



**Office of Will County Executive  
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**Will County, City of Joliet and the Continuum of Care (CoC) join the United Way of Will County to assist the homeless during the COVID-19 crisis**

The Emergency Housing Assistance Plan will provide hotel housing to those currently homeless or at risk of losing shelter during this shelter-in-place order.

WILL COUNTY – On Monday, the Continuum of Care, a network of agencies and service providers working to end homelessness, released the Emergency Housing Assistance Plan to provide safe shelter for the homeless and those at risk of losing shelter.

Local shelters are at capacity and some have had to rehouse their clients due to limited staffing and the inability to maintain proper sanitization standards. For the health and safety of their clients and staff, shelters such as Daybreak Center shelter, are transitioning clients to hotels. Similar moves are being made across the U.S. and worldwide as the homeless are especially vulnerable to COVID-19 due to the lack of stable shelter, lack of access to proper hygiene and medical care and basic food supplies.

With the help of local hotels, the Plan can support up to 50 hotel units at this time. Shelter can be provided for up to three weeks in accordance with the current shelter-in-place order. It is estimated that about \$100,000 is needed at this time to cover the costs of these hotel rooms. Agencies have secured about half of what is needed by reallocating existing state and federal resources (CDBG/ESG) to this effort. Remaining funds are being solicited through private and corporate funds to make this a public/private effort.

The CoC response system is as follows:

- CoC's Lead Agency is Will County Center for Community Concerns which will coordinate the effort and manage additional state resources being made available through Department of Human Services and federal emergency response funds to sustain the effort.

- MorningStar Mission shelter will act as the entry point for assistance. MorningStar will screen shelter seekers for COVID-19 symptoms and collect necessary data and then refer the client to a designated hotel location.
- City of Joliet Police Department will transport MorningStar referrals to partnering hotels.
- Veterans Assistance Commission of Will County will coordinate case management needs with other CoC service agencies.
- CoC Leadership Committee Homeless Advocate will provide peer mentorship to those housed through this initiative.
- Local business owner, Jeff Eberhard, and founder of the Guardian Group will coordinate the support services needed for those housed through this effort (food, diapers and personal hygiene supplies) and will be the drop off location for donations at [313 S Larkin Ave, Joliet, IL 60436](#).
- Northern Illinois Food Bank has ordered 50 Shelf Stable food boxes to be delivered to sheltered homeless at these hotel.
- United Way of Will County has pledged financial support and will assist in soliciting private and corporate donations to a COVID-19 Response Fund that can be used for housing. Donations can be made at <https://uwwill.org/will-county-covid-19-response-fund>.
- Local agencies in need of volunteers and residents looking for volunteer opportunities, are encouraged to join the United Way of Will County Volunteer Center: <https://uwwill.galaxydigital.com>.

For more information about this program, contact the CoC interim Coordinator Sarah Kidwell at phone: 815-722-0722 ext 2227 or email [skidwell@wcccc.net](mailto:skidwell@wcccc.net).