

DIVERSION NEWS



A QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER FROM THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE RESOURCE DEPARTMENT, ORANGE COUNTY, NC VOLUME 1 • ISSUE 3 • WINTER 2023-2024

DEFLECTION/DIVERSION

The CJRD administers diversion and deflection programming for youth, adults with first-time charges, people with substance use disorders, people who have a serious or persistent mental illness, individuals with criminal records and people experiencing homelessness. The purpose of a deflection or diversion program is to reduce the harm of legal system involvement by diverting individuals to therapeutic, harm reduction, educational and community resources. Participants work with a diversion coordinator to complete a diversion plan that addresses accountability, collateral consequences of legal system involvement, and service referrals.



CJRD Diversion Programs include the Lantern Project, OC-PAD, YDP, SOHRAD, the CCDR Team, and OC Youth Build

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The Lantern Project serves adults with substance use disorder.

Megan Pickard: cpickard@orangecountync.gov

Jennifer Cole: jecole@orangecountync.gov

www.orangecountync.gov/LanternProject

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The Youth Deflection Program (YDP) serves youth who commit low level non-violent offenses.

Tami Pfeifer: tpfeifer@orangecountync.gov

www.orangecountync.gov/YDP

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OC-PAD serves adults with certain first-time misdemeanors.

Desmond Frierson: dfrierson@orangecountync.gov

www.orangecountync.gov/OCPAD

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Street Outreach, Harm Reduction, and Deflection (SOHRAD) works with people experiencing homelessness.

Tiffany Hall: tihall@orangecountync.gov

www.orangecountync.gov/SOHRAD

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Community Care and Diversion Response Team will divert individuals with serious mental illnesses and co-occurring disorders from arrest and incarceration.

Ashley Machado: amachado@orangecountync.gov

www.orangecountync.gov/CCDR

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Orange County Youth Build (OCYB) offers interventions for high-risk youth with the goal of decreasing criminal legal system engagement.

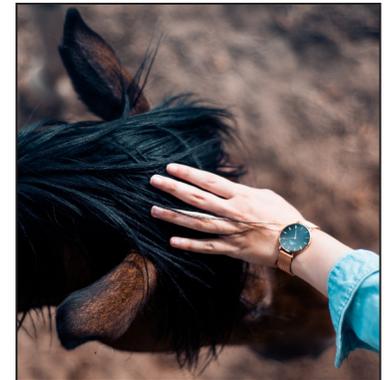
Erica Cooke: ecooke@orangecountync.gov

www.orangecountync.gov/OCYB

Come and experience the Healing Power of Horses

The Criminal Justice Resource Department is pleased to promote this programming opportunity for justice-involved individuals 18 and older.

Referrals can be made by any court or court stakeholder and should be submitted to CJRD Director Caitlin Fenhagen at 919-245-2303.



The mission of Sincerus Healing is to offer the power of horses to support self-awareness and promote healing. Come spend your afternoon interacting with horses, and learn more about yourself in the process! Transportation to the farm and lunch provided. There is no cost to the participant.

Wednesday Afternoons:

March 27 and May 15

1pm - 4pm

Meet at 12:30pm at the Courthouse at 106 E. Margaret Lane in Hillsborough



OUR MISSION

The mission of the Orange County Criminal Justice Resource Department (CJRJD) is to safely reduce unnecessary pretrial incarceration, increase jail alternatives and diversion opportunities, reduce the number of individuals with behavioral health issues facing criminal legal involvement and incarceration, reduce recidivism, reduce racial and economic disparities, and increase public safety by providing treatment and support for individuals involved in Orange County's criminal legal system.



Orange County Courthouse
106 E. Margaret Lane, Hillsborough, NC 27278
(919) 245-2303

www.orangecountync.gov/CJRJD



LANTERN PROJECT: NAVIGATING PATHS TO RECOVERY BY MEETING PEOPLE WHERE THEY ARE AT

In Orange County, the Lantern Project shines a beacon of hope for individuals at the intersection of substance use disorder and the legal system. Comprising two crucial initiatives—Diversion and Reentry support—the Lantern Project, a collaboration between CJRD and Freedom House Recovery Center, brings case management, therapeutic interventions, harm reduction education and a holistic needs assessment to those with substance use issues and legal system involvement.



Diversion Coordination: Illuminating New Beginnings

In partnership with local law enforcement, district attorneys, and court personnel, the Recovery Diversion Coordinator assists individuals deflected by law enforcement or diverted from the court due to substance use. Through personalized Diversion Service Plans, this initiative aims to reduce court entanglement, offering a lifeline for recovery and a new start. The Diversion Coordinator ensures ongoing case management and additional referrals for holistic support.

Reentry Navigation: Guiding the Journey Home

The Reentry Recovery Navigator focuses on those currently incarcerated or recently released from incarceration. With a compassionate touch, the Navigator conducts intake assessments, provides peer support and



ensures clinical supports during detention and after release. Crafting transition plans for a seamless return to the community, this project collaborates with Freedom House staff for essential behavioral health treatment referrals.

The Lantern Project, in collaboration with Orange County courts, law enforcement, and legal and behavioral health community, is a critical effort in providing paths to recovery and navigating toward brighter futures away from the criminal legal system.

Learn more at www.orangecountync.gov/LanternProject

Submit a Lantern Project referral:

For court stakeholders: www.orangecountync.gov/DRF-CS

For law enforcement: www.orangecountync.gov/DRF-LE

FINDING HOPE IN RECOVERY: TWO PARTICIPANTS' INSPIRING JOURNEY WITH THE LANTERN PROJECT

TB

This is the story of TB, a resilient individual who, despite facing the challenges of a substance use disorder (SUD), found hope and transformation through the Lantern Project.

TB's path to recovery began at her First Appearance in court, where she bravely shared her struggles with the judge. Recognizing the need for specialized support, her defense attorney referred her to the Lantern Project and connected her with the Recovery Diversion Coordinator, Megan.

As TB embarked on her recovery journey, Megan conducted an intake assessment and collaborated with her to create a personalized recovery plan.

The initial step was to identify a suitable treatment provider, leading TB to a women's recovery and treatment center. What sets this facility apart is its unique accommodation, allowing TB to keep her son with her during treatment—a rare and invaluable opportunity that has contributed significantly to her healing process.

Throughout the process, Megan maintained constant communication, offering unwavering support. TB appreciated

having a dedicated ally just a phone call away, someone who not only motivated her but also provided a non-judgmental listening ear.

"Treatment helped me see that I could go back to who I was, to love myself, to live without using substances," TB shares, reflecting on her recovery journey. Committed to her continued recovery, TB has set ambitious goals. Upon completing her treatment program, she plans to transition to a supportive Transitional Living environment in another county.

Furthermore, with a desire to give back to others on the recovery path, TB aspires to become a Certified Peer Support Specialist, offering assistance to individuals navigating their own journey towards recovery and community reintegration.

In sharing her story, TB emphasizes the importance of seeking help and readiness for recovery. "There is help if you really want it," she assures others facing similar challenges. Acknowledging the significance of taking recovery one day at a time, TB's message is, "It's worth it." Her story serves as a testament to the transformative power of resilience, support, and the pursuit of a healthier, substance-free life—one step at a time.

FINDING HOPE IN RECOVERY: TWO PARTICIPANTS' INSPIRING JOURNEY WITH THE LANTERN PROJECT, CONT.

ER

ER's journey was marked by significant hurdles, including being HIV-positive, battling substance abuse, experiencing homelessness, and grappling with a lengthy criminal record. Her encounters with the criminal legal system and the healthcare system were frequent, each time exacerbating her physical and mental health symptoms.

The impact of ER's struggles extended beyond herself, affecting the community, her family, and various professionals involved in her care. Aggressive panhandling, trespassing, and possession charges were not only a legal concern but also indicative of the distressing state of her well-being. Her family, especially her adult daughter and young teenage son, were deeply traumatized by ER's out-of-control substance use disorder and deteriorating health.

During her release from jail she exhibited severe physical and mental distress yet resisted necessary immediate medical attention. After reasoning with ER, she was transported to the hospital for medical clearance.

Once ER was admitted to UNC Hospital, The Lantern team collaborated with multiple agencies and with her assigned UNC social worker. After advocating for Medically Assisted Treatment (MAT), a discharge plan for ER linked her to an outpatient clinic and to return to her daughter's house.

Upon discharge in early November 2023, ER returned to her daughter's care, where she continued Medications for Opioid Use Disorder (MOUD) and received support for her outpatient appointments. The Lantern Project played a crucial role in advocating for ER's pending legal issues by providing updates on her sobriety status.

As of January 2024, ER lives in a stable environment, maintains sobriety, and actively engages in positive interactions with her children. Her sustained sobriety has positively impacted her family relationships, as expressed by her daughter: "I feel like I have my mother back."

ER's success story underscores the importance of a comprehensive and collaborative approach in addressing complex challenges. It reflects the potential for positive change when individuals receive the support and resources needed for recovery.

We hope that ER's journey serves as an inspiration and a reminder that with dedication, empathy, and strategic intervention, individuals facing substantial challenges can embark on a path toward healing and transformation.

EMPOWERING FUTURES: A GLIMPSE INTO ORANGE COUNTY'S YOUTH DEFLECTION PROGRAM (YDP)

The Youth Deflection Program (YDP) in Orange County diverts low-risk youth from formal court proceedings, prioritizing community support.



Eligibility is for those 17 or younger with no prior juvenile record, involved in misdemeanor or low-level non-violent felony offenses that law enforcement deflect from the juvenile justice process. YDP Coordinator, Tami Pfeifer, oversees the deflection process, tailoring plans to each youth's needs. Successful compliance eliminates the need for a juvenile petition, emphasizing rehabilitation. Programs include community service, school support, restorative justice, teen court, and mental health treatment. The YDP focuses on personalized intervention for positive youth development, interrupting the school-to-prison pipeline.

Learn more at www.orangecountync.gov/YDP

Submit a YDP referral: www.orangecountync.gov/DRF-LE

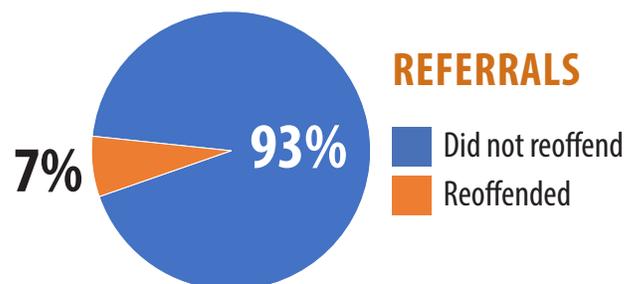
"Since YDP's inception 2 years ago, we have received 84 referrals. That is 84 young people that would have received charges and been sent to the department of juvenile justice that were deflected from the collateral consequences of legal involvement.

Through our deflection program we have connected kids to mental health programs, substance use prevention or intervention programs, restorative justice, mentoring, positive pro-social activities, volunteering opportunities and more.

Only a small percentage (7%) have reoffended. This is an absolute success in decreasing young people's criminal legal system involvement!"

Tami Pfeifer

YDP Coordinator and Youth Behavioral Health Liaison



COLLATERAL CONSEQUENCE EDUCATION AND OPPORTUNITIES: THE ORANGE COUNTY PRE-ARREST DIVERSION (OC-PAD) PROGRAM

OC-PAD works closely with law enforcement to divert individuals with no criminal records who commit certain low-level misdemeanors from the criminal legal system.



This approach provides accountability, therapeutic programming, and information on collateral consequences, ultimately promoting community safety. By offering early intervention and seeking to reduce recidivism, OC-PAD allows law enforcement to prioritize more pressing issues, improve community relations and reduce racial disparities.

The program's success lies in its ability to address public health concerns effectively. The program includes a tailored diversion plan which may include community service, mental health and substance use treatment, educational classes, and restorative justice opportunities. Successful compliance leads to no charges being filed, which brings long-term benefits to the participants.

NAVIGATING EQUITY IN DIVERSION: OVERCOMING BARRIERS TO EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

"A real challenge facing diversion efforts that appears continually is when people that are eligible to be deflected or diverted (those that fit the program criteria) are, instead, being formally charged and required to appear in court in lieu of being given the opportunity to have their alleged offense diverted.

The CJRD acknowledges the importance of law enforcement officer discretion, however, our goal is to ensure that discretion is being applied equally and, more importantly, equitably, across our collective community.

Diversion offers education and opportunity along with other services and advantages that our traditional justice system does not provide. Every individual deserves an opportunity for diversion."

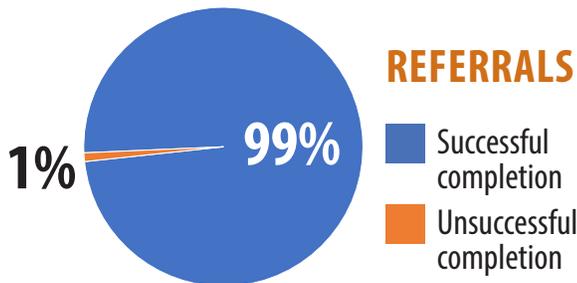
*Desmond Frierson
OC-PAD Coordinator*

EMPOWERING CHANGE: OCPAD'S COMPLETION RATES IN FY 2022-2023

"The OC-PAD completion rate for people referred and enrolled by law enforcement during the 2022 - 2023 fiscal year was very encouraging and helps to further illustrate the importance for an alternative to traditional policing and the criminal justice system for many offenses.

Of the 183 people referred to OC-PAD by law enforcement between 7/1/2022 to 6/30/2023, only 2 people were unsuccessful in completing the program. That's 181 people that avoided an arrest, court date, or charge, court fees/fines and costs, and the collateral consequences of having a criminal record."

*Desmond Frierson
OC-PAD Coordinator*



EMPOWERING LIVES: NALOXONE ACCESS FOR OUR COMMUNITY

In a proactive effort to address the opioid crisis and support those who may encounter overdose situations, the Lantern Project continues to offer free Naloxone, a life-saving opioid overdose reversal medication.

Naloxone kits are not only distributed directly to Lantern participants at no cost but are also strategically placed in free vending machines. These machines are conveniently located at the Orange County Detention Center and the Southern Human Services Center in Chapel Hill on Homestead Road.

Despite challenges in securing a steady supply of Naloxone, the CJRD team remains committed to this vital initiative, which reflects our determination to provide accessible resources that empower individuals and contribute to the well-being of our community.

The Lantern team recognizes the critical importance of Naloxone in saving lives and fostering a safer, healthier environment for all.



DEFLECTION AND HOUSING FIRST: SOHRAD'S MISSION TO SUPPORT THE UNSHELTERED IN ORANGE COUNTY

The Street Outreach, Harm Reduction and Deflection (SOHRAD) program connects people experiencing homelessness in Orange County with housing service referrals and basic needs. Peer support and clinical staff use a relationship-based model to provide ongoing engagement, case management, and advocate for law enforcement deflection for people living unsheltered.

SOHRAD is co-managed by the Orange County Criminal Justice Resource Department and the Orange County Partnership to End Homelessness in the Orange County Housing Department.

Monday-Friday, 8am-9pm

Saturday, 12 noon-9pm

(919) 886-3351

SOHRAD@orangecountync.gov



A VETERAN'S PATH TO RENEWAL: A SOHRAD SUCCESS STORY

I met a veteran who was really down on his luck and stated that he was just getting out of a mental health hospital after contemplating suicide. He explained to me that he had been evicted from his apartment after losing his job and being unable to afford the rising rent. He said he had been living in a field behind a hotel, in a sleeping bag.

We discussed him being a veteran and needing assistance with mental health resources, as well as connecting to a primary care provider. I provided him with resources and noted that I would connect him to the Department of Veteran Affairs (VA).

He was very skeptical and not very trusting. We made plans to meet every few days at the Inter-Faith Council for Social Services (IFC). For one of our check-ins, he stated that he had just been turned down for a depression medication study and felt like giving up.

We talked it through for about 45 minutes, until I made sure that there was no suicidal ideation. I reminded him that I was still waiting to hear back from the VA. After about another month of check-ins, I finally heard back from the VA.

Now, he is fully connected to the VA and receiving physical and mental health services, and is also staying in transitional housing sponsored through the VA.

The VA also reports that his whole demeanor has changed, and his mental health status appears to be better. While staying in the transitional housing, the VA will continue working on getting him connected to long-term housing!

Tiffany Hall

SOHRAD Clinical Coordinator

INCREASING MENTAL HEALTH DIVERSION: A COLLABORATIVE APPROACH BY THE CCDR TEAM

This DHHS grant-funded program is a collaborative initiative



focused on diverting individuals with serious mental illness from the criminal legal system. Recognizing the imperative to provide these individuals with community behavioral health provider and support services, the CCDR Team includes the Mental Health Diversion Coordinator, a clinician from Freedom House Recovery Center, a Peer Support Specialist, and a Social Worker in each Orange County law enforcement agency. Together, this team works collaboratively to implement effective strategies for mental health diversion, and wrap-around support in the community. In addition, the social workers engage with their law enforcement agencies to support residents with behavioral health crisis needs.

CCDR Team Update



CCDR Team from left to right: Christian McDonald, Freedom House Clinician; Ashley Machado, Mental Health Diversion Coordinator; Savannah Gilliland, HPD Diversion Social Worker; Myiah Livingston, CHPD Diversion Social Worker; Sean Marimpietri, Freedom House Peer Support

The CCDR team, committed to enhancing law enforcement diversion for individuals with serious mental illnesses, is almost at full strength. All positions have been filled. Freedom House Recovery Center hired a licensed clinician and a Peer Support Specialist. All collaborating law enforcement agencies—CHPD, HPD, OCSO, and CPD—all hired their respective Diversion Social Worker positions. The CCDR Diversion Coordinator is actively engaged with participants and providing guidance to team members as the most recent hires familiarize themselves with their roles and adjust to their responsibilities and tasks as part of the CCDR team.

In an exciting development, our Mental Health Diversion Coordinator, Ashley Machado, has completed training to become a Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) trainer for adults. This achievement enables her to train law enforcement officers and other stakeholders, providing them with the skills to respond appropriately to mental health crises. This initiative

contributes significantly to reducing the stigma around mental health and ensures a more empathetic, appropriate and informed response in our community.

Currently, the CCDR program has enrolled 36 participants, with 3 successfully discharged. Notably, 67% of participants are unhoused, presenting unique challenges in engaging and supporting them.

Diagnoses range from bipolar disorder to PTSD, reflecting the diverse needs of this population. Despite the obstacles posed by mental illnesses, the CCDR team remains committed to providing holistic support and fostering positive outcomes for individuals on their journey to recovery.

From the Mental Health Diversion Coordinator, Ashley Machado:

Breaking Cycles

“A person previously well-known to local law enforcement and the criminal legal system, who was marked by disruptive behaviors that were linked to severe alcohol use disorder and bipolar disorder, has now attained a noteworthy milestone of three months of sobriety.

“Currently residing in transitional housing, the client has maintained a clean record with law enforcement, undergone a significant improvement in their mental health symptoms and overall wellbeing.”

ORANGE COUNTY YOUTH BUILD PROGRAM: EMPOWERING FUTURES, TRANSFORMING LIVES

We are delighted to announce the recent hiring of our Youth Build Coordinator at the CJRD. In this new role, our Coordinator, Erica Cooke, will be establishing and leading a program dedicated to providing comprehensive support for justice-involved high-risk youth.

Erica Cooke is an empathetic counselor and strategic thinker with a background in education, mainly focusing on child development. She has numerous years of experience working with at-risk youth who come from diverse backgrounds and have limited resources.

In her prior position at Communities in Schools in Durham, she engaged with both children and their families which rooted her belief that creating rapport and building lasting, meaningful relationships with each young person and those within their community is critical.

Erica also expressed her eagerness to delve deeper into understanding the needs of at-risk youth within the juvenile justice system and gaining insights into Orange County as a whole. She is dedicated to



Navigating Collaborative Terrains

“Navigating the intricacies of collaboration and communication across diverse stakeholders has been a formidable challenge in our diversion program. Balancing the needs of individuals with serious mental illness within the criminal legal system while aligning with community resources demands thoughtful coordination.

“Yet, through these challenges, we’re forging stronger bonds and refining our approach to ensure a more seamless and impactful journey for those we serve.”

Community Empathy

“As the Mental Health Diversion Coordinator of the Community Care and Diversion Response Team, my commitment is to forge a path of compassion, understanding, and transformative change for individuals at the intersection of the criminal legal system and serious mental illness.

“I am dedicated to cultivating a responsive and inclusive program that places humanity at its core, recognizing the inherent worth and potential for change in each person we serve.

“Our collective efforts will not only transform individual lives but contribute to a more compassionate and cohesive community. Together, we will pave the way towards a future where mental health and justice intersect with empathy, understanding, and a commitment to healing.”

making a meaningful impact in this role and is enthusiastic about the positive results that will arise from collaborating with other professionals dedicated to serving the youth in Orange County.

What is Orange County Youth Build?

OC Youth Build provides personalized support to at-risk youth in the juvenile justice system.

Through dedicated case management, mentoring, counseling, and leadership training, we strive to empower and support youth away from being involved in criminal behavior, violence, and legal system entanglements.



Addressing Urgent Needs:

The pressing issues of juvenile violent crime, increased gun possession, and high-risk behaviors in Orange County demand proactive and new solutions. Recent data shows a 34% increase in juvenile violent crimes, 79% of youth scoring as moderate to high risk on assessments, and a significant rise in youth firearm charges. OC Youth Build provides a tailored intervention to meet youth with critical needs.

Eligibility Criteria:

- Ages 13–18 with a case originating in DJJ.
- Score Moderate to High Risk on the YASI Instrument.
- Priority given to youth with felony charges, engaging in high-risk behaviors, or in need of community supports and behavioral health interventions.

Referral Process:

- DJJ or Court Stakeholder completes and submits the Referral Form.
- Coordinator provides a written acceptance decision within 3 business days.
- The Coordinator initiates contact and meets with the youth within 1 week.
- In the case of a decline, the referral source is promptly notified.

Participation Insights:

- Engagement typically spans 6 months to 1 year.
- Minimum of 3 weekly contacts, including at least one in-person meeting.

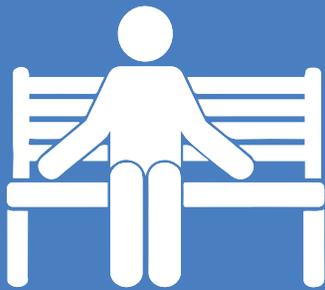
- A personalized plan is devised, with the Coordinator attending all court dates and crucial youth meetings.
- Monthly written summaries keep referral sources informed.
- Successful completion requires a minimum of 6 months of active engagement and progress toward goals.

“Sitting in juvenile court, as I did yesterday, is always a reminder that our community’s young people need more support. When there are charges ranging from murder, gun possession and car theft in addition to lower-level incidents it is an awakening that there is more opportunity to build support for kids and families.

There is a gap in services in our county specifically targeting kids involved in more serious at-risk behavior. OC Youth Build will begin to fill this gap.

As a CJRD staff member dedicated to serving kids, I am excited to welcome Erica Cooke as the Youth Build Coordinator and I’m equally excited at the passion she is bringing to build this program.”

*Tami Pfeifer, LCSW
Youth Behavioral Health Liaison*



Help for people experiencing homelessness

CONNECT TO HOUSING AND SERVICES

Orange County Housing Helpline

- Homelessness prevention
- Eviction prevention
- Shelter referrals
- Permanent housing
- Connections to security deposits, utility deposits, rental assistance



(all program availability dependent on funding)

**Monday-Friday, 10am-4pm
(919) 245-2655, housinghelp@orangecountync.gov**

In-person drop-in hours: Mondays, 9am-1pm

**IFC Commons
110 West Main St, Carrboro**

Tuesdays and Thursdays, 8:30am - 4pm

**Southern Human Services Center
2501 Homestead Rd, Chapel Hill**

HELP FOR PEOPLE LIVING UNSHELTERED

Street Outreach, Harm Reduction and Deflection (SOHRAD) team

- Welfare checks for people living outside or in cars
- Connections to housing & services
- Case management and peer support
- Harm Reduction outreach
- Law enforcement deflection or warm hand-off where safety is not an issue



Monday-Friday, 8am-9pm

**Saturday, 12 noon-9pm
(919) 886-3351, SOHRAD@orangecountync.gov**

**Chapel Hill Police Department Crisis Unit Hours:
Monday-Friday: 7am-11:30pm
(919) 968-2806**

COLD WEATHER BEDS FOR WHITE FLAG NIGHTS

EVERY NIGHT NOVEMBER - APRIL

WHERE: Inter-Faith Council for Social Service (IFC)*

WHO: (Men) 1315 M.L.K. Jr Blvd., Chapel Hill; (Women) 2505 Homestead Rd., Chapel Hill

CALL: 919-929-6380; (Men) ext. 3000, (Women) ext. 4000

WHEN: After securing a space by phone, arrive between 7pm and 8pm (let staff know if you're working and will be late). Leave by 8am.

ALSO: COVID-19 test may be required each night.

Dinner will be provided at IFC Commons (110 W. Main St, Carrboro) Mon-Fri 5:15-6pm and at the shelters Sat & Sun.

**Check daily for availability. Guests maintain their spot as long as they claim it each night.*

WHEN TEMPS DROP BELOW 33 DEGREES

WHERE:

Orange County Southern Human Services Center
2501 Homestead Rd., Chapel Hill

WHO: Men, Women, and Families.

CALL: 919-245-2490

WHEN: Shelter available below 33 degrees.
Check-in starts at 6pm, check out by 8am.

ALSO: COVID-19 test required each night.

Walk-ins accepted. Snacks provided.

Check daily to confirm operational by calling 919-245-2490.



Check current weather at
www.weather.gov/RAH



For more info: ocpehnc.com/Resources

DONATE SUPPLIES!

We need supplies for our cold weather pop-up shelter such as:

- Twin sized blankets
- Individual servings of quick foods such as ramen, oatmeal or grits
- Individual bags of chips and snacks
- Coffee or tea



Drop off items Monday-Friday 8am-5pm at
Southern Human Services Center,
Housing Department, 2501 Homestead Rd, Chapel Hill, NC



Volunteer with us at the shelter:
orangecountync.gov/ShelterVolunteers



Call 919-245-2490 for more information!