

Suisun City Homelessness Forum

April 5, 2023

Q/A

Question	Answer
General Questions	
"Who is the specific person for Suisun City that is responsible for homeless situation?"	As explained in the forum, there is no one agency or person responsible for homelessness. A slide shared out the multiple agencies that work together to address the needs of an unsheltered individual based on their situation. Typically, in Suisun City, when a call is received regarding a homeless encampment the location is assessed to identify jurisdiction. Suisun City staff will work to coordinate with that agency (example: Union Pacific, CalTrans, CA Fish and Wildlife, Solano County, etc.) to coordinate efforts. If the homeless encampment is within the City jurisdiction, Suisun City Police Department will often be the first point of contact. RCS - Coordinated Entry System is an access point for all people in Solano County who are experiencing homelessness and an individual can be referred there at any time.
"What is the city doing to avoid attracting more and more homeless encampments?"	<p>The City is doing what we can to avoid attracting more encampments and removing them within the law. For example, a significant number of encampments had built up around the light tower in downtown and was creating a problem in a number of ways. The City hired a biologist to go out and look at the area. He declared it an "Environmentally Sensitive Area" due to the proximity to the waterway and the trash and human wastes that were being created by the inhabitants of the encampments. The site was posted for no trespassing and the encampments were removed. According to numerous people who walk near the site, birds have returned to that area that had left when the encampments were there.</p> <p>The City is also working to eliminate some of the transient boats that are ending up downtown at the marina guest dock. We will soon be posting signage requiring boats moored longer than 4</p>

	<p>hours to check in with the Harbor Master’s Office for an appropriate permit and pay guest berthing fees or be subject to tow or removal.</p> <p>We are also scheduling monthly encampment cleanups on other publicly owned properties. Unfortunately, staffing levels in Public Works and the Police Department do not allow for a constant removal and cleanup, but this is a priority for staff to address to the extent we can by law and to the extent that staffing resources allow.</p> <p>With regard to private property, generally this becomes a code enforcement issue. We have achieved compliance on several private properties, but we struggle with one property in particular as we have an unrelated litigation pending and the property owner has been unwilling to work with the city to resolve the homeless encampment issues. The Council recently authorized the City Attorney to pursue a public nuisance abatement for this property.</p>
<p>“How can homeless persons find out where to go to access the ‘coordinated entry’ that is relevant to Suisun City?”</p>	<p>An unsheltered individual can contact Resource Connect directly to attain services for Coordinated Entry. The forum provided ideas regarding printed contact cards for Resource Connect to be made available for City staff to share with individuals in need of resources. There are coordinated days in which Suisun City Police Department and service providers visit encampments to share resources or to provide a legal 72hr notice requirement before an encampment is to be cleaned up. At the forum service providers shared that individuals have the right to refuse services.</p> <p>Resource Connect. https://www.resourceconnectsolano.org/ Can call 707-652-7311 or email us at RCS@caminar.org</p> <p>Access sites are: 1234 Empire St. Fairfield CA 94533 Hours: 9AM-5PM 908 Tuolumne St. Vallejo CA 94589 Hours: 9AM-5PM</p>
<p>“How do you expect to grow as a small town when the threat of violence, arson, pan handling, open drug use and alcohol consumption, trash, and filth by homeless individuals in the downtown area?”</p>	<p>The City acknowledges the challenges presented in the downtown area, especially with limited resources and staffing. In the past, the Downtown Business Improvement District contracted additional cleanup services to support cleanliness. Due to limited funding they were unable to renew their contract this year. The City is considering alternate solutions and funding sources to support cleanliness Downtown.</p>
<p>“What makes you think you can address a</p>	<p>The City alone cannot address or solve homelessness. As mentioned in the forum, as a city with</p>

<p>problem that cities, states, and the federal government have failed to solve. Is this a result of complex social economic factors?”</p>	<p>less than 50K people, Suisun City does not receive direct funding to address homelessness. It is by strengthening local partnerships and collaboration of services that the City and City Leaders can work to address the needs of unsheltered individuals. Currently, the City is part of the regional board working to implement a regional strategic plan to address homelessness. There is a board strategic workshop taking place on Saturday, April 22nd from 9am to 2pm at 675 Texas Street, Fairfield.</p>
<p>What is the regulatory agency for homeless programs.</p>	<p>The oversight mechanism generally comes from the state and the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) when applying for funds.</p>
<p>Shelter</p>	
<p>“Suisun City is not able to offer enough beds for all homeless who are camping. Should we create a sanctioned camping area where at least basic services and sanitation could be provided? If not, what is a better alternative?”</p>	<p>The topic of having a sanctioned homeless encampment area was previously discussed by two prior city councils. Each discussion resulted in voting down a sanctioned encampment area due to the limited resources available to support the services needed.</p> <p>As noted in the forum, there is a shelter bed available for anyone who would like a bed via Coordinated Entry through Resource Connect. Individuals have the right to refuse moving to a shelter, often due to trauma, mental health, pets, or trust issues. It takes multiple outreach attempts before an individual agrees to transition to shelter.</p>
<p>“How much does the city pay for those two beds?” Does spending that much for two beds make sense? Could that money be spent more wisely?”</p>	<p>The City contracts with Shelter Inc. for homeless shelter beds and wrap around services. The cost of the contract is \$68,400.00. This means that at all times the City is guaranteed the minimum of two beds and has the ability to offer shelter to those who wish to receive shelter or to enforce illegal encampments by meeting the legal requirement of being able to offer shelter to an individual. The funding for the shelter beds have previously been paid through grant funds. This past year the City budgeted funding through General Funds. UPDATE: Since the April forum, the services to Suisun City have changed from contracted beds to contracted hours, meaning that the City is able to shelter more than two individual based on available contracted service hours (currently as of November 2023 there are four individuals from Suisun City receiving services at Shelter Solano).</p> <p>The City does not have a homeless shelter within City limits and there are no non-profits within city</p>

	limits that directly assist or house homeless individuals.
“When the two beds are full, do we qualify for county beds?”	Yes. Individuals have opportunity to attain access to a shelter bed via Coordinated Entry through Resource Connect. Once City beds have been used, the City would coordinate with Resource Connect.
“Can there be a joint effort to allow non residents emergency shelter for CAN B? (re: Suisun residents to Fairfield)”	CANB has a contract with the City of Fairfield to provide shelter to Fairfield residents. It’s their money, therefore their option to have eligibility guidelines. There have been times when a client has lived both in Fairfield and in Suisun, and we allowed those clients into the program. A joint effort for the shelter would have to be asked to the City of Fairfield Homeless Services Division.
“I have people camping in their vehicles, RV, van pulling a small trailer on Humphrey Drive. Is it possible for social services and other resources to visit those vehicles and RV? These vehicles’ occupants have chosen Humphrey to live. Looking forward to possible alternate location to camp.”	City / Humphrey Drive RV’s
Lived Experience	
“First slide ‘Who is responsible for solving homelessness’- shouldn’t homeless individuals themselves be one of the groups that shares responsibility for the solving the problem?”	In many cases and forums across the county that is happening. For example, the Solano County Housing First COC has a lived experience advisory board that offers platform and voice to people who’ve experienced homelessness to support system improvements. As the City of Suisun moves through this process we will make sure to engage those with lived experience to help problem solve and collaborate.
“This is at least the second homelessness event with a notable absence of homeless people. What concrete steps in Suisun City taking to gather opinions of the homeless, and to engage homeless person in finding solutions?”	There was a member in the forum who had past lived experience and now serves as a staff member for one of the service providers. There will be future opportunities to include more voices of those with lived experience in these conversations. The purpose of the Lived Experience Committee is to give feedback on our systems, not necessarily to be the “decision makers”, that typically is up to the individuals or groups who are funding the agencies.

<p>“Question for Change and New Beginnings: How does managing ‘their’ money and giving them an allowance make them independent?”</p>	<p>The reason we do is this because Social Security has deemed these folks to be unable to manage their funds. Our job is to pay their bills and make sure that their money lasts throughout the month versus all being spent at the beginning of the month with nothing left over for the end of the month. Social Security sees this as making the individual able to live independently. Some people get multiple checks a week, others once a week and a few get the check at the beginning of the month as they have learned to be better with their money and a few of those people actually become their own payees. Each person is unique and we work with each client to give them as much “independence” as we can.</p>
<p>“Let’s talk about veterans- they are unique. They have PTSD, no housing, no job, other issues. DAV, VA, and other Vet groups are trained to help.”</p>	<p>Veterans >contact Alfred Sims at solano county office of vet affairs, https://www.solanocounty.com/depts/veterans/ Veterans have mulitple complex issues/needs, resources. CANB offers transitional housing to Veterans and the VA has vouchers for housing (client pays 30% of their income for rent.)</p>
<p>Funding</p>	
<p>“Is there a budget being given by JPA to Suisun City since we do not qualify for grant funding?”</p>	<p>All of the funding received by the JPA is available to the region. Therefore, Suisun is eligible for applying for any funding that passes through the JPA but it must be used on providing services to all residents of Solano County.</p>
<p>“The Solano County Grand Jury report mentioned a concern of an emerging ‘Homeless Industrial Complex’, does anyone have input on whether there is a financial incentive to keep homelessness in perpetual continuation? Shelter Solano has accepted about \$2.3 million dollars for a commercial kitchen/dining hall while the most expensive household last years was \$900,000.”</p>	<p>Agency / funding Shelter Inc.?</p>
<p>Legal</p>	
<p>“This is not to be political in the least. Over the last month we have heard, ‘No one is above the</p>	<p>The Martin v. Boise decision heard in the 9th circuit provides a lawful exception to anyone experiencing homelessness with regard to violating camping ordinances or setting up an</p>

<p>law', however, it often seems that the homeless are. Could someone comment on this issue?"</p>	<p>encampment on public property. There are several conditions that must be met before a homeless individual can be issued a citation. In essence, this case law decision did "decriminalize" certain activities that some homeless engage in.</p>
<p>Homeless individuals are setting fire to the Railroad sound wall putting single family homes and vehicles at risk. Additionally, the homeless are attracting pests which are affecting home owners at summerwood in North Heritage Park."</p>	<p>This area is railroad property. The HOA in that development has had good traction with the railroad police department. Continued enforcement of illegal camping needs to be done by the railroad police, but SCPD and SCFD will respond to these issues and assist where possible.</p>
<p>"You are giving examples of non-problematic homelessness. What about the people doing drugs and littering around town?"</p>	<p>From a PD perspective, we need to witness someone doing drugs to conduct enforcement. Possession of most drugs have been downgraded over the years by voter initiatives from felonies to non-custodial misdemeanors and even infractions at some point. While we will continue to enforce the law in these circumstances, we no longer make custodial arrests and book people in jail for simple possession of drugs due to the changes in the laws. From a behavioral perspective, there are underlying issues that result in this where prevention and harm reduction efforts could help</p>
<p>"What does law enforcement provide to individuals displaced during encampment sweeps? These take away basic supplies that protect from the elements (e.g. rain/heat) and overburden other systems with even less funding than the police department."</p>	<p>We do not take any supplies that homeless have been given. Often times, the individuals will remove their entire encampment including tents and other camping gear. What we provide prior to moving an encampment is transport to an actual shelter, should the individual wish to receive such services.</p>
<p>"Regarding the homeless camp on Railroad Avenue, said to be private property. That particular camp is also contributing to a crisis in animal over population. Is there something that can be done to prevent the backyard breeding where 22 pitbull puppies were being sold in order to use animals as income?"</p>	<p>Addressed at the meeting. PD is unaware of a pitbull mill near the area. This would be an issue handled by animal services. Specifically Humane Animal Services (HAS), as they hold the contract for animal services in Suisun City.</p>
<p>"Since we as a society no longer are able to</p>	<p>From behavioral health perspective:</p>

<p>commit homeless individuals involuntarily unless they are physically harming themselves or others, what can be done to assist those who are permanently mentally ill and have no hope of ever being able to productive live in society?"</p>	<p>People with mental health challenges and homeless histories can be productive and there is hope of being productive - many have recovered, have jobs, families, and meaningful lives with the right treatment and support- and roof over their heads. All people also have civil rights and choices, as a result the LPS laws allow consideration for supporting people involuntarily only under specific conditions. Solano BH has a team that offers outreach and we can engage, offer medications and treatment, and at a certain point, people want housing, and there are insufficient housing types (from apartments to group homes) to help. More beds are needed across a continuum of care. https://www.disabilityrightsca.org/publications/understanding-the-lanterman-petris-short-lps-act</p>
<p>"How can private land owners (where encampments are) be held accountable to terminate present and future encampments?"</p>	
<p>"I really want to know- do homeless people carry weapons, guns, kives, etc? Also, are there new arrivals of homeless people every day of the week?"</p>	<p>Many people carry weapons on them daily, including homeless people. Additionally, homeless individuals often have items in their camps that could be used as weapons that other people woul have in their garage or home. We have not encountered many homeless with guns, but as most people in this day and age do, they have been known to carry knives.</p> <p>New homeless sometimes show up when other cities displace an encampment or write citations for violating ordinances. They will often move to different areas of their city, or other cities altogether.</p>
<p>Data</p>	
<p>"If we have the 3rd lowest homeless population in Solano County--how is it determined? Is that per capita?"</p>	<p>Per capita, see Point in time count- http://www.housingfirstsolano.org/hic-pit-count.html</p>
<p>"Is there an online location to view outcome measurements regarding services provided and long-term self-sufficiency?"</p>	<p>Not at this time but something the Coordinated Entry System hopes to achieve in the not too distant future. (https://www.hudexchange.info/resource/4427/coordinated-entry-policy-brief/)</p>

<p>“What percent (estimate) of homeless individuals want to transition to housing and what percent (estimate) decline the option to remain on the street?”</p>	<p>This is pretty evenly split. At least half of the individuals want to transition to housing and about half of individuals decline. Some of the challenges that are faced are due to mistrust, trauma, mental and/or behavioral health issues, pets, and other challenges.</p> <p>In addition, sometimes for those who decline this depends on the type of housing being offered; if its shelter, many people prefer to stay put than put up with some shelter requirements or lose pets, belongings; housing first works and based on research, most people opt for that if offered.</p>