



Crisis Solutions Center Neighborhood Safeguards

Who will be served by the Crisis Solutions Center?

Participants will be individuals experiencing a non-violent crisis in the community due to an emotional or mental illness, or substance use. Examples include suicidal thoughts, deep depression, or an inability to think clearly. These individuals will be in good behavioral control and be willing to cooperate with services of the program.

The Crisis Solutions Center **is not** intended as a replacement for people who require jailing or hospitalization for the safety of themselves or others, including the general public.

The program is intended to serve men and women living with mental or addictive illnesses who are currently being sent to jails or hospitals because more appropriate, therapeutic options do not currently exist to serve their specific needs. Services provided on-site will include mental health and chemical dependency treatment, as well as referrals to more consistent services and housing options.

Who will be ruled out from participating in the Crisis Solutions Center?

People who have committed a current violent offense or have a violent criminal history, including committing a domestic violence offense **will not** be referred to or accepted into the program.

Will participants be free to come and go into the surrounding neighborhood?

No. Simply put, at no time will participants be unaccompanied in the neighborhood surrounding the Crisis Solutions Center.

What is the process for arrival/admission to the program?

Referrals: The program will receive referrals from any police force in King County, Medic One Units, County Designated Mental Health Professionals, or hospital emergency room staff. DESC will have signed agreements with these first responders regarding referral expectations, including eligibility, drop-offs and pick-ups.

Arrival: All participants will arrive under the escort of a police officer, DESC Mobile Crisis Team staff, Medic One or ambulance staff, or King County Designated Mental Health Professionals.

Referred participants will be received by intake staff of the Crisis Diversion Facility (16 bed, 72 hour program).

Screening: Prior to referral, all potential participants will be screened for violence potential and criminal history using law enforcement databases in order to rule out individuals with assaultive backgrounds and other violent behaviors. Medical conditions exceeding the service capacity of the Crisis Solutions Center will be directed to an emergency room.

What happens when participants are discharged from the program?

All Crisis Solutions Center participants will be escorted from the facility by DESC staff, police, or ambulance and returned to their home, the community from which they came, new housing, a shelter for homeless persons, hospital or another acceptable destination. No participants will be discharged without a pre-arranged destination and transportation to it.

What about unauthorized departures from the program?

In the rare instance a participant decides to leave the facility against medical advice, Crisis Solutions Center staff will be alerted to such situations by an alarm system. An alarm will sound when a person tries to open a perimeter door without use of a security card. The security system (including door delays and closed circuit television cameras) will allow staff enough time to respond before the participant can exit the building. Staff will immediately intervene by attempting to persuade the participant to return to the facility.

If a participant who is in the program tries to walk away from the facility, two DESC staff members will follow the person to monitor his or her behavior and continue efforts to persuade him or her to return to the facility or accept a ride to his or her next destination. Seattle Police will be called immediately if the participant is perceived to be a threat to people or property. DESC staff will continue following the person until either the police respond and detain the person or he/she has left the neighborhood. The staff members following the person will carry walkie-talkies in order to maintain steady communication with staff at the facility.

One aspect of the Crisis Solutions Center is a two-week program known as Crisis Diversion Interim Services for homeless people who have completed the Crisis Diversion Facility. Will participants in that longer-term program also be accompanied in the neighborhood at all times?

People served by the Crisis Diversion Interim Services program (30 beds) will stay for up to 14 days. This is considered an unreasonable length of time for people to be continuously kept indoors. There will be occasions when staff will need to take participants to appointments or outside to get some fresh air and exercise. During these occasions, participants will always be accompanied by staff. Not all participants will be eligible for such outings – only those deemed stable enough to remain appropriate outside of the Crisis Solutions Center facility.

Are there aspects of the physical facility design that protect the neighborhood?

Yes. The building is specifically designed to ensure that unauthorized entries and exits cannot occur. Entry to the facility will be controlled by staff at all times. Exits, required by fire code, will be monitored at all times by electronic control devices and staff (see 'unauthorized departures' above). The entry door enters into a controlled vestibule from which only authorized persons may access the common program space beyond. Those in the program space wishing to exit must pass through two alarmed doors, from the program space to the vestibule and the vestibule to the exterior of the building.

An added neighborhood safeguard is that staff will be monitoring activity around the building with full-coverage closed circuit television cameras, window and regularly scheduled walks around the building.

Finally, the facility will go through a Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) review. CPTED is a formal program of the Seattle Police Department, administered in partnership with the Seattle Neighbor Group, to analyze physical design features and make recommendations that suppress criminal activity.

What impact will police, ambulance and program staff vehicle traffic to and from the facility have on the neighborhood?

Participant drop-offs will occur in a discreet off-street driveway. The entrance where police and Medic One will arrive is an existing off-street driveway, which we will enclose with a fence to create a modified 'sally port'. First responder vehicles arriving with referred participants will not use lights or sirens, because they will be non-emergent transports. We anticipate 8 to 10 first responder or DESC Mobile Crisis Team vehicle arrivals/departures each day.

Program staff (85 in all, working 3 shifts each day) and service partners will use a large parking lot behind the building. The presence of these staff in the neighborhood will help promote the economic vitality of the neighborhood, as they frequent local restaurants and other retail businesses.

Will you have security on-site?

Yes. The Crisis Solutions Center will have high staff-to-participant ratios 24/7. Minimum daytime staffing will be 18 employees during business hours and 13 employees overnight. This allows for staff to participant ratios of 1:3 during the day; and 1:4 overnight.

All program staff will be trained in aggressive behavior management and other safety techniques. Security functions are fully integrated into program operations, rather than the task of one specific person. DESC staff will enforce program rules which prohibit uncivil or illegal behavior in the surrounding neighborhood.

How can neighbors give continued input to ensure the facility design and program operations do not present safety risks?

DESC has a long history of siting projects, and often, neighbors raise concern when we first announce a location. We find that after opening, neighbors appreciate DESC's attentive approach to both how we operate our programs, and how we respond to neighborhood concerns. DESC is seeking community involvement with this project, as we have in past developments. Our goal is to develop a safe and successful project, and we strongly value community input in that process.

DESC is interested in working with key stakeholders on creating a Good Neighbor Agreement and the establishment of an ongoing Advisory Committee. We want to hear directly from people who have concerns, and work collaboratively to address these concerns. We commit to implementing measures to address those concerns, where possible, as long as they do not undermine the primary goals of the program.

In addition to the Good Neighbor Agreement process, we welcome other suggestions for neighborhood input. DESC is committed to being a good neighbor, because it serves our clients and the broader neighborhood to be transparent and responsive to neighbors' concerns. We have been very active in all neighborhoods where we have programs. DESC's policy is to integrate into the surrounding community. The Crisis Solutions Center will be staffed 24 hours a day. We will provide the program telephone number that will always be answered.

Additionally, all of our program managers participate in the relevant community councils; and this will also be the case with the Crisis Solutions Center. In fact, the Cascade Community Council meets in one of our buildings. And, our supportive housing project known as Rainier House is home to the Rainier Chamber of Commerce. We have found this model of pro-active engagement with neighbors is key to the success of our programs.

For more information about DESC's Crisis Solutions Center, please see desc.org/crisis_solutions.html. We welcome any questions you may have about this program. Please contact Nicole Macri, DESC's Administrative Director, at 206-515-1514 or nmacri@desc.org.