Emergency Shelter Code Blue Winter 2024-2025

1. SUMMARY

Lancaster County's Code Blue Plan establishes a collaborative approach to organizing existing available services during extreme cold weather for vulnerable populations in Lancaster County.

This plan details protocols for Code Blue Alerts, sets forth services available during Code Blue activation, and encourages all partners to communicate regarding the ongoing efforts available in the community to address the needs of individuals at risk during extreme weather events.

The Code Blue activation period is from November 1 to March 31 with the greatest risk from December to February. Risk peaks in January-February, the coldest months. The Plan's goal is to assist agencies in coordinating services when Code Blue alerts have been issued.

2. ACTIVATION

The Lancaster County Emergency Management Agency (EMA) monitors local weather and receives notification from the National Weather Service (NWS) regarding any weather event, including but not limited to extreme temperatures. The Lancaster County EMA relays NWS alerts immediately to all municipal EMA coordinators, deputy coordinators and all county agencies. In such cases, the Lancaster County IT Department communicates weather threats internally via the internal messaging system and the official Lancaster County Website. Stakeholder partners will be alerted via direct emailing from the email distribution, Everbridge Alerting System, as well as through various social media platforms.

A Code Blue alert will be generated by the Lancaster County EMA, in collaboration with LCHRA and the O4C, after evaluating weather forecasts and advisories produced by the NWS that predict the following weather conditions in the county within 24 to 48 hours:

- Temperatures will reach 20 degrees Fahrenheit or lower;
- Wind chill temperature will be zero degrees Fahrenheit or less for a period of two hours or more (sustained); or
- Extreme snowstorms and major sleet/freezing rain events.

If possible, the decision to declare a Code Blue will be made by 5:00PM on the previous business day and by 5:00PM on Friday before the weekend in which extreme winter weather is forecasted.

The LCHRA/O4C will send out an announcement regarding Code Blue Alert status through the following platforms:

- Contact Subscriber Email Distribution List
- Everbridge Alert System
- Facebook
- [Lancaster County Website](#)
- [Lancaster County Housing & Redevelopment Authority Website](#)
- [Lancaster County Emergency Management Website](#)

Notifications: We will use the web-based Dashboard and LEMA texts to communicate Code Blue declaration. The Code Blue notification will contain an anticipated duration of the active status (i.e., "Code Blue in place from 01.03.25 to 01.05.25). The Dashboard will also have "real time" shelter occupancy that your agency is expected to update daily.

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For the Code Blue season, the Lancaster County Housing & Redevelopment Authorities, the Office of Homeless Coalition, and the Lancaster County Emergency Management Agency will encourage existing non-profit, volunteer, and faith-based organizations providing services to homeless and at-risk populations to become available as a Warming Center by providing:

- Extended hours, to allow clients to remain indoors during the day for longer periods of time
- Outreach services to share information regarding Warming Centers and other supportive services
- Transportation to Warming Centers and other services

Note: The warming centers are subject to availability and can change at any time. Please contact the individual organization using the phone number listed to confirm its hours of operation.

3. CODE BLUE SERVICES

As individuals, communities, and provider agencies continue to confront the challenges of COVID-19 or other highly infectious disease such as RSV or seasonal influenza, warming centers designated within this Code Blue Plan should seek to uphold all safety measures recommended by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) as well as any Executive Orders issued by Federal, State or County officials.

4. COMPLEX COLD EMERGENCY(S) AND ADDITIONAL RESPONSE MEASURES

In an extended period of extreme cold that becomes a complex activation of Code Blue, the Code Blue Logistics Operator (LCHRA/O4C), the Lancaster County Human Services Departments (Office of Aging, Behavioral Health & Developmental Services, Veterans Affairs, Drug & Alcohol, etc.), and Emergency Management (EMA), will discuss additional measures to assist citizens. Additional response measures may include steps to:

- Increase surveillance, outreach, and vigilance, particularly for vulnerable populations;
- Mobilize neighborhood leaders to check on and assist vulnerable individuals in targeted locations; or
- Request assistance in providing and distributing provisions such as hot food/drink, socks, or blankets.

5. OUTREACH AND AWARENESS

Before December 1st, as a general reminder about the cold weather season approaching, the LCHRA/O4C will release information regarding the Code Blue Plan and services available. The release of information will include email announcements, website resource directories, social media posts, and a press release through the County's Public Information Officer(s). Information regarding tips on how to stay safe in the cold weather will be provided by the EMA Health & Medical Preparedness Coordination and included with the release of information.

Email/text alerts will be issued by EMA on Code Blue days to organizations serving the homeless, respectively, instructing them to advise individuals to keep warm and safe, on the harmful effects of the extreme cold, and to get or stay indoors in heated environments. All agencies or community partners interested in receiving Code Blue email notifications are encouraged to register for emails by emailing bdegoede@lchra.com

6. NEIGHBORHOOD OUTREACH

Local townships and boroughs are encouraged to disseminate cold weather-related information to community improvement associations and community-based organizations.

The LCHRA/O4C will ensure that the homeless outreach teams operating across the County are notified when a Code Blue alert is issued by EMA. These teams are encouraged to canvass known areas to offer vulnerable homeless individuals transportation to warming centers available within that community.

7. COORDINATION AND TRACKING

The LCHRA/O4C Code Blue Logistics Operator, with support from the LEMA, will evaluate multiple data sources and data collection platforms as an indicator of the effectiveness of Code Blue:

- Hypothermia-related deaths and will work in conjunction with appropriate agencies to review and share available data;
- Hospital admissions and EMS calls for hypothermia and cold-related illnesses;
- Incidents and injuries resulting from lack of heat, such as carbon monoxide poisoning from generators;
- Meal provisions distributed on Code Blue days; on
- Informational calls, vulnerable individual calls, and cold-related service requests received.

8. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

1. Office for the Homeless Coalition. (Code Blue Logistics Operator)

   a. Operate according to the County of Lancaster's Code Blue Plan, as established by the Lancaster County Housing & Redevelopment Authorities including meeting all reporting requirements set forth therein;

   b. Manage and provide appropriate oversight to a network of Warming Centers and Support Services designated by the County's Code Blue Plan to participate in the delivery of Code Blue services;

   c. Manage the current network of participating organizations and outreach new organizations in Lancaster County to build a wider program network and work to establish best practices in the implementation of the Code Blue program;

   d. Collect and aggregate monthly and quarterly utilization and other descriptive data from Warming Centers and Support Service organizations in a format approved by the Lancaster County Housing & Redevelopment Authority; and

   f. Administer reimbursement (if applicable) based funding to a network of approved organizations agreeing to the terms of the County's Code Blue Plan.

2. Lancaster County Housing & Redevelopment Authorities

   a. Update the Code Blue Plan document;

   b. Maintain and monitor cold-related data to identify trends that may indicate impending crisis, and request additional resources as needed;

c. Communicate Code Blue information via traditional media, social media, and electronic communications;

d. Provide health tips and encourage local resilience against the cold weather all season; and

e. Will coordinate public messaging directly with Lancaster County ITS Department.

3. Code Blue Service Providers

a. Develop plans for warming centers & have plans reviewed and approved by the Code Blue Logistics Operator for inclusion in the official County Code Blue Plan;

b. Pre-approved Overnight Warming Center providers shall submit a reimbursable services budget to the Code Blue Logistics Operator for approval;

c. Coordinate the extended hours for programs during Code Blue days;

d. Coordinate with the homeless outreach teams to distribute literature regarding winter safety tips and to provide information regarding Code Blue services;

e. Coordinate with the homeless outreach teams to canvass known "hotspots" on Code Blue days and respond to 211 requests for outreach to vulnerable homeless individuals;

f. Refer clients with behavioral health, medical, or other special needs appropriately;

g. Provide invoices for approved reimbursable services to the Code Blue Logistics Operator and as detailed in the Code Blue Plan;

h. Share social media messaging during Code Blue declarations; and

i. Link individuals with appropriate services as necessary to break the cycle of homelessness.

4. County Office of Emergency Management

a. The Technical Hazards Specialists will monitor weather and provide forecasts from credible weather resources (i.e. NOAA, NWS, etc.). Weather alerts will be generated, initiating the Code Blue alert sequence;

b. The Community Resilience Coordinator, or the Health & Medical Preparedness Coordinator will issue the Code Blue declaration;

c. Share weather and Code Blue information through appropriate networks;

d. The Health & Medical Preparedness Coordinator will assist by providing CHAC-reviewed, County-approved health tips and encourage local resilience against the cold weather all season;

e. The Community Resilience Coordinator will provide direct outreach support to LCHRA/OHC for this plan;

f. Will provide LCHRA/OHC, and all Code Blue partners with access and training on WebEOC platform for resource management/shelter status monitoring and reporting;

g. Will provide LCHRA/OHC with access and training on Everbridge mass-messaging platform; and

h. Will post Code Blue messages on all Public Safety web-based platforms.

5. County Department of Information Technology Services (ITS)

a. Will post Code Blue messages issued by EMA on Official County Website as "Alerts".

6. Law Enforcement Agencies

a. Relay public messaging to homeless and vulnerable citizens encountered on patrol;

b. Dispatch officers to check on known or reported vulnerable citizens;

c. Distribute Code Blue literature within jurisdiction; and

d. Share social media messaging during Code Blue declarations.

9. PLAN MAINTENANCE

1. Lancaster County Housing & Redevelopment Authorities, along with Emergency Management shall maintain this plan and organize an annual review no later than November 1 of each year.

2. Based on the findings of annual reviews, Lancaster County Housing & Redevelopment Authorities shall coordinate plan revisions as necessary.

3. Agencies' internal procedures to execute their responsibilities under this plan shall be reviewed annually by the respective agencies no later than November 15 of each year.

4. Participating agencies are responsible for notifying Lancaster County Housing & Redevelopment Authorities if policies or procedures that substantively affect this plan are modified.

Final 11/25/2024

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Agency	Target Population	Warming Center / Emergency or Temp Shelter	Food/Nutrition	Donation Management	Financial Assistance	Transportation	Case Management	Behavioral Health Support	Substance Misuse Support

*Table 2 – Sample WebEOC Code Blue / Emergency Shelter Resource Board

Figure 1 – Current WebEOC Shelter Management Board

Program Name & Location	Target Population	Service Summary	Extend Hours to Assist	Services Available for Extended Hours	Code-Blue Specific (yes/no)	Utilized as a Warming Center?

*Table 3 – Sample Code Blue Service Delivery Board by Agency