



Smithfield United Church of Christ Winter Shelter FAQs

June 9, 2023

When is the Smithfield Shelter Closing?

Effective June 21, 2023, the Smithfield United Church of Christ (aka, the Smithfield Street Shelter) will no longer operate its overnight shelter.

The last night the shelter will be available is June 20, 2023.

Why is the Smithfield Shelter Closing?

Smithfield Shelter has served as a winter emergency shelter for more than a decade but was never designed as a year-round shelter or long-term living space. Initially open only on the coldest nights, it more recently operated nightly from November 15 to March 15. This year, the decision was made to extend the closing date to allow DHS to work with providers to ensure that there were additional beds in our shelter system to accommodate the increased need.

What is the plan for people staying at the Smithfield Shelter?

Like all shelters, most people only stay for a night or two. The shelter houses most people for only a one- or two-night stay before they move on to other accommodations. We have identified about 125 people who have been staying more consistently at the shelter in recent months and will find other spaces for each person within our existing and expanding shelter system. These living plans will be developed working with the individual, allowing us to try to find a place that best fits their needs. This process is already underway. Over the past few weeks, we have transitioned over 30 people to new shelter options.

How are we letting people know about the Shelter closing?

Representatives of DHS have been meeting with people staying at the shelter as we develop housing plans for them. Signage has gone up alerting people to the closure. Street outreach and provider staff have been spreading the word and there has been a lot of coverage in the media and discussions in the advocacy community about the closing of Smithfield Shelter.

How will we provide services to those who are currently accessing their services through the shelter?

As we find new shelter arrangements for about 125 of the most frequent shelter clients, we are working with them to keep them connected to any services they are currently using.

For others, they can find assistance nearby at the Second Avenue Shelter, which also provides supports and services like laundry and medical care not available at Smithfield Shelter.

What are other shelter options?

Allegheny County has many shelters in and outside of the city to accommodate people. This includes shelters for families, women, and other specific populations. Anyone needing shelter space or a place to stay can call the Allegheny Link at 866-730-2368 for guidance and planning.

Provider Name	Population Served	Approximate Bed Capacity (*includes expansion)
ACTION Housing McKeesport Shelter	Single persons/Individuals	25 beds
ACTION Housing McKeesport Low Barrier Shelter (operated by Team PSBG)	Single persons/Individuals	17 beds
Bethlehem Haven	Single persons/Individuals	28 beds
Community Human Services Scattered Site	Single persons/Individuals	50 beds
Community Human Services Wood Street Commons	Single persons/Individuals	32 beds
East End Cooperative Ministry	Single persons/Individuals	41 beds*
FamilyLinks DOCS Emergency Shelter	Single persons/Individuals	18 beds
Goodwill Pleasant Valley Shelter	Single persons/Individuals	25 beds
Light of Life Rescue Mission Shelter	Single persons/Individuals	54 beds*
Pittsburgh Mercy Second Avenue Commons	Single persons/Individuals	135*
Alle-Kiski Hope Center	Families with children	23 beds
Allegheny Valley Association of Churches	Families with children	3 family units
Auberle Duquesne Family Shelter	Families with children	10 family units
Auberle McKeesport Family Shelter	Families with children	25 family units
Auberle Overflow shelter	Families with children	5 family units
Center for Victims Emergency Shelter	Families with children	24 beds
Community Human Services Family Shelter	Families with children	3 family units
Salvation Army Family Caring Center Shelter	Families with children	17 family units
Womanspace East Shelter	Families with children	26 family units
Women’s Center and Shelter Emergency Shelter	Families with children	38 beds

Are there plans to expand the current shelters or add additional shelter space?

Yes, we have been working on this and have expanded capacity over the past month. There are additional projects in the works, some beginning in the next few weeks and we will announce as appropriate.

What about people who don't want to go to another shelter?

While we confident we will have shelter space for the approximately 125 of the most frequent Smithfield Shelter clients, it's important to note that whatever plan we develop, following a plan or going to a shelter remains a personal choice.

What about people who stay intermittently at Smithfield Shelter and are not getting an individualized plan?

Individuals who need support can contact the Allegheny Link.

The Allegheny LINK assists:

- Households experiencing homelessness and/or their advocates to access services such as emergency shelter, rental assistance, and screen for longer term homeless housing programs using the Allegheny Housing Assessment tool
- Households experiencing housing instability or eviction with assessment and referrals to prevention programs and services
- With navigation of affordable housing resources
- With resource connection to any and all supports and services leading to housing stability

The Allegheny Link accepts in person drop ins, and phone calls for assistance.

In person: Monday – Friday 8:00 AM - 4:00 PM at One Smithfield Street, Pittsburgh 15222

By phone: Monday – Friday 8:00 AM – 5:00 PM at 1-866-730-2368

Will Smithfield Shelter reopen next Winter?

We are currently focused on transitioning people to other shelter options and will evaluate what happens next winter later this year.

What role does Shelter play in our continuum of housing options?

Shelter is a critical engagement point and safe haven for emergency situations. We strive to have safe and supportive shelter options for anyone who wants it. Ideally, stays in shelter are short because people are transitioning to permanent housing and resources quickly, in under 30 days for all clients. Our experience and best practices suggest that smaller shelter spaces that are open 24/7 and do not require people to leave during daytime hours are ideal. These options are also preferred by both guests and shelter providers and are more likely to create the conditions for improved outcomes for the people and communities we are trying to serve. This is the shelter and housing system we are working to build. Many pieces are already in place, and we are working to fill-in the gaps.