

BRIEFING NOTE HS10-21

For information or For Approval

Date: March 24, 2021

Purpose: Emergency Shelter Update

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This briefing note provides an update on emergency shelter usage and capacity.

Background:

Since the onset of the pandemic in March, 2020, shelters and support services have been constrained by the pandemic protocols. Shelters have been required to maintain all safety guidelines and physical distancing requirements for both guests and staff, while continuing to provide services and supports.

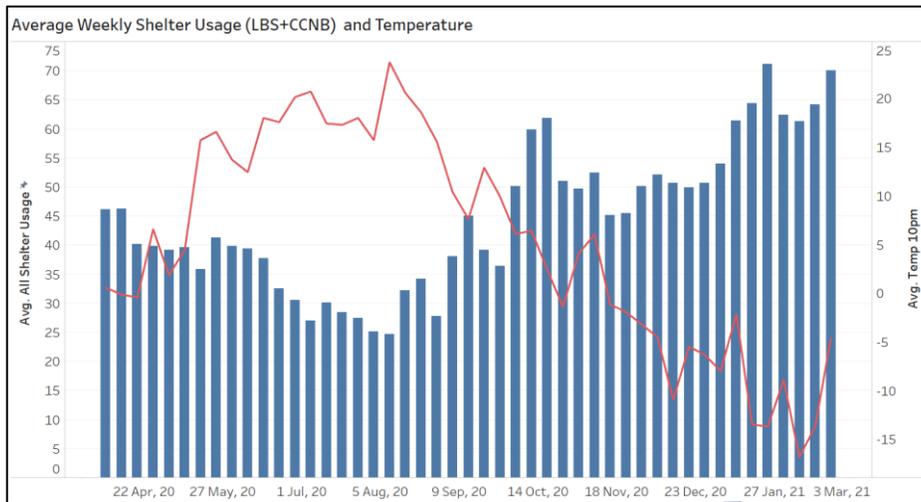
Crisis Centre North Bay and the Low Barrier Shelter located at the Gateway House Chippewa site, have been at capacity for overnight shelter beds since the Fall of 2020. In September 2020, the need for day programming during the winter months was recognized by the DNSSAB and funded through the Social Service Relief Fund.

The North Bay Indigenous Friendship Centre opened a Day Program effective December 12, 2020, offering services 12 hours a day on Saturdays and Sundays through the use of their gymnasium. Nipissing Mental Health Housing and Support Services is providing Day Programming 12 hours a day, Monday to Friday, effective December 23rd, 2020.

Report:

The addition of the day programming has provided those experiencing homelessness with a place to receive supports and connections with other services 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. This has been especially important while many other services have been shut down or limited in service during the stay at home order, and during the winter months. (Figure #1)

Figure #1 Weekly Average Shelter Usage and Average Temperature – April 2020 - February 2021



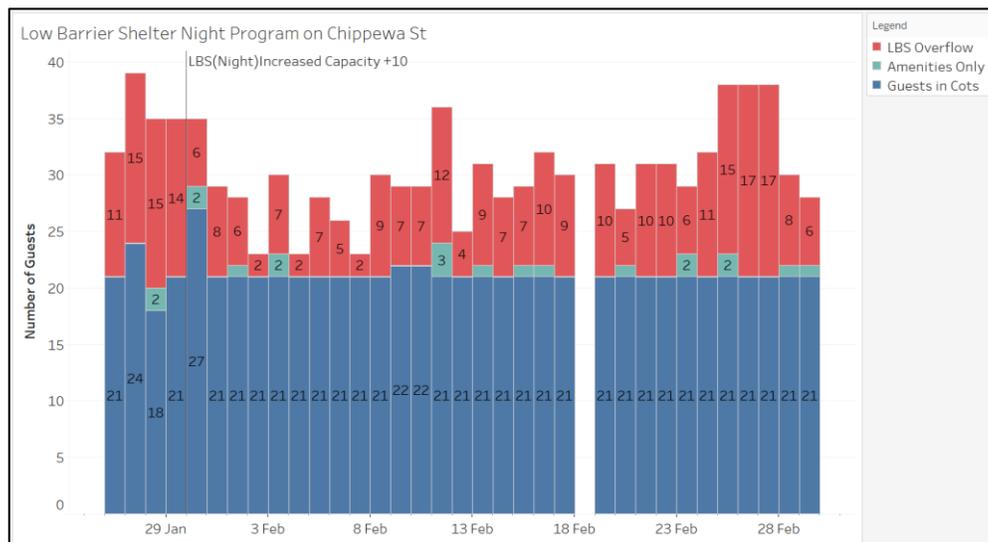
The Day Programming became available just before the provincial Stay-at-Home order came into effect on December 26. Both sites have experienced steady attendance.

Although the capacity within the system increased to 24 hours per day, 7 days a week, the need for shelter beds overnight continued to rise during January and February.

During January, the Low Barrier Shelter was consistently over capacity. NMHHSS and CCNB worked together to better place individuals within the system. Some individuals were moved to the Crisis Centre 4 Elms and some were temporarily housed in motels.

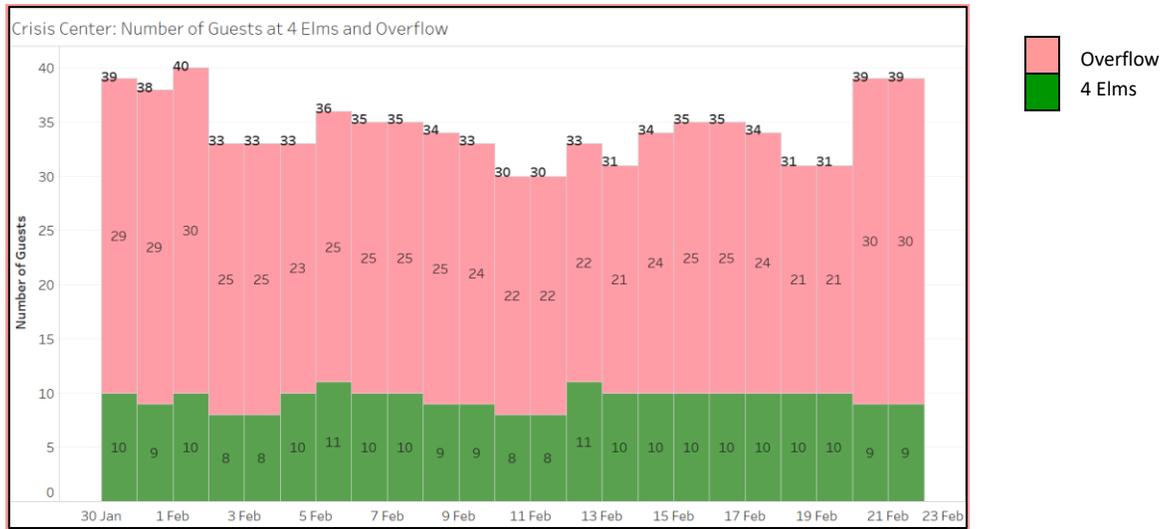
Working with the property owner at Chippewa, 10 LBS overflow spaces were created, opening on January 30th, 2021. Since this expansion no guests have been turned away due to limited space.

Figure #2 – Low Barrier Shelter Attendance and Overflow usage January – February 2021



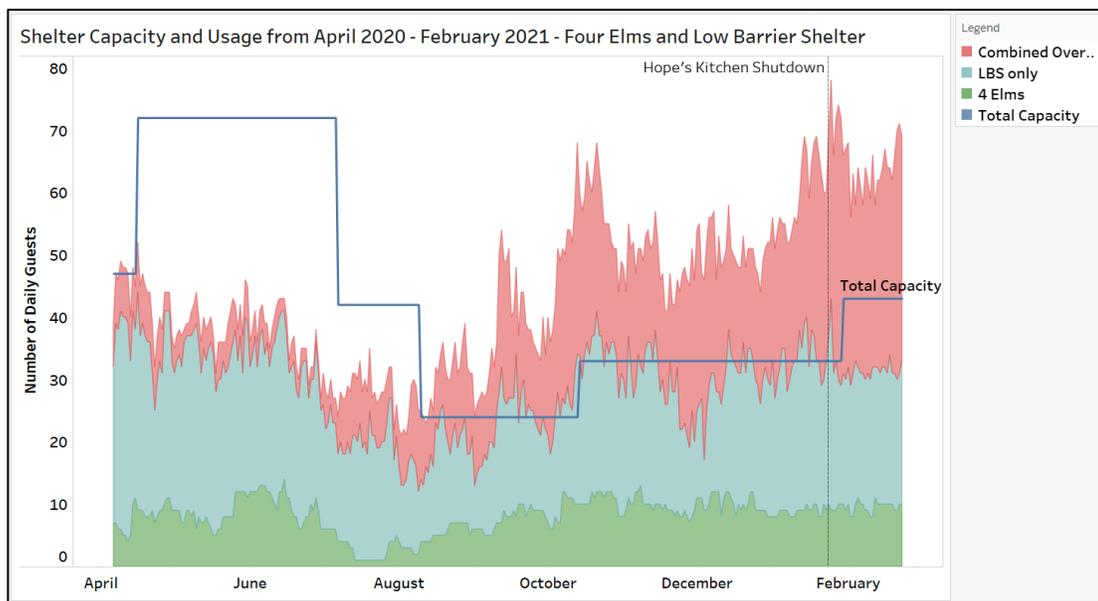
- The LBS Night program increased their capacity by 10 in January. Since then, guests have accessed this overflow every night.

Figure #3 – Crisis Centre North Bay Shelter Usage January – February 2021



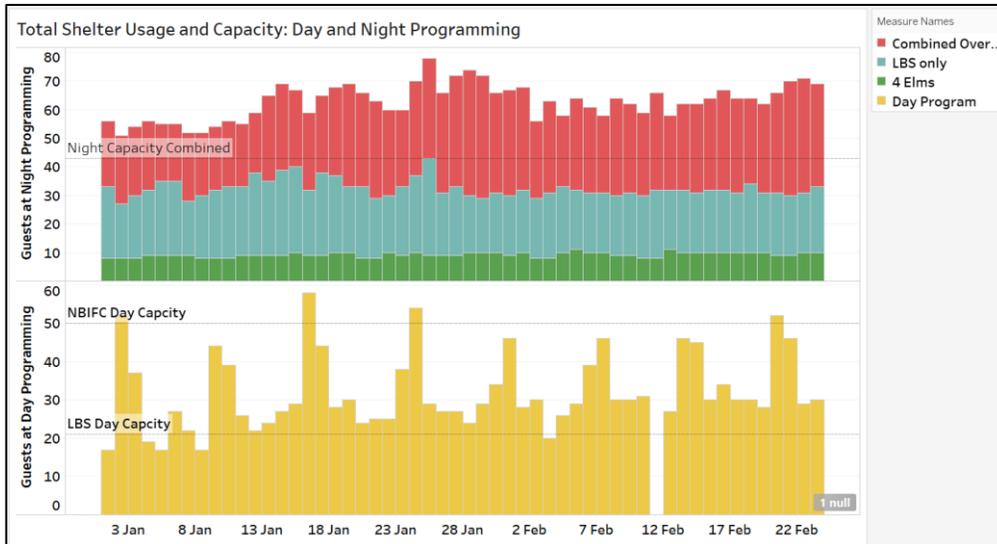
➤ CCNB is currently sheltering approximately 40 guests at 4 Elms and in Overflow combined.

Figure #4 Combined Overflow and usage for both LBS and CCNB



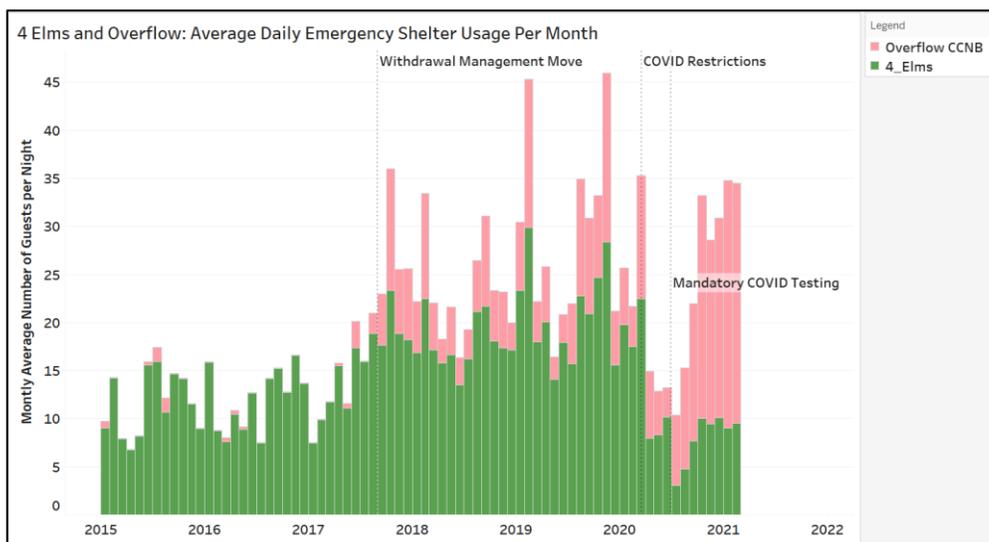
➤ Combined shelter usage between LBS and Crisis Center continues to climb. Early February saw a record high of 80 people in shelter and overflow.

Figure #5 Day and Night Programming: Usage and Capacity



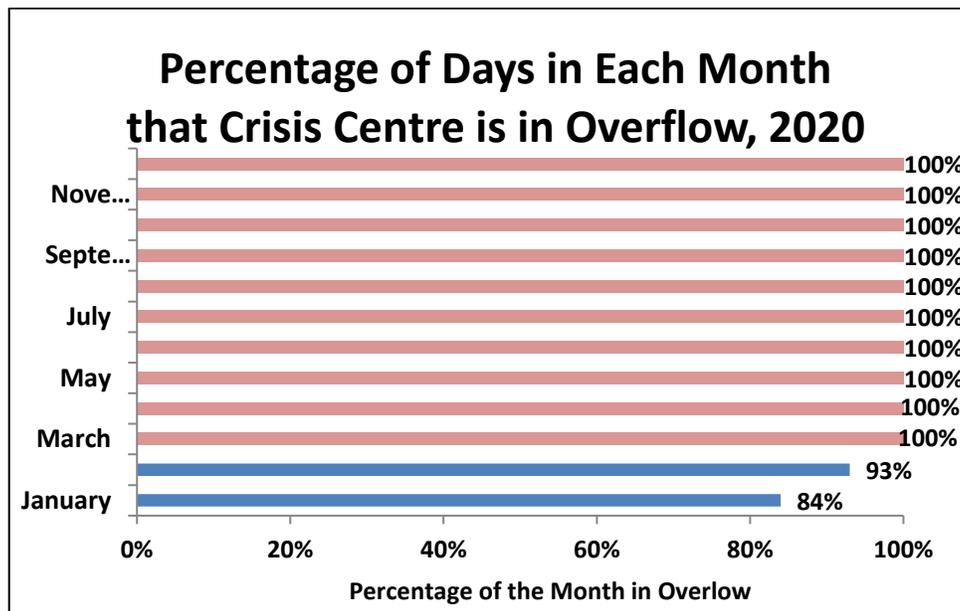
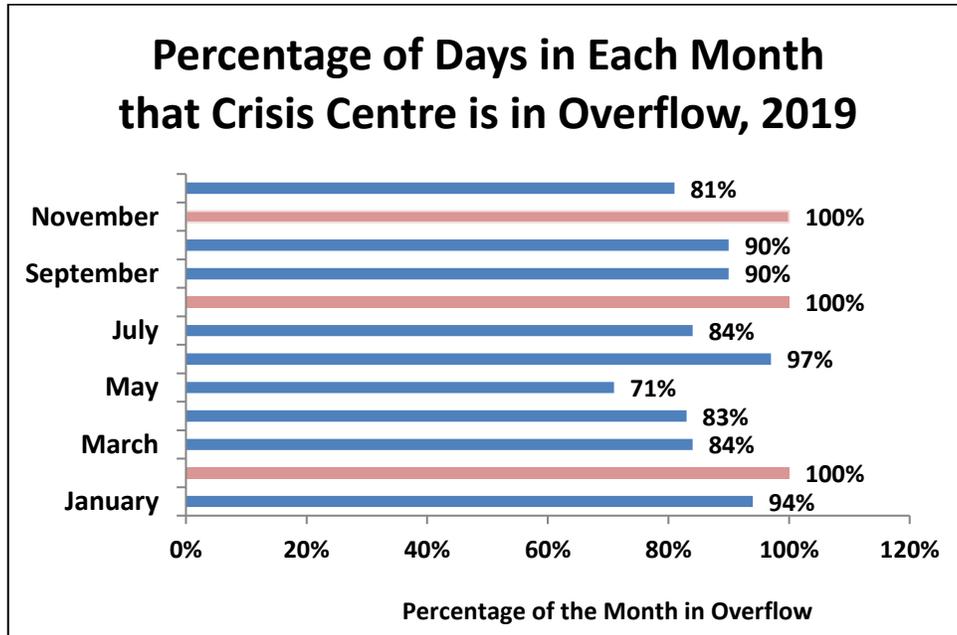
- Night Programming: Since January 1st, 2021, the combination of guest at CCNB and LBS (including overflow) has exceeded the combined capacity of both shelters every night.
- Day Programming: The LBS and NBIFC has been running at capacity respectively for 81% and 18% of days since January 1st, 2021. Overall the Day Program has been at capacity for 43 days out of 70 days since the beginning of the year.
- The number of guests at the Day Program is the total number of people recorded during the 12 hour program, which can exceed the maximum capacity of a given moment as people come and go.
- The spike in shelter demand for January and February has been consistent over the years, as depicted in the January and February historical usage graph below.

Figure #6 – CCNB Shelter Usage: Historical Comparison



- CCNB noted that since the beginning of COVID, they had to adopt a different strategy for overflow usage due to capacity restrictions and mandatory COVID testing.

Figure #7 - Percentage of time the crisis centre has been in overflow by month: 2019 & 2020



➤ Since the pandemic began in March 2020, the Crisis Center has been in overflow every day of the month.

Risks and Mitigation:

Risk: Access to services for individuals experiencing homelessness within the district continues to be challenging.

- The DNSSAB, in collaboration with other community partners, will continue to create opportunities for connections and referrals for supports, housing and treatment options.

- Within the next year, a Coordinated Access system will be implemented using the Homeless Individuals and Families Information System (HIFIS) and a standardized prioritized assessment tool, the Service Prioritization Decision Assistance Tool (SP-DAT). This will allow for the creation of a shared, By-Name-List of homeless individuals waiting for support and housing and also provide accurate and timely data to use for planning.

Risk: There is a shortage of affordable and appropriate housing options to which individuals can be referred.

- Early in 2021, funded through the Investment in Affordable Housing 2014 Extension, the first 16 units of the new Gateway House will open. This will provide stable, supported housing for 16 individuals who are currently homeless or at risk of homelessness and living with mental health or addiction issues.
- Phase 2 of the Gateway House has been funded through the Social Services Relief Fund and this will provide up to another 20 units of housing. To meet the funding requirements, this phase must be completed by December 31st, 2021.

Risk: There is finite funding for both the day Programs and the overnight Low Barrier Shelter beds.

- Funding has been allocated, through the SSRF Phase 2 funding, to keep the Day Programming open until the end of April.
- Through the use of unspent funding it is anticipated that the Low Barrier Shelter will remain open until the end of August 2021.
- The DNSSAB continues to advocate to all levels of government for sustainable funding for these services.

Risk: Nipissing Mental Health Housing & Support Services will no longer operate the Low Barrier Shelter as of May 1, 2021.

- The DNSSAB is in negotiations with Crisis Centre North Bay to take on the operations of the Low Barrier Shelter. This will enable a smooth transition between operators and provide continuity of service for individuals experiencing homelessness.

Conclusion:

The COVID-19 pandemic continues to challenge service providers and service recipients but has also provided opportunities for the DNSSAB and its partners to work together to face current and future challenges. The DNSSAB will continue to work with community partners and stakeholders to find creative and collaborative solutions to homelessness within the District of Nipissing.