



Subj: guidance on homeless encampments during COVID-19 pandemic

Connecticut's "shelter decompression" effort has identified spaces where people experiencing homelessness may shelter during the pandemic. However, unsheltered homelessness may persist in some communities due to a combination of resource constraints, structural barriers, and the individual preferences and risk factors of people experiencing homelessness.

This memo summarizes national guidance on homeless encampments issued by the CDC and others (sources below) and highlights considerations and a recommended approach for communities in Connecticut.

Community responses to homeless encampments should account for the following background conditions:

- Clients face reduced access to most resources, including social services, food, water, restrooms, showers, laundry, money, and information.
- Even if shelter or housing are available, access may be limited by structural barriers, client preference, and the availability of needed services and supports.

Given these conditions, the following strategies are recommended:

- Avoid "clearing" or "sweeping" encampments. Clearing encampments can increase the potential for infectious disease spread.
- Address encampments in collaboration with local homeless services providers, and reach out to statewide contacts to plan and troubleshoot (contact info below).
- Identify where and how people experiencing unsheltered homelessness will access food, water, showers, laundry, and other services.
- For larger encampments, supply portable toilets, showers, handwashing stations and garbage removal.
- Encourage people staying in encampments to space their sleeping areas at least 12 feet apart.
- Provide up-to date and locally-relevant communication about COVID-19 spread, symptoms, hygiene and social distancing, testing availability, and treatment or isolation options.

If a homeless encampment poses a public health challenge in your municipality or region, please collaborate first with your local health department and CAN (contact list attached) to ensure your community's plan aligns with CDC guidance, supports positive outcomes for clients, and minimizes risk of additional spread of COVID-19.



For additional support with implementing this guidance, you may reach out to the following contacts:

Department of Housing

Leigh Shields-Church, CAN Manager, leigh.shields-church@ct.gov

Kara Capobianco, CAN Manager, kara.capobianco@ct.gov

Department of Public Health

Kim Ploszaj, Epidemiologist, kimberly.ploszaj@ct.gov

CT Coalition to End Homelessness

David Gonzalez Rice, Senior Program Manager, dgrice@cceh.org

The following resources contain additional information about this guidance:

Centers for Disease Control, “People Experiencing Homelessness and COVID-19 - Interim Guidance”

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/homeless-shelters/unsheltered-homelessness.html>

National Healthcare for the Homeless Council, “Responding to COVID-19 Among People Experiencing Unsheltered Homelessness”

https://nhchc.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/NHCHC_Unsheltered-Homelessness_Final.pdf

National Alliance to End Homelessness, “Serving and Supporting Unsheltered Homeless Persons During COVID-19”

<https://endhomelessness.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Street-Outreach-During-COVID19-April-2020-NAEH.pdf>

United States Interagency Council on Homelessness, “Planning Checklist - Ending Homelessness for People Living in Encampments”

https://www.usich.gov/resources/uploads/asset_library/Planning_Checklist_Ending_Homelessness_for_People_Living_in_Encampments_Aug2015.pdf

Thank you for your attention to this matter and for your continued care for people experiencing homelessness across our state,

David Gonzalez Rice

Senior Program Manager

CT Coalition to End Homelessness