

Evaluation and Action Guidelines for Clearing Homeless Encampment

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This document has been reviewed and amended in consultation with the Dallas Commission on Homelessness Unsheltered Homeless Subcommittee on June 20, 2016.

These guidelines detail the proposed process for evaluation and appropriate action in response to an encampment of persons experiencing homelessness within the Dallas city limits. The guidelines are developed to establish cooperative responses to unsheltered homeless by city officials and the emergency homeless response system.

These guidelines are built with the acknowledgment that the experience of extreme poverty and associated housing barriers is the contributing factor to a person spending the night in an outdoor place not meant for human habitation. The subjects of encampment clearing decisions will meet the HUD definition of unsheltered homelessness. The basis of these guidelines is to, at every possible stage, respond first and foremost to addressing the extreme poverty and homelessness condition that has resulted in a concentrated area presenting with serious observable threats to public health and safety.

Identification of Encampment Site for Evaluation for Clearing

The City of Dallas 311 system currently is used to identify concerns and locations related to unsheltered homeless. These calls are typically routed to the Dallas Police Department Crisis Intervention Unit following existing protocols (*See attached CIU Operational protocol*). Each occasion is triaged with available resources to resolve the complaint.

When a location begins to exhibit signs of threats to public health and safety concerns as determined by either a City of Dallas department head or homeless service provider leadership, the Crisis Intervention Unit in cooperation with MDHA or an assigned Street Outreach Provider, will develop an encampment profile document. The profile may include:

- A map, description and ownership information of the geographic area/property
- Relevant 311/911 call logs and police reports
- Population census and basic demographic information of encampment residents
- Case management assessments of encampment residents
- Photos, descriptions or other information related to public safety or public health observed in the area

The Encampment Profile will be presented for review to the Encampment Evaluation Team to determine a planned response. The Encampment Evaluation Team will include representation from:

- Housing and Community Services Department
- Dallas Police Department
- Dallas Fire and Rescue
- City Attorney
- Streets and Public Works Department
- MDHA and Street Outreach Providers

The Encampment Evaluation Team will recommend the course of action necessary to appropriately abate the property, public health and/or safety concerns. The scale of the recommended response may include only the provision of limited services and/or case management, to a full encampment closure including notice to vacate, clearing and securing of the area.

Encampment Closure Process

If the Encampment Evaluation Team determines that the site should be responded to with a full closure, the process should follow the following stages:

A. Resource Assessment Stage

- Comprehensive evaluation of staffing and housing resources to provide adequate services to the persons in the encampment. Before the encampment closure process is to begin, the City of Dallas and MDHA must be able to acquire a minimum threshold amount of resources dedicated to the encampment:
 - full-time case management services of at least one case manager for every ten households within the encampment area
 - identification of available shelter and housing for no less than 50% of the verified encampment population households
 - Flexible Assistance Funds of at least \$500 per person for 50% of the verified encampment population
- Comprehensive evaluation of legal, staffing, clean-up, and security resources necessary to close the encampment.

Once the resources necessary to properly respond to the population are identified and committed to the encampment closure, the Encampment Evaluation Team will meet and establish the closure timeline. The timeline will include:

B. Notice of Closure Stage

- Development of a 45 day Encampment Closure Plan detailing proposed actions and timeline for providing case management and housing access services to the persons at the site, actions and timelines to provide notice, clearing and securing the site. Because many persons who are experiencing homelessness may be recipients of mainstream benefit income such as SSI/SSDI, Social Security or Veterans benefits which commonly are paid on the first or third day of the month, the closure plan should consider closure dates that fall within the first week of the month to increase the opportunities to make these funds available as part of an individual's housing plan.
- Written *Notice of Closure* of 45 days' notice distributed to area residents, and repeat notices distributed bi-weekly in case of new residents moving into
- Intensive case management and housing services
- Weekly Encampment Closure Team progress briefings and population report
- First written *Notice to Vacate* distributed to encampment residents within seven days of closure
- Second written *Notice to Vacate* distributed to encampment residents within three days of closure
- Intensive outreach, case management and other support services to residents over final 48 hours prior to closure.
- Closure of encampment to residents and case managers and conduct site cleanup and clearing.
- Secure site.

All aspects of service and resource provision, notification and property handling will be conducted with the goal to minimize conflict and trauma. Encampment closure success will be defined when the process involves no citations or arrests and at least 50% of the encampment residents are relocated to shelter or housing.

C. Emergency Amendments to an Encampment Closure Plan/Timeline

At any point during the encampment closure process, the City of Dallas may have the discretion to expedite or extend closure because of unforeseen emergency conditions related to public health and safety or unanticipated loss of encampment closure resources.