Frequently Asked Questions

This winter, Knollwood is joining other congregations, in partnership with The Dwelling, to host a temporary overflow shelter for our unhoused neighbors. As your neighbors, we want you to hear how it works directly from us.

Why is Knollwood doing this?
When the Bethesda Center closed this fall, our city lost about 100 shelter beds heading into the coldest months of the year. Knollwood is not becoming a permanent shelter. We are standing in the gap with The Dwelling, offering one room on our campus for overnight shelter during the winter months.

When and where will this take place?
Overnight only, 6:00 PM through 6:00 AM, from November 24 through March 1, in the Community Room of our Wellness & Community Center (WCC). Guests arrive between 6:30 and 7:00 PM and leave by 6:00 AM. This is a temporary winter shelter, and there are no plans to continue beyond March 1.

Who are the guests, and how are they screened?
Guests are screened downtown by trained staff of The Dwelling before coming to Knollwood. This is not a drop-in shelter. It serves a set group of people who are transported from downtown each night and who are known to The Dwelling through ongoing case management and support services. Anyone in active mental health distress, impaired by substances, in behavioral crisis, or who is a registered sex offender is not sent to the shelter.

How do guests get here and leave?
Guests come to Knollwood on The Dwelling's bus each evening and go back downtown on it each morning. Every guest must leave by bus. If a guest ever refuses to board, the monitor and bus driver will call law enforcement to have the person removed, and that person will not be allowed to return to the shelter.

Will guests be walking through our neighborhood?
No. Guests arrive and leave only on The Dwelling's bus, and while they are here, they stay inside the WCC with trained monitors. Guests are not allowed to come and go or to be on other parts of our campus, and all areas of the WCC outside the shelter space are locked each evening.

What if someone comes to Knollwood asking for shelter?
This shelter is only for those screened and brought by bus from downtown. We do not accept walk-ups at any time. If someone comes to Knollwood asking for shelter, they'll be transported back downtown by law enforcement.

Who is in charge overnight?
Every night, The Dwelling provides two paid, trained monitors who stay with guests the entire night, along with a staff person who checks guests in. Guests are screened with a metal detector at check-in, and their belongings are put away until morning. Shelter staff are trained in de-escalation, trauma-informed care, mental health awareness, and overdose response. Knollwood also provides a host each evening to welcome guests on behalf of the church.

What happens if there is an emergency?
The Dwelling's monitors are responsible for responding to any emergency during the night, and protocols are in place for medical emergencies, behavioral health response, and law enforcement response. Our campus security cameras also monitor who comes to Knollwood, as they do every day.

Is the shelter permitted and insured?
A permit is required to operate an overflow shelter. With the support of The Dwelling, Knollwood has applied for one, expects to receive it before November 24, and will not operate without one. Knollwood has also secured additional insurance coverage for the shelter.

Why weren't neighbors asked before this was decided?
The honest answer is timing. The Bethesda Center closed on October 26, and that same week The Dwelling asked Knollwood and a number of other congregations to help. With less than a month to prepare before the coldest weather arrived, we have moved as quickly as possible to communciate before the shelter opens.

Who do I contact with a question or concern?
Email **frontdesk@knollwood.org**, and we will be glad to follow up. You can find more information at **knollwood.org/shelter**

We believe compassionate care and attention to safety go hand in hand, and are not mutually exclusive. We care deeply about the safety of our campus and our neighborhood, and simultaneously care about our unhoused neighbors who need a warm, safe place to sleep this winter. We're grateful to be your neighbors, and welcome any questions or concerns. Thank you!