

# United Way Dickinson Manna House

## Low-Barrier Shelter Policies and Procedures

### Admission

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#### **Policies**

- Our goal is to provide emergency shelter – long-term temporary shelter to the most vulnerable people in our community.
- To enter shelter, clients are not required to be sober, compliant with mental health or addiction treatment plans, or to engage in services.
- Gender is self-identified, and clients will be placed with the gender they identify as.

Admission will be denied for the following reasons:

- Client does not meet the basic eligibility criteria for shelter admission (e.g. gender, age, household composition, homeless status);
- Client has a restraining order against them that prohibits admission;
- Client is displaying violent or threatening behavior;
- Client is not ambulatory enough to get in and out of bed on their own, as well as take care of bathroom and hygiene needs independently; or
- Client has an infectious disease or appears to otherwise be ill and poses a threat to themselves and other clients.

#### **Procedures**

- During intake, clients will be asked if they have any weapons, drugs, or alcohol to dispose of.
- Clients will sign an “expectations form” acknowledging they understand expectations of behavior, criteria for involuntary exit, and grievance procedures. Expectations will be read aloud to the client.
- Clients denied access to shelter will be referred to other community services.

### Client Expectations

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Clients are expected to:

- Demonstrate responsibility for themselves, their actions, and their housing plan.

- Abstain from behavior that is disruptive and unacceptable to others. Examples include: verbal, physical, or sexual harassment, threats and/or violent behavior, nudity, possessing weapons, drug dealing, etc.
- Keep bed and common areas clean. Excessive damage to the building may result in involuntary exit from shelter.
- Smoke only in designated areas.
- Attend resident meetings.
- You are responsible for your belongings and may not buy, trade and/or sell your belongings with others.
- Weapons are not allowed in shelter and nothing may be used as a weapon.
- Possession, use, or distribution of alcohol or illegal drugs is not allowed within the shelter.

## **Involuntary Exit**

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### **Policies**

- Involuntary exits will be for no longer than one night unless deemed necessary for the health and safety of clients or staff.

- Involuntary exits will occur only as a last resort and in the most serious cases.
- Unless the client poses an immediate threat to the health and safety of other residents and/or staff members, staff will avoid involuntarily exiting clients at night.
- Unless the client poses an immediate threat to the health and safety of other residents and/or staff members, involuntary exits must be approved by a supervisor. During hours that there is no supervisor on site, a supervisor will be on call to approve involuntary exits.
- Client's belongings will be stored for at least five working days after a client is involuntarily exited.

Clients will be exited involuntarily for the following reasons:

- Violence or threatening behavior;
- Behavior that endangers health or safety of the client, residents or staff;
- Theft;
- Destruction of property;
- Client is not able to be ambulatory enough to get in and out of bed on their own, as well as take care of bathroom and hygiene needs independently; or
- Client has an infectious disease or appears to otherwise be ill and poses a threat to themselves and other clients.

Clients will **not** be involuntarily exited for the following reasons:

- Not participating in services;
- Not completing a chore; or
- Being under the influence of alcohol and drugs.

### **Procedures**

- Staff will call the police in the case of an immediate threat to the health and safety of other residents and/or staff members.
- Staff will attempt to verbally de-escalate conflicts.
- Clients will be provided with opportunities for cooling off such as going for a walk and coming back into shelter or switching bed locations if feasible.
- Clients may be asked to move beds or rooms in the case of conflicts with other clients.
- Clients not meeting the Client Expectations will be asked to meet with a staff person in private. The staff will outline which of the expectations they feel is not being met. The staff will ask the client what may be needed to help the client achieve the expectation on an

ongoing basis. Whenever possible, staff will coach clients on how to meet the expectations rather than punishing the client (exiting them involuntarily) for not meeting the expectation.

- If a client must be involuntarily exited, clients will be provided with a written copy of the grievance procedures.
- All involuntary exits will be documented in case notes.

## Alcohol or Drugs

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## **Policies**

- People who experience homelessness, like other members of our community, may be using substances to varying degrees. Everyone is entitled to shelter whether or not they use substances. As a result, admission, discharge, and service restriction policies will not be based on substance use alone.
- Clients that use alcohol or any other substances are welcome to use the shelter so long as the client is independently mobile (can get to their bed on their own) and is able to meet the Client Expectations described above.

## **Procedures**

- Clients that have been observed as going to bed under the influence will be checked in on once per hour by staff, within close enough proximity that breath sounds can be heard or breathing can be seen in the chest.
- Staff will call 911 immediately if a client requests emergency medical assistance, is struggling to breath, has stopped breathing, or does not respond to stimuli such as shouting or touch.
- Clients causing a significant disturbance to other guests while under the influence of alcohol or any other substance will be asked to refrain from doing so and return to their bed and go to sleep. If they are unwilling to do so or incapable of doing so, they may be asked to move or sit in view of staff.
- Clients that become violent while under the influence of alcohol or any other substance will be treated the same as any other guest that engaged in violent behavior.
- If alcohol or drugs are found in shelter, clients will be given the opportunity to dispose of it or leave the shelter for that night. Possession of alcohol or drugs along is not a reason for involuntary exit.