



Brother Francis Shelter Limited Stay Policy, September 2009

The Brother Francis Shelter (BFS) limited stay policy is intended to motivate shelter guests to make prudent long-term decisions regarding their situations. All emergency shelters in Anchorage have similar stay policies. No guest at BFS is required to leave the shelter after 30 days if they are actively working on a plan to transition to permanent housing. BFS is staffed and funded to operate with a nightly census of 130. As we enter the winter of 2009, the average census for the past six months has been over 200. The “fire marshal” capacity of BFS is 240. After that point our overflow arrangement is to call in additional BFS staff to open Beans’ Café as a second overnight shelter when we have more than 240 individuals seeking shelter.

As a result of the deaths of 13 homeless men and women on the streets of Anchorage over the last few months, Catholic Social Services has re-visited the limited stay policy. After extensive deliberation, CSS has determined that the Brother Francis Shelter does not have the staff or the resources to completely suspend the limited stay policy. However, we are making modifications for the winter months.

- From October 1 – March 1, the temperature for invoking the BFS Cold Alert policy, which allows anyone on a 30-day out or an individual out on a minor rule infraction to stay at the shelter, will be raised from 15 degrees to 32 degrees. (The Anchorage Police Department is contacted when an individual is out on a major rule infraction or has a history of violence and requires shelter.)
- As of October 1, BFS will allow individuals on their “30-day out” to wash clothes and take showers on Monday, Wednesday and Friday from 10:00 am to 2:00 pm. This is an attempt to engage the small subset of BFS guests who do not appear to be motivated by the limited stay policy to become involved in shelter services.

Brother Francis Shelter strives to treat all with dignity, care and compassion. The staff at Catholic Social Services is distressed that we are not able to find a way to reach all of those in need. The unfortunate truth is the shelter can only provide limited services. The program is not set up to be a permanent residential program for an unlimited number of guests; it is an emergency homeless shelter designed to assist individuals on their journey to recover from homelessness.