



***From Policy to Practice:
Responses to Homeless
Encampments in
Los Angeles***



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About This Report

The number of people staying in encampments is growing throughout Los Angeles County and City as the total number of unsheltered people in the region also increases. The visible nature of encampments on neighborhood streets and sidewalks, adjacent to highways, and inside parks has made responding to encampments a prominent and divisive issue across the region. Both the County and City have established distinct approaches for responding to encampments. To understand the Los Angeles encampment ecosystem in early fall 2022, the Abt study team examined the prevalence and characteristics of encampments. The team conducted interviews with leadership from public agencies, law enforcement, homeless service providers, and outreach teams to understand the spectrum of encampment characteristics and response strategies across the Los Angeles region. We also reviewed policy documents to guide the County and City’s responses to encampments.

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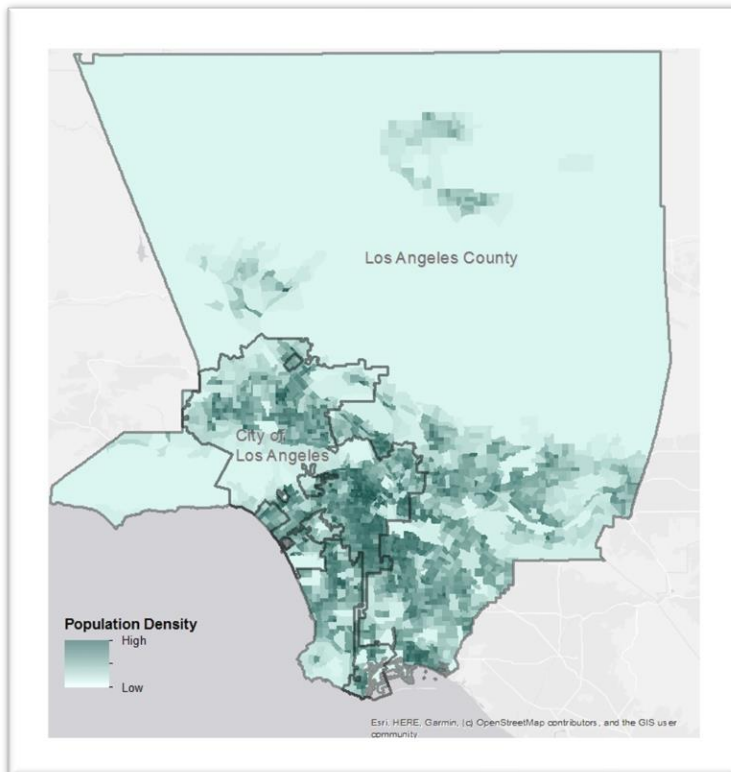
1. Introduction

The numbers of people staying in encampments are growing throughout Los Angeles County and the City of Los Angeles as the total number of unsheltered people in the region also increases. Los Angeles County had 48,548 people experiencing unsheltered homelessness in February 2022, the largest unsheltered population in the nation. The number of people experiencing unsheltered homelessness is much larger than the second and third highest regions—San Jose (7,708) and Seattle (7,685).¹ The visible nature of encampments on neighborhood streets and sidewalks, adjacent to highways, and inside parks has made responding to encampments a prominent and divisive issue across the region. Encampments became a central issue in the 2022 Los Angeles mayoral race, as well as in many other local elections across the region, as the public continues to demand a response to the rising numbers of

Encampments across Los Angeles

This report presents a snapshot of Los Angeles County and City's response to homeless encampments in the fall of 2022. Homeless encampments, ranging in size from a single tent to dozens of tents, continue to grow and evolve across the Los Angeles region. The jurisdictional challenges that exist between Los Angeles City, County, and other municipalities add an additional layer of complexity to developing and executing encampment responses, including outreach, sanitation, and in some instances closure.

Exhibit 1.1. Population Density Varies Across Los Angeles County and City



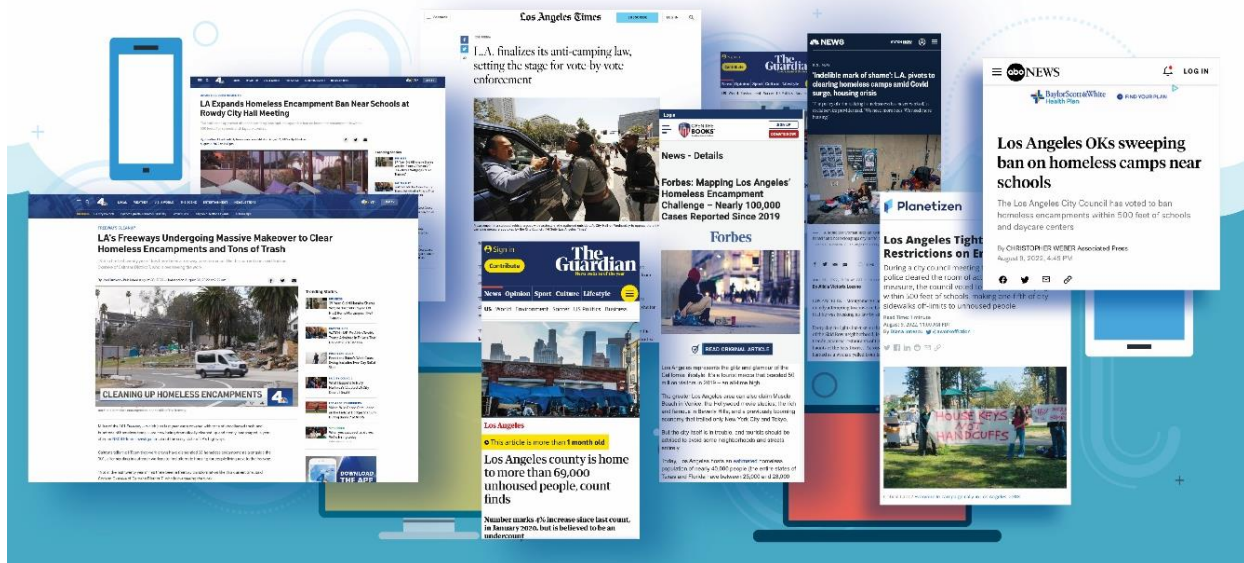
encampments. Both the County and City have established approaches for responding to encampments. The County uses a centralized, sequential approach for prioritizing and tracking encampment responses, while the City has a more decentralized approach involving multiple partners.

Working across a large geographic area with many jurisdictions makes developing and coordinating a response to encampments challenging. Los Angeles County is an extremely large and diverse geographic area comprised of 88 cities, with the City of Los Angeles the largest. Population density varies widely, from rural areas in the north part of the County to densely populated areas in the City of Los Angeles and surrounding municipalities along the coast (see Exhibit 1.1). The Los Angeles County

¹ The number of people experiencing unsheltered homeless in Los Angeles County increased by four percent from 2020 to 2022. <https://www.lahsa.org/documents?id=6515-lacounty-hc22-data-summary>.

Departments serve numerous cities and towns and unincorporated areas of the County. To help the large number of people experiencing unsheltered homelessness within its jurisdiction, the City of Los Angeles uses its departments and funding under its control, as well as working with County Departments including the Department of Mental Health and the Department of Health Services. Both the County and City transfer resources to the Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority (LAHSA), an independent joint powers authority that also receives funding directly from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and the State of California to respond to homelessness in the region.

Despite the County and City efforts to respond to encampments, connecting people experiencing homelessness to outreach services and moving them into temporary and permanent housing is a continuing challenge. Despite numerous programs that work with people experiencing homelessness residing in encampments, there is still a deficit of funding available to respond to the growing number of encampments across the region. A shortage of affordable housing options and ongoing rental subsidies in the LA region also limits the ability of program staff to move people from encampment settings into housing.



This image shows the many different news outlets that have covered the response to encampments in Los Angeles.

Presently, much of the information on how the County and City respond to homeless encampments comes from local and national media reports. *This brief provides an overview of encampment responses in the County and City of Los Angeles as of fall 2022.* It offers a detailed view of existing ordinances, policies, and procedures that shape the responses to encampments and the roles of the numerous County and City agencies and partners roles that implement the policies. *However, the data collection and analysis for this report was completed prior to 2022 Los Angeles mayoral race and the City and County emergency declarations on homelessness* (refer to Section 6.2 for more information on these items).

This study is funded by the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation with the goal of providing local policymakers and community members with a better understanding of the actions that are being undertaken to respond to homeless encampments in the Los Angeles region.

1.1 Methodology

To understand the Los Angeles encampment ecosystem in 2022, the Abt study team first examined the prevalence and characteristics of encampments. The team conducted 15 interviews with leadership from public agencies, law enforcement, homeless service providers, and outreach teams to understand the spectrum of encampment characteristics and response strategies across the Los Angeles region. We discussed policies and procedures related to encampment responses, including clearances, cleanings, and closures with key County and City staff. We collected and reviewed local ordinances, rulings, agency protocols, and other documents that outline how Los Angeles County and City agencies and their partners respond to encampments. The study team then spoke with staff of City and County Departments and LAHSA to understand the plans to respond to the ordinances.

This report proceeds as follows:

- Chapter 2 describes the encampments and the characteristics of their residents.
- Chapter 3 reports how Los Angeles County and the City of Los Angeles respond to encampments.
- Chapter 4 describes the implementation protocols used by Los Angeles County and the City of Los Angeles.
- Chapter 5 explains the challenges of reducing encampments across the Los Angeles region.
- Chapter 6 summarizes the report's key findings.
- Appendix A contains the list of the Los Angeles County and City entities that the study team interviewed.
- Appendix B contains the list of organizations that provide outreach to encampments in Los Angeles County and City.

2. Understanding Los Angeles Encampments and Their Residents

Encampments, ranging in size between a single tent to group of tents that cover multiple blocks, exist across the Los Angeles region.² This section provides an overview of where encampments are often located in the Los Angeles area, why people choose to stay in encampments instead of other unsheltered living environments, and how the characteristics of people residing in encampments compare with the region's overall population experiencing homelessness.

2.1 A Shortage of Affordable Housing and the Pandemic are Driving the Increasing Number of Encampments in LA

Government agency leaders and homeless service providers report that Los Angeles County has experienced a significant increase in the number of homeless encampments in recent years. This increase can be largely explained by the shortage of affordable housing and rising housing costs in the area and the scarcity of interim and permanent housing. Furthermore, as the COVID-19 pandemic discouraged people from staying in crowded conditions such as congregate shelters or doubling up with family or friends, the number of people staying in encampments continued to rise. During the early months of the pandemic, County and City officials suspended the clearing and closures of encampments across the region. This aligned with the Center for Disease Control (CDC)'s guidance that stated living in tents offered better protection against the spread of the virus than crowded congregate shelters.³

2.2 Los Angeles Encampments Exist in a Variety of Areas

Encampments are located throughout the County and City of Los Angeles, adjacent to highway on- and off-ramps, on sidewalks in both downtown and residential areas, within public parks, along riverbeds and beaches, and beside train tracks. Many encampments have accumulated bicycles, furniture and other personal belongings. Within Los Angeles City limits, encampments can be challenging to define. An encampment can spread across multiple blocks, making it unclear if it is one large encampment or several smaller adjacent ones. An encampment also can be just one or two small tents. Within Skid Row, an area in downtown Los Angeles that is historically known for its large numbers of people



*Photo: Encampment near Interstate 10 and downtown exit.
Source: Abt Associates*

² This research does not focus on vehicular homelessness, except the textbox on pg. 23.

³ During the pandemic, the County still responded to encampments with outreach and clean-up teams but did not disperse encampment residents. In the case of exigent circumstances, where significant harm to persons or community could occur, the County followed its full encampment protocol described later in this brief.

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experiencing unsheltered homelessness, numerous large encampments stretch across multiple intersections and blocks. Staff from the Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority (LAHSA) observed that, during the pandemic, some encampments moved to areas that were farther from high-density areas and where residents felt safer from contracting COVID-19. Recently, the LA region has seen a rise in vehicular homelessness, particularly people staying in recreational vehicles (RVs) parked in industrial areas. The Greater Los Angeles Point-In-Time count reported 7,178 RVs being used as living space by approximately 11,564 people in Los Angeles County during February 2022.⁴ (Refer to the box on pg. 22 for more information about LA’s response to RVs.)

Across the County, larger encampments are commonly found around riverbeds and in more secluded areas that are out of public view. For example, a large encampment has been located along Coyote Creek periodically for more than a decade, consisting of several smaller groups of tents and other temporary structures along the flat portion of the adjacent flood control channel and Coyote Creek Bikeway, especially north of Interstate 5 in Santa Fe Springs. Another example is a ten-mile stretch of encampments from the Santa Fe Dam to the Los Angeles foothills. At times, between 200 and 300 people stay in these encampments. In May 2021, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Los Angeles District cleared 250 tons of litter and debris from an encampment at the foot of the Santa Fe Dam Spillway in Irwindale, which is northeast of the City of Los Angeles.⁵ Government officials reported that large encampments, like these and Skid Row often are hard to address because of their fluctuating population and large geographic spread. The City and County send homeless outreach workers to these encampments to provide people experiencing unsheltered homelessness with immediate support and connections to short-term housing placements and social services. The number and types of outreach workers that respond to an encampment depend on the number of people, their needs, and the availability of outreach staff in the jurisdiction. Outreach workers generally create lists of people staying in these larger encampments and track whether outreach workers have engaged with everyone in the encampment.

2.3 *People Choose to Stay in Encampment Versus Other Unsheltered Environments for Several Reasons*

Government officials, service providers, and outreach workers in Los Angeles familiar with encampments all said that people stay in encampments instead of other unsheltered environments for several reasons: a greater sense of security, autonomy, and community compared to experiences in the shelter system. These reasons are consistent with prior research on why people form and move into encampments.⁶

⁴ Data from LAHSA report on the total number of vehicles, tents, and makeshift shelters and estimated persons in those dwellings counted during the 2022 Greater Los Angeles Homeless Count. Retrieved from: <https://www.lahsa.org/documents?id=6533-cvrtm-summary-by-geography>.

⁵ Reese, W. *Corps Removes about 250 Tons of Debris at Santa Fe Dam*, US Army Corps of Engineers Los Angeles District Website, May 18, 2021, <https://www.spl.usace.army.mil/Media/News-Stories/Article/2621590/corps-removes-about-250-tons-of-debris-at-santa-fe-dam/>.

⁶ Dunton, L., Khadduri, J., Burnett, K., Fiore, N., Yetvin, W. *City Approaches to Encampments and What They Cost*. Abt Associates, Inc. for the Office of Policy Development and Research, U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. 2020.

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Many people staying in Los Angeles area encampments recently lost their housing, previously lived in doubled-up situations, or did not think shelter options were viable for their needs. People staying in encampments report past negative experiences with congregate and interim housing sites in the Los Angeles area. These experiences include fear for their personal safety or the safety of their belongings, their inability to stay with other members of their household or pets, and their frustration with shelter rules such as entry/exit times or sobriety policies. In many cases, emergency shelters are not meeting the needs of people experiencing unsheltered homelessness or providing types of assistance that they want to receive. These experiences align with prior research on why people are resistant to staying in emergency shelters.⁷ Government officials stated that people staying in encampments are most likely to accept non-congregate, low-barrier shelter options, yet these options are limited in the region.

Multiple interviewees reported that people stay in encampments for better security for themselves and their personal belongings compared to staying in shelters or in more isolated unsheltered locations. People staying in encampments often report experiences with violence, coercion, and past negative interactions with law enforcement.⁸ They also are the victims of serious crimes, including assault, robbery, and homicides. Outreach workers also said that they are seeing more people fleeing domestic violence in encampments than they had previously.



Photo left: Tents near Miracle Mile neighborhood.

Photo right: Tents near Interstate 10 and downtown exit

Even when residents are faced with the threat of displacement and the possibility of violence, encampments provide people with a strong sense of community during extremely challenging periods of their lives. Encampments can offer social support for people during a time of crisis. People staying in encampments often rely on each other for security and food. Government and law enforcement officials

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Staff at the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department have noticed more reports of outside violence and gang infiltration in encampments since the pandemic began. For example, gang members may force "rent" payments from people staying in encampments.

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also reported that some encampments offer easy access to drugs and other substances for people struggling with substance use disorders. The potential loss of the encampment community can be a deterrent to people accepting interim housing and moving away from the encampment. Outreach workers try to preserve the sense of community that exists in encampments, recognizing that people may be more likely to accept housing or services if they can maintain these relationships.

Finally, the fear of contracting COVID-19 likely contributed to a rise in the number of people staying in encampments. Because of their outdoor setting and ease of social distancing, some people believe that encampments offer better protection against the spread of the virus than more crowded congregate shelters.

2.4 Residents of Los Angeles Encampments Have Different Characteristics

Across Los Angeles, people of all ages, races, ethnicities, and genders live in encampments. Although the exact demographic breakdowns of people residing in encampments is unknown since no data are collected specifically on those living in encampment settings, 28 percent of the population experiencing unsheltered homelessness in the City of Los Angeles is Black,⁹ while Black people make up only 8 percent of the City's population. Men make up around 72 percent of those experiencing unsheltered homelessness in the City. Observationally, outreach workers find that most encampment residents are adult men and that children are rarely present in encampment settings.¹⁰ Outreach workers say that transition age youth aged 16-25 often will stay in encampment settings together. An official with the County Health Department stated that youth aging out of foster care are much more likely to experience homelessness than other youth in Los Angeles.¹¹

Where are Encampment Residents from?

Interviewees reported that the majority of people living in encampments were born and raised in Los Angeles County. Most people choose to live in encampments located in the neighborhood where they are from so that they have community ties and feel safer.* Interviewees stated that during the pandemic, they encountered more people staying in encampments who were originally from outside the Los Angeles region and had recently moved to the area. The reason for this change is not clear.

*Dunton et al. (2020). *City Approaches to Encampments and What they Cost*. Abt Associates, Inc. for the Office of Policy Development and Research, U.S. Department of Housing Urban Development.

Outreach workers and health experts report that the average biological age¹² of people residing in encampments has increased over the last five years. This likely reflects two factors: 1) people staying in encampments tend to age more quickly than the housed population because of inability to treat chronic

⁹ LAHSA, "2022 Greater Los Angeles Homeless Count—City of Los Angeles." Retrieved from: <https://www.lahsa.org/documents?id=6516-city-of-la-hc22-data-summary>.

¹⁰ Children rarely live in encampments because families experiencing homelessness in Los Angeles often receive a hotel/motel voucher or are placed into other settings, although some families with children do live out of their cars.

¹¹ See also Broslawsky, A. *Foster Youth and Homelessness*. Homelessness Policy Research Institute. 2021. <https://socialinnovation.usc.edu/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/Foster-Youth-and-Homelessness-final-1.pdf>.

¹² Chronological age refers to the actual amount of time a person has been alive, whereas biological age takes genetic and lifestyle factors into consideration, including diet, exercise, stress, and sleep habits.

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health conditions, sleep deprivation, stress, and poor nutrition, and 2) a rising number of older adults are moving into encampments. Outreach workers frequently encounter physical health challenges among the encampment population, including chronic obstructive pulmonary diseases (COPD), diabetes, mobility issues, and injuries caused by vehicles.¹³ Compounding these physical challenges, increased stress and access to illegal drugs can worsen or lead to new substance use and mental health conditions for encampment residents. One public health expert familiar with encampment residents in Los Angeles stated that about 30-35 percent of encampment residents have a substance use disorder, mental health condition, or both.

Outreach workers and public health officials believe that people living in encampments have more complex mental and physical health conditions now than they did in the past. The increased acuity of encampment residents stems from a combination of substance use disorders and mental health issues. Outreach workers report that the most vulnerable encampment residents tend to take a long time to accept housing and services, which further contributes to declines in their physical and mental health. People with mental health conditions also may rely on the support of others living in the encampments and be hesitant to leave their current source of support. In addition, people with severe mental illness may be unable to obtain or maintain benefits that would help them exit homelessness and may have barriers that prevent them from building trusting relationships with outreach workers.

¹³ Since encampments are often located adjacent to streets, there is a high incidence of vehicle injury among people staying in encampments. One outreach worker said that many people refuse treatment for injuries because they don't want to leave their encampment out of fear of losing their spot or theft of their personal belongings.

3. Responding to Encampments

As the number of people experiencing unsheltered homelessness and living in encampments continues to rise across the Los Angeles region, both the County and City governments have launched robust efforts to provide assistance to people living in encampments and to try to reduce the numbers of encampments and their sizes. A County official stated that they are “*trying to balance the maintenance of County spaces with a growing number of encampments. There is a need to balance the quality of life for people in encampments with overall community health and wellbeing.*” To achieve this balance, both Los Angeles County and City established processes to clear and close encampments in response to safety concerns and complaints from housed neighbors. This section details the outreach efforts to people in encampments, how Los Angeles County and the City of Los Angeles prioritize encampment responses, and the County and City agencies and departments that partner to implement the responses.

3.1 Outreach is the Cornerstone of LA County and City’s Encampment Response

To achieve a balance between the needs of people staying in encampments and the overall health of the community, both the County and the City have made outreach to people living in encampments their top priority. Drawing on the capacity of dozens of organizations providing outreach to people experiencing unsheltered homelessness, outreach teams work across Los Angeles County (including the City of Los Angeles), engaging people staying in encampments and establishing rapport with them. Outreach workers begin by addressing their immediate needs and then try to connect them with any available housing opportunities. Any attempt to clear and close an encampment is preceded by efforts to enhance the quality of life of people in encampments and provide them with alternatives.

Across Los Angeles County and City, the Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority (LAHSA) is largest provider of general outreach services to people living in encampments. LAHSA staffs its own outreach teams and also provides funding to other organizations to conduct outreach activities. These general outreach services are supplemented by specialized outreach for people with needs such as mental health and substance abuse services or outreach focused explicitly on preparation for cleaning or clearing an encampment. Appendix B provides additional details on the organizations that provide different types of outreach related to County and City responses. Outreach teams routinely visit encampments across Los Angeles based on a planned schedule and provide “*voluntary, client centered, trauma-informed care*” and connections to low-barrier housing resources.¹⁴ The focus of general outreach to people living in encampment settings includes establishing rapport and identifying their immediate needs such as food, water, hygiene supplies, and medical care. These outreach staff then continue to build communication, developing a list that documents every individual currently staying in the encampment and their needs.¹⁵

General outreach workers also may help people living in encampments with:

- obtaining their personal documentation (e.g., birth certificate, state identification card) needed to obtain housing or services;

¹⁴ LAHSA. Best Practices for Addressing Street Encampments. June 2021. Pg. 2.

¹⁵ Ibid, pg. 7.

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- enrolling in public benefits such as CalWORKS, Calfresh, Medi-Cal, and Social Security disability benefits; and
- accessing available emergency shelter or other interim housing when they are available.¹⁶

Accepting outreach is voluntary, and people in encampments sometimes decline to engage with outreach workers initially or at all.

Depending on the observed or assessed needs of the people living in an encampment, general outreach workers may request support from specialized outreach teams, including the Department of Mental Health’s (DMH) Homeless Outreach and Mobile Engagement (HOME) team or the Department of Health Services’ Housing for Health Multidisciplinary teams (MDTs). These teams are comprised of specialist outreach workers who provide medical, mental health, and substance use care, as well as specialized case management.

The City’s response to encampments includes outreach focused on preparing for cleaning an encampment and engaging with residents on the day of the cleaning. Outreach teams pair Los Angeles Sanitation (LASAN) workers with LAHSA Homeless Engagement Team (HET) outreach workers, with one team assigned to each Council District.

In 2017, Los Angeles County implemented *Strategy E6: Countywide Outreach System* within its Comprehensive Homeless Plan. Prior to E6, numerous outreach teams worked independently and did not coordinate their efforts. Under the E6 strategy, three core agencies, LASHA, DMH, and DHS, began working together on the provision and measurement of outreach activities across the County, resulting in a new streamlined system for providing outreach services. LAHSA also implemented a centralized way to request outreach. Outreach coordinators in each of the eight regional Service Provision Areas (SPAs) receive outreach requests through the Los Angeles Homeless Outreach Portal (LA-HOP), a web-based tool where both unhoused people and their housed neighbors can request assistance. The outreach coordinators review, assess, and assign requests based on highest need. Teams use the local Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) to track outreach efforts, the Coordinated Entry System’s

Outreach during the COVID-19 Pandemic

During the pandemic, some people experiencing unsheltered homelessness chose to stay in encampment settings to avoid contracting COVID-19. Encampments offer an opportunity to practice social distancing and isolate from other people outside of their household. During the pandemic, outreach workers shifted to “lifesaving mode” and stepped up their interaction with people staying in encampments. Across the region, outreach teams received additional funding to expand their work and shift their focus to protecting people living in encampments from contracting COVID-19. Early in the pandemic, their additional support roles included delivering meals to people living in encampments and distributing personal protective equipment (PPE) such as masks, gloves, and hand sanitizer. As testing became more widely available, outreach workers also connected people in encampments with information about testing locations. Once vaccines were available, outreach workers promoted vaccines and helped transport people in encampments to vaccination sites.

¹⁶ Resource Development Associates. Los Angeles County Chief Executive Office—Research and Evaluation Services. Homeless Initiative Strategy E6: Countywide Outreach System, Implementation Evaluation. December 2019. Xvii.

assessments of people reached by outreach workers, and whether they have entered temporary housing or other components of the homeless service system.

The County, City, and LAHSA coordinate more than 150 outreach teams across Los Angeles County.¹⁷ In response to recent legal proceedings, the City of Los Angeles is implementing its own outreach strategy, in addition to the County E6 strategy. The City’s Outreach Engagement Framework, adopted in 2021, describes the outreach services to people living in unsheltered locations including encampments.¹⁸ This additional outreach is intended to move more people living on the streets and in encampments in the City into housing.

A Director of Outreach is in the Office of the City’s Administrative Officer (CAO) and oversees five regional Outreach Coordinators. Each of these Coordinators liaises with three City Council Districts and helps to design and implement each council district’s street engagement strategy and coordinate outreach efforts within the districts.¹⁹ The City’s Unified Homelessness Response Center (UHRC), a centralized command center to facilitate interagency coordination across the City, also helps to coordinate the various outreach efforts happening across the City.

3.2 *The Growing Number of Encampments Requires Prioritization of Formal Responses*

As the number, size, and permanency of encampments continues to rise throughout the area, local residents are increasing pressure on public officials to clear and close encampments near their homes and businesses. The County and City use different processes to determine whether an encampment response should occur. In both the County and City, these responses can result in the encampment being cleared and closed permanently using their established protocols. However, in both jurisdictions, encampments are often cleaned for sanitation but not formally cleared from the location. Because of the large number of encampments, the demand for formal encampment responses is greater than the resources to conduct them. As a result, the County and the City each developed an approach for identifying, tracking, and prioritizing requests for encampment responses, including cleanings and clearings.

In Los Angeles County, requests for encampment responses come in from multiple points, including the County Board of Supervisors offices, Los Angeles’ Homeless Outreach Portal (LA-HOP) operated by LAHSA, Department of Public Works (DPW) “The Works” website or mobile application, and the County Sheriff’s Department (LASD). The County’s Executive Office’s (CEO) Homeless Initiative (HI), in consultation with LASD, LAHSA, and DPW, makes the final decision about which encampments to initiate a formal response, with decision whether to respond to an encampment made “*on a case-by-case basis.*” As of fall 2022, the County prioritized encampments of 20 or more people that are located near schools or other areas with exigent safety concerns such as an area that floods or is at high-risk for fire.

¹⁷ City of Los Angeles, Outreach Engagement Framework. https://clkrep.lacity.org/online/docs/2021/21-0329_rpt_cla_8-31-21.pdf

¹⁸ City of Los Angeles, Revised Attachment A, Outreach Engagement Framework. https://clkrep.lacity.org/online/docs/2020/20-1376_misc_a_9-2-21.pdf.

¹⁹ Home for Good. Los Angeles Finally Has a Street Outreach Framework. Will It Work? | Home For Good (homeforgoodla.org).

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In contrast to the County, the City of Los Angeles relies on three City Municipal Codes (LAMC) that preclude encampments in certain areas.

- **LAMC 41.18** is an anti-loitering ordinance that states that no individual can obstruct a street, bridge, fire hydrant, or other public space by sitting, lying, sleeping or storing, using, maintaining, or placing property in a public right-of-way. This restriction extends a maximum of 500 feet from “sensitive use” areas, which include schools, public parks, and public libraries.²⁰ In order to enforce 41.18, the City Council must designate, through a resolution from a City Council member, a specific area for enforcement against sitting, lying, storing, etc. The City must also post signage stating these rules and the date on which they go into effect, and this date must be at least 14 days after the date of postage. This ordinance aims to move people living on the street into interim housing. In September 2022, Los Angeles City Council expanded 41.18 to include encampments within 500 feet of schools and daycare centers. Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD) has primary enforcement responsibility for this ordinance, with direction from City Council offices. Typically, enforcement of 41.18 relies on voluntary compliance of people staying in encampments. As of fall 2022, the ordinance was not being enforced consistently across the City as there were few available options for moving people off the street and into interim housing at that time.
- **LAMC 56.11** regulates the storage of personal property in the public right of way. It states that no one can store unattended personal property in a public area such as streets and sidewalks, as well as within ten feet around any entrance, exit, driveway, or loading dock.²¹ This ordinance aims to ensure free access to public areas such as sidewalks or doorways. The City may remove and impound any unattended personal property within 72 hours of a posted pre-removal notice. The pre-removal notice must be posted 24 hours beforehand, and once removal begins belongings will be stored or thrown away if deemed hazardous. LASAN has primary enforcement responsibility for this ordinance, though aspects of the ordinance were not regularly being enforced as of late 2022.



Photo: Sign postage of LAMC 41.18

Source: Abt Associates

²⁰ Los Angeles, CA., Municipal Code ch. 4 § 41.18. 2021). https://codelibrary.amlegal.com/codes/los_angeles/latest/lamc/0-0-0-128514.

²¹ Los Angeles, CA., Municipal Code ch. 5 § 56.11. 2016. https://codelibrary.amlegal.com/codes/los_angeles/latest/lamc/0-0-0-138386.

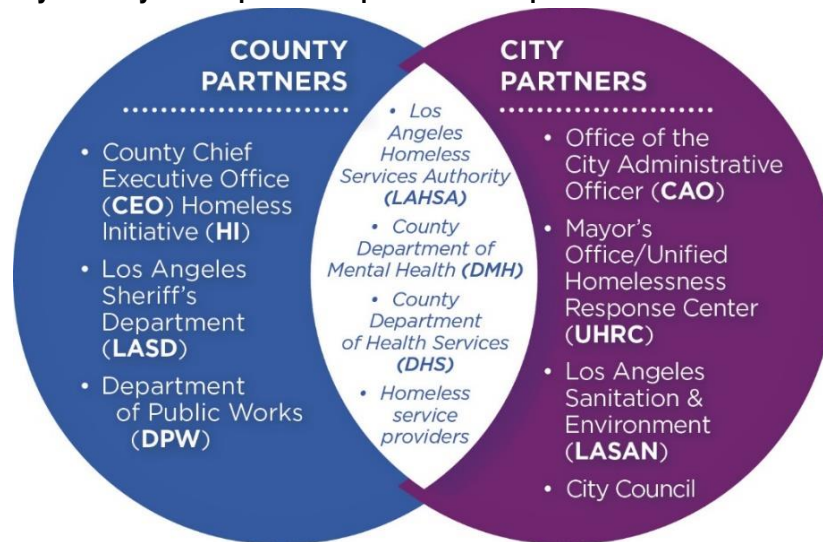
- **LAMC 63.44** oversees regulation of City parks and recreation areas and states that overnight and after-hours entrance, loitering, or camping is prohibited in City parks.²² Storage of bulky items, tents, and other personal property is also prohibited per a July 2015 amendment (Ordinance 183,761)²³ and enforced by code 56.11. Pre-removal notice is posted 24 hours before removal, but notice is not required for non-permitted bulky items and potentially hazardous items.

In the City, complaints about encampments from residents and business owners are received through myLA 311, LA-HOP (operated by LAHSA), and via emails and phone calls to the City Council district offices. LASAN staff reported that they received tens of thousands of requests through myLA 311 for encampment responses during the last year. The UHRC coordinates with City Council district offices to prioritize which encampments will receive cleanings and which if any will have clearance actions.

3.3 Encampment Responses Are Implemented by an Array of Partners

Both the County and the City encampment responses involve a multitude of implementation partners. Different entities coordinate each jurisdiction’s response. In the unincorporated areas of the County and contract cities, the Homeless Initiative in the County’s CEO oversees encampment responses. In the City, responsibility for overseeing encampment responses is divided between the CAO Office, the UHRC operated out of the Mayor’s Office, and the 15 Council Districts in the City. As shown in the middle section of Exhibit 3.1, three implementation partners—LAHSA, DMH, and DHS—fulfill the same outreach role in the County and City responses. Similarly, each jurisdiction’s sanitation/environmental services department (DPW and LASAN) play critical roles in their encampment response, cleaning encampments and removing trash and debris during clearance activities.

Exhibit 3.1. County and City Encampment Response Lead Implementation Partners



²² Los Angeles, CA., Municipal Code ch. 6 § 63.44. 1979. https://codelibrary.amlegal.com/codes/los_angeles/latest/lamc/0-0-0-159459.

²³ Los Angeles, CA., Ordinance 183,761, Los Angeles Municipal Code § 63.44. 2015. https://codelibrary.amlegal.com/codes/los_angeles/latest/lamc/0-0-0-159459.

SECTION 3: RESPONDING TO ENCAMPMENTS

Exhibit 3.2 presents the key partners involved in the County’s response to encampments and their main roles. The County’s encampment response is led by the CEO’s Homeless Initiative, responsible for approving requests for implementing the county-wide protocol. The County’s DPW assists in identifying encampments for responses and is responsible for removing trash and debris from encampments when they are being cleared and closed. A major feature of the County’s approach is that the LASD is a key implementation partner. One County official stated that having law enforcement involved in their encampment response *“makes a huge difference because there is a different perception about their role of authority, even if there is no threat of arrest. People are more willing to move on and accept services.”* The LASD’s Homeless Outreach Service Team (HOST) and LAHSA’s HOST work together as an integrated team, with LASD HOST officers receiving specialized training to understand people experiencing homelessness and best practices around delivering services to them, as well as legal considerations and enforcement and collaboration approaches. LASD HOST and LAHSA HOST co-lead the documentation, assessment, outreach, and monitoring of the encampment leading up to its closure. Specialized outreach teams from the County DMH and DHS also participate in outreach activities as needed.

Exhibit 3.2. Key County Partners and their Roles

Organization Name	Role
Chief Executive Office’s (CEO) Homeless Initiative (HI)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oversee implementation of county-wide encampment protocol • Coordinate encampment responses • Approve or deny encampment protocol response requests • Initiate encampment response in Homeless Encampment Auto Request Submission (HEARS) system and track encampment response progress
Department of Public Works (DPW)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify and report encampment sites that pose risks to people or infrastructure • Provide posting notification of clean-up efforts • Coordinate clean-up of encampment debris, including providing dumpsters at prioritized encampment locations, removing trash, and placing hygiene stations Support storage of belongings
Los Angeles Sheriff’s Department (LASD)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify and report encampments • Visit encampments and engage in outreach activities, cultivating relationships and providing incentives to people who accept help • Provide multi-jurisdictional support • Monitor location of encampment for 30-60 days post-cleanup
Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority (LAHSA)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assess encampments and coordinate outreach with DMH and other community-based partners. • Conduct outreach to connect people staying in encampments to services and available interim housing • Oversee LA-HOP outreach requests and deploy outreach coordinators as needed • Provide direct emergency services (e.g., hygiene kits, water, food vouchers, etc.)
County Department of Mental Health (DMH)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engage in specialty treatment programs, partner with outreach teams as requested by LASHA, County, or City, engage at cleanups • Manage the DMH Homeless Outreach & Mobile Engagement (HOME) program via coordination of ten teams across eight Service Planning Areas (SPAs) • Aid in finding clinically appropriate housing placements • Provide psychiatric crisis assessments (known as 5150 evaluations) for individuals who may require hospitalization • Follow clients for as long as necessary, until they are amenable to treatment or services • Provide training for law enforcement partners
County Department of Health Services (DHS)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff and manage specialized outreach teams, including MDTs, Public Spaces, and County + City + Community (C3) Teams (see Appendix B for description)

SECTION 3: RESPONDING TO ENCAMPMENTS

Exhibit 3.3 presents the key partners in the City’s response. In the City, coordination of encampment responses is co-led by three partners: the Office of the CAO, the UHRC in the Mayor’s Office, and the 15 City Council district offices. City councilmembers have a significant role in encampment response activities, including the ability to designate areas as 41.18 enforcement zones and decide in what locations to conduct clean ups and closures. City officials acknowledged there can be some overlap in the roles of the CAO and UHRC in overseeing the City’s response to encampments. Similar to the County, LASAN plays a significant role in the city’s encampment response. LASAN is the lead public agency that responds to personal property in public rights of way. LAHSA, DMH, and DHS conduct outreach leading up to encampment clearance and closure activities.

Other City departments also play a critical role in supporting the City's encampment strategy. These departments, including the Department on Disability, the Department of Transportation, Street Services, the Department of Animal Services, the Department of Recreation and Parks, the City Attorney's office, and the Fire Department, all support the city’s response to encampments. Currently (as of fall 2022), the LAPD has a more minor role, encouraging voluntary compliance with encampment cleanings by attending scheduled cleanings and providing security for LASAN workers. At this time, LAPD is not involved in outreach activities. Planning meetings between all of the partners occur either weekly or bi-weekly.

Exhibit 3.3. Key City Partners and their Roles

Organization Name	Role
Office of the City Administrative Officer (CAO)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Manage federal, state, and local funding to respond to homelessness and coordinate the city’s response to homelessness. • Oversee Street Engagement Strategy, lead coordination agency for enforcing 41.18 • Operate the City Homeless Outreach Coordination Unit, which works with the City Council Districts to implement a tailored response to encampments in each Council District. • Coordinate with other clean-up operations
Unified Homelessness Response Center (UHRC)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Serve as the “air traffic controller” to coordinate and implement the city’s homeless initiatives, part of the Mayor’s Office of City Homelessness Initiatives • Coordinate the Encampments to Home initiative
City Council Offices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Designate 41.18 enforcement areas • Prioritize encampments for cleaning and outreach efforts • Support additional outreach efforts to local encampments • Respond to citizen and business concerns about encampments in their district
Los Angeles Sanitation & Environment (LASAN)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Responds to personal property in public right of way (56.11), think of themselves as “property people” • Visit encampment and conduct preliminary investigation, documenting number of belongings and whether attended, extent of contamination, make recommendation about type of cleaning, length of time to execute. • Send personal belongings to “The Bin” and other city storage facilities
Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority (LAHSA)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coordinate homeless outreach efforts for the whole County • Operate Homeless Engagement Teams (HET)
Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support CARE+ and CARE teams as needed with encampment cleaning and closure efforts • Participate in Unified Homelessness Response Center (UHRC) meetings

4. Implementing a Protocol for Encampment Responses

In some circumstances, the County and City may decide it is necessary to implement a formal response to a specific encampment. This section describes how the formal processes and protocols developed by the County and City to respond to homeless encampments are implemented once an encampment has been prioritized.

4.1 Implementing Los Angeles County’s Encampment Protocol

The County Chief Executive’s Office’s (CEO’s) Homeless Initiative (HI), Los Angeles County Sheriff Department (LASD), the Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority (LAHSA), and the County Department of Public Works (DPW) collaborate to implement the *Protocol for Reporting and Responding to Homeless Encampments or Concentrated Homeless Activities*. The protocol applies in unincorporated areas of the County and jurisdictions that contract with the County’s Sheriff Department (Exhibit 4.1).²⁴

Prior to early 2020, the use of the County encampment protocol typically resulted in an encampment cleared from a location after outreach staff engaged with residents and offered supportive services and sometimes linkages to interim housing. With the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, Los Angeles County adhered to the U.S. Center for Disease Control’s (CDC) guidance not to clear encampments, as encampments allowed for more social distancing and potentially offered less opportunity for the virus to spread than congregate shelters. The County instead shifted its focus to completing non-displacement cleanups at prioritized encampments. County officials stated that, during the pandemic, they engaged the full protocol and cleared an encampment only if there were exigent health circumstances (e.g., people living in flood channels, behind floodgates). Otherwise, the HOST teams visited encampments to clean and remove debris.

Exhibit 4.1. Geography Where LA County Encampment Protocol is Used

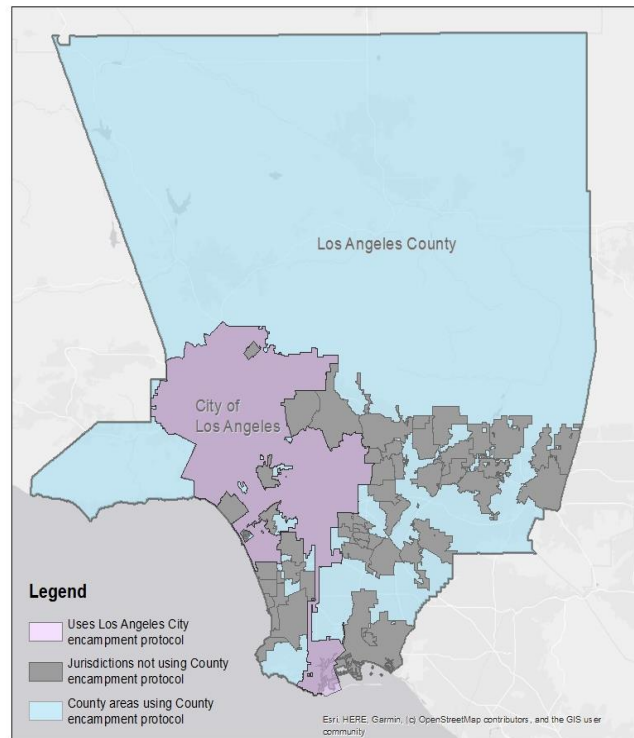


Exhibit 4.2. LA County Encampment Response Process



²⁴ The County Encampment Protocol also applies to County owned and managed properties that are within the City of Los Angeles or other cities with their own police departments.

SECTION 4: IMPLEMENTING A PROTOCOL FOR ENCAMPMENT RESPONSES

When initiating a request for engaging the protocol, LAHSA Homeless Outreach Service Teams (HOST) and LASD Homeless Outreach Service Team (HOST) staff visit the encampment to conduct an in-depth assessment, including how long it will take to complete outreach and clear the encampment. The goal is for this assessment to be completed within 72 hours of approval, but, given demands on HOST staff, this can take longer. During the assessment phase, LAHSA HOST workers document all people living in the encampment and complete a Coordinated Entry System (CES) assessment for everyone present. They also document items at the encampments and take photographs. They determine whether to engage any other specialized outreach assistance, such as the County Department of Mental Health (DMH) Homeless Outreach and Mobile Engagement (HOME) team or the County Department of Health Services (DHS) Multidisciplinary Teams (MDT). This assessment process helps to determine whether people staying in the encampment are already connected to outreach workers or case managers at local homeless service providers. The information collected during the assessment process is then uploaded to the encampment tracking system, the Homeless Encampment Auto Request Submission (HEARS).

LA County Uses Centralized Encampment Reporting and Tracking System

Los Angeles County uses the GIS-based Homeless Encampment Auto Request Submission (HEARS) platform to track encampments identified within the County's jurisdiction. Each encampment is placed on the online map to identify its precise location. The information from the County's Encampment Identification Form is then entered into HEARS so that all County partners can share information and track progress occurring at each encampment. County staff can upload photographs and notes to provide information on response activities, and staff use the geographic location to plan activities in relationship to other encampments in the same geographic area. The HEARS map has different colors assigned to encampments to delineate their current status. County staff stated that automating the identification, approval, and tracking processes maximizes the use of limited staff capacity and helps support conversations with other County departments.

Once the assessment is complete and the form approved through the agency's internal chain of command and CEO HI, outreach efforts to people staying in the encampment begin. Based on information reported by the HOST teams, the CEO HI staff, with input from LASD HOST and LAHSA HOST, decides on a timeline for continuing outreach and engagement at the encampment and for eventual cleaning and closure. Once a date of action is determined, LASD HOST and DPW post a notice two weeks prior to the event and then a week beforehand. For urgent cleanups like those for encampments in storm drains or riverbeds, three days' notice is preferred but not always provided. After the initial posting, outreach work continues with both LASHA teams and LASD HOST team members visiting the encampment. HOST workers may ask LASD HOST teams to accompany them on their visits to the encampments if the outreach staff have safety concerns. HET outreach workers also present any available interim housing opportunities to encampment residents. The LASD HOST continues to periodically visit the encampment and act as a deterrent to unlawful activity. LASD HOST staff also identifies the owner of the property where the encampment is located and determines any other jurisdictions that should be involved in the closure process.

HOST and HET team members stated that, by the day of the encampment resolution or cleaning, typically few if any people remain at the encampment. If people are still at the encampment, outreach staff offer services and referrals to shelters if space is available. HOST teams provide a warm hand-off of people

SECTION 4: IMPLEMENTING A PROTOCOL FOR ENCAMPMENT RESPONSES

remaining at the encampment on the day of closure to homeless service providers in the area for periodic follow-up by other outreach teams.

LASD HOST team members help ensure an orderly process and keep other staff safe during the cleanup process. On the day of resolution, DPW removes trash and debris and sanitizes the area where the encampment is located. DPW staff will not interact with any encampment residents without LASD law enforcement with HOST training present, as there has been an increase in violence toward DPW staff. Hazardous waste such as human waste and needles are cleaned up by a contractor. LAHSA outreach teams provide bags for people to dispose of trash and waste during the cleanup. Abandoned items and things left behind by encampment residents that are in roadways or floodways are picked up by DPW staff to be disposed. DPW provides storage for people's personal belongings for up to 90 days. DPW documents their work. If encampments are on County-owned land, after clearance and closure, the County erects fencing to deter future encampment formation.

After the encampment is closed, LAHSA HET and LASD HOST will continue to monitor a closed encampment location for between 30 and 60 days to ensure that people do not return to the area and reestablish an encampment. Implementing the City of Los Angeles' Encampment Response

The City of Los Angeles built upon the County's approach to managing encampments, establishing their own encampment protocol in 2021. Their responses target violations of LAMC 41.18 in specific areas (as described in Chapter 3), as well as special encampment enforcement zones around interim housing sites. In addition to these responses, the City also has a process for conducting encampment clean-ups for violations of LAMC 56.11, which prohibits the storage of personal property on public property. While the City also suspended cleanings and closures at the onset of the pandemic, they resumed cleanings gradually under the advisement of local public health officials with new procedures to protect the people staying in the encampment and staff. The next section describes the city's response to encampments, including clearance and cleaning actions.

Encampment to Home

In 2018, a group of local stakeholders, including LAHSA, local philanthropists, and homeless service providers piloted a new model to help house people staying in larger, high-profile encampments in public spaces. The "[Encampment to Home](#)" approach combines high-touch outreach to engage everyone in a larger encampment over a set period of time and move them into dedicated housing units. Coordinated outreach teams conduct extensive engagement activities focused on expedited housing navigation and storage of personal belongings to move people quickly into interim or permanent housing. In 2021, the City began to support the Encampment to Home model. Encampments to Home events occurred in Venice Beach, South L.A., Echo Park Lake, MacArthur Park, Westchester Park, and El Pueblo.

City Encampment Clearance Response

The CAO leads the implementation of the City's [Street Engagement and Management](#) strategy, which outlines the City's formal process for designating a 41.18 zone. The protocol begins after a City Councilmember introduces a resolution to designate a 41.18 implementation for a specific encampment. Once a resolution has been introduced, the UHRC and CAO inform LAHSA, the City's Sanitation & Environment department (LASAN), and DHS outreach teams of the location and begin completing the Encampment Assessment Form. This form includes information collected about the encampment, including the number of people present, the identified needs of each individual, hygiene and sanitation

SECTION 4: IMPLEMENTING A PROTOCOL FOR ENCAMPMENT RESPONSES

concerns, and needs for hazardous waste removal. Further coordination with the Council offices and the UHRC and CAO occurs to determine which department will lead the engagement. After approval of the City Council resolution, the CAO and UHRC coordinate with LAHSA outreach teams to complete the Encampment Assessment Form. Then the relevant City Council Office and UHRC coordinate outreach efforts.

The engagement lead and LAHSA outreach workers visit the encampment to determine the housing and other service needs of people in the encampment and work with the CES coordinator for the area to identify any potential housing options in the community. The lead encampment agency works with LASAN to develop a street engagement and hygiene plan for the encampment. The City deploys a range of hygiene services to people living in unsheltered locations, including mobile showers, attended bathrooms, and mobile laundry. Outreach workers also administer a CES assessment to all people present in the encampment. If needed, DHS' Multidisciplinary Team (MDT) staff are engaged to help support needed services for people staying in the encampment. Throughout the outreach process, the engagement lead produces daily reports on services offered and housing placements made.

After needs assessments occur, CAO, UHRC, and Council offices, working with the encampment lead, identify a timeline for conducting the final clean up and closure of the encampment. Signage about the upcoming cleanup is posted by LASAN staff. At that time, the Council Office recommends whether the encampment location should have deterrents to reestablishing the encampment constructed, such as fencing or another type of physical barrier.

On final engagement day, sanitation staff and other outreach workers arrive to clear and close the encampment. City officials reported that many people leave the encampment prior to the cleaning day. Outreach workers monitor the site for two weeks after the encampment closure occurs, and signs are posted that notify people the date after which lying or sleeping is prohibited by LAMC 41.18. LAHSA HET workers begin checking on the encampment site 14 days after posting to ensure that people have not returned to the site and reestablished an encampment.

City Encampment Cleaning Response

Not all 41.18 operations are enforcement operations. In many instances, a 41.18 response is cleaning focused to quickly address contaminated and unsanitary conditions that exist in encampments. The City conducts two types of sanitation cleanings, Comprehensive Cleaning and Rapid Engagement (CARE) and CARE+ cleanings. CARE responses involve light spot cleaning (e.g., power washing sidewalks and

Addressing Violations of 41.18

Given the large number of encampments in the city that violate the LAMC 41.18 prohibitions against loitering, many had not been prioritized for cleaning and closure as of the fall of 2022. As of that time, LAPD reported that compliance with LAMC 41.18 is largely voluntary, meaning that the LAPD does not routinely cite or arrest people staying in encampments for violation of this code (as well as LAMC 56.11 relating to unattended personal property). Instead, LAPD officers encourage people staying in encampments to comply with posted notices. At that time, the LAPD did not have a formal role during the encampment outreach process.* However, LAPD officers deployed in the area are aware of scheduled closures and routine cleanings of enforcement zones and may attend encampment cleaning and closure events, time permitting.

*Prior to 2020, specially trained LAPD officers participated in outreach activities as part of Homeless Outreach and Proactive Engagement (HOPE) teams, working with LASAN and LAHSA outreach teams. Due to budget cuts and staffing challenges, HOPE teams are no longer operating.

SECTION 4: IMPLEMENTING A PROTOCOL FOR ENCAMPMENT RESPONSES

removing trash) and are completed in response to violations of LAMC 56.11. CARE+ cleanings occur following a response to a posted comprehensive cleanup notice and are conducted weekly on a designated day (see photo at right). For these in-depth cleanings, heavy machinery and biohazard contractors may be used to dispose of large amounts of waste and contaminated belongings. LASAN waste trucks also can be deployed to collect large amounts of trash and debris. Each City Council district office can schedule CARE+ weekly encampment cleanups at two locations in their district and the lighter touch CARE cleanings weekly at three locations. Each Council District office is responsible for scheduling priority cleanings on a 20-week calendar.

To create awareness of the impending CARE or CARE+ clean-ups, LASAN staff visit the encampment to post official notice of the cleaning 24 to 48 hours in advance, instructing people to prepare to vacate the area. LAHSA outreach workers then visit the encampment at the time of the notice to build rapport and trust with people staying in the encampment. They encourage people in the encampments to make their own decision to move rather than be forced to move. Once a notice has been posted, cleanings will continue to occur weekly as designated in the sign (see photos).



Photo: Comprehensive Street Cleaning sign
Source: Abt Associates



Photo: Special Enforcement and Cleaning Zone sign
Source: Abt Associates

LASAN workers are the “property people” and have responsibility on the day of the cleaning to determine whether items at the encampment are contaminated or not contaminated. LASAN staff also must determine what is trash and what is a personal item to be stored. This decision can be challenging, because people staying in encampments may want to keep items that sanitation workers may think are trash, such as plastic bags and used food containers. Before the clean-up, LASAN staff first survey the encampment location to estimate the number of people staying in the encampment and the quantity of trash and personal items. They document their findings to prepare for the cleaning event.

On the designated clean-up day, LAHSA HET staff typically attend the cleanup to encourage any people still at the encampment to move themselves and their belongings from the area so the cleaning can occur. LAPD officers also may be present to encourage people to move from the location scheduled for cleaning. Once people have left and taken the

SECTION 4: IMPLEMENTING A PROTOCOL FOR ENCAMPMENT RESPONSES

belongings they want, LASAN staff are responsible for disposing of the remaining trash or debris. A separate contractor has responsibility for disposal of contaminated items. Unattended items that are not determined to be trash or debris are bagged and tagged by LASAN staff in a clear plastic bag and with a manifest of the items. The bags are sent to “the Bin,” and other city storage facilities for people experiencing homelessness. Each person’s items are stored in a 96-gallon plastic bin with a lock. LASAN posts a notice that the items have been moved to storage. LASAN then stores these items for 90 days. If the belongings are not claimed, they are disposed of.

Once all people have vacated the encampment and personal belongings have been removed, LASAN staff begin executing a CARE+ cleaning (described above).

Recently, LASAN outreach staff have experienced both verbal and physical assaults during encampment cleanings and resolutions. Sometimes people in encampments are reluctant to dispose of or store their personal belongings and will confront or become violent with LASAN workers. LAPD has trained LASAN workers to use police radios so that they can request law enforcement assistance quickly if encampment clean-up activities escalate into violence.

Growing Number of People Staying in RVs on Public Streets

People living in recreational vehicles (RVs) parked on public streets is a growing phenomenon across Los Angeles County. This growth accelerated during the pandemic and included people living in RVs as a personal preference and as a place of last resort. Some people purchase used RVs in anticipation of losing their housing, while other people experiencing homelessness rent RVs for the night or week from “RV landlords.” In August 2022, the County’s Chief Executive Office’s Homeless Initiative reported that roughly 5,200 RVs were being used in this way across the county.* RVs that are being lived in as a place of last resort often are not well maintained and can be hazardous to the environment as well as the occupant’s quality of life. Often, RVs are parked adjacent to or near tent encampments.

The demographics of people living in RVs differs from those of tent encampments. City officials report that people staying in RVs are often younger (sometimes minors), and younger people tend to park their RVs in clusters. Families with children are more likely to stay in RVs than in tent encampments. County staff stated that many living in RVs are undocumented. Some people staying in RVs are employed or have incomes and do not consider themselves to be homeless, which can make outreach engagement difficult. City officials reported that people staying in RVs may be wary of accepting interim housing and shelter placements because they are worried about their RVs and property being seized and do not want to give up the privacy that an RV provides.

Los Angeles County DHS typically respond to RVs because they often encompass quality of life issues including sewage, blackwater, and debris. The County DPW collects trash left outside RVs and is currently focusing on non-displacement cleanups because of COVID-19 guidelines. In January 2022, a new County-wide RV encampment program began that supplements the work of HET staff. The program engages in disposal of hazardous RVs, minimizing improper disposal of RV waste, and also creates safe parking opportunities for people with their RVs.**

The City of Los Angeles LAMC 85.02 prohibits vehicular residences on residential streets or within 500 feet of parks and schools. The ordinance’s authorization lapsed at the end of 2019, allowing people to park all over the City. This moratorium continued during the pandemic, and currently vehicle dwelling is not prohibited. Within the City, LAPD and the City Department of Transportation are the only departments that can impound an RV, removing it from the street. The City’s strategy is to engage this population through existing outreach processes. Ultimately, the goal is to remove non-functional or dilapidated RVs from the street permanently by destroying them after they are impounded and placing people living in them into interim or permanent housing.

Both Los Angeles County and City are in the process of updating and revising their procedures for responding to people permanently living in RVs.

* County of Los Angeles, Chief Executive Office. Addressing RV Encampments During the Covid-19 Recovery. August 12, 2022.

** LA County Supervisors Holly J. Mitchell and Kathryn Barger. “Revised Motion: Establishing a Countywide RV Encampment Pilot Program” September 13, 2022.

5. Challenges to Reducing Encampments

Despite Los Angeles County and City efforts to close encampments across the region, challenges to making significant progress remain. This section discusses two of the largest barriers to successfully moving people from encampments, insufficient funding for encampment responses and the continuing lack of affordable housing in the region.

5.1 *The County and City Use Multiple Funding Sources to Support Their Encampment Responses, but More Funding Is Needed to Meet Demand*

Responding to encampments is a significant expenditure for municipalities, as the ongoing outreach and subsequent cleaning and clearing activities are labor-intensive. Historically, federal funding for encampment response has been limited, so counties and cities have funded encampment responses largely from their own resources.²⁵ However, in response to the crisis of unsheltered homelessness crisis across California, state resources have now been made available to support the cost of responding to encampments.

In 2022 the state began funding an Encampment Resolution Grant program. Cities and counties can apply for funding to implement a local demonstration project that “*supports cross-systems collaboration and service strategies to help people experiencing homelessness transition out of encampments toward safe and stable housing pathways.*”²⁶ As of late 2022, the state had awarded two rounds of grants. The first round included awards to the City of Long Beach (\$1.3 million) and the City of Los Angeles (\$1.7 million). In the second round of funding, LAHSA received a \$14.96 million grant to serve women and families living in Skid Row encampments. Street outreach activities to people living in encampment settings are also funded using the state’s Homeless Housing, Assistance, and Prevention Program (HHAP).

Recent local investments in outreach services also have helped accelerate County and City responses to homeless encampments. As of August 2021, 166 government funded outreach teams were active across Los Angeles County.²⁷ Outreach teams have several sources of funding. Measure H funding is used by the Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority (LAHSA) to support its Homeless Engagement teams²⁸; the County’s Department of Mental Health (DMH) provides funding for its HOME teams using a combination of Mental Health Services Act and Medi-Cal funding; and the County Department of Health Services (DHS) uses Measure H to fund its Multidisciplinary Teams. These teams work Countywide,

²⁵ Dunton, L., Khadduri, J., Burnett, K., Fiore, N., Yetvin, W. City Approaches to Encampments and What They Cost. Abt Associates, Inc. for the Office of Policy Development and Research, U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. 2020. Pg. 43.

²⁶ California Grants Portal. *Encampment Resolution Funding Program*. <https://www.grants.ca.gov/grants/encampment-resolution-funding-program/>.

²⁷ Report of the Los Angeles City Chief Legislative Analyst. *Outreach Engagement Framework*. August 31, 2021. https://clkrep.lacity.org/onlinedocs/2020/20-1376_rpt_cla_8-31-21.pdf.

²⁸ In 2017, Los Angeles County voters approved a .25 percent sales tax (known as Measure H) to support efforts to prevent and address homelessness.

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including in the City of LA. Measure H funding also supports LAHSA's Countywide Outreach System, which coordinates 150 outreach teams as part of the County's Homeless Initiative Strategy, E6.

Outreach efforts directed by City departments, Council Offices, and the Unified Homelessness Response Center (UHRC) are funded in part by Measure H and in part by the City's General Fund. Using these and other funding streams, the City is developing its own capacity for encampment outreach services to augment Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority's (LAHSA's) outreach efforts. Citing frustration with LAHSA's insufficient levels of outreach and failure to respond to City priorities, the Los Angeles City Council is planning to administer its own contracts with an array of outreach providers. Councilmembers will be able to choose which providers will conduct outreach to encampments in their districts. The City also uses state Homeless Emergency Aid Program (HEAP) and Homeless Housing, Assistance and Prevention (HHAP) grant funding to support street-based services including hygiene services and street medicine teams.

Even with multiple funding streams across different levels of government, more funding is needed to help respond to encampments in Los Angeles. Both the County and City are planning encampment response activities months in advance to address a growing queue of encampment identifications and assessments. With these response commitments already made, the County and City have limited flexibility to respond quickly to the acute needs of people experiencing homelessness and to community concerns about new encampment formation. City and County officials also report a need to increase funding for vehicle storage (especially RVs), storage of personal belongings, resources for assisting non-English speakers, interim housing for people with pets, and above all, permanent supportive housing.

5.2 The Lack of Housing Options Continues to Hinder Encampment Response in Los Angeles

Government officials and homeless service providers across the County and City agree that better upstream solutions are needed to stop the growth of encampments. The largest issue is the lack of affordable housing in the region. Outreach workers strive to connect people experiencing homelessness with any available options, including interim and permanent housing. However, the shortage of interim housing hinders encampment closure efforts in both the County and the City. While not documented by a survey, based on their observations County and City officials said that the closures have not reduced the total number of people staying in encampments. Leading up to an encampment cleaning or closure, outreach workers often are not able to offer people in encampments either temporary or permanent housing. Thus, people move to another encampment or other unsheltered locations ahead of their encampment closure.

Many people interviewed for this study said that some people staying in encampments are not ready to move directly into permanent housing. In some instances, people transitioning from living in encampments need assistance reacclimating to living indoors, including how to use and safely maintain kitchens and bathrooms. Case management and housing navigation services while staying in interim housing can help prepare people for permanent housing. An official with DMH cited a need for more Board and Care or other licensed residential care for people experiencing homelessness with severe mental illness. Other people interviewed cited a need for increased placements in assisted living facilities or in skilled nursing care for older people experiencing homelessness who require a high level of assistance with physical, mental, and behavioral health conditions.

SECTION 5: CHALLENGES TO REDUCING ENCAMPMENTS

During the pandemic, two new programs created both interim and permanent housing opportunities for some people living in encampments. The County received Project Roomkey (PRK) funding, which provided non-congregate shelters for people who were vulnerable to COVID-19. This state funding enabled outreach workers to quickly move people who were elderly or had medical conditions that made them vulnerable into hotel and motel rooms. County staff stated that people staying in encampment settings were more likely to accept this form of non-congregate shelter because it offered privacy, people could keep many of their belongings, and they could move in immediately. In some instances, entire encampments in the City were moved into motels together. The state's Homekey program, also launched during the pandemic, created both interim and permanent housing across Los Angeles County. During this period, the City also increased funding for creating additional interim housing options, including A Bridge Home and tiny home villages.

In 2021, as part of the American Rescue Plan, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development launched the Emergency Housing Voucher (EHV) program. Both the Housing Authority of the City of Los Angeles and the Los Angeles County Development Authority received significant allocations, totaling 5,329 vouchers between the two public housing authorities. Many of the smaller public housing authorities across Los Angeles County also received EHV allocations. These one-time vouchers are dedicated to people who are experiencing homelessness, at-risk of homelessness, a victim of domestic violence, or facing housing instability. EHV's offer another potential housing option for people living in encampments.

Despite these new housing resources, the encampment response in Los Angeles remains stymied by the lack of housing that outreach workers are able to offer to encampment residents or other people experiencing unsheltered homelessness.

6. Key Findings and Looking Forward

The visible nature of encampments on neighborhood streets and sidewalks, adjacent to highways, and inside parks has made responding to encampments a prominent and divisive issue across the Los Angeles region. Elected officials, governmental agencies, homeless services providers, and health care professionals all play a role in responding to encampments and serving the people residing in them. The data collected and analyzed as part of this study support five descriptive findings, each of which is an observation about how Los Angeles County and the City of Los Angeles responses to encampments are working as of fall 2022. These observations provide important context for local, state, and federal governmental officials as they consider the crisis of unsheltered homelessness in Los Angeles County and future responses to encampments.

6.1 Key Findings

1. ***Outreach is the top priority of both the County and City responses.*** In order to balance quality of life for encampment residents with the overall health of the community, the County and the City have made outreach to people in encampments their top priority. In Los Angeles County, the Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority (LAHSA), homeless service providers, and the Los Angeles Sheriff's Department (LASD) HOST Teams lead service-focused outreach, with the Department of Health Services' (DHS) and the Department of Mental Health's (DMH) specialized teams providing support as needed. In the City of Los Angeles, the Offices of City Councilmembers, the Office of the City Administrative Officer (CAO), and the Unified Homelessness Response Center (UHRC) coordinate with other city agencies, LAHSA, and homeless service providers to conduct outreach at homeless encampments. Outreach workers visit encampments across the County whether or not the encampment has been scheduled for intensive clean-up or closure. Both the County and the City have implemented efforts to coordinate outreach across dozens of organizations providing those services.
2. ***Both the City and the County have official encampment protocols.*** The County's protocol includes a process of encampment identification, assessment, outreach, posting and clean-up. County staff use GIS-based software to submit the Homeless Encampment Auto Request Submission (HEARS) to record and track encampment responses. The City's protocol was built on the County's. However, unlike the Sheriff's Department's involvement in the County's protocol, there is no formal involvement by the Los Angeles Police Department. The City's protocol aligns with municipal codes 41.18 and 56.11, but limited resources mean that these codes are enforced only when an encampment is prioritized for cleaning or closure. Encampment cleanings that rely on Comprehensive Cleaning and Rapid Engagement (CARE) and CARE+ teams are a large component of the City's protocol. Responding to encampments, including outreach, providing medical services, cleaning, clearance, and closure, requires a large amount of labor and financial resources by the County and City.
3. ***The County and the City identify and prioritize homeless encampments differently based on formalized protocols and municipal codes.*** Within the County, the Chief Executive Office's Homeless Initiative makes the decision if and when to pursue a formal encampment response. At the time of this report (fall 2022), the County prioritized encampments of 20 people or more. The City uses municipal code 41.18 to ban encampments in certain geographical areas, with City Councilmembers deciding when to implement and enforce those bans. Both jurisdictions receive feedback from constituents, outreach teams, and local homeless service providers.

4. ***Both the County and the City have unmet demand for encampment response despite unprecedented funding.*** Responses to homeless encampments (e.g., cleaning, health services, sanitation, and emergency services) historically have not been funded by homeless service systems. However, the state of California, Los Angeles County, and the City of Los Angeles have made funding available in recent years through the state’s Encampment Resolution Grants, the County’s Measure H, and direct funding from the City’s budget. Despite this recent investment, funding is still insufficient to meet the demand for responding to homeless encampments across the region.
5. ***A consensus across stakeholders is that the encampment response must go upstream and address the crisis of affordable housing in the Los Angeles region.*** In order for the Los Angeles community to have fewer encampments and fewer people residing in encampments, more interim and permanent housing options need to be available to offer to people to come indoors. As community stakeholders noted when an encampment clearing or closure occurs, residents of the encampment often move to or start another encampment nearby. Unless interim or permanent housing that is considered more desirable than living in an encampment is offered to people before the cleaning, clearing, or closure response, the number of encampments and people living in encampments will remain high. Los Angeles saw great success in bringing people experiencing unsheltered homelessness indoors with the implementation of Project Roomkey and Homekey. These interim and permanent housing program models offered participants autonomy, privacy, security, and a place where they could stay with their partners, pets, and personal items.

6.2 Looking Forward

Encampments became a central issue in the 2022 Los Angeles mayoral race, as well as many other local elections, as the public continues to demand a response to their rise in the region. On December 11, 2022, Karen Bass was sworn in as the Mayor of Los Angeles. On her first day in office, Mayor Bass declared a state of emergency on homelessness, and the following day the Los Angeles City Council unanimously approved the declaration. The state of emergency allows City departments to bypass regulations and protocols to achieve flexibility and swiftness in placing people experiencing homelessness into temporary and permanent housing.²⁹

After this report’s data collection and reporting:

- On December 16, 2022, Mayor Bass issued her first executive directive expediting the housing development process within City departments for all affordable housing and shelter projects.³⁰
- On December 20, 2022, the Los Angeles Board of Supervisors unanimously passed a motion to support the City’s state of emergency declaration. The Supervisors asked the County’s Department of Health Services, Department of Public Health, Department of Mental Health, Department of Public

²⁹ City of Los Angeles Mayor Declaration of Local Emergency. *Mayor Karen Bass Declares a State of Emergency on Homelessness*. December 12, 2022. <https://mayor.lacity.gov/news/mayor-karen-bass-declares-state-emergency-homelessness>.

³⁰ City of Los Angeles Mayor Executive Directive #1. *Mayor Bass Signs Executive Directive to Dramatically Accelerate and Lower the Cost of Affordable Housing and Temporary Housing*. Expedition of Permits and Clearances for Temporary Shelters and Affordable Housing Types. December 16, 2022. <https://mayor.lacity.gov/news/mayor-bass-signs-executive-directive-dramatically-accelerate-and-lower-cost-affordable-housing>.

SECTION 6: KEY FINDINGS AND LOOKING FORWARD

Social Services, and the Los Angeles County Development Authority to support the City's declaration and each appoint a liaison to coordinate efforts with the City.³¹

- On December 21, 2022, Mayor Bass issued her second executive directive launching the Inside Safe Initiative (Inside Safe), under which all homeless outreach and engagement activities are to be coupled with the immediate offer of interim housing and a pathway to a permanent housing resource.³² The initiative's aim is to secure hotel and motel rooms in the geographical area of homeless encampments and then move the people residing in those encampments into the rooms. Inside Safe builds off the success that Project Roomkey had in the City during its implementation over the past two years.
- On January 10, 2023, the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors also declared a state of emergency on homelessness.³³

It is too early to tell what impact the City's and County's state of emergency declarations and the executive directives will have on people experiencing homelessness in encampments across Los Angeles. Any impact from recent actions will not be reflected in the point-in-time count for 2023 when it is released later this year as the count occurred prior to implementation of Inside Safe. Declaring a state of emergency on homelessness has never occurred before in the City of Los Angeles, so the event itself is unprecedented. There seems to be newfound excitement and commitment among elected officials to dedicate resources, including staff, to bring people experiencing unsheltered homelessness indoors. Others who have been engaged in this work for decades are concerned that not enough mental health, substance use, and intensive case management services are linked to these interim housing efforts, and therefore people will exit these programs back to unsheltered homelessness. In addition to these concerns, many community stakeholders are worried about the eviction moratoriums ending across the region and what effect that will have on the inflow into homelessness over the next several years.

Additional Encampment Research

In January 2023, Abt Associates began a two-year, longitudinal study examining specific housing and supportive service interventions deployed at three encampments across Los Angeles County. The research will follow the planning and implementation of these interventions as homeless service providers engage encampment residents with the goal securing permanent housing. The research will include interviews with current and former encampments residents, homeless service providers, community organizations, business owners, governmental agencies, and elected officials; a survey of residents who live in the neighborhood where the encampments are located; HMIS data; and cost data collection. The research is funded by the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation.

³¹ Revised Motion by Supervisors Janice Hahn and Kathryn Barger. *County Support of the City of Los Angeles and the State of Emergency*. December 20, 2022. <https://file.lacounty.gov/SDSInter/bos/supdocs/175905.pdf>.

³² City of Los Angeles Mayor Executive Directive #2. *Inside Safe Initiative*. December 21, 2022. <https://www.documentcloud.org/documents/23492650-inside-safe-directive>.

³³ Motion by Supervisors Lindsey P. Horvath and Kathryn Barger. *Proclamation of a Local Emergency for Homelessness in the County of Los Angeles*. January 10, 2023. <https://file.lacounty.gov/SDSInter/bos/supdocs/176661.pdf>

Appendix A: List of Organizations Interviewed

To inform our work, we interviewed staff from the following county and city departments, as well as other organizations:

Los Angeles County

- County Department of Mental Health (DMH)
- County Department of Health Services (DHS)
- Office of the County Chief Executive (CEO), Homeless Initiative (HI)
- Department of Public Works (DPW)
- Los Angeles Sheriff's Department (LASD)

City of Los Angeles

- Mayor's Office of City Homelessness Initiatives
- City Attorney's Office
- Office of the City Administrative Officer (CAO)
- LA Sanitation & Environment (LASAN)
- Los Angeles Fire Department (LAFD)
- Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD)
- Los Angeles City Department of Transportation (LADOT)

Other Organizations

- Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority (LAHSA)
- RAND

APPENDIX B: ORGANIZATIONS PROVIDING OUTREACH TO ENCAMPMENTS IN LOS ANGELES COUNTY AND CITY

Appendix B: Organizations Providing Outreach to Encampments in Los Angeles County and City

Exhibit B.1. Los Angeles County Outreach Teams

Name	Lead Organization	Outreach Type	Description
Homeless Engagement Teams (HET)*	Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority (LAHSA)	Emergency, service-focused	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Comprised of two people Focus on addressing immediate needs of people experiencing unsheltered homelessness including those in encampments, such as food, water, and medical care Connect people with interim housing opportunities when they are available.
LAHSA Homeless Outreach Service Teams (HOST)	Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority (LAHSA)	Emergency, service-focused	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Co-lead the implementation of the County's Encampment Protocol with LASD HOST officers Receive special training to complete encampment assessments and outreach in challenging geographic areas Accompany LASD HOST team to visits encampments. Provide people staying in encampments with food, water, and connections to medical care and available interim housing opportunities.
Los Angeles Sheriff's Department (LASD) Homeless Outreach Services Team (HOST)**	Los Angeles Sheriff's Department (LASD)	Emergency, service-focused	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Co-lead the implementation of the County's Encampment Protocol with LAHSA HOST outreach workers Assess encampments and accompany LAHSA HOST team on visits Conduct regular visits to mitigate unlawful activity, Post notices of encampment clean-ups Attend encampment clean-ups and provide security
Homeless Outreach and Mobile Engagement (HOME) Teams	County Department of Mental Health (DMH)	Service-focused	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide psychiatric support, connection to mental health services, outreach, and intensive case management for people staying in encampments with serious mental illness. Engage with the individuals and performs mental health assessment Conduct at minimum a weekly check-in to determine individual needs
Housing for Health—Multi-Disciplinary Teams (MDT)	County Department of Health Services (DHS)	Service-focused	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide physical health, mental health, substance use, case management and peer support to people living in encampment settings with specialized five-person teams Staff includes health specialist, mental health specialist, substance use specialist, peer with lived experience, and a generalist Visit encampments both on weekdays and weekends
Public Spaces Teams	County Department of Health Services (DHS)	Service-focused	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Deploy in county public spaces (e.g., parks, public gathering places) as a visible outreach presence to support people experiencing homelessness and people staying in encampments

APPENDIX B: ORGANIZATIONS PROVIDING OUTREACH TO ENCAMPMENTS IN LOS ANGELES COUNTY AND CITY

Name	Lead Organization	Outreach Type	Description
County + City + Community (C3) Teams	LA County Department of Health Services	Service-focused	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Operate in the Skid Row and Venice Beach areas • Provide general street outreach to support MDTs • Led by local homeless service provider staff with extensive knowledge of these neighborhoods

Sources: Resource Development Associates. *Los Angeles County Chief Executive Office—Research and Evaluation Services. Homeless Initiative Strategy E6: Countywide Outreach System, Implementation Evaluation*. December 2019. p.16

Los Angeles City Chief Legislative Analyst. *Outreach Engagement Framework*. 2021. https://clkrep.lacity.org/onlinedocs/2020/20-1376_rpt_cla_8-31-21.pdf.

Interviews with Los Angeles organization staff.

*In the City, HET teams are deployed using both a regional approach to ensure full coverage across the jurisdiction and geographically based teams depending on need.

**LASD HOST teams only respond to encampments in unincorporated areas of the County or in jurisdictions that contract with the Sheriff's Department for law enforcement services.

APPENDIX B: ORGANIZATIONS PROVIDING OUTREACH TO ENCAMPMENTS IN LOS ANGELES COUNTY AND CITY

Exhibit B.2. Los Angeles City-Specific Outreach Teams

Name	Lead Organization	Outreach Type	Description
Comprehensive Cleaning and Rapid Engagement (CARE) and CARE+ teams	Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority (LAHSA) / LA Sanitation & Environment (LASAN)	Sanitation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus on sanitation response and complete clean-ups at encampments throughout the city • Comprised of LASAN sanitation workers with LASHA HET outreach workers, • Deploy one CARE team to each Council District to complete spot cleanings • Assign CARE+ team in four geographic regions to complete in-depth cleanings
Crisis and Incident Response through Community-Led Engagement (CIRCLE Team)	Urban Alchemy	Emergency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Respond to non-violent, non-urgent 911 calls involving people experiencing homelessness • Unarmed trained teams comprised of one mental health or licensed behavioral health clinician and one community ambassador to de-escalate the situation • Pilot program in two city districts, Venice and Hollywood • Recently received funding to expand into Metro LA and two other city neighborhoods
LAHSA HET City Homelessness Roadmap Teams	Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority (LAHSA)	Service-focused	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide outreach prior to LAMC 41.18 encampment clearings • One team assigned to each of the 15 Council Districts
Council District funded outreach teams	Local homeless service provider organizations	Emergency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hired by Council District offices, • Conduct additional general outreach to people experiencing unsheltered homelessness within their district's geography
Street Medicine Teams	University of Southern California (USC)	Service-focused	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deliver medical care to people living in encampments • Provide first aid on-site and referral to other health care • Help with placement and deployment of hygiene stations

Note: Some private organizations also conduct outreach in various parts of the City, but they are not coordinated or affiliated with these efforts. Source: Los Angeles City Chief Legislative Analyst. *Outreach Engagement Framework*. 2021. https://clkrep.lacity.org/online/docs/2020/20-1376_rpt_cla_8-31-21.pdf.