



Liz Henderson
Director of the Emergency Shelter Services Operations
Boston Public Health Commission

As **Director of the Emergency Shelter Services Operations for the Public Health Commission**, **Liz Henderson** is the voice of the voiceless. Her work ethic and focus on serving those who struggle with problems that lead to homelessness is beyond comparison.

Liz began her career at Long Island Shelter as an emergency shelter case manager and has served the shelter program in numerous positions throughout the years. The Shelter Services Commission is comprised of two permanent and one temporary homeless facilities so when named Director in 2014, Liz assumed the responsibility of overseeing operations that provide shelter, food and social support to upwards of 700 homeless guests each night. Shelter guests are a diverse group of individuals who seek the Commission's services for many reasons. Some have fallen on hard times, others struggle with untreated mental health or addiction and many are working to overcome criminal histories that make it difficult to land the housing and employment opportunities they need to successfully rejoin society. Whatever their needs, Liz manages to treat everyone individually while also setting clear and consistent rules to maintain the safety of all shelter guests.

In her role as Director Liz faces unusual challenges that few of us could imagine. Perhaps her most demanding surprise was the abrupt closing of the Long Island Bridge leading to the Long Island shelters. Thanks to Liz's proactive approach to care for the shelter's guests, a plan to house those in need was activated in a timely fashion. Prior to the bridge's closing Liz had helped write a Continuity of Operations Plan that provided step-by-step actions to establish a 200 bed emergency shelter in a South End gymnasium. Without her foresight, the City would have required weeks to open a temporary shelter rather than the 48 hours it took in October.

Liz is proactive in planning for other needs within the program as well. The Young Adults program is one result of her action to regularly check with the manager of DATA Reports for information about guests that she turns into services needed by the shelter's population. When Liz saw an increase in the number of young adults using the facilities, she took action to increase the number of beds dedicated for that population and regularly tracks their use so that the Shelter can continue to meet appropriate needs.

Liz Henderson is a humble and dedicated public servant. She does her work not for the praise or salary, but because she has a true commitment to caring for the City's most vulnerable residents. We praise you Liz for your steadfast commitment and congratulate you on your selection as a 2015 Shattuck Award recipient.