



# Draft Overnight Storage Concept Paper

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Initial Report for Input – March 2017

DRAFT

## **Introduction and Goals**

Staff was directed to outline a concept for a long-term storage program by the City County Homeless Issues Committee that could be shared with community stakeholders for their feedback. Long-term storage is defined generally as a program where customers can store belongings in the same location, for an extended period of time, including overnight.

Members of the community have expressed a need for additional long-term storage programs. A lack of secure storage can be barrier to individuals trying to access resources that can help them find housing, employment, or other needed services.

The goal of this concept paper is to reach consensus on the components of a long-term storage program that can serve the basic needs of its customers. Ultimately, an agreed upon concept could inform site specifications and an operating budget estimate.

This proposal is not meant to be a universal storage model solution – other models, and multiple locations, may be necessary to meet the needs of our diverse population of individuals in need of housing.

## **Existing Storage Programs**

Existing free storage opportunities for individuals who are homeless are outlined below.

### **Sanctuary Storage**

Location:..... Social Justice Center, 1202 Williamson St., Madison

Days/Hours of Operation:..... 7 days a week, 8:00am – 6:00pm

Square Footage:..... Unknown

The Sanctuary Storage program is funded by the City of Madison (\$22,000, mostly for rent) and run entirely by volunteers. The space is a suite of offices with a central check-in area. Most offices have been fitted with shelving. Belongings are typically stored in the suitcase, bag, box, or other container the customer carries them in at check-in.

### **St. Vinny's Lockers Program**

Location:..... 1312 Culmen St., Madison

Days/Hours of Operation:..... 2 days a week, Wednesdays 3:00pm – 5:00pm,  
Saturdays 8:30am – 10:30am

Square Footage:..... Approx. 900

The St. Vincent de Paul Locker Program is privately funded and operated by volunteers with St. Vincent de Paul Staff oversight. The space is a former screen printing shop with four separate rooms – a waiting room/check-in room with tables where customers can sign up for the program and access the contents of their bins, a bin storage room, an overflow storage room for

abandoned belongings, and a room to store suitcases that customers used to store/transport their belongings prior to accessing St. Vinny's Lockers.

A referral from a service provider is required prior to accessing the program. The program can serve up to 75 people at one time. Customers can use up to two 30-gallon storage bins for 60 days and may store vital documents in a separate secure file for up to one year. Customers must check in before the 60 day term is up and may be granted an extension.

If the customer has not made contact for 60 days, a volunteer may remove their belongings from bin storage and put them in plastic bags in overflow storage. An attempt will be made to locate the customer. If the customer cannot be located, their belongings will be disposed of (often donated to St. Vincent's Thrift Stores).

Only program volunteers can access the secure storage areas. When a customer needs their bin, the volunteers will retrieve it for them. Each customer is given a unique ID number for their bin and a picture is taken of the customer and put in their file to provide additional security. No medication, food, drink, alcohol, drugs, weapons, or wet clothes can be stored. Belongings will be checked for these items by Vinny's Lockers volunteers prior to storage and at each visit to the lockers.

#### Storage in Overnight Shelter Programs

Limited long-term storage space is available to single women and families staying at the Salvation Army's overnight drop-in shelter located at 630 E. Washington Ave.

Single men staying at one of Porchlight's shelter sites (Grace Episcopal Church, St. John's Lutheran Church, and First United Methodist Church (in winter months)), must take their belongings with them when they check-out of shelter in the morning.

#### Emerging Program

**The Keys to Dignity** program, operated by Friends of the State Street Family, is in the implementation stage and storage is not currently available. Once operational, this storage program will provide a minimum of 5 and a maximum of 10 individual lockers at various sites located in the downtown Madison area. (City of Madison zoning currently restricts the number of lockers at any one site to a maximum of 10.)

Customers will be able to store their belongings for a six month period, renewable if they are still without housing at the end of their term. The locker sites will be managed by Friends of the State Street Family volunteers. Lockers are intended to provide sufficient space for an individual to store sleeping gear and a backpack.

Friends of the State Street Family is currently recruiting locker site partners and locations. Dane County passed a resolution to fund the purchase of lockers for the program. The resolution also pledged support for placing up to 20 lockers at county-owned properties in the downtown area. County staff are

currently working to locate 10 lockers at the County-owned parking ramp on Henry St. in downtown Madison.

The City of Madison passed two pieces of legislation in support of the program – one to affirm its commitment to collaborate with Dane County to “[place lockers in downtown parking ramp\(s\) and/or other identified safe or reasonable locations which can be utilized by homeless persons to store their personal belongings](#)” and the other [amending City zoning](#) to allow for the siting of the lockers.

### **Proposed Program Attributes**

Proposed attributes for a long-term storage program are listed below and informed by existing programs, as well as the input of members of the City County Homeless Issues Committee.

#### **Eligibility**

The proposed program would be open to individuals and families experiencing homelessness, with preference given to:

1. Those on the community’s by-name list for housing and/or,
2. for individuals for whom long-term storage is necessary to alleviate a medical condition.

#### **Intake Process**

1. Customers (adults or unaccompanied youth) will receive one large 30 gallon tote. Adults with minor children may register for two totes.
2. If program capacity is reached, a waitlist for the program will be maintained.
3. Each customer will have a file created in their name with a corresponding ID number for their tote and photo of the customer to verify identity. An inventory of items being stored in the tote will be included in the customer file and must be amended if the contents of the tote change.
4. Customers will provide contact information, including an address where they can receive mail or messages, a phone number, e-mail address, or social media contact.
5. The customer will also provide an alternate contact where information can be received, in the event program staff/volunteers need to reach the customer, if the storage agreement is terminated and/or property is disposed of due to a health or safety threat, or if property appears abandoned.

6. Staff will review contents of the tote at intake, and after totes are accessed by the customer, to ensure prohibited items are not being stored.
7. Customers will also be allowed to store vital documents in a secured file, separate from their 30 gallon tote.

#### Length of Service and Requirements to Maintain Access

1. Registration will include a three month term. At the end of three months, customers must check in with the storage provider.
2. If storage is still needed, the customer can renew for another 3 month period if they have complied with program rules, is still homeless, and if there is no one on the storage program wait list at the time a renewal is requested.
3. Customers will release their tote if and when they become housed.

#### Hours of Operation/Staffing

Hours of operation may depend on site location, customer need, or funding available for the program. Other community resources are generally available between 8am and 5pm.

At least two staff/volunteers should be on site at all times to maintain efficient service for the customer, and to provide safety for customers and staff.

#### Security and Item Restrictions

1. Only items that will fit into one 30 gallon tote will be stored. No furniture, perishable food, illegal, or dangerous items will be allowed in totes or in the storage area.
2. If a customer needs their tote, their identity will be verified. Only storage program staff/volunteers are allowed to retrieve it and provide the tote to the customer.
3. Totes will be secured, and the room that totes are in will be secured. Staff/volunteers will be the only individuals allowed in the tote storage area.
4. Staff/volunteers will be authorized to access the tote and dispose of any items presenting a health or safety threat, including but not limited to perishable food items, or items that could cause a fire or otherwise damage the facility.
5. In the event of a rodent or pest infestation, the participant would be allowed to clean their items and return them to storage.

### Abandoned Property/Service Termination

1. If a customer does not return for their belongings after their three month term, program staff/volunteers will attempt to contact the customer through the information provided on their tote registration form prior to disposition.
2. A customer may name a designee who can access the tote for them in the event they are unable to do so, and their property faces disposition.
3. Program policies for service termination should use progressive discipline and include written reasons for any program violations which would result in a ban from the storage program. The storage program provider must make a reasonable attempt to deliver written warnings to customer.
4. Written warnings must also be delivered electronically when possible.
5. The program disposition policy must include reasonable advanced notice to the registrant and their designated alternative contact, if any. Reasonable notice is not required for items presenting a health or safety threat.

### Proposed Site Attributes

Because the need for long-term storage is great, and the needs of individuals and families who are homeless are different, finding one location to meet the need may be difficult.

Ideally multiple locations, a scattered-site model similar to the “Keys to Dignity” program, could be offered over time to increase convenience and access for customers.

The following attributes would be ideal in considering a location for a long-term storage program.

1. An indoor storage space. Given Wisconsin’s climate, an indoor facility would be ideal to protect belongings, and provide increased access to belongings, regardless of the weather.
2. Near a bike path or major bus route.
3. Proximity to compatible services.
4. 1,000 square foot space minimum.

5. Multiple rooms, or a space that could be sectioned off, to provide an intake area, secure storage room for totes, secure storage room for suitcase storage, secure room for abandoned property holding prior to disposition, and a room or private space for customers to access their belongings.
6. A site that could be purchased, or rented. A site appropriately zoned to operate as a storage facility would be ideal.

### **Next Steps**

Staff will share this initial report with members of the City County Homeless Issues Committee at their meeting on April 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2017.

After the committee's input is incorporated, staff will share this document for additional stakeholder input through the Homeless Services Consortium membership, Board of Directors, and its relevant committees. Input from individuals with lived experience could be acquired through existing partnerships with agencies and programs.

A formal adoption of the program and site recommendations by the City County Homeless Issues Committee and the Homeless Services Consortium Board of Directors will result in a final report that could help inform future site searches and a budget for the program.