

Sacramento Homelessness COVID-19 RESPONSE TEAM

Encampment Program

Brought to you in partnership by Sacramento County, City of Sacramento, Sacramento Steps Forward and the Sacramento Housing and Redevelopment Agency

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Q. What is the Response Team strategy to protect those living unsheltered from getting COVID-19 and to slow the spread of the virus?

A. The Response Team coordinates support to people who are living unsheltered so they may remain safely in place and meet daily needs. The team is following the guidance of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention that:

- Encourages people to set up their tents or sleeping quarters with at least 12 feet x 12 feet of space per individual and practice social distancing during the day;
- Calls for ensuring that toilets or handwashing stations are available and open to people 24 hours a day;
- Mandates straightforward communications to people sleeping outside on:
 - Proper hand hygiene, respiratory hygiene and cough etiquette;
 - Ways to isolate themselves if sick;
 - Connecting to primary healthcare and behavioral health resources.

The Response Team accomplishes this by:

- Engaging with an estimated 3,800 people living in 77 encampments to help them remain in place safely and provide them with food, water, and sanitation, including toilets, handwashing stations and personal hygiene items.
- Assessing individual health and providing a pathway to isolation/quarantine units for those prioritized for these resources.

Q. What are encampments?

A. Homeless encampments take a variety of forms, including groups living under freeway overpasses, sleeping in parks, or living on sidewalks. Encampments include those living with nothing more than sleeping mats, within makeshift cardboard configurations, or in tents.

Q. *How are encampments being supported?*

A. Encampment support is carried out by a public, nonprofit and private partnership team, and supported by a variety of community groups.

- Some 37 outreach workers from Sacramento County, Sacramento Steps Forward, Sacramento Self-Help Housing and Sacramento Covered have been assigned to engage individuals at each encampment. Their job is to assess overall conditions, provide information on COVID-19 prevention strategies, and help connect to healthcare if campers become ill or are showing symptoms of the virus. The teams are also poised to proactively search for anyone who might be symptomatic. They are also beginning to reach out to those 55 years and older and therefore at a higher risk to get COVID-19 and provide them with the option to go to an isolation/quarantine unit.
- On-call University of California Davis and California Northstate University medical students support outreach workers who identify individuals in need of medical care. A mobile integrated health unit is also available to assist.
- The response effort funds Loaves and Fishes who prepares 200 meals a day for distribution to the encampments; with another 200 meals provided by Sacramento Covered and other volunteer organizations, for a total of 400 plus meals being delivered daily to those living in unsheltered locations.
- The Response Team helps to ensure that encampments have adequate sanitation facilities. Approximately 40 handwashing stations and 40 toilets have been placed at 27 locations, and a second phase of placements is underway. Sites were identified through assessments by outreach workers and recommended from County Regional Parks' maintenance staff. Vendors prioritized sites with the largest number of people in locations that are accessible to sanitation equipment.

Q. *What happens if someone gets COVID-19 while in an encampment?*

A. Outreach team members are on the front lines to identify anyone who may be symptomatic. They work with medical staff to determine the nature of their sickness. If the person is believed to be symptomatic with COVID-19, they will be tested, and moved to a medical care isolation facility pending test results. (If tests return negative, the individual is eligible for a preventative quarantine unit).

Q. How are outreach workers at encampments being protected against the virus?

A. Outreach team members have been provided personal protective equipment and are trained on the most up-to-date prevention guidance and safety protocols.

Q. What role does law enforcement play in the encampment strategy?

A. The Sacramento County Sheriff's Department Homeless Outreach Team, the City of Sacramento's IMPACT Team and Sacramento County Regional Parks rangers are working in collaboration with the Response Team. These teams have on-the-ground knowledge and relationships and are a valuable partner in making referrals to deploy outreach team members for additional engagement and assistance, as appropriate.