

Cooling Center Evaluation Summary Report, Maricopa County 2014



Project Overview

What is a cooling center?

Community centers, churches, and other community based organizations that provide water and serve as a safe, cool indoor place for refuge from the heat.

- A 2014 evaluation of cooling centers in Maricopa County to assess services provided, daily operations, demographics of visitors, and potential for expansion to further preventive efforts around heat-related illness and deaths.
- Multiple partners including public health officials, community members, academic researchers, government agencies, and nonprofit organizations joined together to complete the assessment.

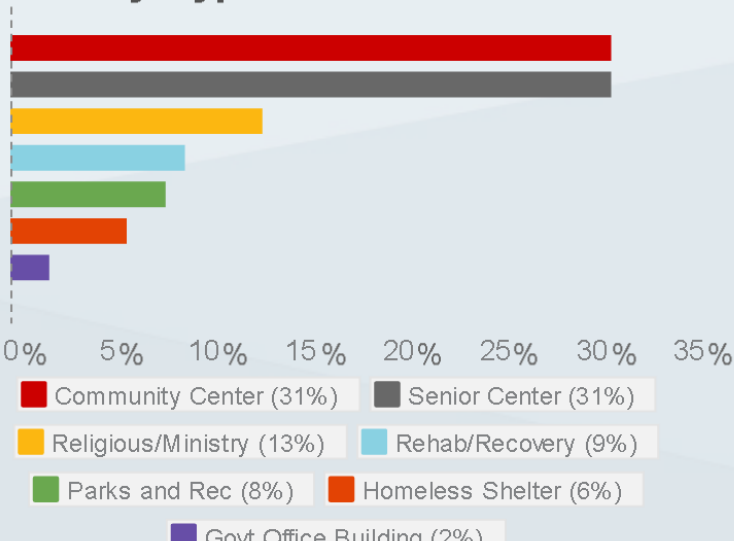
Total Number of Registered Cooling Centers in Maricopa County in 2014: **56**

- 53** Facility Manager Surveys Completed
- 52** Observational Surveys Completed
- 658** Visitor Surveys Completed



Facility Manager Survey Results

Facility Type



Facility Information

- 45% of the facilities have been operating as a Cooling Center for 3-6 years
- 54% of Cooling Centers operate on normal business hours (M-F; 6am-6pm)
- Only 6% of Cooling Centers are open 24/7

Utilization Patterns

- 27% of facilities use 5% or less of their capacity on a daily basis
- Only 3 facilities reported being at 100% capacity on a daily basis

Costs

- 62% of facilities indicated no additional costs associated with serving as a Cooling Center

"What motivated your facility to become a Cooling Center?"

1/3 of facility managers indicated the extreme heat motivated them to become a Cooling Center.

"It was an opportunity to give back to the community, a natural extension of our services."
"We want to help people in need, give them a place to cool off. We are a life line."

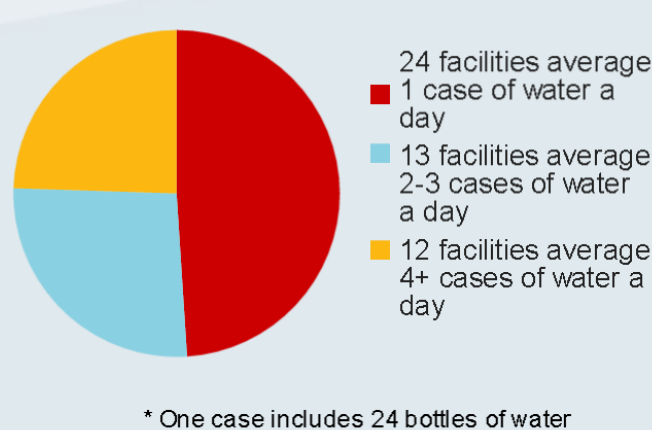
Services and Supplies

- 71% of facilities offer food/snacks to visitors
- 58% of facilities offer health and human services
- 46% of facilities offer housing and utility bill assistance

"What services and supplies would you like to provide if your facility had unlimited resources?"

- 29% of facilities indicated they would like to offer items to keep visitors cool such as reusable water bottles, water coolers, and misters
- 23% of facilities indicated they would like to offer protective weather gear to visitors such as sunscreen, hats, and umbrellas

Number of Water Bottles Handed Out on an Average Day at Cooling Centers



"How do you alert the public about your services?"

1/2 of facility managers reported they alert the public about their services through word of mouth.

Observational Survey Results



Accessibility

- Evaluators indicated that 90% of the Cooling Centers were easily accessible (easy to approach, enter, use or understand).



Cooling System(s)

- 98% of Cooling Centers use central air conditioning to cool off their facility.



Visitor Tracking System

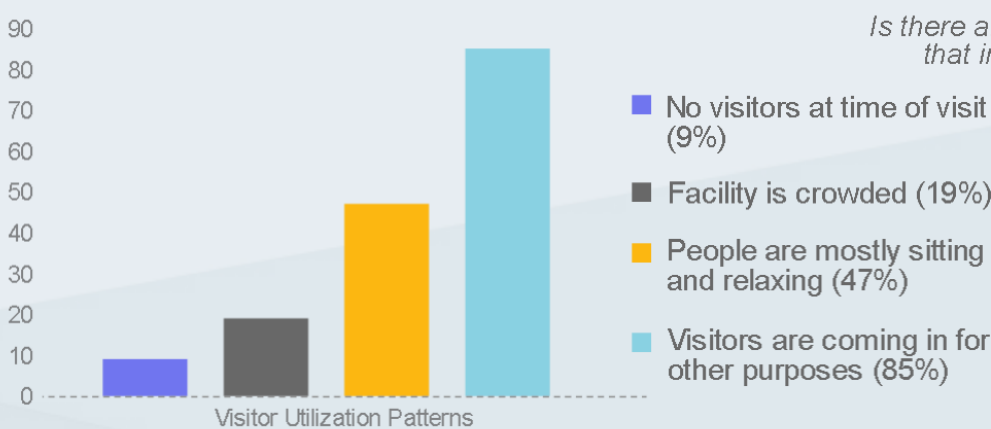
- Only 26% of facilities had a sign-in sheet available for Cooling Center visitors.



Services and Supplies

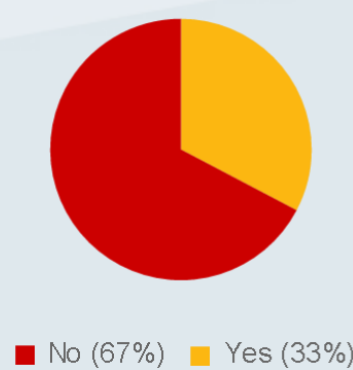
- 100% were noted as having free water for visitors.
- 96% offered public restrooms and electrical outlets for use.

Utilization Patterns



Visibility

Is there an indicator sign visible on the facility's exterior that informs people that it is a Cooling Center?



Visitor Survey Results

Demographics



- 59% of Cooling Center visitors identified as female (with an unemployment rate of 81%) and 40% identified as male (with an unemployment rate of 86%).
- 40% of Cooling Center Visitors were between the ages of 18-44.
- While the highest number of Cooling Center visitors were White, the rate of Cooling Center Visitors was highest amongst Native Americans and African Americans.
- 82% of Cooling Center Visitors indicated that English was their primary language.

Household Information

- 67% of Cooling Center visitors had a permanent residence.
- 89% of the Cooling Center visitors who had a permanent residence indicated that they had air conditioning at their place of residence.
- 27% of Cooling Center visitors indicated they can use their air conditioner, but don't due to cost, repairs needed, or other reasons.



Health Risk Factors



- 50% of Cooling Center visitors do not feel their health is at risk due to high summer temperatures.
- 41% of Cooling Center visitors have a chronic medical condition. It is believed chronic medical conditions put individuals at higher risk for heat-associated illness and death.

Visitor Trends

- 36% of visitors said it was their first time visiting a Cooling Center.
- 67% of returning visitors said they visit a Cooling Center 3 or more times a summer.
- 22% of visitors said they visit a Cooling Center to seek relief from the heat.
- 1/3 of visitors said they walk, and 1/4 of visitors indicated they use public transit to get to the Cooling Centers.
- 61% of visitors said they found out about excessive heat warnings through TV.
- A majority of visitors find out about the Cooling Centers through word of mouth.



Maricopa County Cooling Center Evaluation Project
 In collaboration with Arizona State University and
 Arizona Department of Health Services, July 2014

For the full reports, please visit:
www.maricopa.gov/publichealth/services/epi/Reports/heat.aspx

