

Shelter Accessibility Advisory Board 8.7.25

9:30am - 11:30am via Zoom

Attendance: Jennifer Shaoul, Cynthia English, Crystal Rivera (left 11:00), Asa Johnson, Beth Diesch, Charisma White, Lisanne Anderson, Erica Strang, Mbacke Thiam (joined 10:45)

Agenda for 08/07/2025

- Review of meeting minutes from 7/9 and implementation of any pertinent edits.
 - Reminder to group to add suggestions in meeting minute reviews rather than making direct edits, so that group can review and approve known changes; changes to agenda should be created in a separate document rather than added to the minutes from the previous meeting
 - Minutes reviewed and approved
- Follow up discussion on audio usage of minutes for committee members.
 - Per Jen discussion with Legal: Would require a Reasonable Accommodation; issue at hand is that ownership of the audio recording would be owned by Microsoft/Google/etc; redundancy as the minutes already exist
- Follow up discussion on whether or not the city has access to shelter staff turnover rate data and if so, whether or not our board has access to said data.
 - Per Jen: No official data that comes in. How are we using this data to help us make recommendations for how this will positively improve accessibility in shelter? Agreed outcome: the labor required to figure out this information would not necessarily result in effective/impactful recommendations. Light-touch recommendation for creating a separate group/evaluative body to assess issues related to turnover, staff vacancy rates, incentives/supports for improved staff retention, etc, as this overall issue is outside the scope of this particular body.
 - Recommendation: Extend city EAP to contracted agencies in absence of internal access at the provider level.
- Further planning as to the specific dates and shelters that committee members are to visit, as well as group assignment.
 - Reminder that report is due January 2026
 - Jen recommends shelter visits to take place in October
 - Personally identifying information (including location, other than borough and type of shelter) cannot be included in any written reports
 - Need to identify the four possible shelter types to visit:
 - Employment (possibly Barbara Kleinman): Beth and Lisanne (Queens or Manhattan)
 - Adult Families with Children: Erica and Crystal (Manhattan or Bronx)
 - Adult Families: Charisma and Mbecke
 - Mental Health (possibly/purpose built): Asa and Cynthia
- Brainstorming and creation of a standardized set of questions to ask the constituents we are able to interact with at the shelters we visit about their shelter experience.
 - Cynthia in process of drafting the one-pager, will be sent to group within next couple of weeks

Next steps/follow-up items:

- Report is due January 2026
- Jen: Examination of what information is available regarding shelter staff turnover rates at the various tiers of management, both at the intake/assessment shelters and ideally at partnered provider shelter agencies. If data isn't available to the city then this may be a possible recommendation from this committee: Provider agencies to submit regular reports regarding staffing vacancies, with the idea that longer tenure of staff contributes to better engagement/more positive client outcomes.

- Beginning in the Fall, to possibly be assigned to incoming SWI: Grant writing project for self-advocacy Peer program for shelter inreach; possible collaboration with Ombudsman's office.
- Recommendation: Ensure that individuals have access to resources for advocacy
- Cynthia will propose possible adjustments to the terminology of Ombudsman, possibly "Consumer Advocate"
- At next meeting: Propose and decide upon group rules/discussion mediation; Cynthia proposes time limit per agenda discussion item
- Draft signage for posting at shelters for site visits: Example, SDAB will be on site x date/y time to receive feedback about your experiences regarding accessibility in shelter (less wordy verbiage)
- Jen to discuss shelter visits with facilities team prior to September meeting
- Asa and Cynthia to create agenda for next meeting and will send to the group for review prior to September meeting
- Review/approval of one-pager drafted by Cynthia
- Continued training slides by Jennifer (left off on slide 57)
- Next meeting: Either Monday 9/15 or Friday 9/19, to be confirmed; calendar holds sent