



San Francisco Department of Public Health

Barbara A. Garcia, MPA
Director of Health

City and County of San Francisco
London N. Breed
Acting Mayor

Medical Respite expansion offers an alternative for homeless clients unable to thrive in shelters

30 new beds help avoid hospitalizations, emergency care and relieve suffering

Acting Mayor London Breed, Supervisor Jane Kim and Health Director Barbara Garcia celebrate new program reaching capacity

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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SAN FRANCISCO (December 18, 2017) –Acting Mayor London Breed, Supervisor Jane Kim, Health Director Barbara Garcia today cut the ribbon at the Medical Respite and Sobering Center to celebrate the successful expansion of beds for homeless clients at the Mission Street facility. The newly expanded program now serves clients from shelters in addition to those discharged from hospitals. As a result, more people are getting the care they need, along with support services, to set them on a healthier path for the future.

"These beds could not have come soon enough," said Acting Mayor Breed. "During this holiday season, more residents in need will be able to access three warm meals, a bed, and connection to vital services. Our Medical Respite Center is a national model for addressing complex homelessness issues; today's expansion builds on that model and will help even more of our most vulnerable residents."

The Medical Respite has provided essential post-hospital care to 3,000 homeless clients in San Francisco for the past 10 years. Now the program has expanded by 30 beds to offer care for shelter clients whose needs exceed traditional sheltering and the services of shelter nurses, and who may otherwise seek emergency care or hospitalization.

"Proud to have fought to build and expand a medical respite in the South of Market," Supervisor Jane Kim said. "Many residents living on our streets are incredibly sick and need medical and nursing care in a non-hospital setting. We need a 24 hour homeless shelter staffed by nurses, clinicians and psychologists."

"Today we celebrate the much-needed addition of care for shelter clients that has improved lives, reduced hospitalizations and stabilized health so that clients can take their next step, be it back to shelter, into housing or another option," said Barbara Garcia, Director of



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Health. “By providing a place for shelter clients to get the medical care they need, shelters are better able to offer a safe and healthy environment for all residents.”

The Medical Respite began to open the new beds in May, and is now at full capacity, with a total of 75 beds for homeless clients coming from hospitals or shelters. To date, 39 shelter clients have been referred for a variety of reasons, including incontinence, behavioral or cognitive impairment, injuries or the need to keep ongoing medical appointments.

At the Medical Respite, homeless clients recuperating from hospital stays or coming in from shelters are greeted by a full complement of health and social services. While at respite, clients receive nursing support, case management and discharge planning. These services include medication management, resolution of acute ongoing medical needs or diagnostic work ups, connecting to primary care, linking to benefits, mental health and substance use treatment. The goal is to ensure that patients’ health is stabilized so that they can take their next step, be it back to shelter, into housing or another option.

Of the 39 shelter clients served by the Medical Respite to date, 23 are male, 16 are female and one is transgender. The average age is 55, and the most represented ethnic groups are white (47 percent) and African American (42 percent). They are referred by the Health Department’s Shelter Health program from various shelters throughout the city, and the top diagnoses among this group are cancer, orthopedic issues, congestive heart failure, wounds and kidney disease. Some shelter clients suffer chronic illnesses, cognitive or functional impairments that leave them very vulnerable and make it hard for them to do well in a shelter setting.

The Medical Respite is also good for the City’s health care system. It relieves hospital emergency departments and improves patient flow by providing an appropriate discharge destination for patients who no longer need hospital care, but do not have a safe and stable place to recuperate. The expanded program also provides for homeless clients with chronic medical needs that cannot be addressed in the current emergency shelter system.

The Department of Public Health (DPH) is responsible for the clinical care offered at Medical Respite. DPH contracts Community Awareness and Treatment Services (CATS), a community based organization, to provide 24/7 staffing, general operations and custodial services. DPH works closely with the Department of Homelessness and Supportive Housing, shelter staff and shelter nurses to coordinate care.

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