

Disaster Planning Effects of Severe Cold Weather on Homeless Communities

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Impact of Cold

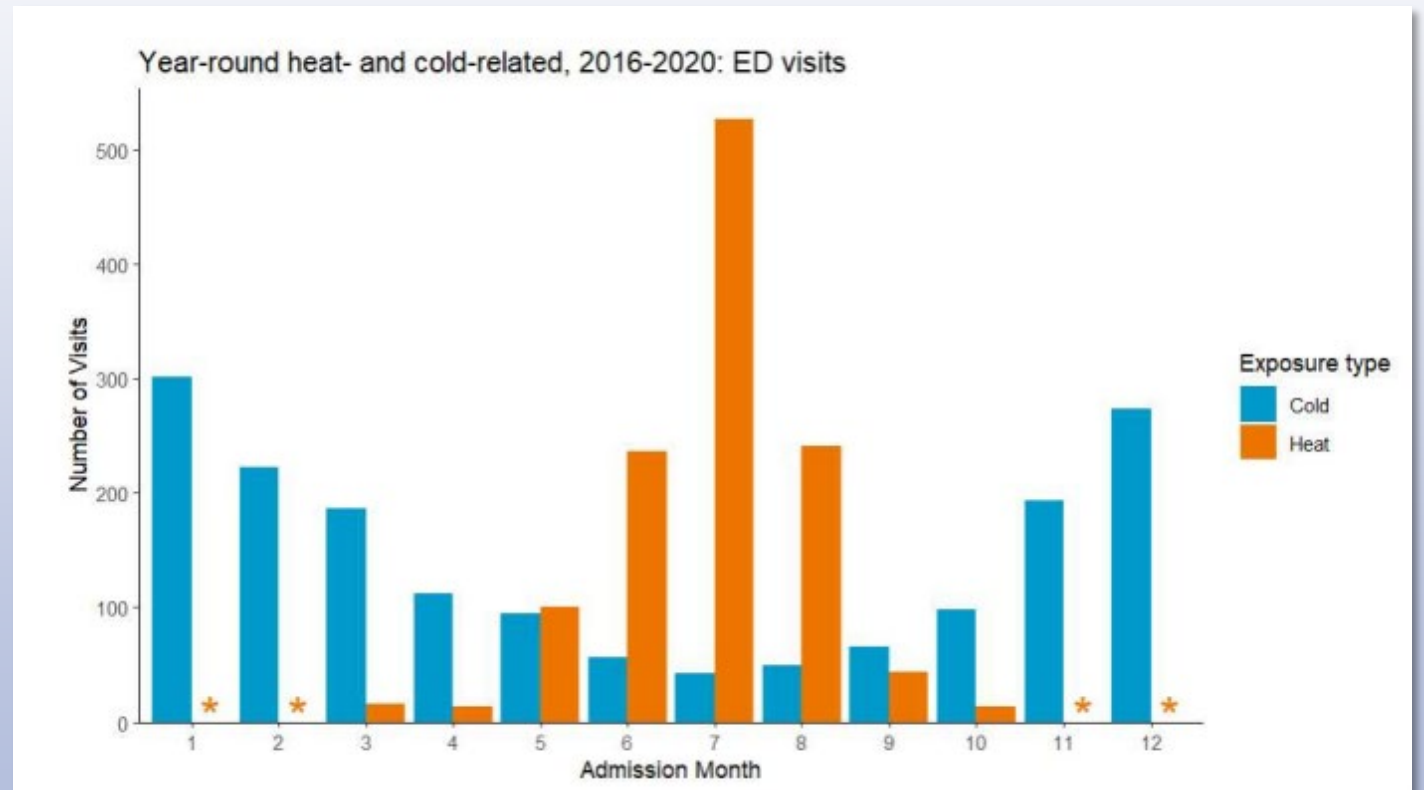
- Exposure to certain weather conditions may cause heat- or cold-related illness or injury
 - Focusing on the impact of cold for this presentation
- Existing health conditions can be triggered or worsen due to heat and cold
 - Asthma, diabetes, heart and kidney conditions, mental health, etc.
- Being wet (water/rain/snow) combined with cold can also contribute to negative health outcomes

Cold Weather Illness/Injury Examples:

- Hypothermia
- Frostbite/ Tissue damage
 - (chilblains, immersion hand/foot)
- Confusion/altered mental status
- Death

Heat/Cold Emergency Department Visits

- Cold-related cases happen year-round and happen frequently
 - Notable spike from November through March
- Based on ED visit data from 2016-2020



Cold/Heat Impacts on Demographics

- Men make up the majority of inpatient and hospital visits for heat and cold
 - 68% of ED visits for cold are male
- Cold ED visits more likely than heat to be paid by Medicaid, Medicare, or self-pay/uninsured
- Signs of homelessness are common in ED visits for cold
 - ~17% of all cold ED visits statewide (underestimate due to data limitations)
 - Higher impact in certain cities, hospitals
- Signs of homelessness not common in ED visits for heat

Connecting EPHT and Homeless Service Providers

- Dr. Nicole Karlsson, ScD from Environmental Public Health Tracking (EPHT) was able to present this data to our Cold Weather shelter vendors
- Opportunity to learn from each other
 - Vendors learning more about the seasonal health risks
 - Understanding causes and prevention of ED visits and who is missing from data
 - Possibility of exploring data outside of strictly ED visits
- Led to additional analysis with weather data from NOAA and National Weather Service

Cold Weather Shelter Program FY23

- **Flexible funding with mission of providing low barrier shelter and cold weather solutions for PEH**
- Gross total of \$1 Million distributed across all 10 NH counties
 - Each county was given \$50,000 with an additional portion of funds based on the previous year's unsheltered PIT count (all Federal funds)
- Short notice of program implementation
 - Program did not roll out until around December 2022
 - Vendors were determined through an RFP
 - For counties that did not receive applicants, agencies that were trusted homeless service providers were approached to participate

Vendor Agencies and Counties Served

- All 10 NH counties were represented in the program by 8 vendors
- Vendors included: Lakes Region Mental Health Center, Merrimack County, Strafford County, Tri-County CAP (TCCAP), Southwestern Community Services (SCS), Way Station, Nashua Soup Kitchen & Shelter (NSKS), Cross Roads House
 - SCS and TCCAP served two counties instead of one
 - NSKS subcontracted with 1269 Café to serve Greater Manchester
- All agencies would meet virtually with BHS and EPRR twice a month to share program updates
- Towards the end of the FY23 program, vendors were met with for feedback for future similar programs

Types of Cold Weather Solutions

- The types of solutions implemented were at the discretion of the vendor agency and based on need and capacity
- Examples of solutions seen includes...
 - Warming Stations/Centers (Drop-in sites, resource centers)
 - Seasonal Emergency Homeless Shelters
 - Hotel and Motel Stays
 - Expansion of Year-round Emergency Homeless Shelter Beds/Capacity
 - Alternatives to Shelter
 - Coordination of Referrals to Related Services
- Solutions also had the ability to be implemented outside of winter
 - Program funds available until June 30th
 - Cold weather doesn't happen in just the winter!

Cold Weather Program FY23 Data

- Known total impact of the program was at least 1214 individuals
- Data comes from HMIS
 - Short notice of implementation
 - First time the State had funding for a program like this
 - Does not capture entire scope of program (Ex: all hotel/motel use, supply distribution)

NH County(s)	Agency	Individuals Sheltered
Rockingham	Cross Roads House	55
Belknap	Lakes Region Mental Health Center	8
Merrimack	Merrimack County	200
Hillsborough	Nashua Soup Kitchen & Shelter	749
Cheshire and Sullivan	Southwestern Community Services	18
Strafford	Strafford County	119
Coos and Grafton	Tri-County Community Action Program	23
Carroll	Way Station NH	42
Total Individuals Sheltered		1214

Improvements for FY24 and Onward

- Program is returning for FY24 through general funds and looks mostly identical to last year's
 - Program will also return for FY25
- Development of support and guidance documents
- Further partnership with Regional Public Health Networks
- Improvements towards data collection to allow for deeper analysis
- Exploring impactful data beyond PIT counts for future similar programs
- Earlier RFP release and earlier funding access
 - Program is in the early stages currently, October 1st 2023 – June 30th, 2024

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