email List (SCPEL)
 - Various Facebook groups and pages, etc.
 - Targeted emails
 - Via phone call to:
 - St. Francis Soup Kitchen
 - Homeless Persons Health Project
 - River St. Shelter
 - Homeless Services Center
 - MHCAN
 - In person to:
 - Calvary Episcopal - Coffee House (Monday night)
 - Street Team:
 - Targeted visits to areas where people who sleep outside are known to congregate.
 - Sharing info with anyone who appears to be homeless.
 - Bulletin boards:
 - Printed Activation info-graphic and map are often available for pick-up at Bookshop Santa Cruz.



Example of WCP Activation Info-graphic.



Example of a WCP Activation Map

Warming Center Program opens when forecasts drop below 36degrees or when rain persists heavily beyond 2 days. To check if we're open: Call 211 ask for Warming Center Program



Program Basics

The Rules

Job #1 is to make sure everyone has a safe and restful experience. It's important to start the relationship between guest and WCP with a clear understanding and agreement about the boundaries. The rules are both listed and spoken to each individual guest prior to them signing their name to them.

- **What is allowed?**

All are welcome.

WCP has an open door policy – a person can come and go as much as they wish throughout the night.

As long as a person is relatively quiet and well behaved they may enter and remain in the WCP space. Dogs, bikes, bike trailers, pushcarts, backpacks, luggage, and other personal belongings are welcome into the space. Personal items must not be too dirty or wet to be in the space

- **No violence**

This is a no-tolerance rule. Once someone has struck or hurt another person physically, that person is **no longer allowed to remain** in the space. This may result in a 911 call and charges brought against the person.

- **No theft**

No one may take or possess another person's property without permission. This is a no-tolerance rule. Once someone has taken another person's property, they are **no longer allowed to remain** in the space. This may result in a 911 call and charges brought against the person.

- **No alcohol or illegal substance use within the space or within 100 yards of the exterior of the building.**

It's understood that some individuals may be under the influence of alcohol or an illegal substance, but that doesn't prevent them from entering or remaining within the space, as long as they are not seen using. Immediately upon viewing, seeing or smelling a person using, that person is **no longer allowed to remain** in the space.

- **No repeated disruptions**

It's understood that people make some amount of noise when they sleep. Some will snore, call out in their sleep or make various bodily noises etc. but if vocal behavior is intentional, prolonged or loud enough, that can disturb the sleep of other guests.

- If someone is intentionally being loud repeatedly, that person is **not allowed to remain in the space**
- If someone is not obeying requests by the Program Manager or a Volunteer over a period of time, that person may no longer be allowed to remain in the space - **Judgment call**
- If someone is disturbing a guest(s) who is trying to sleep, that person may not be allowed to remain in the space - **Judgment call**

- **Obeying Project Manager or Volunteers**

- If a person is not cooperating with requests by WCP workers, that person may not be allowed to remain in the space - **Judgment call**
- **No food, coffee or other liquids in bedding area**
There has been spillage that had stained some of the floor pads and had soiled some personal belongings. A space is available for people to consume soup and other foods and liquids away from the bedding area. This rule should not get a guest kicked out of the space.

Site Locations

Once *activation* has been called, the WCP Program Manager contacts the various site locations to determine availability and timing.

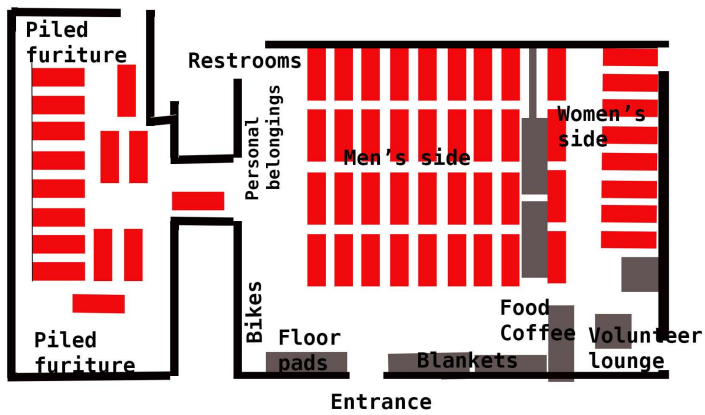
Warming Center Program is a good steward of our site locations. Each location has it's own set of needs and requirements and extra care and focus is required. While it would be easier to focus on a single site location, WCP aims to broaden the community of support and to spread the use over several spaces, so as to not over-burden but to share the burden.

1. **Calvary Episcopal Church - 532 Center St. Santa Cruz, 95060**

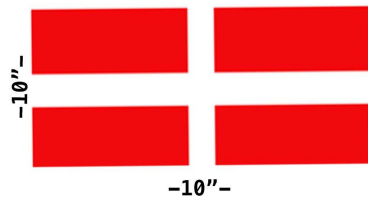
This is the best downtown site location, geographically but it's important to not have those who sleep outside downtown orient to this church too much. There are several food programs and one other shelter program already operating at this facility. This location features a kitchen but no separate lounge - de-escalation must take place outside or inside very quietly.

Timing

There are often evening meetings in the same space that WCP uses that can last as late as 9pm (Wednesday until 10:30pm), and there is a 6:30am deadline in the morning because of a daily AA meeting. There are two rooms used by WCP - the main meeting hall that faces Cedar St. and also the Fireside Room, which often has meetings lasting later than 9:30pm.



Calvary Episcopal's floor-plan with floor pads.



59 FLOOR PADS SHOWN, SPACED 10" APART



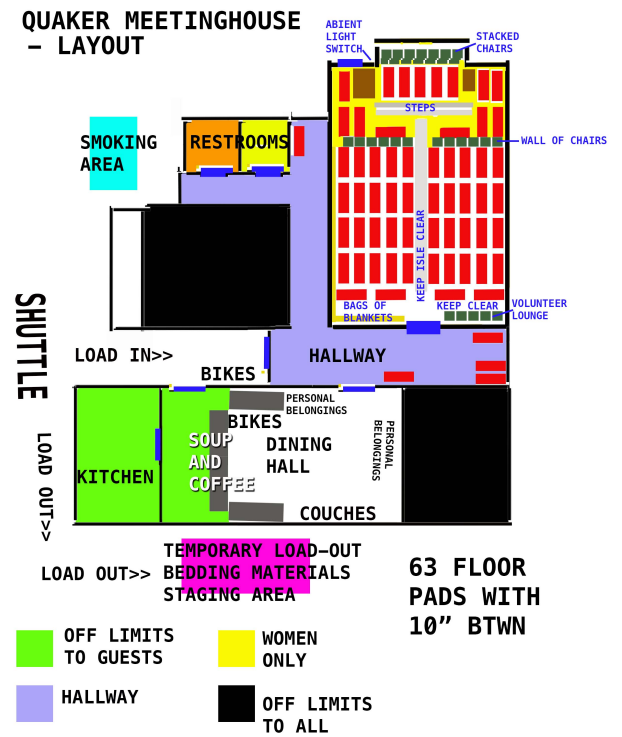
Calvary Episcopal's main hall set up with floor pads and two blankets each.

2. Quaker Meetinghouse – 225 Rooney St. Santa Cruz, 95065

This is a remote location from downtown so the Shuttle and Shuttle Stop is used. This church has a separate dining hall, a hallway and large worship hall. The dining hall is a good place for de-escalation. The members of this church have been very engaged with WCP as volunteers, financial donors and supporters of the program.

Timing

WCP guests are usually able to sleep much later at this location because this church has few morning meetings and the Quaker service takes place at 10am. There are often evening meetings that the site manager has been able to reschedule.



3. Peace United Church – 900 High St. Santa Cruz, 95060

This is a remote location from downtown so the Shuttle and Shuttle Stop is used. This facility features a large hall, a large kitchen facility and a separated lounge area that may be used for de-escalation.

Timing

This is a very active church facility, which may affect access of this location. The large hall is available on most evenings. On weekday mornings there is a 7am deadline for vacating and cleaning the space because of nearby schools.



4. City of Santa Cruz facility – location undecided.

Santa Cruz City Council voted unanimously to allow WCP to use a city owned facility for 5 nights (nonconsecutive) as a “last resort” if another site location couldn’t be found. Details are still being finalized.

Materials

- **Bedding**

Clean bedding is a key component of WCP. Each guest receives at least one floor pad and two blankets.

 - **Blankets**

 - Local Santa Cruz residents have donated more than 200 blankets.
 - Blankets are cleaned and disinfected at a Laundromat on the same day as WCP load out.

 - **Floor pads**

 - An annual late-autumn fundraising dinner has paid for 200 floor pads
 - Floor pads are leaned after every use with Lysol disinfectant.

- **Hot drinks and soup**

WCP is a dynamic service that usually begins with a Shuttle & Soup Stop featuring decaf coffee and hot soup. The host site location also features soup served all night long. We've found that hot soup is a powerful sedative for people who may be irritable and having difficulty falling asleep.

 - WCP has several soup makers who make exclusively hearty veggie soup. On any given night our guests can consume +10 gallons of soup.
 - Hot decaf coffee and cream and sugar are available all night in a large serving Cambro.
 - In the morning, caffeinated coffee, limited pastries and fruit are served.
 - A complete Shuttle & Soup Stop is completely outfitted with easy-ups, folding serving tables, Cambros, Colman stoves, stock pots, paper cups, latex gloves, etc.

- **Cleaning supplies etc.**

WCP is committed to returning every host site location to a condition that is cleaner than we found it. WCP brings it's own bathroom products, cleaning supplies and other various items to ensure that the center is always clean and well running.

- **Storage**

Because WCP is a cold weather program, materials are stored in a secured facility throughout the warmer seasons and when not in use.

Volunteers

Warming Center Program is staffed primarily by community members who've decided to trade some of their time – and many, their sleep – to make sure that others don't have to sleep outside when it's freezing. We value our volunteers very highly because they are the backbone of this program and it

really is the compassionate human connection that makes this program special.

Outreach

WCP regularly outreaches to the community for volunteer support

Training

Training happens in various ways - there are monthly training meetings and a training manual but the most valuable elements of being a WCP volunteer are learned while staffing a shift.

- **Program operation**

Volunteers are instructed about the various roles and processes and are given some idea of what they can expect to experience as they volunteer for the program.

- **Rule enforcement**

Job #1 is to make sure everyone has a safe and restful experience. Volunteers are encouraged to call 911 if there is violence or a clear threat to safety.

- The rules are clear but sometimes the circumstances are not; what may be an intention to be disruptive by one person may be symptoms of a mental health challenge for another.
- Violence and other disruptions must be handled with a great deal of care.

- **Training Manual**

A manual containing basic program operation instructions, details about rule enforcement and crisis management and more are given to volunteers.

- **The Mental Health Module**

WCP is not, nor is it expected to be a psychiatric treatment center and yet we, and our volunteers will sometimes be dealing with guests who're experiencing mental health challenges. A dedicated portion of training meetings and the training manual is dedicated to this

- **Site Locations**

Each host site location is different and those differences are very important to know about.

- **Program operation**

The entire over-view is listed out and described so that volunteers can be clear about what is to happen when and what needs to be ready for the various stages of operation.

- **Various scenarios**

Behaviors and circumstances can vary widely – a list of scenarios that we've dealt with before and their possible outcomes are included.

- **Social Service Professionals**

WCP has a base of support for mental health challenges and drug/alcohol addictions. We have several partnerships with social service professionals who've both helped write some of the training elements and have offered program support should there be a crisis.

▪ **Training meetings – monthly**

All of the above are discussed and volunteers and prospective volunteers are able to ask questions, role-play and workshop a little as they are instructed.

Scheduling

Once *activation* is announced to the Volunteer Team email list (Google Groups), people begin to email the Program Manager who then fills in the various roles and schedule times on an online spreadsheet.

Roles and shifts

There are numerous roles that must be fulfilled each night of a center opening. Some people can't work an overnight shift but they may be able to help with a morning clean up, or a laundry shift. Everyone does their part, making the program very smooth running and successful.

- **Street Team** - Putting the word out on the street during the daytime to those who'll benefit that night
- **Mobilization** - Help load the materials transport vehicle (1 hour)
- **Soup!** - We serve 4 gallons of soup at both the Shuttle Stop AND at the all-night Warming Center (can be different people)
- **Shuttle & Soup Stop host** - Serve soup to people waiting for the shuttle and keep a warm and friendly vibe
- **Load in & Set up** - Help us load a large amount of bedding materials into the space and set them up for use
- **Late evening shift + Load in** - This is the first shift that helps greet guests and set the tone for the evening
- **12am-3am Overnight shift** - Monitoring a room of sleeping people while sitting quietly, serving soup, enjoying soft conversation
- **3am-7am Overnight and Wake-up/Clean-up** - Monitoring a room of sleeping people, clean-up and load-out
- **5am-7am Wake-up/Clean-up** - Help to wake-up, clean up and load-out

- **Laundry** – Just after load out, all used blankets are washed at a Laundromat
- **Demobilization** – Materials are loaded back into storage

Shuttle & Soup Stop

A regular downtown location is utilized as a place where people may wait to be transported to the Warming Center. Some host site locations are located away from the downtown corridor; we don't want our guests walking to, or riding a bike in extreme weather to a remote neighborhood. This helps our guests begin to get warm and begin to orient themselves to the group experience to come. While they're waiting, they may enjoy cover from rain, a cup of soup or a hot drink. It also is easier to direct our guests to a consistent shuttle stop no matter where the host location may be.

- We're currently using the open walkway where Pearl Alley meets Lincoln Street behind the Good Times building.
- Two easy-ups, two folding tables and several chairs are stationed
- A Warming Center Program banner is hung from the Pearl Alley iron work sign
- 4 gallons of vegetable soup in a large stock pot remains heated on a Colman camp stove and portions are ladled into paper cups
- A 6 gallon Cambro of hot decaf coffee, cream and sugar is included
- At least one volunteer remains at the stop for the duration of the time
- The shuttle usually makes 3-5 trips, picking up as many as 15 people per trip
- We'll try to accommodate onto the shuttle whatever a person has with them including bikes, trailers, dogs, backpacks, personal belongings etc.

Program Administration

- Community awareness outreach and advocacy
- Creative printed, email, social media, materials
- Fundraising, grants, events and donations
- Blanket and warm clothing drive
- Volunteer coordination and training
- Materials management
- Weather forecast monitoring and activation system
- Shuttle
- Program operation and management

Community resonance for Warming Center Program

ALL IN - Toward A Home For Every County Resident The Santa Cruz County Community Strategic Plan to Prevent, Reduce, and Eventually End Homelessness

The County Board of Supervisors supported this with a unanimous vote.

Engage the community around developing additional emergency and interim services for unmet health and safety needs of persons living outdoors, including small shelters around the county, warming centers and improvements to existing shelters.

Grand Jury Report on Emergency Homeless Shelters in Santa Cruz County – Recipe for Failure: Shrinking Budgets and Increasing Needs for Emergency Homeless Shelters- Summary.

This Grand Jury report urged Santa Cruz County to support emergency shelters including Warming Center Program, by name.

A newly formed volunteer led grassroots organization, the Warming Center Program, was assembled in late 2014 with the mission to help provide shelter when weather conditions become dangerously inclement. Their first two nights of operation were at Calvary Episcopal Church in downtown Santa Cruz, which provided shelter to almost 100 homeless individuals who sought shelter from the rainstorms in December 2014. The Warming Center was at 75% capacity during these two nights, helping to shelter the overflow of homeless persons in the city of Santa Cruz.

...The number of homeless individuals served underscored the need for sufficient winter shelter capacity.

Pg9.

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To help support Warming Center Program

Volunteer.
Donate blankets.
Paypal donations.
All to compassionman@hotmail.com
or send a check made out to:
'Santa Cruz Sanctuary Camp'
to 535 Spring St. Santa Cruz, CA 95060

Thank you for taking this stand with us, that no one should have to sleep outside when it is very cold or wet.