



City and County of San Francisco

Shelter Monitoring Committee

Standard of Care-Complaint Investigation

Investigation Number: 41617ND-I
Complaint Number: 21617ND

Site: Next Door

Date Complaint Submitted to Site: July 11, 2016

Date Investigation Requested: July 22, 2016

Date of Investigation: September 29, 2016

Alleged Standard Violations:

- 1) Treat clients equally, with respect and dignity, including in the application of shelter policies and grievance process
- 2) Provide an environment that is safe and free from physical violence

Investigation-Conducted by: Committee Members T. Bohrer and P. Hall, Committee staff H. Chen

If applicable, staff interviewed: N/A

If applicable, number of clients interviewed: 45 clients (13.63% of total client capacity)

The complainant alleged that she was unfairly written up for arguing with another client because the other client initiated the conflict by yelling at the complainant and making violent gestures in the complainant's face while the complainant's only response was to run away from the area. The complainant also alleged that staff were retaliating against her and that certain clients do not get written up for harassing or threatening other clients.

Standard 1

To measure the site's compliance with Standard 1, the Committee surveyed clients about their experiences with shelter staff.

In order to determine Next Door's compliance with Standard 1, the Committee needed to receive responses from 10% of the total client capacity (33 clients) indicating that they either:

1. See/Do not see shelter staff not following shelter policies when writing up/denying services to clients for arguing, making threats or fighting

2. See/Do not see shelter staff showing favoritism towards or retaliating against certain clients

Question 1: 45 Clients were asked, “Do you feel that staff follow shelter policies when writing up or denying services to clients for arguing, making threats or fighting?”

- * 17 clients said “Yes”
- * 18 clients said “No”
- * 9 clients said “Sometimes”
- * 1 client did not answer this question

Client Comments:

- *“Sometimes they do but a lot of times they don't.”*
- *“They do nothing, that's why people assault people and continue to, because staff is never present to witness it.”*

Question 2: Clients were asked, “Do you feel like staff show favoritism towards or retaliate against certain clients?”

- * 33 clients said “Yes”
- * 9 clients said “No”
- * 3 clients said “Sometimes”

Client Comments:

- *“Staff allow favorites to get away with everything. There are good staff and bad. They don't allow women to work it out, they say just eat and forget about it. This causes resentment. They need to be more strict about enforcing shelter rules. They have their favorites, especially those who are the worse people perhaps out of fear of retaliation.”*
- *“Bed 45 and 46 hit people, staff do nothing. Other people get DOS but not bed 45 and 46.”*
- *“I've noticed that they often threaten DOS and will not follow through. There have been trouble makers who get kicked out and come back again, even the same night. Without consistent enforcement of rules, follow through, people will not feel the need to follow the rules. This leaves those who do follow the rules and are considerate feeling frustrated and sometimes unsafe. I can deal with the annoying and immature, that's totally expected. But some are very disruptive, even threatening, but they are allowed to stay or return to cause more problems.”*
- *“Only few of them can relate to myself. Not even they try to talk to me. Also they establish favoritism and discussion between me and other clients. It is not helpful.”*

While responses to Question 1 were closely split between “Yes” and “No”, 10% of the total client capacity at Next Door (33 clients) indicated in their responses to Question 2 that they have seen shelter staff showing favoritism towards or retaliating against certain clients. As a result, Next Door is not in compliance with Standard 1 of the Standards of Care.

Standard 2

The complainant alleged that staff are not maintaining a safe environment and that they do not enforce the shelter rules and policies for writing up or denying services to clients for threatening others or fighting. To measure the site’s compliance with Standard 2, the Committee surveyed clients about whether or not the site provided a safe environment for clients and if staff stepped in to de-escalate arguments and verbal fights.

In order to determine with Standard 2, the Committee needed to receive responses from 10% of the total client capacity (33 clients) indicating they either:

3. Do/Do not feel safe at the shelter

4. Do/Do not see shelter staff de-escalating arguments and helping to break up verbal fights between clients.

Question 3: 45 Clients were asked, "Do you feel safe at the shelter?"

* 18 clients said "Yes"

* 12 clients said "No"

* 11 clients said "Sometimes"

* 4 clients did not answer this question

Client Comments:

"Because many people are dealing with issues (drugs), there are times when one needs to be proactive and watch ones back"

"Many dangerous people reside here (felons, drug dealers, etc.) Most of the staff is scary, rude, unreasonable, incompetent, foul mouthed and verbally abusive"

"Sometimes when you take in a transgender person, man to woman, I feel unsafe. I walked in the shower room and saw a man with a penis taking shower with undrawn curtain. Having a very manly person sleeping next to my bed is unnerving."

"Safe from assault, not from illness. Restroom and shower cleanliness is poor, including mold, bodily fluids, excrement, toilets clogged for days at a time and odor that permeates the entire floor. Incident this week - One night clients were arguing over use of outlets in the bed areas. The monitors response was to shut them off completely. I need the outlet next to my bed for medical equipment on an as needed basis. At the time the monitor on 2 shifts and the night supervisor denied knowing why the power was off (I knew the outlets are controlled by a breaker switch). I stated to all staff my medical need but the power remained off all day. Not until the following evening did the monitor who turned off the power admit to me that she had done so intentionally."

"Some staff are professional but most are just kind of hanging out, often chatting with each other instead of paying attention to clients."

"I've had things thrown at me for example, wet tissues thrown at my head and leg, back leg grabbed real hard by people staying here."

"Thieves, fights"

"Transgenders threatening to knock women out. Nothing personal but I feel some of us women have been abused by men, then we want to feel safe here. But transgenders be saying "I'm still a man bitch, I'll knock you bitches out." Talking inappropriate about sexual parts. I just feel transgenders should have their own section for these reasons."

"Don't feel safe because staff has to see you get hit or hear you get threatened, most times they don't. So the rule says one thing but how can we prove? Our word means nothing, our complaint means nothing, can't prove."

"Hell no, the staff are asleep at night. The director is not addressing violent people."

"Confrontations between other people in the shelter make me anxious"

"This building is a target for scary stuff, it's not very well protected in lobby or stairwells."

"One or two monitors on a floor w/over 100 clients is understaffed. The staff do not make their rounds. The staff sit through their shift. The staff sleep at work."

Question 4: 45 Clients were asked, “Do staff de-escalate arguments and help break up verbal fights between clients?”

* 24 clients said “Yes”

* 11 clients said “No”

* 7 clients said “Sometimes”

* 3 clients did not answer this question

Client Comments:

“As for verbal fights, some staff don't seem to care at all.”

“It seems like staff don't get involved”

“They are rarely available.”

Client responses to Questions 3 and 4 were split, with neither question receiving responses from 10% of the total client capacity indicating full compliance or non-compliance with Standard 2. As a result, the Committee is unable to make a determination on Next Door's compliance with Standard 2.

Recommendations for Next Door:

* Please ask all shelter staff to review Chapter 1 of the Shelter Training Manual: “Ethics and Boundaries”

* Please remind all staff of the importance of treating all clients equally and that giving clients preferential treatment or retaliating against clients is prohibited

* Please review all client comments

As a result of the Shelter Monitoring Committee completing the investigation into the complaint, this case is now closed.