



San Francisco Department of Public Health

SOMA RISE Center, Frequently Asked Questions

Q: What can I do to help a person on the street who is exhibiting a crisis, high on drugs, or to report street conditions?

For medical emergencies, fires, or criminal activity in progress call 9-1-1

- Neighbors can direct anyone who appears to be intoxicated and in need of help to the drug sobering center for help.
- Concerns about an encampment blocking the sidewalk (fully obstructed or with less than 6 foot of clearance from entrances to a home or business) should be directed to the San Francisco Police Department Non-Emergency line at: 415-553-0123.
- Concerns related to illegal activity within the encampment should be directed to SFPD Non-Emergency at 415-553-0123 or 9-1-1, whichever is appropriate.
- Concerns about trash or cleaning services around an encampment should be directed to 3-1-1.
- Concerns related to syringe litter should be directed to 3-1-1 and provide the location. The San Francisco AIDS Foundation is also partnering with the program to maintain a syringe-free area around the center and the pick-up crew can be reached for rapid response (7.00 am-7.00 pm daily) by text at: 415-810-1337.

Q: What is a drug sobering center, and why is the city opening one?

A drug sobering center is an innovative approach to address the serious problem of drug overdose deaths in San Francisco and the deteriorating street conditions. It was the top priority of the San Francisco Methamphetamine Task Force and a central recommendation of the city's Mental Health SF legislation.

While sobering centers have been opened before and San Francisco has an alcohol sobering center, the SOMA RISE Center, standing for recovery, initiate, support and engagement, will be one of the first in the nation to provide an indoor monitoring site for drug intoxication.



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The SOMA RISE Center will provide a safe place for persons coming down from drugs, including methamphetamine, heroin, or fentanyl, which are the main cause of the high rates of overdose deaths in the city. While indoors, these individuals can have some of their basic needs met, such as rest, and be connected to other services as they leave, which could include housing. The low-barrier approach to behavioral health services has proven successful in helping move people along the path to recovery and wellness. Research shows sobering centers reduce the need for emergency room visits and hospitalizations and improve the lives of the participants. Furthermore, the drug sobering center provides an alternative approach to law enforcement and unnecessary emergency room visits and hospital stays.

Q. Why was the South of Market (SoMa) neighborhood chosen as the location for the SOMA RISE Center?

The SoMa and Tenderloin neighborhoods are among the neighborhoods most seriously impacted by drugs, drug use and drug overdose. These two neighborhoods have the city's highest overdose rates, predominantly among individuals who are experiencing homelessness. Making the facility easily accessible to those in greatest need affords the best chance of positive outcomes.

After an extensive search of options in the SoMa and Tenderloin areas, 1076 Howard Street, between Sixth and Seventh Streets, was selected as the optimal choice being centrally located to the highest area of need and having the right facility features. With a brick and mortar building, we can better ensure safety, stability, and cleanliness.

Placing the facility near a hospital, as some community members have proposed, does not address the needs of these clients. Should individuals need to go to the hospital, the drug sobering center will call emergency services. The intention is that clients will come into the center before they have a drug related crisis, emergency, or a drug overdose. See below for more information about the clients this facility will serve.

Q: How will this program benefit this neighborhood?

The SOMA RISE Center will decrease the number of intoxicated people on the streets and increase the likelihood of people seeking drug treatment and other health and housing services. These outcomes are a benefit both to the people in crisis and to the



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general community who live and work in SoMa and pass by homeless and intoxicated individuals on the streets every day.

San Francisco Department of Public Health (SFDPH) and HealthRIGHT 360 are committed to finding solutions that address community concerns, including identifying destinations for all clients as they are exiting the facility and transporting to get them there.

Unfortunately, the SOMA RISE Center cannot solve all the issues created by homelessness and substance use disorders in the SoMa and Tenderloin neighborhoods, but it is one of a number of solutions designed to address these challenges.

Q: What steps will the program take to support neighborhood safety?

SFDPH and HealthRIGHT 360 are committed to the safety of neighbors, clients and staff. We will work to ensure the program does not have a negative impact on neighborhood safety and quality of life. We pledge to maintain cleanliness in the front the building and to supervise the wider area around the entrance. Safety workers will ensure the area is quiet, clean and does not lead to congregating. We will have a designated place to smoke with safety worker supervision that is away from the doorways of residents and businesses.

Additionally, DPH has heard from the community and is partnering with community organizations to reduce loitering in the blocks near the drug sobering center and pick up medical waste.

Health Right 360 will have a phone number for neighbors to call and a website for neighbors to provide feedback. Also, HealthRIGHT 360 commits to meeting neighbors on a quarterly basis to hear input into how the facility is operating.

Q: Who is the SOMA RISE Center designed to serve?

The SOMA RISE Center is designed to address the specific needs of people in the SoMa and Tenderloin neighborhoods who are intoxicated, non-violent, and willing to following instructions. As an example, a young woman in her early 20's with a history of trauma is sitting in the street in SoMa, intoxicated and confused. The Street Crisis Response Team brings her to the center. She can use the restroom, get a shower, have a snack and water, and sleep off her intoxication. The staff engages with her, offers her



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referral to substance use services and other resources, and on departure, we transport her to a women's shelter.

Q: How will people get to and from the program and where will they go afterwards?

Clients can walk in or can be transported by street outreach teams from the SoMa and Tenderloin neighborhoods. Outreach teams include the SF Homeless Outreach Team (SF HOT) and the Street Crisis Response Team, and silent EMT/ambulance services. While use of the program is voluntary, we expect most people to stay until they are more sober, leaving in a better condition than when they arrived. When an individual is ready to leave, we will identify and transport people to their next destinations where they can receive other services, such as food and shelter, treatment, or to their "home" location.

Q. Could this center ever become a safe consumption site?

The SOMA RISE Center at 1076 Howard St. is not appropriate for nor intended to be a safe consumption site. It will be designed, permitted and leased as a drug sobering site. A safe consumption site, should it be considered in another location, would have to go through an approval process that involves community notification and input.

Q: Does city zoning permit a drug sobering center at this site?

Yes, on April 12, 2021 the San Francisco Director of Planning issued a letter stating that the drug sobering center at 1076 Howard St. is in conformity with the objectives of the General Plan. As a community facility providing critical social and health services, it meets Objective 7 in the General Plan to make the educational and preventative services of the Department of Public Health convenient to the people, thereby helping the achieve the goals of the Public Health program in San Francisco.

Furthermore, the underlying Mixed-use General (MUG) Zoning District principally permits social service uses. The project provides a needed social service to the community and will preserve and revitalize a historic building.



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Q: Who is HealthRIGHT 360 and what is its role in the drug sobering center?

HealthRIGHT 360 is the proposed operator of the SOMA RISE Center with oversight by the San Francisco Department of Public Health. HealthRIGHT 360 is a non-profit community provider of residential and outpatient service for health care, mental health, and substance use disorder services. SFDPH and HealthRIGHT 360 have a relationship that dates back to the 1960's with the Haight Ashbury Free Clinic and Walden House. HealthRIGHT 360 headquarters is located in SoMa, just six blocks away from the proposed site.

Q. What do the safety workers do? How are they trained?

The safety workers will be on site 24/7, inside and out, monitoring the building entrance area for safety and overseeing admissions and discharges. Their role includes engaging with individual clients during arrival, conducting safety assessments, assisting with storing client belongings, and ensuring safety throughout the duration of their stay. Safety workers are trained in trauma-informed care, nonviolent communication, and crisis de-escalation.

Q: Who are the other staff members on site?

There will always be at least six staff members on site at any given time. In addition to safety workers, there will be an emergency medical technician (EMT) on site to monitor vital signs and screen for medical emergencies.

HealthRIGHT 360 has a long and successful history of hiring people with lived experience to be peer counselors engaging and encouraging people to connect with services, treatment, and housing. The upstairs floor of the SOMA RISE Center will host SFDPH administrative offices.

Q: How does the program work?

The program can support up to 20 clients at a time with some flexibility. Our expectation is they will stay 4 to 12 hours or longer as needed. During this time, we will provide:



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- Individualized monitoring for health and safety
- A rest area and room to walk to meet needs at different stages of intoxication
- A place to shower, hydration and light snacks, and some clothing if necessary
- Storage for belongings
- Assessments for substance use, physical and mental health issues
- Referral and transportation to services, including treatment and housing
- Monitoring for symptoms of overdose and intervene as needed

Q: How will the SOMA RISE Center pilot be evaluated?

Evaluation criterion are being developed. We will include assessment of program and community safety, service utilization, and contribution to the goals of the City's Mental Health SF objectives.

If the center is successful based on the criteria, a case can be made to create new neighborhood-based drug sobering centers elsewhere in the City where we know there is need.

Q: What are the next steps and how can the community provide feedback?

San Francisco Department of Public Health (SFDPH) and HealthRIGHT 360 conducted two community meetings on April 21 and April 27, 2021 to gather feedback from the community. A further community response meeting was held on May 26, 2021. In this meeting, DPH and HealthRIGHT 360 shared plans to address community concerns specifically around safety and street conditions, which included commitment that:

- The SOMA RISE Center is designed to serve the SOMA and Tenderloin neighborhoods.
- DPH and HealthRIGHT 360 commit to identifying and transporting participants to "next step" destinations.
- DPH and HealthRIGHT 360 are partnering with community organizations in the vicinity to address safety and street conditions.
- The SOMA RISE Center will be evaluated based on how it has improved the lives of participants and the neighborhood.



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This additional meeting was to demonstrate that DPH and HealthRIGHT 360 are listening to the community and intend to be a good neighbor.

Following these meetings, the lease for 1076 Howard Street will need reviewed by the San Francisco Board of Supervisors and the Mayor. The program will also go before the San Francisco Health Commission for approval.

In the meantime, members of the public may submit comments by calling 415-255-3495, or via email: 1076Howard@SFDPH.org