

HOMELESS ENCAMPMENT RESOLUTION STRATEGIES: DEVELOPING AN ENCAMPMENT RESOLUTION TASK FORCE

WHAT IS AN ENCAMPMENT RESOLUTION TASK FORCE?

An Encampment Resolution Task Force is a collaborative decision-making body that is dedicated to the identification and assessment of local homeless encampments; the prioritization and planning of encampment resolution and clean-up efforts; and the continuous evaluation of strategies and outcomes for improving the health, safety, and housing opportunities for persons experiencing homelessness living in encampments.

MULTI-DISCIPLINARY APPROACH

An Encampment Resolution Task Force should employ a multi-disciplinary approach, bringing together representatives from local government agencies, public service providers, social service providers, and other community partners that interact with or are impacted by homeless encampments to collaboratively develop and implement encampment resolution strategies. This approach views every individual, agency, or provider that interacts with people experiencing homelessness and living in encampments as an intervention point for providing outreach, engagement, and access to shelter, housing and services.

ORGANIZATION AND COMMUNICATION

The development of formal organization and communication structures is critical to the success of an Encampment Resolution Task Force. One option for maintaining open and frequent communication between task force partners is to have regular meetings to address ongoing encampment resolution efforts. Another option, as implemented in San Francisco through the Healthy Streets Operations Center, is the co-location of partner agencies to create a central hub for the local response to homeless encampments and people living on the street.

ENCAMPMENT RESOLUTION TASK FORCE: ROLE OF COMMUNITY PARTNERS

The Encampment Resolution Task Force should consider the role of community partners in the following components of the encampment resolution process:

- **Encampment Identification:** A wide range of community partners may be able to assist in the identification of encampments within your jurisdiction, including local government agencies and officials, Police and Fire Departments, community outreach and engagement teams, property owners, business leaders, and neighbors of encampments. Communities should bring these various community members to the table early to not only help identify encampments, but to share any information they can regarding encampment characteristics that could impact the encampment resolution process. Additionally, cities and counties should consider utilizing their IT Department to help map and visualize encampments once they are identified.

- **Encampment Prioritization:** The prioritization process should leverage the knowledge and expertise of community partners to collect information regarding the vulnerability, risks, and needs of each encampment.
 - Local government agencies and officials, outreach and engagement teams, business owners, property owners, and neighbors can help assess the estimated number of individuals residing in an encampment.
 - Local government agencies including the Departments of Health and Human Services, Public Health, Public Works, and Emergency Management can help assess environmental and public health risks associated with an encampment. Other government agencies such as the Department of Parks and Recreation and the Water District may be brought into discussions regarding specific environmental risks and concerns posed by the location of the encampment.
 - The Fire Department is a crucial partner in determining the fire risk associated with an encampment. The Fire Department may be able to provide information on reported fire incidents in or near an encampment and help identify brush, hazardous materials, and flammable materials that could pose an increased fire risk.
 - The Police Department, Fire Department, homeless outreach and engagement teams, local government agencies, public service providers and social service providers may all be able to share information regarding the number of calls for services they have received from or regarding an encampment.
 - Property owners can help define the urgency of encampment resolution and can assist in the development of site-specific outreach, engagement, and clean-up strategies.

- **Resolution Planning:** Resolution planning should include the development of an encampment resolution timeline, community engagement strategy, and a plan for the prioritization of shelter, housing and services for formerly encamped individuals.
 - The development of an encampment resolution timeline should include representation from all local government agencies and officials, outreach and engagement teams, law enforcement, and other partners that will be involved in the encampment resolution process from announcement to clean-up of the site.
 - Community members including people with lived experience, business owners, neighbors and the Department of Community Engagement can be crucial partners in the development of a community engagement strategy. It may also be important to bring advocates into the discussion of a community engagement strategy to ensure consistent messaging regarding the encampment resolution process.
 - Local housing and shelter providers, social service and health care providers can provide access to prioritized shelter, housing and services for formerly encamped individuals. It is also important to engage local government agencies and officials to determine if local funding or resources can be set aside to assist in encampment resolution efforts.

- **Outreach and Engagement:** Community outreach and engagement teams should be at the forefront of encampment outreach efforts, building on pre-existing relationships and rapport between outreach workers and encampment residents where possible. Law enforcement can also be an important partner in outreach and engagement efforts, often assist outreach workers in engaging individuals living in encampments while ensuring the safety of all parties involved.
- **Clean-up and site maintenance efforts:** The Department of Public Works and Fire Department have the expertise to safely and efficiently support encampment clean-up efforts. Additional government agencies such as the Department of Public Health, the Department of Parks and Recreation, and the Water District, may need to be involved to provide information on safely addressing public health risks and location-specific environmental risks. Law enforcement may need to provide assistance in maintaining the site once the encampment is cleared to ensure that the area does not become re-encamped.
- **Legal considerations:** The Encampment Resolution Task Force should consult with legal representatives, including the City or County Attorney, to ensure that the rights of individuals living in encampments are being respected, that notice requirements are being met, and to assist in addressing and legal concerns or issues as they arise.

ENCAMPMENT RESOLUTION TASK FORCE: COMMUNITY PARTNER CHECKLIST

The checklist below provides recommendations for community partners to have represented on your local Encampment Resolution Task Force. Communities should consider additional task force partners who are already working with people experiencing homelessness and living in encampments.

HOUSING AND SHELTER PROVIDERS

- Continuum of Care (CoC) agencies
- Emergency shelters and Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG) recipients
- Housing Authority
- Other housing and shelter providers

LOCAL GOVERNMENT AGENCIES AND OFFICIALS

- Planning Department
- Community Engagement
- Housing and Community Services
- Human or Social Services Departments
- Public Health and Behavioral Health Care Departments
- Fire Department
- Public Works
- Parks and Recreation
- IT Department

- Emergency Management
- Flood Control District
- Water District
- Transportation, railroads, and other transit landowners
- Port Authority
- Animal Care and Control
- Department of Fish and Wildlife
- Elected officials

OTHER SOCIAL SERVICE AND HEALTHCARE PROVIDERS

- Domestic violence survivor organizations
- Benefits service providers
- Health Care for the Homeless providers
- Hospitals
- Free/low-cost clinics

COMMUNITY OUTREACH AND ENGAGEMENT TEAMS

- Housing outreach specialists
- Healthcare outreach and engagement teams
 - Mobile medical services
 - Behavioral health outreach
 - PATH outreach teams
- Youth outreach and peer-led teams
- Veterans services organizations

LAW ENFORCEMENT AND JUDICIAL AGENCIES

- City and County Police Departments
- Sheriff's Office
- District Attorneys
- City Attorney

COMMUNITY MEMBERS

- Property owner(s)
- Neighbors
- Business leaders
- Philanthropic organizations
- Faith-based organizations
- Local researchers
- People with Lived Experience

ADVOCATES

- Legal representatives
- Fair housing organizations
- Community advocates