



Shelter Association of Washtenaw County (SAWC) 2021-2022 Winter Shelter Update: 11/8/21 – 4/3/22

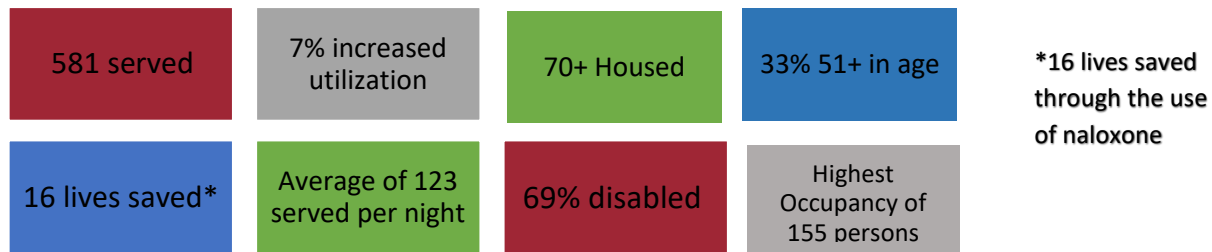
THE WINTER SHELTER PROGRAMS

The SAWC has developed an array of shelter and supportive services available to those experiencing homelessness during the winter months. This includes up to 175 shelter beds for individuals at a variety of sites.

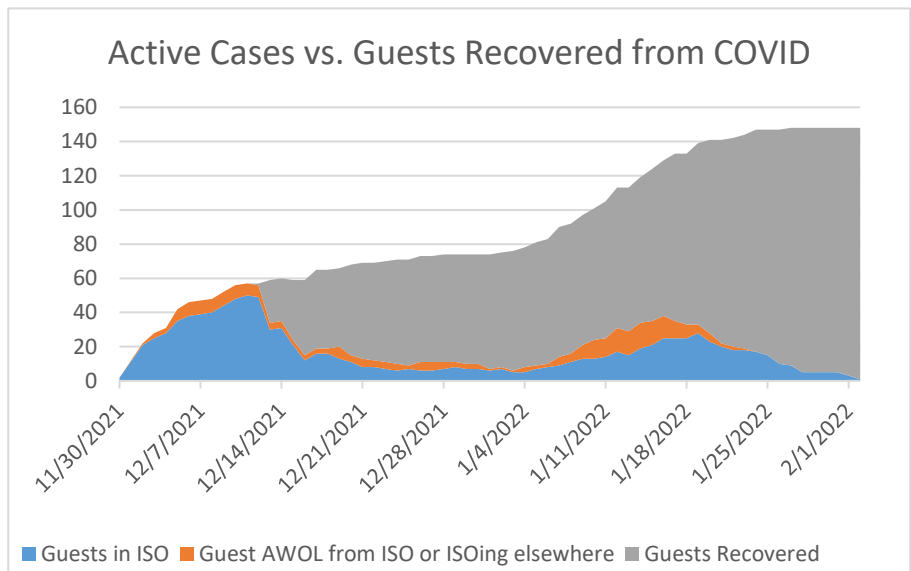
The SAWC provides additional day-time and overnight emergency shelter to individuals experiencing homelessness in Washtenaw County during the winter months. The SAWC winter program for 2021-2022 operates up to five sites at one time including the Delonis Center, a hotel offsite for those with acute medical conditions (recuperative shelter), a rotating shelter at local congregations, and two monthly day shelter locations, one in Ypsilanti and the other in Ann Arbor. The SAWC Winter Programs also operate as an access point to key supportive services for individuals experiencing homelessness. Supportive services offer individualized housing plans, intensive case management, and housing voucher sign up assistance. Additional basic need services include an onsite medical clinic, laundry, storage, showers, phone and mail access. These basic need services are designed to help those served preserve the dignity they deserve as they move from homelessness to housing.

In this now third winter season affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, the SAWC continues to operate with heightened health and safety measures. These measures are in place under the direction of Public and Packard Health. Measures include onsite mask requirements, PCR testing, on demand rapid testing, onsite vaccine clinics multiple times weekly, and enhanced cleaning procedures among others. Additionally, the SAWC has an emergency response when there are positive COVID cases including an emergency offsite hotel location for guests to rest and recover and mitigate the spread of the virus. These expansive COVID response efforts are supported by Washtenaw County.

NUMBERS AT A GLANCE

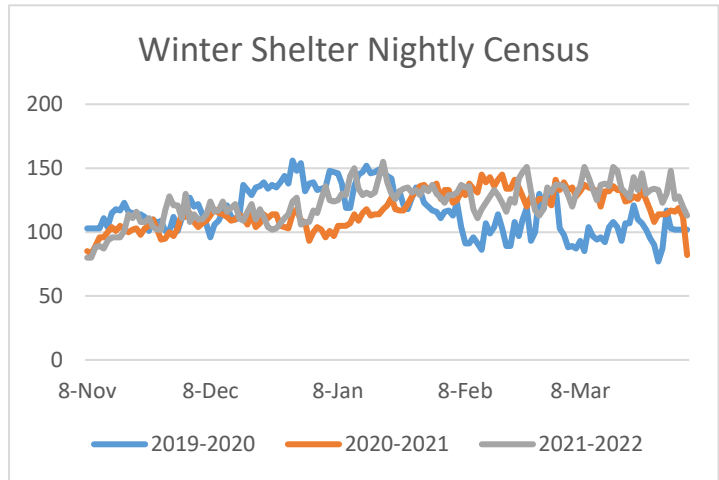


During this past winter we continued our commitment to provide enough winter shelter beds so our community does not turn away anyone seeking safe, emergency shelter. Maintaining this commitment was challenging as the COVID-19 pandemic continued to affect our community this winter. Up until the omicron wave, we had been able to maintain very low case counts, however in early December we had a sudden outbreak of the virus. Partnering with Washtenaw County, we quickly organized and implemented a congregate isolation site in less than 24 hours. In January, we began a hotel model as we continued to have positive cases. Cumulatively, during this period, there were 151 cases. We worked in concert with Public and Packard Health to ensure those with COVID-19 had access to medical care to meet their needs including monoclonal anti-body treatment (30 guests). Mostly clients reported mild or no symptoms (76%), however 9 individuals were hospitalized. We worked closely with Michigan Medicine and St. Joseph Mercy Hospitals to coordinate care. Following the outbreak, we created a new full-time Health and Safety Coordinator role to help us plan for any future emergencies.



In addition to the effects of COVID-19, there were other key trends this winter. We saw a nightly utilization rate 7% higher than the previous winter more in line with “pre-pandemic” winter seasons. This trend is indicative of our continued need for more affordable housing locally.

We also saw increased substance use and made more Narcan saves than in any previous winter (16). We engaged with guests and community non-profits including MISSION to better understand this trend and build support in minimizing overdoses as a community. Feedback centered on the ongoing toll of the continued COVID-19 pandemic on the community as well increased fentanyl. We hosted additional emergency safety trainings and in-services with staff to ensure we maintained strong protocols and were able to recognize signs of potential overdose, so staff felt confident supporting guests in these emergency circumstances.



Despite these challenges, we had many successes over this winter with an increased housing rate due to additional housing vouchers as well as specialist programs like the emergency housing voucher (EHV) program and the opening of Avalon’s Hickory Way and other supportive housing properties.