

The Implementation of the Blueprint for Emergency Shelter Services - or the "Shelter Blueprint" as it is more commonly known - is a comprehensive plan to decrease emergency shelter use in Hamilton. Implementation of the Shelter Blueprint will lead to changes at all shelters and service delivery at Wesley Centre. Beginning on August 1, 2010 Wesley Centre will provide day-time programs and services only.

What is the new Shelter Blueprint?

The Shelter Blueprint is a comprehensive plan that seeks to develop a sustainable system to better support homeless people as they move to permanent housing. The plan was endorsed by Hamilton City Council in April, 2009. This report can be found at www.wesleyurbanministries.ca. The Shelter Blueprint is a plan to address homelessness more effectively across the shelter system. The new Shelter Blueprint will continue to focus on a "housing first" approach that will help lower the number of individuals staying in emergency shelters. **The shelters are working together as one coordinated system to stabilize and improve basic emergency shelter services.** The shelters will enhance the work of an intensive case management team that will help people find and maintain permanent housing across the community.

Why was the development of the Shelter Blueprint necessary?

Several factors precipitated the development of the Shelter Blueprint:

- New knowledge of best practices indicated that quickly moving individuals to permanent housing with supports produced better results (referred to as a "housing first" approach);
- New initiatives such as the H.O.M.E.S. Program, Claremont House, and other "housing first" programs were doing a great job of keeping chronic shelter users housed;
- The realization that the shelter system had not changed significantly in many years;
- Lower numbers of individuals accessing emergency shelters was impacting financial viability. In 2005, Wesley Centre averaged 61 guests sleeping each night. In 2009 the number of guests decreased to 46. Similar decreases were experienced in other shelters.

Who is involved in the Shelter Blueprint?

It is important to note that all shelters will have a new role and revised operating procedures as a result of the Shelter Blueprint implementation. **This is not a plan for Wesley Centre, this is a plan for all agencies and all support programs that are part of the shelter system.** Shelter Blueprint Partners are: Wesley Urban Ministries, Good Shepherd Centres, Mission Services, Salvation Army Booth Centre, Housing Help Centre, Mental Health Outreach Team (Public Health) and the City of Hamilton.

What will the role of Wesley Centre be in the future?

Wesley Centre will begin to transition to a day-time drop-in program in 2010. On July 31, 2010, Wesley Centre will cease to provide emergency shelter services to clients. Wesley Centre will then become a day-time program operating 8 hours per day, 7 days a week.

Most of the programming that Wesley Centre offers today will continue. Hot meals will be provided and clients will have access to laundry and shower facilities. Our Sunday worship service and Sunday Dinner program will continue. Access to health, employment and housing supports will still be a priority. Art classes, the library program and other recreational activities will be offered and enhanced in the future. In short, **Wesley Centre will continue to be a hub of services for individuals who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless.** For those who need to access shelter on a nightly basis, Wesley Centre will also refer individuals to emergency shelters.

In many ways, this transition moves Wesley Centre towards its historic role in Hamilton. Since 1955, Wesley Centre has offered day-time programming to individuals and families in need. That **strong legacy of support to the community will continue.**

In addition, Wesley Urban Ministries is playing a leadership role in managing the new intensive case management team that is supporting the entire shelter system. This program – called Transitions to Home – brings together staff from all shelters to work collaboratively to help individuals leave shelter and find housing. The Program provides on-going support to those individuals so that they can maintain their permanent housing.

Is this a good news story?

This is a fantastic news story. Not just for Wesley Centre, but for the shelter system as a whole. Over the last five years, fewer and fewer people are accessing emergency shelters and the reduction in the demand for shelter beds is indeed cause for celebration. **By implementing innovative and effective housing programs with critical support systems, we are achieving a decrease in the quantity of individuals requiring emergency shelter.** This means there are more shelter users becoming housed and less homeless people on the streets and seeking safe refuge.

For more information please contact Tamara Coleman-Lawrie at 905.528.5629, Ext. 244 or at tamara.coleman-lawrie@wesleyurbanministries.ca

Wesley Urban Ministries has a vision of community, where justice and compassion guide the way we live, where all members are treated with respect and dignity.

To achieve our vision, we will use our resources to: **DECREASE BARRIERS** by developing and delivering programs that address the needs of people who are marginalized; **INCREASE OPPORTUNITIES** by providing services that help individuals achieve their full potential; and **BE A MODEL AND CATALYST** for social transformation.

How will this affect our Church's involvement with Wesley Centre?

Wesley Centre will still need your help... **now more than ever**. As Wesley Centre begins to concentrate on adult day programming, significant changes in funding and program implementations will affect Wesley Urban Ministries. As a critical supporter of Wesley Centre, your congregation plays a vital role in our transition.

Wesley Centre service delivery hours will change from 24/7, to 8 hours per day, 7 days a week. Our Hot Meal Program at lunch time will continue but Wesley Centre will no longer provide breakfast in the morning or soup and sandwiches in the evening. **Sunday dinners and the Sunday worship services will continue and the support of the Churches for this program is critical**. Donations of food will continue to be required at Wesley Centre and in our other programs.

We know that some Churches who support our breakfast or evening food programs will be affected. Our Volunteer Coordinator will discuss this with the Churches and explore new opportunities for engagement. We also anticipate new volunteer opportunities developing as Wesley Centre takes on a new focus.

Financial contributions for Wesley Centre will be more critical than ever. On an annual basis, Wesley Urban Ministries will **need to raise an additional \$350,000 to support the day-time activities at Wesley Centre**. Your efforts to remind those in your congregation that the need has never been greater would be appreciated. Your congregation is a lifeline to our community and a major source of support and resources for Wesley Centre. Your on-going support ensures the effective delivery of essential services to aid the most vulnerable in our community.

What does this mean for the guests of Wesley Centre?

Working together, the shelter system has developed a set of principles that guide the way we do our work. Those principles are:

- Abandon No One
- Do Not Discriminate
- Ensure Dignity and Respect
- Work Together as a System

Those who currently access shelter at Wesley Centre will transition to other shelters by July 31, 2010. Those shelters are implementing changes that will allow them to work with individuals who previously may have been denied access. In addition, all shelters will be open to their residents 24/7. The staff at Wesley Centre will work together with our partners to ensure that this transition proceeds smoothly.

What does this mean for the staff?

Our staff are incredibly dedicated to their work and we have kept them informed as this process has evolved. The transition to day-time programming will have an impact on staff at Wesley Centre. Some employees will remain with Wesley in other capacities. Others may find opportunities with other shelter programs that will be expanding their staffing. Our commitment is to support staff in any way we can to make this transition as easy as possible.

How will this affect the funding of Wesley Centre day-time activities?

Wesley Centre needs the support of your Church now more than ever. Emergency Shelter funding supported some of our day-time activities and as such we will **need to increase the revenues supporting Wesley Centre in the future**. The good news is that we do have some current investment specifically designated for day-time programming and this funding is unaffected by the shelter bed closure. This includes a significant investment from the Mission and Service Fund of the United Church of Canada. However, our **annual funding shortfall will be approximately \$350,000**. Please contact Wesley Urban Ministries at 905.528.5629, Ext. 244 to discuss how you can support Wesley Centre as we move forward.

Will other shelter beds be closing in the future?

It is anticipated that through the efforts of the Transitions to Home Program, shelter use will continue to decrease. As a result, **future emergency shelter bed closures may be necessary**. That would occur in 2011 at the earliest.

Why was Wesley Centre the first to close shelter beds?

Wesley Centre was the most logical program to close its shelter beds first. Wesley Centre began offering emergency shelter years ago as a response to the high numbers of homeless individuals who were having difficulty accessing other shelters. Today, the demand for shelter beds has dramatically decreased. In addition, the women that access Wesley Centre will have increased access to shelter services in the new Women's Services Centre that Good Shepherd Centres will open later this year. That will reduce the need for Wesley to offer shelter for women. With space available in other shelters, and new operating procedures to ensure clients are able to access those shelters, it will no longer be necessary for Wesley Centre to provide overnight shelter.

Wesley knows that investing in peoples' urgent needs is just the first step in rebuilding lives.