

Attachment 3

Interim Homeless Encampment Prevention and Outreach Policy

Introduction:

The goal of the County Interim Encampment Prevention and Outreach Policy is to implement guidelines and procedures across departments and sister agencies, as well as across jurisdictions for (1) identifying an encampment(s); (2) activating the homeless Outreach and Care Coordination Team of the ACCESS Sonoma County Initiative (Homeless Encampment Assistance and Resource Team (HEART)) to work to bring occupants of encampments into the sheltering/housing system and to make available needed behavioral, social, and medical services; and (3) procedures for closing encampments and remediating the resulting public health and environmental impacts.

The formation of encampments (defined as more than five dwellings established by people experiencing homelessness [that create environmental hazards, public health and public safety risks]) is an indication of a critical need to expand our street outreach, health and other social services, affordable and permanent supportive housing, and other emergency shelter options to serve individuals experiencing homelessness in Sonoma County. The County and its partners are working to provide housing services and supports to address the critical needs of people experiencing homelessness. However, the lack of available housing limits our ability to provide permanent housing, and the County's capacity to reach and serve every homeless encampment on County property is limited by finite resources. Conducting efficient and effective outreach, service provision, housing placement, and environmental and public health remediation is critical, given this context.

The Encampment strategy includes the formation of the Executive Encampment Team (EET), which includes leaders and/or their representatives across county departments including the Community Development Commission (CDC), Department of Health Services (DHS), County Administrator's Office (CAO), County Counsel, Sonoma County Regional Parks, General Services Department (GSD), Transportation and Public Works (TPW), Permit Sonoma, and the Sheriff's Office (or, in situations where the encampment sits on County or CDC property within another municipality's law enforcement jurisdiction, that law enforcement agency). This Executive Leadership Team approves recommended encampment prevention and outreach strategies. The Operations Encampment Team (OET) consists of staff and management from these departments. They coordinate the execution of encampment actions recommended by the Executive Encampment Team. County Counsel will be central to all work of the EET and OET to ensure compliance with Federal, State, and local laws, given the pending litigation and Temporary Injunction against the County and the CDC.

Background:

On December 17, 2019, the Board declared a County emergency on the Joe Rodota Trail (JRT) encampment which posed a threat to public health, public safety and the environment due to its size and scope (258 occupants, making up the largest encampment in County history). On December 23, 2019, the Board took bold action investing \$12 million to expand the homeless system of care for the homeless; directing the establishment of two 2 indoor-outdoor shelters;

purchasing multi-unit homes for permanent supportive housing; creating a new Care Coordination Team of the ACCESS Sonoma County Initiative to provide outreach and social services to JRT occupants; and approving contracts for services to expand access to mental health and substance use treatment and medical services. The Board directed staff to clear and close the JRT by January 31, 2020. The Board activated the County's Emergency Operations Center (EOC) to execute a cross-departmental, cross-jurisdictional plan that cleared and closed the trail. The JRT was cleared by January 31, 2020, without incident or arrest. Approximately 107 individuals were placed into housing, including placement at the emergency shelter, Los Guilicos Villages and placement in other housing, shelter and residential treatment settings.

With this new resource – the Homeless Encampment Assistance and Resource Team (HEART) – The County has a new tool to prevent the formation of encampments that create environmental hazards, public health and public safety risks. This interim policy, if adopted by the Board of Supervisors and the Board of Commissioners of the Sonoma County Community Development Commission would be in effect until the Home Sonoma County Leadership Council develops a county-wide encampments policy across all jurisdictions. The staff resources for the HEART Care Coordination Team will be funded through the end of Fiscal Year 2022

Interim Encampment Proposal:

1. Encampment Definition

This proposal intends to describe the procedures taken to address encampments of five or more individuals that are formed on county, and CDC property that pose a threat to the public health and safety, and environment. Such hazards include environmental hazards and degradation of the property on which the encampment is established. Public health and safety risk include such factors as medical and public health risks to occupants.

2. Identifying and Reporting Encampments

Encampments will be identified and reported to the Executive Encampment Team. Reports of encampments will be identified by different sources including community members, law enforcement, and County property managers (General Services Department, Transportation, and Public Works, and Regional Parks). Once an encampment has been identified and analyzed, the Executive Encampment Team (EET) will provide direction to the Operational Encampment Team (OET) on how to outreach to encampment members to bring them into the sheltering/housing and social services safety net. The OET prepares a situational report which triggers the activation of the outreach and engagement process to homeless individuals living in encampments. This report includes information such as: (1) who reported the encampment; (2) location/address of the encampment; (3) property owner where encampment is located; (4) number of occupants in an encampment; (5) law enforcement jurisdiction; and (6) environmental, public health and public safety risks. The OET will convene a meeting to operationalize the coordination of plans for responding to an encampment.

3. Engagement Process

The primary goal of the encampment outreach and prevention strategy is to bring homeless individuals into the housing/sheltering, behavioral health, social, and medical services systems. To effectively perform outreach to individuals living in encampments, it is necessary to establish a new Outreach and Care Coordination Team of the ACCESS Initiative – The Homeless

Encampment Assistance Resource Team – HEART. The HEART is a multidisciplinary team of staff representing mental health, substance use, eligibility workers, disease control investigators, and social workers. This team is a critical, new development in the County’s work and brings highly skilled clinical and professional health, human, and housing services directly to occupants of an encampment. Upon OET notification, the HEART will initiate outreach to encampment occupants to conduct assessments and offer services including posting and distribution of notices of occupant rights. The HEART will coordinate the efforts to offer assessments, services, and shelter and housing as well as to provide for and coordinate the storage of personal possessions of encampment occupants who request it.

4. Closure and Clean-up of Encampments

The HEART will make every effort to outreach, assess and offer sheltering/housing and services to all occupants in an encampment. This outreach and engagement process will be conducted over several days to build relationships and trust with occupants, to identify earlier contacts, and to form exit strategies for each occupant. After assessments and offering of services have been attempted, the HEART will notify the OET that the team has completed outreach and assessment efforts.

The OET will notify the EET that it is appropriate to serve notices to vacate and notices of planned removal of property, and send them for approval for posting and service to the EET. Occupants who have refused offers of assessment, services, and housing and who remain will be required to leave the property. The OET will coordinate operational and logistical actions required to clear an encampment. This includes securing standard purchase orders for storage space, totes, and transportation of personal property. The OET will serve as the lead entity responsible for leading efforts to pack personal property, inventory it, and transport it. Law enforcement will clear an encampment and the property manager will be responsible for managing the property cleanup including the cleanup and removal of trash, and environmental remediation, if necessary. Private security personnel or law enforcement will patrol the properties to protect against another encampment forming at the property.

Attachment 3A

Interim Homeless Encampment Procedures

1. The Executive Director of the Community Development Commission (CDC) will serve as Command Lead for the Executive Encampment Team (EET) and will initiate communication and action with other EET representatives regarding the need to address a homeless encampment.
2. Once a Homeless Encampment is analyzed and identified and as a priority, the EET will convene an OET to develop and implement a plan for approval.
3. Executive Encampment Team will convene bi-weekly to receive reports from the Operational Encampment Team (OET) and will convene weekly when encampments have been identified for remediation to determine appropriate strategy and plan for addressing the encampments and to receive updates from the OET. County Counsel reviews and approves proposed strategy and plan.
4. Operational Encampment Team (OET) will meet weekly to constantly monitor situations related to the formation of encampments. Once the EET recommends action to clear an encampment, the OET develops an implementation plan for EET recommended action.
5. Once HEART has determined that their outreach, assessments, and housing/sheltering offers and services provision is complete, they will notify the OET.
6. OET will then post notices to vacate and notices of planned removal of property.
7. Personal property will be stored for those homeless individuals who request it. Storage will follow department policies regarding the amount and type of personal property that can be stored. Approved personal property will be stored for a maximum of 90 days.
8. The property will be closed by the property owner and/or property manager.
9. Property manager will perform cleanup and, if appropriate, environmental remediation.
10. Request to law enforcement agencies with jurisdictional responsibility for the property will be asked to monitor and patrol the property following closure of the encampment to ensure that the encampment does not return.