

Addressing Unsheltered Homelessness and Encampments

Policy Guidance for Regional Response

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Facts

- San Diego has large unsheltered population – A MINIMUM of 4,476 persons in 2019 PITC
- Living unsheltered is traumatic, dangerous, and impacts health and well-being of those who have to endure it daily
- Strong connection between unsheltered and jail (27% of those in jail were unsheltered prior to incarceration according to 2018 PITC)
- Strong connection between unsheltered and race. Specifically, African Americans are overrepresented in unsheltered population compared to general population
- Costly to healthcare, public safety, commerce, sanitation, environment, tourism, and significant concern of general public
- Lot of good efforts to address unsheltered, however improvement in coordination and enhanced consistency in practice is needed, including a need for a clearly defined purpose and outcomes

Policy Guidance Development

- In October 2018 RTFH staff co-presented with committee staff to the San Diego City Council Select Committee on Homelessness on addressing unsheltered and encampments.
 - The Committee directed staff and other stakeholders to develop a City Pro-Active Outreach and Encampment Protocol
- Committee staff convened large group of non-profits, RTFH, law enforcement, and other city departments to gather initial ideas in November 2018
- As staff was drafting the protocol, it was suggested that the draft City protocol be broadened to the entire region to include all 18 cities and unincorporated areas and serve as a regional policy. Very appropriate as the RTFH is to serve as an overarching policy body promoting best practice policies region wide.
- Draft policy to date is based on local input, best-practices from other communities, and guidance from HUD TA staff and USICH staff
- Now introducing draft to begin process of gathering additional input and feedback

Purpose of Proposed Policy

- Provide guidance on a shared vision and approach among the region including cities and the unincorporated areas for addressing needs of unsheltered persons including those in encampments
- Guide local municipalities in design and implementation of best-practice policies, activities, and direction of departments that interact with unsheltered including:
 - Housing and social services
 - Law enforcement
 - Sanitation services
 - Public works
 - Code enforcement,
 - Park and recreation
 - Library
 - Fire-Rescue

Proposed Policy Guidelines: Shared Vision and Position

1. **Regional engagement and collaboration:** Issue cannot be solved by one entity alone. Need federal, state, and local collaboration especially with RTFH and County
2. **Address the affordable housing crisis:** Unsheltered homelessness is a direct result of the affordable housing crisis. Most effective way to address unsheltered homelessness is through provision of housing with appropriate services. All municipalities shall support creation of affordable and supportive housing
3. **Respectful, person-centered, and trauma-informed approach:** All interactions are to be respectful, compassionate, and driven by empathy
4. **Balanced enforcement:** Seek to not criminalize homelessness. Respect rights of unsheltered persons and understand that without housing to meet demand people have no other option but to live outside or in vehicles. At same time there is a need to balance community needs for safe streets, healthy neighborhoods, and responsible behavior
5. **Address racial disparities:** Make services, resources, and personnel reflective, responsive, and equitable

Proposed Policy Guidelines: Services and Supports

1. **Access to basic services:** Ensure access to basic services- clean restrooms, showers, etc...
2. **Coordinate with outdoor meal programs:** Coordinate and ensure compliance with AB 2178
3. **Outreach and engagement:** Should primarily be done by non-uniformed services providers but include strong partnerships with law enforcement
4. **Regional deployment of outreach services:** RTFH and County shall ensure funded outreach is deployed regionally but targeted to areas of high concentration
5. **Housing ready perspective:** Employ perspective that all unsheltered individuals are housing ready
6. **Services targeted to those most in need:** More intense services to those most in need. Includes case management and can last longer in duration
7. **Use of Homeless Management Information System and CES:** By Name Lists by region used for targeting
8. **Temporary housing facilities and programs:** Municipalities need to evaluate need for temporary housing settings to assist with rapid exits from streets

Proposed Policy Guidelines: Addressing Encampments

1. **Defines an encampment:** Broad definition – Tents/hand-built structures occupied by individuals on public property and/or right of way
2. **Use a multi-disciplinary approach:** Focused on offering and providing services and supports and emphasizes positive resolution. Partnerships with law enforcement. Services include health, mental health, and substance use disorder supports as well.
3. **Assess and prioritize encampments based on need:** Prioritize based on risk including health, safety, and vulnerable populations
4. **Closure and abatement:** Is necessary for public health and safety but must provide adequate notice, ample opportunities for service engagement, and only conducted at conclusion of multi-disciplinary assessment that includes outreach personnel
5. **Temporary housing options:** Strive to dedicate temporary housing resources and if individual agrees to temporary placement, closure cannot happen until placement is available
6. **Seek to repurpose and secure space:** Seek to secure space to discourage returns to location

Next Steps

- 90 day comment period to enhance draft policy guidelines
 - HUD TA Unsheltered team to assist with gathering additional input specifically from those with lived experience, homeless services providers, and outreach professionals
 - Draft policy to be introduced to the RTFH Intergovernmental Committee on May 30 for initial feedback and input
 - Public panel discussion with Ian De Jong on outreach and encampments in July
- Incorporate all feedback with HUD TA assistance and present final draft to RTFH board in September with accompanying implementation guidelines for discussion and adoption. Adopted policy will be included in the Community Standards
- Engage municipalities in adopting policy guidance and incorporating into other policies and protocols
- Collaborative approach to implement policy guidelines across the region

Questions?

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