

Government Operations Committee Meeting
Homelessness Related Services Summary
March 4, 2022

Video Recording at www.bangormaine.gov/video
Agency Website: [PCHC | PCHC](#)

Penobscot Community Health Care (PCHC)/Hope House

Lori Dwyer, CEO, accompanied by staff of the Hope House (shelter). See handout attached for more details.

- PCHC helps one in ten people in Penobscot County.
- PCHC is a large federally qualified health center located in three counties but most services are located in the greater Bangor Area.
- One department of Hope House – emergency shelter, only low-barrier shelter in region. All in one facility with primary care services, recovery and mental health services. Also have 48 transitional housing units.
 - Folks can be in the transitional housing units for up to 2 years. They pay rent, receive support, and move on.
 - Low barrier means that it is services to anyone who needs it. They can be intoxicated, experiencing mental health crisis, etc. The only thing that would prevent someone from getting services is violent or threatening behavior.
 - Challenges include lack of affordable housing, as it clogs up system. The degree of acuity that now exists in the population is new and pronounced. System is not set up to fund the support needed to assist folks with multiple chronic conditions, often in crisis and is beyond the existing resources and capacity.
 - Impact of sheltering someone and providing wrap around services and moving them into a more supportive position reduces jail night, emergency services, etc.
 - Operating amount is just over \$1million.
 - Focus on triage and diversion, assessments are taken. Homeless response system does a good job to place people where they should be.
 - Serving 56 people a night currently. Spoke about their process for receiving folks and efforts to divert when possible and if accepted, the process followed.
 - Severe mental illness and/or substance use addiction exists in approximately 95% of their shelter guests. Often, many aren't ready for help. It requires relationship building and trust to help build them to get to the point to accept help but can take 6 months to a year.
 - Offer psychiatric help, medical help, suboxone services, and medication management services. Gap of permanent supportive housing is a big gap. Folks fall between the gaps and need this kind of support.
 - Staff must frequently do overdose reversals and has become normalized but staff aren't trained to support that level of trauma. Team is committed to help, but levels of required support have changed significantly.
 - It was pointed out that PCHC does not receive funding for the support offered to their residents of transitional housing.
 - There was discussion over privacy in shelters and new approaches to congregate shelters to provide folks with dignity and the services they need.

This document was compiled by the City of Bangor based on information provided at a City meeting. For complete information and for questions related to this agency's services, please contact them directly.

The Hope House Journey to Hope

The Hope House Shelter is a safe, supportive, short-term stop on our neighbors' paths to building stability, growth, and successful futures.

Homeless Response & Diversion

Our neighbors experiencing housing instability call (207) 991-2638 to speak with a Rapid Resolution Specialist and develop individualized solutions in collaboration with the Specialist. Callers discuss ways to avoid entering the shelter system by:

- > Utilizing natural supports (family, friends) and main stream resources to prevent entry into the shelter system.
- > Accessing PCHC Diversion financial resources to stabilize current housing.

Referrals are also made to:

- √ Emergency shelters
- √ Community Supports
- √ PCHC - WISH
- √ Peer Substance Use Disorder Support
- √ Hope House Housing Navigators

Hope House Shelter

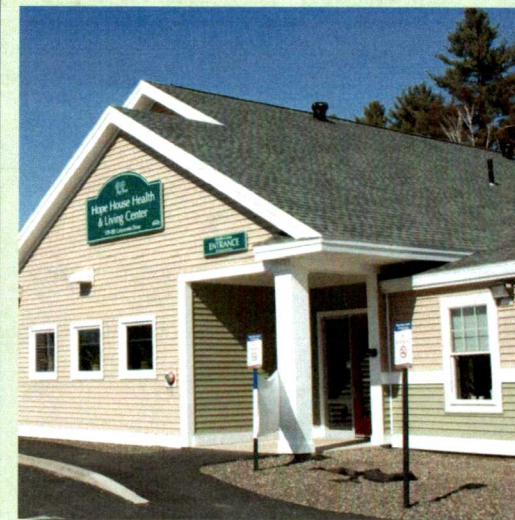
A guest's stay at the 56 bed Hope House begins with addressing immediate safety needs and providing a safe place to sleep, nutritious meals, and 24/7 support from **Shelter Navigators**.

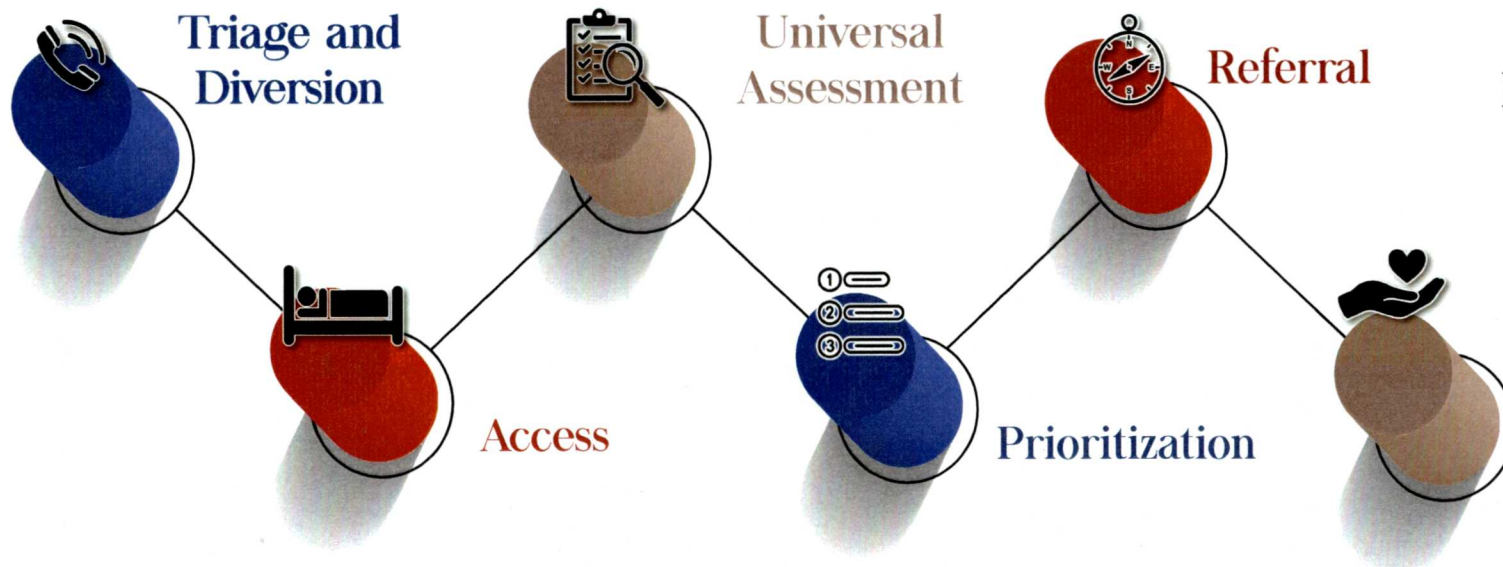
Guests have access to:

- > **Wellness Navigator** support to address physical wellness, mental health, and SUD recovery resources.
- > **Housing Navigator** services to resolve homelessness rapidly
- > **Day Program Groups** to engage in moving beyond homelessness
- > **PCHC - WISH Peer Substance Use Disorder Support**
- > Integrated medical care through the **Hope House Health Center**

Hope House Transitional Housing

Hope House Transitional Housing offers 48 rent-based single-occupancy rooms, helping people move toward healthy living, self-sufficiency and successful independent housing in a safe and supportive environment.





This process is considered best practice nationally. Here's how this works in Bangor.

Housing With Ongoing Supports

Homeless Response Line

Someone finds themselves without a home and seeks support at a shelter, the city, or an agency. Call to Triage/Diversion line/Hope House.

Support specialists work to connect people back to natural supports - family, friends, other resources – to keep them from entering the homeless response system.

Process can take 5 minutes to 48 hours, and involves anything from simple outreach to many hours of negotiation.

Access

If diversion is unsuccessful and a shelter bed is available, the individual is assigned to an appropriate emergency shelter:

- Hope House (Low barrier) **56 beds**
- Bangor Area Homeless Shelter (adults) **37 beds (pre-pandemic)**
- Shaw House (for youth) – **18 beds.**

If no shelter bed is available, individuals are connected to a PATH navigator to assess and solve for life safety; individuals are placed on shelter wait list.

Universal Assessment

Upon intake to the shelter, a comprehensive intake assessment to identify biopsychosocial and housing needs; similar assessment is repeated after 48 hours.

Hope House also conducts a separate wellness assessment.

Prioritization

Resources (e.g., vouchers) are first directed to those with highest vulnerability and longest amount of homelessness (i.e., the chronically homeless).

- Daily Hope House huddles to review and prioritize clients.
- Weekly huddles with regional navigators to review 5% list (those most vulnerable).

Referral

After 14 days, if individual is unable to resolve their episode of homelessness on their own, they are connected to a housing navigator and/or a WISH navigator. Navigators match individuals to appropriate vouchers and housing.

• Hope House tracks peoples' movement through the system using real time data (HIMS system) to prioritize application of resources. This happens through the daily and weekly huddles referenced above.

- Bangor currently has approximately 21 housing navigators who collaborate to meet peoples' needs.

Housing With Ongoing Supports

Appropriate housing is found or re-established. Navigators work with clients, landlords, and safety-net system to match clients to safe, affordable housing.

- Most people need only 14 days or less to resolve homelessness, and many resolve it on their own.

- Hope House operates 48 transitional housing units.

- People with more challenges need transitional housing to progress toward independent living/permanent housing placement.