

City of Alexandria, Virginia
FY 2026 Proposed Operating Budget & CIP
Budget Questions & Answers

March 27, 2025

Question:

What is the waiting list for the Alexandria Community Shelter? What does it cost to shelter clients' pets?

Response:

In the City of Alexandria, there are two year-round emergency shelters: Alexandria Community Shelter (ACS) and the Carpenter's Shelter. Each has 64 beds, for a combined total of 128. Each has been operating at 100% capacity since March 2023. ACS supports individuals with and without children, and Carpenter's Shelter supports households with children only.

Currently, there are 113 households on the shelter waitlist, 99 of whom are without children and 14 with children. Many of the households who are included on the waitlist are currently utilizing the winter shelter, which operates from Nov 1 through April 15 annually. This season, the number of households in the Winter Shelter has increased significantly, leading to an increase in the waitlist. This increase has been attributed to the unusually cold weather. Typically, the number of households on the waitlist is higher during and immediately after the end of the winter shelter season. In April 2024, the list was 72, and in October, it was 45.

The DCHS staff updates the waitlist daily, ensuring that households with the highest vulnerability are promptly referred to shelter as beds become available. Those who have found stable housing or no longer require shelter are promptly removed from the waitlist. Staff and households maintain contact while on the waitlist. This includes households contacting staff when their housing needs change and staff contacting the household if they have not heard from the household. If there has been no contact with a household in 30 days, the household is removed from the waitlist.

The length of time on the waitlist varies, anywhere from one day to 12 months. It depends on how long it takes for a bed to become available, the accommodation needed, and the household's vulnerability. A household's vulnerability is determined through a comprehensive assessment that considers factors such as health conditions and age. This process allows for the prioritization of those with higher needs. Conversely, households with very low vulnerability may be on the waitlist for up to 12 months.

For households with pets facing housing instability (homelessness or eviction), the Animal Welfare League of Alexandria (AWLA) provides crucial support. In 2024, the League housed 92 animals in Crisis Care from households facing a housing crisis. These pets typically stay in the animal shelter for an average of 60 days, costing the AWLA approximately \$1,100 per animal.