



ALLEGHENY COUNTY  
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**WINTER SHELTER OPENING FOR  
PERSONS EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS SET FOR NOV. 15**  
*Shelter to open 7 p.m. to 7 a.m., every night through March 15, 2020*

**PITTSBURGH (November 12, 2019)** – In partnership with the [Allegheny County Department of Human Services](#) (ACDHS) and the [Smithfield United Church of Christ](#) (UCC), [Pittsburgh Mercy's Operation Safety Net](#)® is pleased to announce that the [Winter Shelter](#) for persons who are experiencing homelessness is scheduled to open every night from 7 p.m. to 7 a.m., beginning **Friday, November 15, 2019**, and through Sunday, March 15, 2020, including weekends and holidays and regardless of temperature. As in years past, additional nights in March may be added, if conditions warrant.

This year posed some particularly significant challenges as community partners worked to resolve safety and accessibility concerns with use of the church. Smithfield UCC is actively working through the final stages of securing the appropriate permits for use of the church space

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at 620 Smithfield Street, Pittsburgh, PA 15222 (Downtown).

“The opening of the Winter Weather Shelter could not have been accomplished without the generosity of our foundation community and other partners. It’s a great example of what Allegheny County is all about – coming together to solve problems and working to make our region a better place, which includes caring for everyone in our community,” said Abigail Horn, deputy director of the Office of Community Services at ACDHS.

Sharon Sumansky, homeless services senior manager at Pittsburgh Mercy’s Operation Safety Net, an innovative, award-winning outreach program to persons who are experiencing homelessness, said upgrades to the fire safety and sprinkler system have been approved, which will allow the shelter to open. Additional work is slated to install the enhanced fire safety system, correct plumbing concerns, and improve accessibility.

“There will be work going on in the shelter throughout the entire season,” Sumansky said.

She added that [AdHawk Solutions](#), which contracts with Pittsburgh Mercy for operational management, is working with Operation Safety Net to finalize the preparations needed for the facility to operate effectively and to help coordinate the meal services.

Winter Shelter services include a warm, dry place to sleep; a hot meal served nightly; access to showers and laundry facilities; basic health care with options to begin primary care; homelessness diversion and housing-ready services (for persons who are experiencing chronic homelessness); benefits and service coordination; care management services; veterans services; winter clothing; and information and referrals to essential human services. The Winter Shelter works in collaboration with the [Allegheny Link](#), which connects people in need to available resources in [Allegheny County](#), including housing, as well as to other agencies and providers in the county.

“The individuals who come to the Winter Shelter for services are often those who are the most in need of services,” said [Brian Matous](#), homeless services supervisor. “In fact, many of the individuals we serve at the Winter Shelter have multiple, complex needs.”

Besides being a place for persons experiencing homelessness to get out of harsh winter elements, the main goal, Matous said, is to get a more complete understanding of why the individual is struggling with homelessness. “If we learn that someone is coming to us because they do not have power, heat, or water, then we’d rather divert someone from entering homelessness,” said Matous. “We’re a judgment-free service that focuses mainly on helping individuals grow out of their struggles with homelessness.”

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Being homeless, Matous added, is not necessarily an indication that the individual lacks the financial resources to be housed. Rather, “homelessness is a complex state of being that usually only happens when several support systems and personal health factors have broken down,” said Matous. “We want the Winter Shelter to be the place that someone can take that first step of becoming their better, and eventually, their best selves,” he added.

Winter Shelter meals will be coordinated by Pittsburgh Mercy. Faith groups, organizations, and individual volunteers are needed to prepare and/or serve hearty, nutritious meals for up to 125 individuals. To volunteer, call Brian Matous at 412-689-6565.

Organizations, corporations, and individuals who do not have the capacity to prepare meals but would like to contribute toward the cost – or to cover the cost – of purchasing a balanced, hot meal for up to 125 individuals are encouraged to consider making a monetary donation. Donations may be made via Pittsburgh Mercy’s website, [www.pittsburghmercy.org](http://www.pittsburghmercy.org), or mailed to Pittsburgh Mercy’s Development Office, 9983 Perry Highway, Suite 208, Wexford, PA 15090-9297. Do not mail cash. Checks can be made payable to “Pittsburgh Mercy.” Please note “Winter Shelter” in the memo blank. Those interested in making monetary donations offline may also contact [Connie Murray](mailto:CMurray@pittsburghmercy.org), director of Development at Pittsburgh Mercy, at [CMurray@pittsburghmercy.org](mailto:CMurray@pittsburghmercy.org) or 724-934-3537.

In-kind donations of new hats, scarves, gloves, socks, boots, winter coats, toiletries, and personal hygiene items for distribution to participants at the Winter Shelter are also greatly appreciated. The Winter Shelter accepts in-kind donations by appointment. Currently, there is a critical need for new and lightly used men’s and women’s boots and larger size men’s winter coats (sizes 1X-3X). To schedule an appointment to drop off donations, call 412-232-5739, ext. 2 or Brian Matous at 412-689-6565, or email [Operationsafety@pittsburghmercy.org](mailto:Operationsafety@pittsburghmercy.org). If emailing, please note “Winter Shelter In-Kind Donation” in the subject line.

Funding for the Winter Shelter is made possible by the Allegheny County Department of Human Services, Pittsburgh Mercy’s Operation Safety Net, and an Allegheny County Economic Development Emergency Solutions Grant.

Winter Shelter organizers also gratefully acknowledge the contributions and support of [ACTION-Housing](#), [Catholic Men’s Fellowship](#), [City of Pittsburgh](#), [Northside Homeless Alliance](#), [Office of Mayor William Peduto](#), [Living Ministry](#), and countless volunteers, providers, funders, and donors, without whose collaboration and support the shelter would not be possible.

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### ***About Pittsburgh Mercy's Operation Safety Net®***

[Pittsburgh Mercy's Operation Safety Net®](#) is an award-winning, innovative medical and social service outreach program for the unsheltered homeless population in Allegheny County. It strives to address the circumstances which undermine the behavioral and physical health of persons served by creating avenues for people who are homeless to access the medical and social services that are necessary for them to improve their quality of life. Since its founding in 1992, Operation Safety Net has reached thousands of individuals where they live – in camps, along riverbanks, in alleyways, or beneath bridges and highway overpasses. In 2018, it served 1,006 persons experiencing or at risk of homelessness. It helped 117 of them to obtain safe housing. In doing so, Operation Safety Net not only assists with providing health care and affordable housing, but also offers this vulnerable population hope, dignity, and a sense of community. Operation Safety Net is part of [Pittsburgh Mercy](#) and [Trinity Health](#), serving in the tradition of the [Sisters of Mercy](#). To learn more, or to make a donation in support of our important work in the community, visit [www.pittsburghmercy.org](http://www.pittsburghmercy.org).

### ***About Pittsburgh Mercy***

[Pittsburgh Mercy](#), a member of [Trinity Health](#), serving in the tradition of the [Sisters of Mercy](#), is a person-centered, population-based, trauma-informed community health and wellness provider. Pittsburgh Mercy, home to the region's only Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinic, is also one of the largest nonprofit organizations and employers in Southwestern Pennsylvania. Pittsburgh Mercy includes Bethlehem Haven, McAuley Ministries, Pittsburgh Mercy Behavioral Health, Pittsburgh Mercy Community Health, Pittsburgh Mercy Intellectual Disabilities Services, the Pittsburgh Mercy Parish Nurse & Health Ministry Program, Pittsburgh Mercy's Operation Safety Net®, and Pittsburgh Mercy Family Health Center. Together, these Pittsburgh Mercy programs and their 1,500 employees serve more than 33,000 individuals annually at 70+ locations in Southwestern Pennsylvania. To learn more about [Pittsburgh Mercy](#), or to make a donation in support of its important work in the community, visit [www.pittsburghmercy.org](http://www.pittsburghmercy.org).

### ***About Allegheny County Department of Human Services***

[Allegheny County Department of Human Services](#) is responsible for providing and administering publicly-funded human services to Allegheny County residents. DHS is dedicated to meeting these human services needs, most particularly for the county's most vulnerable populations, through an extensive range of information exchange, prevention, early intervention, case management, crisis intervention, and after-care services.

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