



Shelter Monitoring Committee

MEMORANDUM

TO: Shelter Monitoring Committee
FROM: Committee Staff
DATE: August 15, 2023
RE: July 2023 SOC Staff Report

July Client Complaints

There were three complaints submitted through the Shelter Monitoring Committee in July 2023. This complaint is still open pending investigation.

****Note: Narratives provide an overview of the types of complaints forwarded to each site. Not all sites have had a chance to respond to the complaints. Complaints may have already been investigated to the satisfaction of the site or its contracting agency; however, the Committee must allow for each complainant to review the responses and the complainant determines whether s/he is satisfied. If the complainant is not satisfied, the Committee will investigate the allegations listed in the complaint.*

Ellis Street

Client #1

Complaints submitted: 7/18/2023

Response received: 7/19/2023

Alleged Standard of Care (SOC) Violations:

- **SOC 1:** Treat all clients equally, with respect and dignity...
- **SOC 2:** Safety...
- **SOC 15:** Provide secure...property storage...
- **SOC 31** (Training...cultural humility, including sensitivity training regarding homelessness...)

Complaint #1 (SOCs 1, 2, 31):

- The complainants (husband and wife) reported harassment, bordering on sexual harassment. One client was in bed when four staffers came to do a room check, ignoring her request for time to dress. She had to remain under her blankets while they did the room check. A site supervisor again came into the room despite being asked to wait a minute by the other client, because he was using the toilet. Even when she should have been able to see he was undressed, in the bathroom, she remained in the room. Staff need to take sensitivity training regarding homelessness, women, and trauma victims.
- *The shelter responded by stating that staff under no circumstances will enter the room if guests mention they're in the restroom or not properly dressed.*

Complaint #2 (SOCs 1, 2, 31):

- Complaint #1 was very concerning in and of itself, but it was made worse when, only a couple of weeks later, the site case manager began asking to conduct services with one of the clients alone. When she objected, he offered to arrange to have a coworker present. Requests to have her husband in the meetings were at least initially denied.
- *If a guest requests that their partner also be present, they would always be accommodated.*

Complaint #3 (SOCs 1, 31):

- The couple believe staff have targeted them, badgering them for having too many possessions, preventing them from taking even small items into their room. They have had to store possessions outside of the shelter. At one point they were not even allowed to take in an umbrella, though staff changed their decision on this later. The site manager has embarrassed the complainants in front of other staffers, taking a long time to let them in to their room, and saying something to the effect that a “real Muslim” would not use regulated substances. They submitted at least seven grievances without response before approaching SMC.
- *The shelter stated that their rules allow guests to bring in their purse or satchel even if they're on the no property list, i.e., for those who have exceeded the limit, but any other property would not be allowed in.*

Complaint #4 (SOC 1):

- Mail service is very unreliable. The clients suspect their mail may have been intercepted, received but not delivered by staff.
- *The shelter responded that the day-shift supervisor handles all incoming mail to prevent issues like this from arising. The supervisor on the day shift gathers all mail and confirms the room number. Then the supervisor will pass mail out to the rooms. If the Guest is not present, mail will not be delivered till the following morning.*

Complaint #5 (SOCs 1, 15):

- Valuable items have been taken from the clients' room. One item was actually recovered when one of the clients saw someone attempting to sell it in front of the shelter. However, other items have disappeared permanently. One of the clients states that in mid-June staff took three or more bags of their possessions “to sort,” but ended up throwing “everything” away. She confirms that valuable items, for example, their “torch,” have been lost while in the possession of staff. That is, staff will not allow them to take certain things to their room and say they will keep them in the designated box near the front desk, but when the complainants attempt to retrieve them, they are gone.
- *Per the shelter, items that are not authorized to be taken to their room are stored in the guest's designated box at the front lobby. During room inspections, guests' excessive property would be confiscated, tagged, and stored in the property room. A confiscation slip is left on their bed informing them what was taken.*

Complaint #6 (SOCs 1, 31):

- Staff share private/confidential information about guests. Elements of one of the clients' criminal history were shared with staff and perhaps others who had no reason to be told. The client is concerned that this kind of knowledge could lead to his being targeted by people in the community who would otherwise see him in a neutral or positive light.
- *Staff, other than supervisors and care managers, are under no circumstances able to access clients' confidential information.*

Next Door

Client #1, Complaint #1:

Complaint submitted: 7/18/2023

Response received: 7/19/2023

Alleged SOC Violations:

- **Standard 1:** Treat all clients equally, with respect and dignity...
- **SOC 31** (Training...cultural humility, including sensitivity training regarding homelessness...)
- The complainant alleges that the supervisor of the security staff responded to concerns he had with the suggestion that he “remember whose country he’s in.” Front-line staff are unprofessional and even rude, e.g., calling him a “weenie” and otherwise being dismissive of his concerns. Supervisors especially should be trained and always remain professional in their interactions with shelter guests. The client expressed concern that he might face retaliation for complaining.
- *The shelter was not able to verify the specific allegations. However, they told the client they want him to feel heard and respected. The shelter assured him it does not tolerate any type of disrespectful behavior. Frontline staff have had training and are held to “a higher standard.”*

A Woman’s Place

Client #1, Complaint #1:

Complaint submitted: 7/21/2023

Response received: 8/2/2023

Alleged SOC Violations:

- **Standard 1:** Treat all clients equally, with respect and dignity...
- **SOC 31** (Training...cultural humility, including sensitivity training regarding homelessness...)
- The complainant alleges that others are allowed to sit in the downstairs dining area but that she was told on Saturday 7/15/23 around 11:45 AM to leave. She feels singled out. There is no written rule against being in the dining area. Any noise she made was much less than the music that the staff was playing.

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The Committee is required to make two announced site visits to each site each year to survey clients. **Sanctuary** passed with no adverse findings. One thing that came up in the surveys was that the food is not appealing and breakfast is too small. **A Woman's Place Drop-in**, which had been closed during COVID, had its first inspection in three years. Some posters were not available in Spanish, but the clients appreciate recently installed recliners that replaced a large proportion of the regular chairs.

Staff Update and Committee Membership

Membership (Admin. Code Sec. 30.305)

There are currently four unfilled seats on the Shelter Monitoring Committee:

Seat 1 - Must be homeless or formerly homeless who is living or has lived with their homeless child under the age of 18. (These requirements are being revised in accord with the changes proposed by the SMC in 2022.

Seat 2 – Shall be held by a person who is homeless or has been homeless within the three years prior to being appointed to the Committee, and who has a disability.

Seat 5 - Shall be held by a person nominated by one or more community agencies that provide behavioral health, housing placement, or other services to homeless people.

Seat 12 - This is the “DPH Seat.”

If you are interested in applying for a Seat on the Committee, please contact staff at 628-652-7706 or email shelter.monitoring@sfgov.org for more information.

FY2023-2024 Upcoming Meeting Calendar

- Sep 20
- Oct 18
- Nov 15