



GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA INTERAGENCY COUNCIL ON HOMELESSNESS

EMERGENCY RESPONSE & SHELTER OPERATIONS (ERSO) COMMITTEE

2024 HEAT PLAN REVIEW: FEEDBACK FROM ICH FORUMS

Issued: 30 October 2024

PURPOSE

This document is intended to capture all feedback related to the 2024 Heat Plan.

BACKGROUND/CONTEXT

The review includes a summary of key themes informed by detailed feedback tracked across eleven (11) ICH Forums, including:

- Emergency Response and Shelter Operations (ERSO) CMTE, including Front Door Services, Shelter Capacity, and Shelter Solutions WGs;
- Strategic Planning CMTE, including the Single Adult System WG and Youth WG;
- Proposed Health Care CMTE and Behavioral Health WG; and
- Executive CMTE, including Consumer Engagement Workgroup (CEWG).

The feedback is categorized and organized by the section of the Heat Plan. The ICH Team has taken an initial pass at identifying ■ Areas of Concern or Risk, ■ Opportunities for Improvement, and ■ Progress/Trends to Celebrate.

The ICH Team has also analyzed the feedback and proposed a synthesis detailing the opportunity/issue, context, recommendations, immediate actions for follow up and key questions/concerns.

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2024 HEAT PLAN FEEDBACK & ANALYSIS

While feedback reflects specific and critical issue areas, it also emphasizes the impact of the lack of year round shelter for single adults, including unaccompanied young adults. Unlike hypothermia season, there is a significant contraction of the supply of low-barrier shelter beds during the heat season. In 2024 hyperthermia season, the District saw consistently high occupancy of 95 - 98% across shelter sites serving men, women and LGBTQ+ identifying.

SUMMARY OF FEEDBACK & CONCERNS

The following table identifies key themes, including cross-cutting issues that may not be directly addressed in the heat plan.

Theme/Issue Area	Description
Access to Cooling Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Buses: Persistent calls for cooling buses, with considerations for tracking utilization, budgeting, locations, staffing support (vs. special attention and outreach) and delivery of comfort items. • Supplies: Need for cooling kits for distribution at key locations, including DCPL. • Water: Access to drinking water and cooling/misting supports. Limitations to provider resources and distribution.
Behavioral Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support to Unsheltered, especially those ill-prepared for the weather. • Care Coordination, including <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ DBH outreach, crisis prevention/response ○ Courts and MPD to minimize discharges of vulnerable individuals ○ Protocols/procedures for coordinating transportation with MPD because DBH cannot transport
Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Operations: Request for clarity and communication regarding the locations and operational status of cooling resources. • Materials: Anticipating or standardizing communication materials; creating materials in advance; and translation of materials.
Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understanding and evaluating the impacts of exposure to inclement weather, including heat-related illnesses and fatalities. • Outreach reported increase in use of emergency services during heat waves and increase in observed substance use and mental health concerns.
Roles & Responsibilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opportunity to standardize or formalize ICH participation in seasonal planning, including <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Check-ins during Plan implementation ○ Debrief and analysis post-Plan implementation by consolidating feedback across the season ○ Provides in-line comments and feedback to HSEMA, entity developing & finalizing the Heat Plan • Request for consistent HSEMA participation in relevant ICH forums.
Weather Concerns & Preparedness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Air Quality: Potential for evaluating risks and mitigation strategies in partnership with DOEE given the prevalence of respiratory illnesses amongst people experiencing homelessness • Climate Change: Likelihood of extreme and extended weather events seasonally • Flood Risk & Mitigation: Potential for evaluating flooding risks and exploring practical mitigation strategies in partnership with DOEE given the feedback from CEWG.

HEAT PLAN REVIEW

The following table itemizes feedback relative to the sections of the [2024 District Heat Emergency Plan](#)¹.

Heat Plan Element	Constituent Concerns Flagged at ICH Forums	Analysis/Synthesis
1. Introduction		
2. Policies		
2.1 Activation Thresholds	05/22 ERSO CMTE <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ■ Question about cooling bus operations and activation. 	See details on Cooling Buses under Section 6.
2.1a Heat Emergency		
2.1b Extended Heat Emergency	06/28 CEWG <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ■ Clarification that buses are only requested if it is an extended heat emergency. 	See details on Cooling Buses under Section 6.
2.2 Use of Fire Hydrants		
3. Individuals Experiencing Homelessness		
3.1 Outreach Services	07/31 ERSO <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ■ Feedback from outreach staff sharing how they distribute water. • ■ Concern for people affected by the encampment closure. 	Opportunity/Issue: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Water: Concerns about inadequate water distribution, including logistical challenges.

¹ Additional information on the District’s heat response can be found on HSEMA’s website, heat.dc.gov.

Heat Plan Element	Constituent Concerns Flagged at ICH Forums	Analysis/Synthesis
	<p>07/17 Behavioral Health WG</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ■ Questions as to whether there are more FD-12s due to the heat emergency. • ■ Recommendation to track vital signs as they relate to heat and FD-12s. • ■ Discussion on data-sharing for care coordination and request to map it out. • ■ Providers seeing an increase in substance use, exacerbating mental health concerns and increase in CRT calls. • ■ Reports that people at MLK are not doing well but working with the DBH ICC team for services. • ■ Request for additional water resources given limits to UPO and provider distribution. <p>07/10 Health Care CMTE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ■ Inadequate amount of water distribution. Could consider handing out gallons instead of bottles • ■ Increased EMS calls for heat-related concerns. • ■ Some outreach providers distribute frozen wipes, water, sunscreen, etc. • ■ Suggestion to look at the number of cooling kits and amount of water UPO passed out. • ■ In the past DC Water had an app that shows which businesses refill reusable water containers for free. <p>07/09 Exec CMTE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ■ Concerns that it appeared there was not enough water available or being distributed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Health concerns particularly related to substance and behavioral health issues, leading to more crisis response calls. • Impact of Encampment Closures: Difficulties in locating individuals after encampment closures. <p>Recommendation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluate the need for cooling kits throughout the season to inform budget planning; • Develop resource guides specific to water resources and distribution; • Conduct data review of crisis calls during heat alerts and extended heat emergencies, including FD-12s, ER visits and hospital admissions for heat-related illnesses. • Working with Hospitals implementing CMS requirements for tracking Social Determinants of Health (SDOH) and housing instability.

Heat Plan Element	Constituent Concerns Flagged at ICH Forums	Analysis/Synthesis
	<p>05/22 ERSO CMTE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ■ Inquiry about providing tarps and additional items to prevent individuals from sunburn and protect from hot surfaces. • ■ Suggestion to work with outreach teams to understand engagement approach as people move to new locations following encampment closures. • ■ Concerns about difficulty locating individuals following encampment closures. 	
4. Communications		
4.1 Alert and Notification	<p>08/23 CEWG</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ■ Concern that guidance during tropical storms, tornado warnings is only relevant for people who are housed. <p>07/30 Strategic Planning CMTE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ■ Concern that guidance during heat alerts does not meet the needs of unsheltered. • ■ Concern and confusion on location of cooling buses, including those in high crime areas. <p>06/26 Shelter Capacity WG</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ■ Flag that people outside the Downtown Day Service Center did not know about cooling buses and did not have access to water. • ■ Clarification on operational shifts for the Downtown Day Center and heat alerts. 	<p>Opportunity/Issue:</p> <p>Significant concerns regarding the effectiveness of emergency guidance and resources for unsheltered individuals during extreme weather events.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Awareness and Accessibility Issues: Reports that individuals near the Downtown Day Service Center were unaware of the availability of cooling buses and lacked access to essential water supplies. • Operational Clarity: Need for clearer operational guidelines for services during heat alerts. <p>Recommendations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish standard operating shifts and thresholds for expanding services, including consideration for holidays and weekends.

Heat Plan Element	Constituent Concerns Flagged at ICH Forums	Analysis/Synthesis
4.2 Public Messaging	<p>07/31 ERSO CMTE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clarification on how cooling bus locations are communicated to staff and clients. <p>07/17 Behavioral Health WG</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Request for seasonal flyers to be translated into Spanish. <p>07/16 Youth CMTE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Request for heat-related flyers or guide on access to water resources. <p>06/25 Youth CMTE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Heat Alert email was shared with staff and clients. 	<p>Opportunity/Issue:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Operations: Request for clarity and communication regarding the locations and operational status or changes, especially for cooling buses. Materials: Anticipating or standardizing communication materials; creating materials in advance; and translation of materials. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Access to other resource such as water; request for seasonal flyers to be translated into Spanish; and resource guides for young adults.
4.3 Recreation, Community, and Municipal Cooling Centers	<p>07/30 Strategic Planning CMTE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Frustration at the recommendation to go to spray parks or pools, given attire requirements. 	
5. Transportation Services		
5. Transportation Services	<p>07/31 ERSO CMTE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Request for more coordination with UPO. <p>03/27 ERSO CMTE</p>	<p>Opportunity/Issue: Request for</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expanded transportation during heat alerts Coordination with shelter transport provider, UPO <p>Recommendation</p>

Heat Plan Element	Constituent Concerns Flagged at ICH Forums	Analysis/Synthesis
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Concerns about transportation during heat alerts. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish and include the transportation schedule in the heat plan or on the DHS website. Make explicit adjustments and plans around the deployment of cooling buses to ensure delivery of water and safety/comfort items.
6. Cooling Centers		
6.1 Low-Barrier Shelters	<p>08/06 FDS WG</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Concern that folks are having to line up in the heat, without seats, for hours to access shelter. <p>07/24 Shelter Capacity WG</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Flag that another heat wave is likely, so need enough shelter capacity with special consideration to significant impact on health during the last heat emergency. <p>07/17 Behavioral Health WG</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Question on available overflow shelters and lack of shelter capacity for single adults. <p>06/26 Shelter Capacity WG</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Concerns around capacity and lack of a plan to currently increase even with the heat alerts. 	<p>Opportunity/Issue:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Long Wait Times in Extreme Heat: Concern for continued heat exposure as individuals are wait to access shelter. Availability of Shelter: Limited low barrier and overflow shelter capacity. <p>Context:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Shelter capacity significantly expands during hypothermia season, but significantly contracts outside of the winter months. Updated climate projections indicate that the number of extreme heat and other weather events are likely to increase in coming years. <p>Recommendations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Advance system progress to ensure year round access to shelter for single adults. Collaborate with District agencies (HSEMA, DOEE, etc.) to explore short term alternatives in the absence of adequate year round shelter.

Heat Plan Element	Constituent Concerns Flagged at ICH Forums	Analysis/Synthesis
6.2 Day Centers	<p>08/06 ERSO</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ■ Suggestion for an additional 24/7 Downtown Day Service Center. <p>06/28 CEWG</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ■ Concerns about staff and treatment at the Downtown Day Service Center, including previous reports that are being investigated. • ■ Concern that Downtown Day Service Center doesn't reach full capacity because of how they speak to people and because of language barriers. 	<p>Opportunity/Issue:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Day Center Utilization: Demand for extended hours and increased capacity at day service centers, including request for 24/7 downtown service center. • Staff Conduct and Client Treatment: Concerns about the negative treatment of clients at the DDSC, including reports of poor staff behavior. <p>Recommendations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure timely follow up and escalation of client concerns; • Explore feasibility of 24/7 resources, including lessons learned from Zoe's Doors
6.3 Youth/Young Adult Providers	<p>06/25 Youth CMTE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ■ Cold water was available to youth in programs. 	
6.4 Public Libraries	<p>08/06 FDS WG</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ■ Shout out to the libraries. They fill gaps as they can and hand out water/wipes. They go above and beyond. <p>05/22 ERSO CMTE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ■ Discussion on potential expansion of operational hours during extreme weather emergencies. • ■ Discussion about libraries serving as de facto cooling centers and request for additional support. 	<p>Opportunity/Issue: Importance of libraries given their services and locations.</p> <p>Context:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In response to request regarding the availability of cooling kits, ICH engaged philanthropy and DC Gov to ensure cooling kit supplies were made available at libraries - an additional \$3K available for purchase and distribution.

Heat Plan Element	Constituent Concerns Flagged at ICH Forums	Analysis/Synthesis
		<p>Recommendations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with DOEE and HSEMA to leverage distribution mechanisms. • Account for additional cooling supply needs in agency budget process, especially HSEMA. <p>Area to Evaluate:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are providers leveraging resources and fundraising such as Amazon wishlists for supplies?
6.5 Recreation and Community Centers		
6.6 Senior Wellness Centers		
<p><i>* Cooling Buses</i></p> <p><i>[Not explicitly included in the Heat Plan, but noted here given the volume of feedback received]</i></p>	<p>08/06 FDS WG</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ■ Need for cooling buses in Columbia Heights and Georgetown. • ■ Suggestion for circulator buses to be donated to be used as permanent cooling and heating buses • ■ Concern that warming buses won't be set up in NW DC since cooling buses aren't. • ■ Request to know who makes the decisions on where buses are placed. • ■ Need for cooling buses north of New Hampshire Ave and downtown. <p>07/31 ERSO CMTE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ■ Frustration over the lack of cooling buses in NW. 	<p>Opportunity/Issue:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Process for informing locations and tracking utilization of cooling buses throughout the season <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Repeated calls for buses in NW, ○ Concerns about limited operation hours given high temperatures overnight ○ Evaluation of impact in reduction of buses between emergencies due to fiscal constraints • Safety and Monitoring: Emphasis on need for safety protocols and better monitoring of bus utilization to improve planning and response.

Heat Plan Element	Constituent Concerns Flagged at ICH Forums	Analysis/Synthesis
	<p>07/30 Strategic Planning CMTE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ■ Flag about upcoming heat wave and the need for cooling buses. • ■ Multiple voices echoing the need for cooling buses in NW and near the State Department. <p>07/24 Shelter Capacity WG</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ■ Questions on remaining budget for cooling buses and request for buses to be stationed in NW. <p>07/17 Behavioral Health WG</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ■ Flag that people have been riding the metro and buses to stay cool. <p>07/16 Youth CMTE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ■ Concern that there are no cooling buses in NW, only in NE and SE. <p>07/10 Health Care CMTE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ■ Cooling buses were not open overnight • ■ Cooling bus locations were taken away from some locations (like SOME). <p>07/09 Exec CMTE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ■ Significant safety concerns about placement of the cooling bus at 14th and Columbia Rd, instead of the Civic Plaza which was communicated. • ■ Request for a cooling bus to be placed downtown. • ■ Concern that CCNV residents declined use of cooling buses. 	<p>Recommendations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore potential to leverage DC Circulator buses given planned phase down; • Expand year round shelter for singles; • Establish safety and escalation protocols for cooling buses, including opportunity for real time adjustments; and • Formally account for projected cooling bus needs in agency budget process.

Heat Plan Element	Constituent Concerns Flagged at ICH Forums	Analysis/Synthesis
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ■ Concern about limited locations and operating time for cooling buses available through 07/11. • ■ Request for clarity on how utilization of cooling buses is monitored to inform planning. <p>06/28 CEWG</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ■ Frustration over cooling bus locations and lack of cooling bus capacity. • ■ Flag that some residents went to Silver Spring Metro because Montgomery County had cooling buses in the evening. • ■ Clarification that buses are only requested if it is an extended heat emergency. • ■ Request to see the budget for cooling buses to inform advocacy and decision making. • ■ Discussion on data-informed decision-making. <p>06/26 Shelter Capacity WG</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ■ Clarification on the communication of cooling bus locations. • ■ Report of illegal activity on the cooling buses and concern that response was to shut down entirely. • ■ Request for safety procedures on cooling buses. <p>06/25 Youth CMTE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ■ One Cooling bus shut down after illegal activities occurred on it. <p>05/22 ERSO CMTE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ■ Question about cooling bus operations and activation. 	

Heat Plan Element	Constituent Concerns Flagged at ICH Forums	Analysis/Synthesis
	<p>03/27 ERSO CMTE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Concern about safety on the cooling buses and the lack of staffing. 	
6. Aquatic Facilities		
6.1 Indoor Pools		
6.2 Outdoor Pools	<p>08/06 FDS WG</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> h3 Project has supplied swimsuits to those experiencing homelessness so they can access pools/rec centers. Note of appreciation for those who go the extra mile to support those in need. 	<p>Opportunity/Issue:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Outreach and providers have pivoted to meet the need for swimsuits to facilitate access to cooling centers. <p>Context:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assumption that, in general, providers do not have additional resources to provide clothing and swimsuits. <p>Recommendation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explore alternative and accessible cooling options for individuals.
6.3 Walk-to-Learn Swimming Pools		
6.4 Spray Parks	<p>08/06 FDS WG</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Challenges with accessing cooling, misting and rec center pools. 	<p>Opportunity/Issue:</p>

Heat Plan Element	Constituent Concerns Flagged at ICH Forums	Analysis/Synthesis
	<p>07/31 ERSO CMTE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discussion on the idea of misting parks instead of spray parks, pools which require specific attire. <p>07/10 Health Care CMTE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Suggestion for temporary portable showers, misters/sprinklers. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Barriers to single adult access to cooling resources and spray parks given the attire requirements. Importance of cooling resources and hygiene supports to protect health and safety during extreme heat and weather. <p>Recommendation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evaluate feasibility of misting fans and other water resources; and Coordinate with agencies and leverage community feedback to inform locations for accessible water resources.
7. District Agency Roles and Responsibilities		
7. District Agency Roles and Responsibilities	<p>07/31 ERSO CMTE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Request for data on heat-related illnesses and deaths. <p>07/10 Health Care CMTE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Request for data on hyperthermia illnesses and deaths. <p>07/09 Exec CMTE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Request for UPO and HSEMA to attend meetings, specifically the next ERSO meeting. <p>07/30 Strategic Planning CMTE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Flag to ensure HSEMA is participating and tracking feedback from ICH meetings. 	<p>Opportunity/Issue:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Need for Data on Heat-Related Illnesses: Clear demand for comprehensive data on heat-related illnesses and deaths. Emphasis on interagency collaboration, especially across health agencies and HSEMA to evaluate and integrate feedback throughout the season where possible. <p>Recommendation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish agency point of contacts for ICH ERSO CMTE meetings; Establish cadence for reviewing data on heat-related illnesses and fatalities, including delegation to the appropriate ICH forum.

Heat Plan Element	Constituent Concerns Flagged at ICH Forums	Analysis/Synthesis
Additional Feedback		
<p>Cross-cutting issue areas that are likely outside the scope of the Heat Plan</p>	<p>07/10 Health Care CMTE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ■ Need for financial assistance to cover high electric bills. • ■ Use grant funds to purchase air conditioning units for housed clients. 	<p>Opportunity/Issue:</p> <p>Needs and promising practices to support clients in housing programs during extreme heat and weather, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • financial assistance/resources to cover high electric bills and • purchase air conditioning units for housed clients <p>Recommendation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluate existing practices and protocols for housing providers to develop promising practices and inform seasonal planning