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THE COALITION OF HOMELESS SERVICES PROVIDERS

MEMBER AGENCIES

Community Human Services
Community Homeless Solutions
Dorothy's Place
Housing Authority of the County of
Monterey
Housing Resource Center of
Monterey County
Interim, Inc.
MidPen Housing Corporation
The Salvation Army - Monterey
Peninsula Corps
San Benito County Health & Human
Services
Sun Street Centers
Veterans Transition Center

ASSOCIATE MEMBERS

Access Support Network
Central Coast Center for
Independent Living
CHISPA
CSU Monterey Bay
Eden Housing
Food Bank for
Monterey County
Gathering for Women
Neighborhood Services Center of the
First United Methodist Church
Veterans Resource Centers of
America
YWCA Monterey County

COMMUNITY ADVISORS

City of Marina
City of Salinas
City of Sand City
Monterey County Department of
Social Services/CAP
Monterey County
Office of Education

CHSP Position on Homeless Encampment Sweeps

Approved on January 15, 2020

The Coalition recognizes an individual's basic need for shelter, safety and community. Additionally, the Coalition recognizes that without an adequate supply of housing too many people living with very low incomes have no local housing options other than living unsheltered. To address this reality of insufficient housing and shelter options, communities (housed and unhoused) along with service providers (public, non-profit, faith-based and voluntary) offer resources that aid in survival and address critical health and quality of life issues for those living unsheltered and in encampments.

It is acknowledged that many encampments in the region originate as a survival response by the community experiencing homelessness, many of whom are awaiting the opportunity to receive assistance. Due to the lack of affordable housing and shelter in the area, many people experiencing homelessness spend 6 months or more on various waiting lists. This lack of extremely affordable housing, permanent supportive housing, transitional housing and emergency shelter space exacerbates the housing crisis and too often forces local constituents without housing to form their own communities in the form of encampments.

The Coalition also recognizes the situation faced by local jurisdictions when encampments accumulate public health and safety hazards and constituents view homelessness as an unwelcome intrusion and ask that encampments be removed. In response to those concerns jurisdictions at times pursue clean-ups.

In this context the Coalition recognizes the legitimate need of jurisdictions for street cleaning in order to maintain public health and safety for the community. However, the Coalition has also observed that the frequency in which they are conducted has the potential to worsen and extend the vulnerability of the population living without housing. Too often, the clean-ups result in the loss of basic necessities for survival and quality of life, including items essential for living unsheltered, important documentation, medications and valued possessions. Furthermore, there are unintended consequences of these clean-ups, most notably the displacement of homeless individuals between jurisdictions and an adverse impact on the relationship

between persons experiencing homelessness and the service providers who rely on the trust and respect of these communities.

It is the position of the Coalition that local jurisdictions, service providers and the community experiencing homelessness work together to create a more viable solution to the current encampment situation. This includes:

- Public disclosure of the specific health and safety or policy concerns being addressed when clean-ups are scheduled
- Provision of self-help resources that can support people living without housing to prevent the build-up of public health and hygiene risks (e.g., trash receptacles and hygiene resources such as low barrier, safe, and 24-hour accessible public restrooms and showers)
- Advance notice of at least one week prior to a scheduled clean-up if self-help resources do not address the documented health and safety concerns;
- Development of scheduled, coordinated encampment outreach efforts as partnership between jurisdictions, homeless service providers, public assistance, health services (public health, behavioral health and medical) and individuals with lived experience; and
- Limiting the frequency of clean-ups, particularly when sufficient shelter to provide an alternative to encampment living is unavailable.

The Coalition is committed to coordinating resources to support bringing people experiencing homelessness into housing and to addressing the circumstances that leave too many of our neighbors unhoused. This includes:

- Developing strategies, policies and resources for providers working to bring housing to all
- Advocating for county-wide collaboration in pursuit of this mission
- Developing a Coordinated Outreach and Resources for Encampments (CORE) team to respond to encampment concerns

The Coalition of Homeless Services Providers would like to formally invite the Monterey and San Benito County communities – public entities, private organizations and residents – to participate in creating and implementing a system that does not criminalize residents fulfilling their basic human needs, but extends a helping hand in recognition of the complexity of their situation.

This position paper is not intended to supersede the 2014 “Position on Temporary Homeless Encampments.”