

# Winter Wellness: Supporting Clients Through Seasonal Challenges

December 2024




**NC COALITION**<sup>to</sup>  
**HOMELESSNESS**<sub>end</sub>

# Updates from SSA

- Ensure you have enrolled as an Individual Representative via the [SSA-1699](#)
  - Email me if you have submitted your 1699 and not yet received your REP ID
  - If you have issues call 1-800-772-6270
- [Starting January 6, 2025](#), Social Security offices will require appointments for most in-person services, including Social Security card requests; walk-ins will still be accepted for vulnerable populations and urgent needs.

# Updates from NCCEH

- Submit [annual provider survey](#) by 1/10/25 at 5 pm
- 2<sup>nd</sup> annual [NCCEH Homelessness No More Gala](#) on Friday, December 21<sup>st</sup>

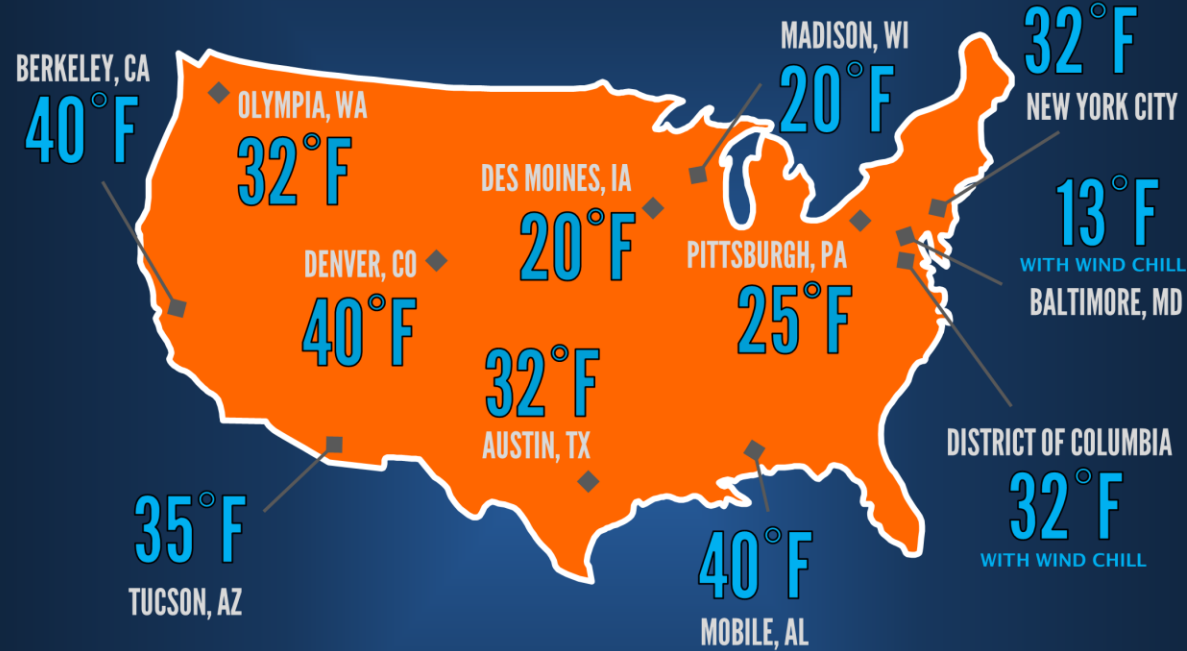


# Supporting Clients Through Seasonal Challenges

# Seasonal Challenges Clients Face

- Common winter-related physical challenges:
  - Higher risk of illness (hypothermia, flu).
  - Difficulties staying warm due to inadequate housing or clothing.
- Mental health & substance use challenges:
  - Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD) and isolation.
- Increased demand for resources during the holiday season (shelters, food pantries, etc.).
- Difficulty accessing shelter
  - Lack of transportation, space or feeling of safety

# HOW COLD DOES IT NEED TO BE BEFORE WINTER SHELTERS OPEN?



**LIFE-THREATENING HYPOTHERMIA** CAN SET IN BETWEEN **32°F - 50°F**. BUT MANY EMERGENCY **WINTER SHELTERS DON'T OPEN** UNTIL IT IS **MUCH COLDER**

A MESSAGE FROM THE NATIONAL COALITION FOR THE HOMELESS

# Substance Use-Related Challenges

- Seasonal changes can affect mood, perspective, and daily task management.
- They can also bring addiction challenges impacting individuals, environments, and industries.
- Seasonal shifts may trigger addiction or relapse in those recovering from substance use disorders.
- Stress during the holiday season often contributes to this risk.
- Disrupted routines and loss of structure can increase vulnerability to relapse.

# Practical Strategies for Winter Wellness

- **Supporting Physical Health:**
  - Promote free flu vaccines and clinics in your community.
  - Tips for sharing preventative care information (e.g., washing hands, dressing warmly).
- **Addressing Mental Health Needs:**
  - Encourage outdoor time during daylight and offer info on light therapy resources.
  - Connect clients to free or low-cost mental health services.
- **Building Client Resilience:**
  - Share actionable tips like planning ahead for weather-related challenges.
  - Foster a sense of empowerment through small steps (e.g., creating a winter prep checklist).



# Leveraging Community Resources for Cold Weather

- Partnering with local coat drives, warming centers, and holiday food programs.
- Identifying and sharing local resources like transportation to shelters or clinics.
- Demonstrating ways to build relationships with community organizations (e.g., churches, nonprofits).
- Check your own closets!

# What's Working in Your Community?

- How are you helping clients overcome barriers like transportation or accessing cold-weather resources?
- Are there any local partnerships that have been particularly helpful for your clients this season?
- Are you facing any challenges this winter that we can brainstorm solutions for as a group?

# Key Takeaways

- Using a Winter Wellness Checklist to organize client needs.
- Establishing partnerships with community organizations for access to winter resources.
- Sharing mental health tips with clients, like light therapy or free helplines.

# Planning for 2025

- What are the most pressing issues SOAR practitioners face that should be addressed in 2025?
- Are there new trends, policies, or challenges in homelessness or mental health that we need to cover?
- What training gaps exist that dialogue calls can help fill?
- Which topics from past years had the highest engagement or feedback? Can we revisit or build upon them?
- Should we invite external speakers or SOAR success stories to share experiences?
- Are there opportunities to integrate fun, engaging elements in these calls?