

A RESOLUTION

**Proposed
Resolution
20-854**

To declare the sense of the Council that the District will close and discontinue use of the D.C. General homeless shelter for families only when certain benchmarks resolution are met, and that there must be funding for a sufficient number of appropriate apartment-style units and permanent housing options for existing and newly homeless families.

RESOLVED, BY THE COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA, That this resolution may be cited as the “Sense of the Council for Closing D.C. General Shelter Resolution of 2014”.

**Sense of the
Council for
Closing D.C.
General
Shelter
Resolution of
2014**

Sec. 2. The Council finds that:

(1) Since 2008, following the closure of D.C. Village, a former nursing home located near a wastewater treatment plant, the District of Columbia has used the site of the former D.C. General Hospital as the primary placement for families seeking emergency shelter. D.C. General Shelter is located at 1900 Massachusetts Avenue, S.E., on Reservation 13, a 67-acre site that is also the location of the D.C. Jail and a methadone clinic.

(2) Because of the substantial, and still rising, numbers of families experiencing homelessness, in 2012 the District began to stop placing families in emergency shelter other than during the winter season, leaving many families to struggle with no safe place to sleep for most of the year.

(3) D.C. General had an original capacity of 153 units. However, in an effort to accommodate the demand for emergency shelter for homeless families, in February 2012 an additional 118 units were added, increasing the capacity to 271. Beginning in November 2012, the cafeteria has been used as overflow for families adding 18 additional spaces, bringing the total capacity to 289 units.

(4) During the 2013-2014 winter season, there was an unprecedented increase in the number of homeless families seeking shelter. On the night of its highest capacity, D.C. General sheltered 287 families, including 549 children, but many more families moved through D.C. General during the course of the season.

(5) While this shelter may be better for families than other less desirable options, research has consistently found that parent and child well-being decline while a family is in shelter when compared to housing or housing-like settings. Further, large communal shelter settings, such as D.C. General, are not healthy and safe environments for families, and especially not for children.

(6) In addition to the challenges of ensuring the security and safety of all residents at a large shelter facility such as D.C. General, there are fundamental ongoing

problems with the physical facility. Poor electrical, heating, and cooling systems and maintenance and pest control problems have continually plagued and negatively impacted the quality of life for the children and families who live there.

(7) The District spends \$13.8 million annually to operate D.C. General. This cost includes funding for operations, food, and security.

(8) Investments in the Emergency Rental Assistance Program, Rapid Rehousing, Permanent Supportive Housing, and the Local Rent Supplement Program will lessen the District's need for emergency shelter.

(9) The Council supports the Mayor's "500 Families, 100 Days" initiative to move families who were in D.C. General and hotels at the end of the 2013-2014 winter into more permanent housing situations through programs including Permanent Supportive Housing and Rapid Re-Housing.

(10) Successful completion of the Mayor's initiative is a critical step toward the closure of the D.C. General shelter. Once accomplished, there will remain only a small number of families in shelter. This will enable the District to move forward with the closure of D.C. General before the height of the 2014-2015 hypothermia season.

Sec. 3. It is the sense of the Council that before the closure of D.C. General:

(1) The Mayor's "500 Families, 100 Days" initiative must be substantially completed.

(2) The District must identify appropriate alternative housing for families remaining in the D.C. General shelter.

(3) The District must identify adequate replacement emergency shelter capacity for homeless families for the Fiscal Year 2014-2015 hypothermia season and into the future.

Sec. 4. It is the sense of the Council that the District shall close and discontinue use of the D.C. General homeless shelter for families located at 1900 Massachusetts Avenue, S.E., only after the benchmarks enumerated in section 3 have been substantially met. It is imperative that the District marshal the will and the necessary resources to close this dated and antiquated facility that was never intended to provide shelter for homeless families.

Sec. 5. It is further the sense of the Council that:

(1) Replacement emergency shelter capacity for families must:

(A) Consist of apartment-style units or private rooms as defined in the Dignity for Homeless Families Amendment Act of 2014, passed on 1st reading on October 28, 2014 (Engrossed version of Bill 20-767);

(B) Be sufficient and available to provide year-round access to shelter for homeless families;

(C) Allow all families placed in shelter to remain in shelter until appropriate and safe alternative housing is obtained; and

(D) Contain a sufficient number of units that are accessible to families with mobility impairments to ensure that the District complies with Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act.

(2) All replacement emergency shelter facilities must provide quality, on-site supportive services including housing search, family case management, and case management that specifically ensure that the educational, physical health, and developmental needs of children and youth are identified and met.

(3) Providers must ensure that there are safety protocols and procedures in place, including staff background checks.

(4) Ongoing training must be provided to all shelter staff, including trauma-informed care training.

(5) Sufficient investments must be made in a full range of homelessness prevention and affordable housing programs including the Emergency Rental Assistance, Rapid Rehousing, Permanent Supportive Housing, and Rent Supplement Programs.

Sec. 6. The Council further resolves that savings from the closure of D.C. General must be shifted to support the costs associated with the development and operation of replacement emergency shelter capacity.

Sec. 7. The Chairman shall transmit copies of this resolution, upon its adoption, to the Mayor and the Interagency Council on Homelessness.

Sec. 8. This resolution shall take effect immediately upon publication in the District of Columbia Register.