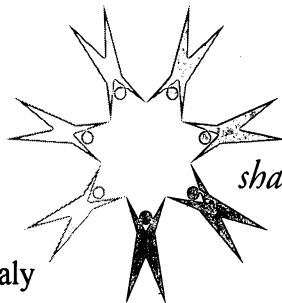


Department of Human Service Programs



sharing resources... building community

TO: Robert W. Healy
City Manager

FROM: Jill Herold
Assistant City Manager for Human Services

DATE: December 1, 1998

RE: Response to Council Orders: #27 dated 9/28, #47 dated 11/2, #86 dated 9/28, #2 dated 10/26, #13 dated 10/26, #32 dated 10/26, #77 dated 9/28 and #91 dated 9/28

Jill Herold
Assistant City Manager

Ellen Semonoff
Deputy Director

Childcare

Commission for
Persons with Disabilities

Community and Youth

Community
Learning Center

Coordinating Council for
Children, Youth and Families
(Kids' Council)

Council on Aging;
Elderly Services

Low Income
Fuel Assistance

Multi-Service Center;
Homeless Services

Office of Workforce
Development

Planning & Development

Recreation

As indicated above, the City Council has recently filed several orders on the topics of homelessness and public intoxication. The orders address a range of issues which reference public health and public nuisance concerns. Several orders reference the need for a multi-disciplinary response and a request to form a committee to address the many concerns the issues of homelessness and public intoxication present.

In the past there have been a number of task forces, planning committees, and working groups addressing various aspects of the issues of homelessness and public intoxication. Each group has been effective in identifying parts of the problem and often developing appropriate responses to those problems. Most recently, under the auspices of the Leadership Council of the Police Department a working group, the Public Intoxication Committee, has been addressing many of the issues raised in the various Council orders. Also, the Department of Human Services each year leads a comprehensive planning process with homeless service providers and advocates to develop a service plan for meeting the needs of the homeless in Cambridge. This plan serves as the framework for significant funding by the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to support services for the homeless population in our city.

The need for an outreach service to go directly to homeless and inebriated individuals where ever they may be in the city and to link them to appropriate services has been a major need identified not only by the two groups mentioned above but also by nearly every preceding group and task force addressing the needs of these populations over the past several years.



This long awaited service is now available! The *FirstStep Street Outreach Program* was very recently launched by CASPAR with funding which comes through the Departments of Human Services in Cambridge and Somerville from HUD. This past month three teams of two outreach workers began offering mobile services to homeless individuals in Cambridge and Somerville 12 hours a day, Monday through Friday. Two teams are assigned specific routes which include the major squares in Cambridge and Somerville, meal programs, known hangouts for homeless individuals, and private hideouts where the most at risk people isolate. These teams will offer help to link individuals with needed substance abuse, medical, psychiatric, case management, housing search, employment and training, legal, and other services.

While this new service will play an essential role in addressing many of the problems identified by the City Council, there continues to be a need for a comprehensive and coordinated response to the issues of homeless and public inebriation. To that end, the leadership of the following departments have recently met and formed a working structure to address these issues. The departments represented include: the Police, Emergency Communications, Public Works, Licensing, Human Services, Community Development, Public Health, Psychiatry and Law as well as the District Courts, and CASPAR. Designated staff from each of these departments and organizations will meet on a regular basis and will include participation from the MDC, MBTA, Harvard and MIT Police Departments, Chamber of Commerce and neighborhood organizations.

The leadership of the above referenced departments will serve as the senior management team to which the working group of designated staff will bring the identification of issues with recommendations for addressing them. Harold Cox, the City's Chief Public Health Officer will chair the working group. The results of this work will be forwarded to the City Manager for his review and consideration and, in turn, to the City Council for policy adoption as required.

First Step

Street Outreach Program

617-666-7227

FirstStep History

In 1997, the communities of Cambridge and Somerville selected street outreach to unsheltered homeless individuals as a priority for funding from the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development through its Continuum of Care Homeless Assistance competitive application process. CASPAR's successful funding proposals resulted in three-year renewable funding to implement the FirstStep outreach program in both communities. FirstStep became operational in Cambridge and Somerville in October, 1998.

FirstStep Philosophy

FirstStep operates from the public health perspective of harm reduction: save a life today in order to interrupt the cycle of homelessness tomorrow. The goal of the program is to reach out to individuals *where they are* as the essential *first step* in building the trust needed to move them from the streets to safer environments where they can access the services they may need to end their homelessness. FirstStep accepts homeless individuals as they are and treats them with the dignity and respect that they deserve.

FirstStep Program

Three teams of two outreach workers overlap shifts in order to offer mobile services to homeless individuals twelve hours a day, from 8 a.m. until 8 p.m., Monday through Friday. Two teams are assigned specific routes which include the major squares in Cambridge and Somerville, meal programs, known hangouts for homeless individuals, and private hideouts where the most at risk people isolate.

CASPAR outreach teams are in close contact with each other during each shift by walkie talkie, and make referrals from the streets using cellular phones. Outreach workers travel by van and on foot in order to increase visibility and to maximize the opportunity to make contact with homeless individuals. They sit on park benches, frequent MBTA stations, and maintain a presence by the Charles and Mystic Rivers, under bridges, and by the railroad tracks.

Consistency is the key to engaging even the most resistant homeless individuals. FirstStep staff can be counted on to return to the same place at the same time with the same message: we are here to help when you are ready to accept the help. Help can take many forms, including linking individuals with needed substance abuse, medical, psychiatric, case management, housing search, employment and training, legal, and other services that will make it possible for them to access permanent housing in time. Contact with clients at all times is noncoercive, and client confidentiality is respected.

Community Partners

FirstStep has made a service commitment to the communities of Cambridge and Somerville and to the providers of services to homeless individuals. The third outreach team has been designated as the Community Response Team, and is on call from 10 a.m. until 6 p.m. to respond to appeals for help from the business sector and concerned residents, the police, and human services. CASPAR staff make ongoing contact with community agencies, business groups, neighborhood organizations, City officials, and residents. The message is consistent and clear: outreach staff, as available, will prioritize community-identified service needs, will respond as quickly as possible, will offer an explanation if service cannot be provided for any reason, and will follow up as mutually agreed with the referral source.

It is as important to identify what FirstStep cannot do, as to enumerate what the program does. FirstStep cannot:

• force people to accept help • move people against their will • lift people who have passed out • serve people who are under arrest for a crime • engage people who are not cooperative

These service limitations are essential in order to assure the well being of staff and the appropriate level of service for clients.



FirstStep

To request help, call the
FirstStep Community
Response Team
at
(617) 666-7227

CASPAR, Inc., founded in 1970, is a community based nonprofit agency providing prevention, intervention, and treatment services to those affected by alcoholism and other drug abuse.

Our mission is to promote prevention; serve individuals and families who are underserved, including those who may be indigent; treat all who seek help with acceptance, respect, and affirmation of their self worth; keep people alive; and support them so they may improve the quality of their lives.



FirstStep

Street Outreach Program
617-666-7227

CASPAR, Inc.
Cambridge and Somerville
Program for
Alcoholism and Drug Abuse
Rehabilitation



CITY OF CAMBRIDGE
CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS 02139

TEL 349-4300
FAX 349-4307



8.

EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENT
ROBERT W. HEALY
City Manager

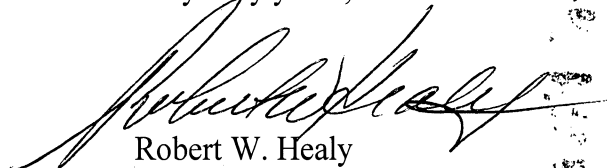
RICHARD C. ROSSI
Deputy City Manager

December 7, 1998

To The Honorable, The City Council:

Please find attached a response to Awaiting Report Item No. 8 and 20, regarding a report on homelessness and preventing public drunkenness, received from Assistant City Manager for Human Services Jill Herold.

Very truly yours,



Robert W. Healy
City Manager

RWH/mec
Attachment

Consent Agenda #8

7755

Relative to AW Repott #8 and 20,
regarding a report on
homelessness and preventing
public drunkenness.

In City Council December 7, 1998

PLACED ON FILE