

Reuben Engagement Center

Indianapolis, Indiana, USA

Project Description: Reuben Engagement Center is a community detox facility that offers temporary shelter to homeless individuals, as well as long term recovery resources and support.

Distinguishing Features: Reuben Engagement Center is being piloted as an alternative response to bringing homeless individuals struggling with mental health and addictions to jail or the emergency room. The center is designed for those who cannot access other shelters due to disruptive behavior or substance abuse.

Population Served: Homeless individuals struggling with with mental health & addictions

Website: www.indycoc.org/partnerships/reuben-engagement-center

News Story: www.indystar.com/story/news/2018/06/15/downtown-police-can-bring-homeless-detox/704643002/

SUMMARY

Reuben Engagement center was founded in 2017 to provide shelter and support to homeless individuals struggling with mental health and addictions. It is part of the Indianapolis Community Plan to End Homelessness and works to enact systemic reform by breaking the cycle of homelessness, hospitalization, and jail time.

Currently, the pilot facility consists of 30 beds, and provides detox and withdraw support, Alcoholics Anonymous, and mental health services. The center ensures appropriate medical evaluation to those coming in off the street, as well as warm showers and other basic supplies. The facility partners with the police, but entrance into the program is voluntary. After the detox and support programs, individuals within the temporary shelter are connected with additional housing support services in the community

Police Partnership – Indianapolis Metropolitan Police Department (IMPD)

10 of the 30 beds at Reuben Engagement Center are designated for IMPD referrals. Previously, when police dealt with behavioral issues, violent or not, there were two options for homeless individuals: Emergency department or jail. In these situations, the individuals were often out of options and needing support, however the police did not have many support options available. Reuben Engagement center is the first non-jail, non-hospital option that IMPD police officers can utilize when responding to disturbance calls involving homeless individuals.

IMPD Limitations: As this is a relatively new pilot program, there are still notable dilemmas within the program. The most prominent is the procedural legalities of transporting homeless individuals from a disturbance call to Reuben Engagement Center. Officers are required to handcuff people being transported in the back of a squad car – even if they aren't being arrested. However, being taken to the center in handcuffs is an understandable issue for homeless individuals. The Indianapolis Office of Public Health and Safety, who oversee the program, is working with the IMPD to find a solution to the issue, as it puts a significant damper on their outreach and support efforts. As the Reuben Center is built around voluntary participation, handcuffs send the wrong message about the program, and can discourage people from accepting help in the first place.

IMPD & Reuben Engagement Center News story: www.theindychannel.com/news/local-news/crime/the-reuben-center-is-open-but-the-homeless-still-mostly-go-to-jail-there-s-a-plan-to-fix-that

CONNECTED ORGANIZATIONS

Reuben Engagement Center is under the supervision of The City of Indianapolis Office of Public Health and Safety. However, it is directly tied to the following programs:

Indianapolis Community Plan to End Homelessness

Reuben Engagement Center was a landmark undertaking within the City of Indianapolis's Blueprint to End Homelessness 2.0. They are still actively engaged in the current homelessness initiative, Indianapolis Community Plan to End Homelessness. This is a five-year plan (2018-2023) focused on ending homelessness through long term solutions and systemic reform. The ultimate goal is creating a system where individuals facing homelessness will spend no more than 30 days without a permanent, safe, affordable place to live. [see the Indianapolis Community Plan to End Homelessness PDF for more information]

Five Year Plan:

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Website: www.chipindy.org/community-planning/indianapolis-community-plan-to-end-homelessness

The Coalition for Homelessness Intervention & Prevention

The Coalition for Homelessness Intervention & Prevention (CHIP) focuses on collaborative community housing solutions. CHIP works to secure funding for housing and pre-housing services, advocates for nationwide policy changes, and unites with community partners working to end homelessness. Their mission includes professional training, support, and development within service organizations. They also prioritize educating the public about homelessness; empowering others to take action and incite change.

Website: www.chipindy.org

CHIP Infographic:

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