



MEDIA RELEASE

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Hamilton hospitals partner with The Hub to create warming space for individuals experiencing homelessness

HAMILTON, ON – During the winter months, hospital staff and physicians often struggle to find warm and safe places for individuals experiencing homelessness after they are discharged from hospital.

That is why Hamilton's hospitals, Hamilton Health Sciences Foundation, The Hamilton Hub (The Hub) and the Greater Hamilton Health Network have launched a new partnership to fund dedicated overnight drop-in spaces for these individuals.

The new overnight warming centre, based at The Hub on Vine Street, is open seven days a week from 11 p.m. until 7 a.m. regardless of the temperature. Spaces will be dedicated for individuals referred to the centre following their hospital visit.

"This new pilot partnership is a vital lifeline to our unhoused community, who are already facing so many challenges," said Jen Bonner, executive director of The Hub. "These new overnight warming spaces will help ensure some of our most vulnerable individuals won't be left out in the cold this winter."

The Hub's overnight warming centre is staffed by trained outreach workers, and students enrolled in healthcare programs such as nursing and medicine, as well as police-in-training, who are able to connect those coming in with primary care, community resources and other supports they may need. The Hub gives a unique opportunity for these students to gain essential experience and skills to bring to their future careers.

"This new support is making a real impact on emergency medicine care in our community," said Erich Hanel, interim chief of emergency medicine at St. Joseph's Healthcare Hamilton. "It is also helping our emergency room staff, who do not want to see patients left with nowhere to go."

The pilot partnership, which launched just before Christmas, has already helped more than 40 individuals referred by Hamilton's hospitals.

"Our teams always grapple with discharging patients who are homeless," says Dr. Alim Pardhan, chief of emergency medicine at Hamilton Health Sciences. "This dedicated space is a critical support to meet their immediate needs for a warm shelter while also making it possible to connect them with other assistance in the community."

Having The Hub open overnight is also helping emergency departments to work more efficiently, as staff no longer have to make multiple calls to shelters throughout the city to determine which may have space to take a newly discharged patient.

"This program is a testament to partners mobilizing quickly to offer warmth and care when it's needed the most through these colder months. With the support of partners and a shared commitment to serving those

who have relied on emergency care, the overnight warming center stands as a symbol of compassion that will be lifesaving,” said Melissa McCallum, executive director of the Greater Hamilton Health Network.

The Hub’s winter warming centre is a low-barrier facility, and the only service in Hamilton offering a warm up spot that includes spaces for couples and non-binary individuals. In addition to hospital referrals, The Hub also welcomes walk-ins.

To set up an interview about this new partnership, please contact Lauren Stasila at lstasila@stjoes.ca or Wendy Stewart at stewartwen@hhsc.ca.