



NEWS FROM THE OFFICE OF
ADAM J. BELLO
MONROE COUNTY EXECUTIVE

For Immediate Release

Monday, December 2, 2024

COUNTY EXECUTIVE BELLO ANNOUNCES EXPANDED TRANSPORTATION ACCESS TO CODE BLUE SERVICES

New partnership with RTS provides free transportation to warming shelters and centers from any bus stop or via RTS Connect

ROCHESTER, NY — Monroe County Executive Adam Bello joined Rochester Mayor Malik Evans, County Legislators and warming shelter providers to announce the details of Monroe County 2024-2025 Code Blue Plan, which provides warming centers for unhoused individuals when temperatures dip below 32 degrees. These updates enhance support for unhoused individuals during extreme winter weather with expanded transportation options and additional warming center providers from four to five.

"Everyone deserves a safe, warm place to stay during the harsh winter months. For many in our community, transportation is a major barrier to accessing shelter. These updates to our Code Blue Policy expand the reach of our warming centers and ensure that no one is left out in the cold, regardless of their financial situation," **said County Executive Bello**. "This initiative reflects months of thoughtful planning and collaboration by our Department of Human Services, RTS, the City of Rochester and our dedicated partner organizations. I'm grateful for their commitment to protecting the most vulnerable members of our community."

"This enhanced Code Blue plan demonstrates our unified commitment to protect our most vulnerable residents," **said Mayor Evans**. "By expanding warming centers and transportation options, we're removing barriers, ensuring that everyone has access to shelter when temperatures drop. No one should have to face Rochester's winter nights alone or without warmth."

"We have been preparing all year for Code Blue days, and we are ready to ensure that every person in our community has a safe and warm place to stay on our coldest days," **said Department of Human Services Commissioner Thalia Wright**. "I am proud of our DHS team who found innovative ways to partner with organizations such as RTS to provide free rides to warming shelters this winter. This new partnership strengthens existing relationships with key community organizations that make certain Code Blue will be a success."

During Code Blue months, individuals in need can request free transportation via RTS to a warming shelter in the City of Rochester at any bus stop. If the nearest shelter is already on the

bus route, the bus will transport them directly there. If a participating warming center is not on the bus route, the bus will transport them to the RTS transit center – where an RTS employee will escort them to the appropriate bus route that will take them to a shelter with available space.

“The RTS team is happy to do its part to help people without a home get out of the cold winter weather and to one of the warming shelters that are along one of our RTS Connect bus routes,” **said RTS CEO Miguel Velázquez.** “Thank you to County Executive Bello, Mayor Evans, and all of the Code Blue partners for all you do to help the less fortunate among us.”

In addition, new warming center sites have been added to the Code Blue initiative, including Saving Grace Ministries in Rochester and Oak Orchard in Brockport, the first time Monroe County has provided a warming center in Brockport. Monroe County will also provide overnight accommodations for unhoused couples through a new partnership with Bethlehem Family Ministries.

“I would like to thank my partners in government and community based organizations for their work to ensure the safety and well-being of Monroe County’s vulnerable residents during our winter months,” **said Legislature President Yversha Román.** “The addition of two new warming providers and transportation addresses some of the obstacles to seeking shelter during Code Blue. I encourage anyone in need of shelter during this harsh weather to utilize these expanded services.”

"Expanding Monroe County's Code Blue program into Brockport is a significant step toward safeguarding our vulnerable populations during harsh winter conditions," **said Legislator Jackie Smith.** "By increasing shelter capacity and providing essential services on the Westside, we are reinforcing our commitment to community well-being and ensuring that no one is left without refuge in freezing temperatures, regardless of zip code."

Code Blue is enacted when weather conditions pose a threat of serious harm or death to homeless individuals refusing shelter, typically when wind chill temperatures are expected to drop below 32 degrees.

Code Blue was initiated Monday, November 25 and will end when weather conditions permit.

“House of Mercy, a beacon of hope in Rochester, NY for decades, dedicated to serving individuals experiencing homelessness, is reinforcing its commitment to providing shelter and support during the upcoming winter months. We believe that everyone deserves a safe and warm place to stay, especially during the harsh winter months,” **said Dr. Tammy Butler, Executive Director of House of Mercy.** “Understanding the critical nature of the situation, and with the spirit of collaboration and collective effort, House of Mercy is expanding its capacity to offer temporary respite through the Cold Blue initiative. House of Mercy is welcoming those who are homeless or inadequately housed. We will provide a safe and warm space, offering essential services like meals, clothing and access to community resources. Our goal is to provide immediate relief and connect individuals with the resources they need to rebuild their lives.

Monroe County Warming Center Sites are listed below:

Open Door Mission, 210 W Main Street, RTS Routes: 16, 17,18,19,20

House of Mercy, 285 Ormond Street, RTS Route 3

Saving Grace Ministries, 1140 Norton Street, Rochester, RTS Route 4,5

Brockport Community Warming Center, located at Brockport First Baptist, 124 Main Street, Brockport, NY 14420. Opens on December 23. No RTS Route.

—30—

Media inquiries:

(585) 753-1064
Steve Barz, Director of Communications
SteveBarz@MonroeCounty.gov

**Molly Clifford, Deputy Director of
Communications**
MollyClifford@MonroeCounty.gov