



Knoxville-Knox County Office of Housing Stability

MEDIA RELEASE

November 24, 2025

Knoxville-Knox County Office of Housing Stability and Homeless Coalition Announce Winter Warming Center Effort

- WHAT:** The Knoxville-Knox County Office of Housing Stability (OHS), in partnership with the Knoxville-Knox County Homeless Coalition, announces the launch of the 2025-25 winter warming center effort.
- WHEN:** Warming centers will activate on nights when temperatures fall to 25°F or below, beginning as early as December 1, 2025 (depending on the site) and operating through Feb. 28, 2026.
- WHERE:** Warming centers are located throughout Knoxville and Knox County in partnership with local churches, nonprofits, and community organizations. A full list of sites will be available at knoxtnhousing.org.
- WHO:** The Office of Housing Stability and the Knoxville-Knox County Homeless Coalition with support from local faith-based and nonprofit partners. The collaboration strengthens Knoxville's existing shelter network by adding temporary emergency capacity.

BACKGROUND:

The Knoxville-Knox County Office of Housing Stability (OHS), in partnership with the Knoxville-Knox County Homeless Coalition, announced the community's warming center network for the upcoming winter season today. A list of warming center churches is available at knoxtnhousing.org/warming-centers.html, and will be updated as additional churches commit to opening their doors. Warming centers will operate on nights when temperatures fall to 25°F or below, beginning as early as December 1, 2025, depending on the site, and operating through Feb. 28, 2026. Warming centers are actively seeking donations, and some are seeking volunteers. For more information, please visit <https://knoxtnhousing.org/warming-centers.html>.

This is the program's third year. In the winter of 2024-25, more than 400 people sought shelter at the warming centers. That number is expected to decrease somewhat this winter due to the addition of new programs and supportive housing in the community.

The Office of Housing Stability has released the 2025 Point-in-Time Count Report, which provides context for warming center efforts. The annual Point-in-Time Count—conducted in January in partnership with local shelters, outreach teams, and volunteers—provides a snapshot of homelessness across the community. On a single night this past January, 1,174 individuals were counted as experiencing homelessness, including 245 unsheltered, 814 in emergency shelters (including warming centers), and 115 in transitional housing.

The report also highlights several key trends:

- Rents have increased by 62% since 2020, while real wages have grown by only 15%.
- Older adults are increasingly at risk, with more than half of those unsheltered age 45 or older.
- Two-thirds of homeless guests at warming centers had lived at a permanent address in Knoxville or Knox County when they became homeless.
- Unsheltered homelessness remains high, even as warming centers temporarily sheltered more than 400 individuals on the night of the count.

“The data confirm what our community has been feeling: the need has outpaced our year-round shelter capacity,” said Erin Read, Executive Director of the Office of Housing Stability. “The warming center network is about more than beds; it’s about compassion, coordination, and making sure no one is left outside on freezing nights.”

During the winter of 2024-25, Knoxville experienced 32 nights with temperatures below 25°F, compared to just eight nights the prior winter. The expanded warming center network builds on that experience by strengthening coordination among shelters, volunteers, and outreach teams.

“This effort truly reflects the spirit of collaboration that defines Knoxville,” said Andrew Church, President of the Knoxville-Knox County Homeless Coalition. “Together, we’re providing warming centers with the training and support needed to operate at their best with the resources available, ensuring as many neighbors as possible are not left out in the cold. We invite our community to join us in this shared work of care and compassion.”

OHS and the Homeless Coalition encourage community members to get involved through volunteering, donating supplies, or hosting a warming center.

For warming center details or donation and volunteer information, visit

<https://knoxtnhousing.org/warming-centers.html>

To learn more about the PIT Count Report, visit <https://knoxtnhousing.org/data-reports.html>

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