

HOW TO BE A HOUSED ALLY TO PEOPLE EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS

Create an Inclusive Community

1

Introduce yourself Initiate basic conversations, like you would with your other neighbors to build rapport. Ask what their names are, how their day is, or comment on the weather. Build up to having more meaningful interactions.

2

Be a good neighbor Ask people what they need. Ask how you can help. Below are some ways to help with common concerns for folks camping near you:

- **Waste:** Inform your unhoused neighbors of the trash pick up day. Ask if they need trash bags.
- **Human waste:** Share a list of bathrooms (sfpublicworks.wixsite.com/pitstop) and call DPW and your district supervisor to request a "Pit-Stop" toilet to be located in your neighborhood.
- **Substance use:** Access resources and learn more at harmreduction.org. Substance use and mental health treatment can be accessed in person at 1380 Howard Street.
- **Hygiene needs:** Offer to provide access to water for drinking, hand washing, & bathing.
- **Charging:** Offer to provide a power source for phone charging.
- **Mailing address:** When trust is built, consider offering them your mailing address if they need to receive important mail. It is crucial to set helpful boundaries for you and clarify expectations.

3

Crisis? If a person is in immediate psychiatric crisis, check in with them before calling Mobile Crisis: (415) 970-4000.

4

Medical help? If the person requests medical help or is unconscious, call 911. Make it clear that this is a medical and not a police emergency.

5

Call the HOT team If the person is medically compromised, but not in need of an ambulance, call the HOT team at: (415) 355-7445. (Note: during COVID-19 they are taking voicemail messages only.)

Support Outreach Organizations and Advocate for Real Solutions

1

Learn about homeless services in your area Support their work by volunteering time or by making a donation. Get involved at cohshf.org and support: North Beach Citizens - Homeless Youth Alliance (Haight) - Beds for Bayview - Dolores Street Community Services (Mission) - Night Ministry - Faithful Fools (Tenderloin) - Project Homeless Connect Glide - YWAM (Tenderloin) - Larkin Street Youth Services (Tenderloin/Haight) - Homeless Prenatal

2

Call your Supervisor and the Mayor's Office and pressure them to open more hotel rooms and safe campsites (and for the long-term, more permanent affordable housing).

3

Organize your neighbors to provide mutual aid to your unhoused neighbors. Network with similar groups (e.g. Cole Valley Haight Allies, Rad Mission Neighbors). Host a video call & invite a speaker to talk about real solutions to homelessness, and how San Francisco could do better. The Coalition can help.

4

Educate yourself! Read the Street Sheet and make sure you know the basic facts: the shelter waitlist is currently closed, HOT team is making referrals to a limited number of hotel rooms for age 60+ and medically vulnerable, most homeless people were San Franciscans before they lost their housing, and the reason we have mass homelessness is that the federal government gutted housing budgets for poor people, closed state-run mental hospitals, and the city hasn't prioritized budget dollars for homeless solutions to fill that gap!



THINGS NOT TO DO

Do not call the police.

1

NEVER call the police on people who aren't causing or threatening imminent violence. Thousands of homeless people end up cited and often incarcerated every year for no offense greater than sleeping, and several homeless people have been murdered by police in the last few years. Police contact can actually prolong a person's homelessness.

2

DO NOT dump your trash out on the streets...especially near to where people sleep in their tents or vehicles. This can give off the impression that it is a homeless person who is "trashing" the street, which can fuel the false association between being unhoused and being "messy." This is dangerous because it might provoke housed neighbors or business owners to complain to the police.

IMPACT OF COVID-19

Before the COVID-19 health crisis, there were estimated 10,000 homeless residents of San Francisco, the majority of whom were living unsheltered on San Francisco's streets. The COVID-19 health & economic crises have exacerbated challenges for those seeking a path to safe shelter.

While there has been a great deal of focus on the city opening approximately 2,600 Shelter-In-Place (SIP) hotel rooms, this response has been slow and far short of 7,000 SIP rooms the Board of Supervisors unanimously authorized in April 2020. The city plans to now reopen 1,000 shelter beds, and has peaked at providing approximately 200 safe campsites. However, that leaves thousands of unhoused neighbors without a safe inside option.

For more information visit

The Coalition on Homelessness at cohfsf.org