

Little Village Shelter for Asylum Seekers Begins Accepting Families

by Submitted by Gov. Pritzker's Office
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CHICAGO - A new State-supported shelter is beginning to serve asylum seekers in Chicago today. The location is the site of a former CVS in the Little Village neighborhood. The shelter will be part of the City of Chicago's existing asylum seeker shelter system and will house approximately 220 people as they transition to independent living.

The shelter development is part of Governor JB Pritzker's investment of an additional \$160 million, via the Illinois Department of Human Services (IDHS), to address the ongoing humanitarian crisis presented by the arrival of over 34,000 asylum seekers from the U.S. southern border.

The State saw an uptick of new arrivals over the holidays and created a temporary shelter at a Chicago hotel. Those new arrivals are now transitioning to the shelter in Little Village.

With the cold weather and continued arrival of asylum seekers, the State is committed to partnering with the City of Chicago to take the necessary actions to keep people safe and help them on their path to self-sufficiency.

“This new location will offer dignity and respite to asylum seekers who have travelled thousands of miles to find safety,” **said Governor JB Pritzker.** “I’m grateful to IDHS and New Life Centers for getting this site operational and for the wrap-around services they will be providing to help migrants achieve independence.”

Available beds at the Little Village shelter will be prioritized for families and individuals with disabilities. The site will offer sleeping spaces as well as meals, hygiene facilities, and wrap-around services.

Along with IDHS and its partners, New Life Centers is supporting community-care services including conflict resolution, onsite communications, community engagement, and connection with local resources.

“A large part of meeting our new arrivals with dignity involves meeting them where they are at – and that involves a variety of supports. Traveling great distances and overcoming adversity to make it to the U.S. often involves trauma, which can be detrimental to mental and physical well-being,” **said Matt DeMateo, Executive Director, New Life Centers of Chicagoland.** “We are grateful to continue to partner with the State to address these emergent needs.”

Intake center

Last week, the State announced its ongoing development of an intake center, co-located with the City's landing zone. With six heated tents, the site will connect new arrivals with wrap-around services and help those with sponsors or an alternate destination along on their journey. While this intake site will be located at the City of Chicago landing zone, the City will continue to be responsible for the landing zone. This new intake site is not intended to provide shelter. It is designed to help individuals upon their arrival at the landing zone to receive expanded services and support in a more streamlined process

and to unite them with their friends and family and/or help them advance to other destinations to avoid unnecessary admission into shelters.

The State has been funding New Life Centers of Chicagoland and Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of Chicago to provide support at the City-operated bus Landing Zone, outside, as of early November. Through this support, to date, over 2,500 individuals have been reunited with family or friends rather than entering the shelter system. With the new, heated intake center, the State will expand staffing and services, with data indicating the number of new arrivals requiring shelter can be reduced by 10%.

Work permit application clinics

Since November, the State has been hosting work-permit clinics to clear the path to independence. Across the 17 legal clinics led by the State-funded partner, The Resurrection Project (TRP), over 1,600 Temporary Protected Status (TPS) and/or Employment Authorization Documentation (EAD) applications have been submitted. Over 425 approvals have been received thus far. The State and TRP will continue to host clinics for shelter residents over the next month and will expand to former shelter residents living in community in mid-February. Through this partnership, the State estimates up to 10,000 individuals to be served in the coming months.

“From assisting with applications for work permits for eligible asylum seekers, to nutrition, shelter, and other basic needs – the State continues to stretch our limited resources to meet the needs of those impacted by this global, humanitarian crisis,” **said Dulce M. Quintero, IDHS Secretary Designate.** “In the absence of federal investment and intervention, we at IDHS thank Gov. Pritzker for his ongoing leadership and compassion.”

Advocating for federal support

Governor Pritzker has repeatedly urged federal intervention to aid in managing the ongoing humanitarian crisis, which has been exacerbated by the GOP Governor of Texas sending buses of migrants to Democrat-run cities, without any information or warning. While the State, City of Chicago, and other municipalities are continuing to step up a federal solution is needed for what is a federal challenge.