

ONLY SHELTER FOR FAMILIES CLOSES

MISSION WILL CONTINUE SUPPLYING FOOD, CLOTHES

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The Victory Mission has closed its emergency shelter for homeless families after being charged with a zoning violation.

The shelter was in the former Milo-Grogan School at 600 E. Starr Ave. and was leased by the mission.

It was the only temporary shelter in Columbus that could house a family together. It could accommodate 12 families, and space also was available for some homeless, single men.

The area, however, was not zoned for rooming houses or similar operations, the city of Columbus said.

The shelter closed April 6 after operating for more than three years, the Rev. Don Fowler, executive director of Victory Ministries, said late last week.

Equipment and supplies were being moved to 400 E. 2nd Ave., where the mission will operate a food pantry and clothing room that also were housed at 600 E. Starr Ave.

The 2nd Avenue address is in an area zoned for manufacturing and would need a variance for a shelter, a city official said.

Fowler said he has been negotiating to rent a larger building at the 2nd Avenue site, and if successful, he will seek a variance to permit four apartments there for the homeless.

Kathryn Mault, a Columbus code enforcement officer, said the city received a complaint that the E. Starr Avenue shelter violated the zoning code. She said the mission was told of the violation in December, but no other action was taken because mission officials said they would seek a zoning variance.

Mault said officials did not follow through, and that Fowler agreed to close the shelter.

The mission also holds prayer meetings, church services and Bible study.

Operations cost about \$20,000 a month with most of the money donated by churches, he said.

Teresa Dowd, president of the Homeless Families Foundation, said last week, "I don't know where the families are going. It's going to be much, much more difficult."

The foundation used to send homeless families to the mission until they could find permanent housing, she said.