Illinois Law Enforcement Response to Homelessness Guidebook
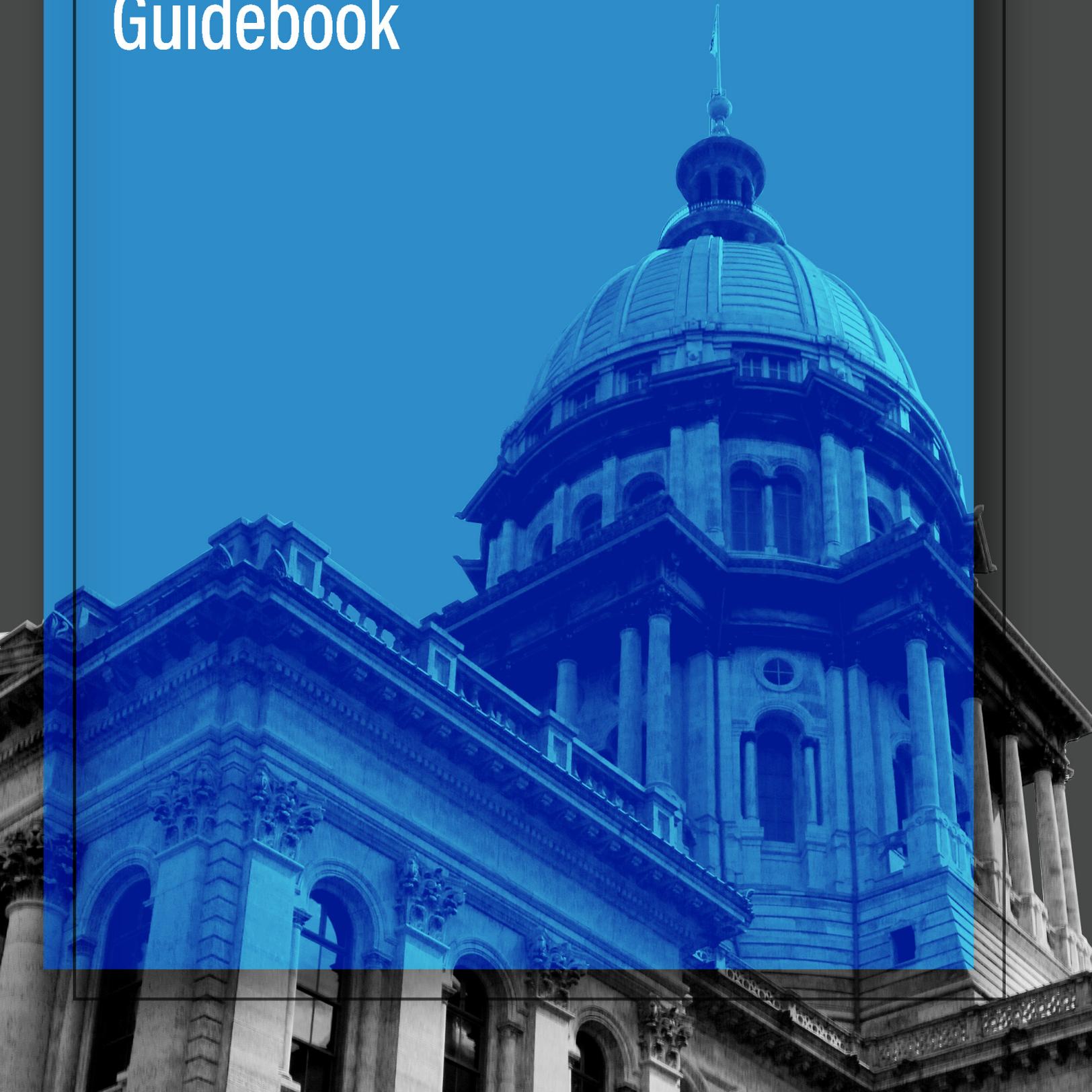
HOW DOES A 77-YEAR-OLD HOMEOWNER WITH A DISABILITY END UP LIVING ON BELLEVILLE'S STREETS?

BY TERI MADDOX

David Semrau has been staying at a Belleville hotel off and on since early June. He was evicted from a small home on North Fourth Street, where he had lived for 27 years. A 77-year-old man with a cognitive disability sat in a chair in the front yard, locked out of his small Belleville home, surrounded by furniture, clothes and other belongings, alone and clueless about what to do next.

How could this happen?

The simple answer is that David Semrau was evicted. He didn't pay his property taxes, St. Clair County foreclosed, the home was sold at auction and Semrau ignored legal notices from the new owner telling him to leave.

But a closer look reveals a series of breakdowns in a system that struggles to deal with people who don't fit into traditional society or follow all its rules. In this case, the "system" includes St. Clair County tax collectors and sheriff's deputies, Belleville police and city officials, a nonprofit agency that serves people with disabilities, an investor who buys delinquent houses, the power company, the library, churches, neighbors, relatives and friends.

In other words, almost everyone.

"It's not just David," said Diane Burrelsman, 49, a Belleville woman who has become an advocate for Semrau. "Think of all the mentally disabled people out there. They are so vulnerable. It's just heartbreaking."

Burrelsman checks on Semrau regularly at the Town House Motel, where he's been staying off and on for two months. He was homeless for a week, wandering city streets and sleeping at bus stations.

The motel room is being paid for by Chuck Wood, another Good Samaritan who's trying to buy Semrau time while Burrelsman works to find affordable senior housing for him.

Burrelsman and Wood were attending the same Fairview Heights church six years ago, when Burrelsman first met Semrau at Belleville Public Library and learned of his social and financial problems. They saw helping him as an extension of their Christian faith. Semrau seemed to possess survival skills, but he also showed signs of autism, according to Burrelsman and others.

"I personally don't think he's capable of holding down a job," said Wood, 60, of Belleville. "So he is considered, in my mind, what the scripture calls 'the least of us.' He's been just kind of put off to the side, and nobody cares about him. But he's still a beating heart and a lost soul."

EVICTION ON MAY 31

Burrelsman and Wood tried to save Semrau's home by paying a lump sum for back taxes and spending thousands of dollars on repairs, but they said they didn't totally understand the delinquent-tax process and relied too heavily on a non-profit agency assisting with the case.

Semrau had bought the 1,018-square-foot home with gray asphalt siding at 520 N. Fourth St. 27 years ago, according to St. Clair County property records. He was evicted May 31.

Semrau isn't adept at abstract thought and focuses mainly on his daily routine, Burrelman said, so he didn't fully grasp the concept that his inaction could eventually put him on the street.

When asked what happened to his home, Semrau replied, "They threw all my stuff out in the front yard. I went back there to get my clothing, and it was laying by my fence, by my mailbox, by the street. They nailed the door shut."

Actually, the locks were changed. That's part of the process when a property owner evicts a tenant who's behind on rent or a squatter living in a vacant home without permission. In this case, the new owner assumed Semrau was the latter and nothing more.

Neighbor Joe Wiggins, 41, was infuriated by what he saw happen two doors down. "These people came and opened the door and just started taking (Semrau's) stuff out, all his precious possessions," he said. "They were just laying on the ground. It was so degrading. They knew good and well that Dave didn't know what was going on, and they made him homeless. They didn't even care.

"The day that he was evicted, Dave didn't have anything. (He returned from the store and) saw the cops and just kept walking. I saw him the next day, and I said, 'Are you OK?' And he said, 'I don't want to talk about it.' It was so sad. I wanted to cry because he just had a pillow and his cart."

I

DIAGNOSIS UNCLEAR

Semrau is 5-foot-11 and stout with a shaved head. He walks or rides the bus to buy food and other supplies, usually at a dollar store. He rarely complains about physical ailments and won't take medication for his newly discovered hyperglycemia and high blood pressure.

Semrau is something of a "hoarder," but he's also obsessed with cleanliness, Burrelsman said.

Semrau answered questions about his life and background during a recent BND interview, despite being distracted by his main goal for the day: Finding a motel housekeeper to bring clean towels and toilet paper and to mop up a sticky spot on the floor.

Semrau provided many factually correct details, including names, dates and places. He also got confused, insisting he had known Burrelsman since she was a baby. He became agitated at times. "I'm old!" Semrau shot back when asked about his halting speech, which makes it seem like he's gasping for breath.

According to Semrau, he had a volatile relationship with his mother, who often called police on him; he dropped out of high school and earned a GED; enlisted in the U.S. Navy but didn't finish boot camp; married and divorced three times; became estranged from his two sons and other relatives; and held small jobs walking racehorses and fixing lawnmowers.

Semrau said he also received mental-health treatment and lived in "nursing homes" as a younger man. He couldn't recall his diagnosis, except to say he was depressed after his first wife divorced him.

In the past 20 years, Semrau's St. Clair County court record has included several charges by Belleville police of disorderly conduct for actions ranging from threatening a neighbor to playing loud music to chasing juveniles; two battery counts for allegedly punching a woman and "head-butting" a man; orders of protection and small claims.

In some cases, Semrau skipped court hearings, landing him in jail. Today, Semrau argues that his behavior was often the result of people harassing him. Burrelsman describes him as a "big kid" who sometimes throws "tantrums" that can scare strangers.

Semrau's sons couldn't be reached for comment.

'FIXTURE' OF NEIGHBORHOOD

Wiggins called Semrau a "fixture" of the North Fourth Street neighborhood. "He kept to himself," said Kimberly Brown, who lived across the street for 10 years. "I did help him once with his cellphone, but he had to take it back to Family Dollar. He had a TracFone.

"He was no problem. He was just a very lonely person. He wasn't a crazy maniac or anything. I don't think he understood life. He could have had Alzheimer's or dementia."

Wiggins remembers thinking Semrau was a little weird when he saw him sitting in a chair in his front yard one night after dark wearing his trademark boxy, wraparound sunglasses, but eventually they became friends. Sometimes they walked to nearby St. Paul United Church of Christ for Tuesday night community meals. Wiggins gave Semrau tomatoes and other vegetables from his garden. "I wouldn't say that he was mentally disabled all the way," Wiggins said. "But he was older, and he didn't understand everything that was going on. Maybe he was on the spectrum of autism. But he was a sweet, innocent guy."

Sandy Ritter, who coordinates the church meals, had been wondering recently if Semrau was OK since she hadn't seen him for two months. Many people who eat at St. Paul are homeless, and volunteers don't know much about them, according to Ritter. She remembers Semrau pulling his things in a rolling cart and wearing sunglasses. "He had a bad attitude, and he was kind of grumpy, but once we found out his name and started calling him by name, he softened up," Ritter said. "You have to give him space. He's a loner. He wants to sit by himself, and you don't mess with him. He's a tough cookie."

Diane Burrelsman, left, and Chuck Wood, right, have been helping David Semrau with back taxes, home improvements and now motel bills. They see it as an extension of their Christian faith.

CRY FOR HELP?

Burrelsman is a scheduler at John J. Cochran Veterans Hospital in St. Louis. She was working at Belleville Public Library's downtown branch in 2017, when she met Semrau, a regular patron. Burrelsman said she suspected that Semrau had a mental impairment. She tried to be kind and gave him suckers. "One day, David was on a computer, and he turned to me and said, 'I'm living like an animal. I don't have any heat. I don't have any electricity,'" Burrelsman said. "And it was a cold November day."

Burrelsman went to Semrau's house, called Ameren Illinois and verified that his power had been turned off for more than a year. She said she paid about $250 to get it turned back on. Burrelsman continued to help with Semrau's monthly expenses. Eventually, she shared his plight with leaders of her former church, Edgemont Bible Church in Fairview Heights. They joined with nearby Grace Church to pay an overdue $800 water bill.

Burrelsman also contacted the Living Independently Now Center Inc. (LINC), a Swansea-based, non-profit organization that serves people with disabilities. A representative helped Semrau sign up for Social Security (about $850 a month) and food stamps.

His Social Security had lapsed five years earlier, after he failed to respond to a letter requesting information, according to Burrelsman.

Wood, a general contractor and carpenter who owns Woodchuck Construction, put a new roof on Semrau's home, installed an air conditioner, replaced the toilet and two faucets and made other repairs. "I have accepted Christ as my savior," Wood said. "He's the boss, as far as I'm concerned. I serve him. Whatever he needs me to do, I do. He provides the way, and I just am the person who does it, just like Moses and all the other prophets and servants."

Wood said Semrau's home was full of items that some people might call "junk," but he was fairly neat and good about washing his dishes. He lived conservatively with few lights and no TV set.

TAXES QUADRUPLED

Semrau bought the home on North Fourth Street for $25,900 in 1996, according to St. Clair County property records. He said he inherited the money from his mother, who died the same year.
Semrau later added the name of a friend, Marilyn Darnell, to the deed and never took it off. She couldn't be reached for comment.

Semrau's road to eviction began in 2015, when he stopped paying property taxes. They were "too high," he said. County records show his annual bill had jumped from $340 to $1,506. "My question is, how can someone's taxes be low for years and then all of a sudden, they quadruple?" Wood said.

"That is as unfair as you can be, especially for someone on a fixed income."

Semrau's tax records show that he had owner-occupied, homestead and "senior freeze" exemptions in 2014 but not 2015, and that's why his bill went up, according to the assessor's office. Assessor Jennifer Gomric-Minton said Semrau was sent a renewal notice, but it came back marked "undeliverable" so the exemptions were removed.

"Typically, when that happens, somebody calls when they get their tax bill and says, 'Why did my tax bill jump?'" she said. "And we'll say, 'Well, (the exemption) was not renewed.' And then they come in and fill out the renewal, and we'll correct the tax bill. But it looks like that never happened." The assessor's office makes follow-up phone calls when exemptions aren't renewed, Gomric-Minton said, but she isn't sure if that happened in Semrau's case.

The county placed a lien on Semrau's home in 2016 due to non-payment of property taxes. But state law allows homeowners up to three years to pay back taxes and redeem ownership. In addition, St. Clair County is one of the most lenient counties in Illinois when it comes to foreclosure, said Whitney Strohmeyer, president of Joseph E. Meyer & Associates, the Edwardsville-based company that serves as its trustee and delinquent-tax agent.

"The county doesn't want to take their property," he said. "We don't evict people. We only move forward when we have to. We give people every opportunity. They simply have to make payments."

By the time the county foreclosed on Semrau's home in June 2020, he owed about $7,500 in back taxes. The trustee agreed to remove it from that year's surplus-auction inventory after receiving a 20% down payment of $1,517. Semrau also began sending $100 a month. The balance was due in six months, Strohmeyer said, but the Trustee Committee often allows an indefinite amount of extra time if people are making payments and returning every six months to request extensions.

AUCTION IN OCTOBER
When Burrelsman and Wood learned of Semrau's tax problems, they started working through LINC to try and save his home. The organization paid the $1,517 down payment in October 2020. A representative told the trustee's office that Semrau had "severe autism," according to his file.

Trustee records show that Semrau mailed in $100 a month for eight months then stopped. Burrelsman and Wood paid another down payment of $1,310 in August 2021 to get him back on track. Semrau made five more $100 payments before stopping again.

Burrelsman said she recalls someone mentioning that Semrau needed to go to a "tax meeting" at the St. Clair County Courthouse, but she can't remember why he didn't go. She regrets not being more proactive, even though she had no legal authority over his affairs. "I'm not blaming LINC," Burrelsman said. "They've been very helpful to us. But they're not tax people, and I was ignorant. I should have looked into this myself."

Burrelsman said she was stunned last summer, when a LINC representative told her that Semrau had to find other housing because the county wasn't going to allow any more time for payment of back taxes, which then totaled about $6,000. Strohmeyer said he isn't sure where that information came from. Semrau's home didn't sell at auction until Oct. 14, 2022.

"Had Mr. Semrau, or someone on his behalf, come to the (Trustee Committee) meeting before the auction and requested more time, I'm sure it would have been granted," Strohmeyer said. Wood, who had spent $1,000 on Semrau's back taxes and more than $5,000 on home improvements, said he wouldn't have done it if he'd known Semrau was going to lose the property anyway.

In December, the LINC representative found an apartment for Semrau at a senior complex in Belleville, but he refused to go. "I had a house with everything in it, with all my stuff," Semrau said. "It was wintertime. It was cold. I was getting Social Security and food stamps. I had cash money in my bank. That's why I didn't leave my house. "(The senior complex) had three meals a day. Maybe it's a nursing home. Maybe you can't get out of there."

Tameka Brown, LINC's executive director, said she couldn't discuss the case due to the organization's rules on client confidentially. Semrau agreed to sign a form giving her permission to speak to the BND, but he changed his mind when he got to her office.

"We promote independent living," Brown said. "We are very opposed to institutional settings or our consumers being homeless, and we tried on several occasions to prevent this from happening to David. Unfortunately, we are here. Anything else, I cannot disclose."

SUSPECTED SQUATTER
The Marnika Ann Ash Revocable Living Trust, based in Jacksonville, Florida, bought Semrau's home for $10,300 at the county auction in October. The BND reached a woman by phone who identified herself as the property manager. She declined to give her name, the owner's name or their locations, but she said both serve in the military, and the owner, who grew up in Belleville, is away on deployment.

The owner planned to renovate the home, rent it out and return it to tax rolls that support schools, firefighters and roads, the property manager said, but she couldn't go inside because a squatter was living there, and he had posted no-trespassing signs. "The house was occupied by someone that was just basically taking the home for themselves with no maintenance, no payments, no taxes, none of that," the property manager said.

A dumpster sits in front of a home at 520 N. Fourth St. in Belleville. A new owner evicted the resident, David Semrau, in late May after buying the property at a St. Clair County auction.

When told that the occupant was a 77-year-old man with a disability who had owned the home for 24 years and lived in it for 27 years, the property manager seemed surprised. She noted that the county doesn't provide that kind of information to auction buyers. "We're human, too, and we don't do business like that," she said.

The property manager said the new owner met all legal requirements of a months-long eviction process, and that Semrau failed to respond to multiple notices sent by certified mail and posted on the door, including some presenting the option of him staying and becoming a tenant.

The owner didn't attempt to make personal contact with Semrau or look into his background, according to the property manager. "He wouldn't respond to official inquiries from the owner, and in the interim, the grass needed to be cut and other things needed to be done," she said. "He wouldn't allow anyone on the property, even though they had rightfully paid for it."

"The owner was getting fines from the city because the property wasn't being maintained," the property manager said.

A manager of the Town House Motel in Belleville hands towels to Diane Burrelsman, a friend of guest David Semrau, right, who was evicted from his home. He's very particular about cleanliness.

WARNING ABOUT GRASS

The Belleville department of health, housing and building issued one warning about tall grass at the home at 520 N. Fourth St. on May 17, according to Director Scott Tyler. Tyler said he went to the home, knocked on the door and a man's voice asked, "Who is it?" When Tyler replied "city of Belleville," the man stayed silent. Tyler saw a rolling cart, assumed the occupant was elderly and checked to make sure he had running water and electricity. Housing records show that city workers returned on May 24 to find the grass mowed, so no charges or fines were levied.

"It would have been different if he had been living in filth with no electricity or running water," Tyler said. "Then we would have called Adult Protective Services or the Visiting Nurse Association to have

them check on him and see if they could help. We do that all the time. "As long as I've been here, (the city has) never gone in and evicted someone who's in dire circumstances, unless there's been a health problem or it's a danger to the neighbors."

Tyler said he called the home's owner or property manager, who told him they were going through legal channels to remove a squatter. The housing department's only other complaint involving the home came on May 31, Tyler said. Someone reported that the front yard was filled with furniture and other belongings. Semrau had been evicted.

It's not unusual for disabled people to lose their homes in the Belleville area, according to Joe Hubbard, former founding director of Catholic Urban Programs who now works with the Society of St. Vincent de Paul. He estimates that it happens about 20 times a year.

A common scenario is that parents or siblings die and leave homes to dependents with intellectual disabilities and mistakenly think they're capable of paying bills and providing maintenance on their own. With taxes in particular, Hubbard said, it takes a certain level of sophistication to understand legal notices and go to the St Clair County Courthouse to work out problems.

"There aren't enough services," Hubbard said. "Or people don't apply for the services. They're afraid of someone coming into their house. They think they're going to get ripped off. They're shy. They're quiet. There are all kinds of reasons."

END OF THE LINE

What happened to Semrau at 11 a.m. on May 31 is technically called a "set out," according to Master Sgt. Adam Quirin, of the St. Clair County Sheriff's Department. It comes at the end of an eviction process. A property owner has to send a crew with a specified number of people, depending on a home's size, to remove everything from inside and put it in the front yard. Items must remain in place 72 hours to give former tenants or squatters time to retrieve them.

"We do not touch anything (unless a gun is found)," Quirin said. "Our officers are there just so there's a law-enforcement presence in case of a problem."

Burrelsman said she went to Semrau's former property after the eviction, collected some of his clothes and documents, including his Social Security card and state ID, and gave other items to neighbors and a church thrift shop. Everything else ended up in a dumpster.

David Semrau waves goodbye to his friends, Diane Burrelsman and Chuck Wood, who had come to visit him Aug. 5 at the Town House Motel in Belleville, where's he's been staying since being evicted.

Burrelsman thought Semrau had an album of old family photos, but she couldn't find it. Today, Burrelsman's biggest frustration is that people keep telling her about "resources" and giving her contact information for agencies and organizations that can help, yet nothing pans out due to waiting lists, eligibility requirements and other factors.

That doesn't surprise Tyler, the housing director, who has run into problems himself when trying to assist people living under poor conditions due to a shortage of affordable housing. "We don't want to put them on the street by any means, but we don't have anywhere to go with them," he said.

Several people have suggested that Burrelsman take Semrau to the Society of St. Vincent de Paul's homeless shelter in East St. Louis, but it's temporarily closed this summer for renovation and, even if it were open, she's not sure he would do well in that environment.

Wood has spent about $2,500 on motel-room charges. If something doesn't change soon, Burrelsman said, they will be forced to take Semrau to a hospital with a psychiatric unit and drop him off, risking the possibility that he will end up back on the streets. Burrelsman said she has no regrets about helping Semrau, even though he can be uncooperative and combative at times. Like Wood, she points to her faith. "What kind of person would I be if I tell people that I believe in Jesus Christ, and then I actually don't do what the Bible says?" Burrelsman asked. "I can't say, 'I know you're disabled and you're a senior, but I'll just pray for you,' when I know that nobody else is going to help this guy."

Introduction to the Homelessness Guide

Scale and Scope of Homelessness in Illinois

According to annually collected homeless data, over 10,000 people experience homelessness on any given day across Illinois. The data also tells us that that three-times this number is estimated to touch homeless services over the course of a year. Even though 60 percent of those who experience homelessness are in Cook County, each community is impacted and responding to homelessness and housing instability. As reported by *Home Illinois: Illinois Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness* some communities like Chicago, Peoria, and Kane County, over 20 percent of the homeless population are long-term homeless with disabilities, otherwise called chronically homeless.

In addition to the scale and complexity of services needed by people in shelters and on the street, there are significant racial disparities within the population. This is especially true for larger urban areas like Chicago, Springfield, and Champaign where *Black Illinoisans makeup 61 percent* of the homeless population. The data and evidence ties racial disparities to policies impacting healthcare access (including mental health), housing discrimination, and the criminal-legal system. This information is important to understand as context for encounters between first responders and people experiencing homelessness (PEH) because it may present challenges to relationship building or seeking assistance.

Police officers and other first responders interacting with PEH should be knowledgeable of the policies and programs aiming to prevent and end homelessness. Additionally, police departments across the country are adopting strategies, policies, and partnerships that encourage longer-term solutions while providing for public safety and individual rights. This issue requires a collaborative approach that ensures each partner is playing their most appropriate role and working in the same direction.

This guidebook is designed to provide police departments and officers across Illinois with practical resources, planning tools and operating policy examples that will help align the response of law enforcement with the broader goals of the State of Illinois and community agencies. This Homeless Guidebook was made possible by the Illinois Department of Human Services Office to Prevent and End Homelessness, the Illinois State Police, and Subject Matter Experts representing the Springfield, DeKalb, and Fairview Heights Police Departments, and Project Now Community Action Agency.

Strategies to Address Homelessness

Homeless services systems across the country rely on established best practices for responding to homelessness. Below is a brief description of the most common intervention areas, and will be referenced throughout the Guidebook. These best practices include:

- *Prevention:* Short-term financial assistance and providing direct assistance in Eviction Court to keep people out of shelters and off of the street.
- *Low-Barrier Shelter:* Reduced requirements around sobriety or service compliance to access temporary shelter and creating more non-congregate temporary housing options. Shelter focuses on accessing housing and linking to services and income.
- *Short and Long-term Rental Assistance with Services:* Also called Rapid Rehousing, or Transition in Place, or Supportive Housing, these interventions get people living back in the community and deliver services to help people stay housed.
- *Outreach and Engagement:* Services to people who live outside or inconsistently in shelter and not yet attached to services.
- *Coordinated Entry:* Universal housing assessment and pre-application for people experiencing homelessness and referral process to homeless-dedicated housing programs
- *Harm Reduction:* An approach to services that does not require sobriety but focuses on choices that promote stability and growth and are demonstrated to reduce substance use over time.

Illinois is operating under its first ever Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness. In addition to the practices and programs listed above, the state is prioritizing adding services and resources for homeless college students, improving discharge planning for adults and youth from corrections and child welfare, expanding Medical Respite shelter, and expanding supportive housing.

Role of and Partnerships with Law Enforcement and First Responders

Law enforcement regularly engages with community members and is responsible for responding to emergencies or social-service related needs 24-hours per day and 7 days a week. Officers and departments can use their personnel and other resources more strategically if investments are made in developing community collaborations and have the most up-to-date information about referrals and other processes.

Police officers address contributing factors to homelessness such as mental illness, substance use, and criminal activity and as such, must develop skills in de-escalation and crisis intervention. According to a 2018 article on "Crime and the Homeless Community," many states, including California, have witnessed unintended consequences of criminal justice reform on homelessness and its underlying conditions, such as drug addiction and mental illness (Police Executive Research Forum, 2018). In this context, it is crucial that Illinois law enforcement agencies learn from the experiences of other states and adopt a multifaceted approach to address homelessness effectively.

A promising approach adopted by numerous police departments across the country, and highlighted by the ***Police Executive Research Forum***, is the establishment of Homeless Outreach Teams (HOTs). These specialized units often work in collaboration with mental health service providers to connect homeless individuals with necessary services and resources. The co-responder model, wherein patrol officers are paired with or co-located with mental health service providers, has proven to be effective in facilitating access to services for homeless individuals. Implementing similar practices in Illinois could significantly improve interaction and communication with the homeless.

This guidebook will provide an in-depth analysis of various strategies and programs that have been successful in addressing homelessness in other jurisdictions. It will examine the role of specialized units, such as HOTs, in effectively managing homeless encampments, property seizures, and homeless court systems. Furthermore, the guidebook will explore the importance of police training on homelessness, innovative uses of technology and data-sharing, funding mechanisms for homeless assistance programs, and regional partnerships to share resources.

By adopting best practices and fostering collaboration with other stakeholders, the Illinois law enforcement community can make a significant impact on addressing homelessness in the state. This guidebook aims to serve as a comprehensive resource for law enforcement officers in their efforts to create a safer and more inclusive environment for all residents, including those experiencing homelessness.

Root Causes

Homelessness is often the result of a combination of factors, including economic, systemic, and personal circumstances. Economic factors play a significant role in driving homelessness. The lack of affordable housing is a primary contributor, as individuals and families struggle to secure stable housing due to high rents and low vacancy rates (National Alliance to End Homelessness, 2021). In Illinois, it is estimated that over 30 percent of households are cost-burdened, meaning they spend more than 30 percent of their income on housing (National Low Income Housing Coalition, 2021). Additionally, unemployment and underemployment, coupled with stagnating wages, make it difficult for many individuals to maintain stable housing (National Alliance to End Homelessness, 2021).

In Illinois, Blacks are seven times more likely to experience homelessness than their white counterparts (350 per 100k versus 47 per 100k people) according to the analysis done by the *Illinois Department of Human Services in 2021*. This disproportionality highlights the systemic barriers faced by marginalized communities, including discrimination in housing and employment opportunities, that can lead to homelessness.

Personal circumstances, such as mental illness, addiction, and domestic violence, can also contribute to homelessness. It is estimated that 20-25 percent of homeless individuals in the United States suffer from severe mental illness (National Alliance to End Homelessness, 2021). Additionally, substance abuse and addiction can hinder an individual's ability to maintain stable housing, and domestic violence is a leading cause of homelessness among women (National Network to End Domestic Violence, 2019).

How to Use the Guidebook

This guidebook is composed of sections that interrelate and reinforce collaborative practices and planning on the issue of homelessness. Law enforcement executives can use sections to assist with creating or enhancing their policies, and individual officers can consult practices and resource information to help their daily patrol and community engagement. Stay connected to the Illinois State Police Academy for virtual training on the Guidebook and its components.

Please consult the Appendix for a full listing of all document links referenced in the Guidebook as well as sample policies and procedures for a number of topic areas related to homelessness.

Response Modalities to Homelessness: An Integrated Approach

Addressing the multifaceted issue of homelessness demands a comprehensive and multi-modal approach, harnessing various response mechanisms such as co-responder models, specialized outreach teams, and multi-agency collaborations. Each of these modalities brings unique strengths and opportunities, though they also present distinct challenges.

Co-Responder *(click here to view model)*

- In the co-responder model, law enforcement officers join forces with social workers or mental health professionals to interact with individuals experiencing homelessness or mental health crises.
- This collaborative approach ensures a more empathetic, well-rounded response, combining the expertise of law enforcement and social service professionals.

Examples

One such initiative is the **Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health's SMART** (Systemwide Mental Assessment Response Teams) program. In this model, a law enforcement officer teams up with a clinician to address mental health-related emergencies, including instances involving homelessness.

The **Los Angeles Police Department's Mental Evaluation Unit** (MEU) exemplifies the successful execution of the co-responder model, where officers and mental health professionals collaborate to offer a comprehensive response to mental health incidents.

- The co-responder model brings significant benefits, such as providing immediate, tailored aid addressing the full range of an individual's needs.
- The challenges of the model are the requirement of strong mental health support structures and comprehensive training for all involved, often straining financial and logistical resources.

Specialized Outreach Teams

- Specialized outreach teams are dedicated to engaging with the homeless community. These groups often comprise officers trained in crisis intervention and understanding homelessness, sometimes supplemented by social workers or health professionals.

The **Mental Evaluation Unit (MEU) of the Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD)** is a specialized unit that aims to reduce the potential for violence during police encounters with individuals who have mental illnesses, are in mental health crises, or are experiencing homelessness. Established in 1972, the MEU works in collaboration with the Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health (DMH).

The core function of the MEU is to act as a liaison between the LAPD and DMH, providing a response system that pairs DMH mental health clinicians with LAPD officers and detectives. These co-responder teams are called Systemwide Mental Assessment Response Teams (SMART) and operate citywide.

The SMART teams specialize in responding to 911 calls involving individuals with mental illness. The clinicians on these teams can conduct field assessments and make referrals to mental health services. They also advise and assist officers in the field in dealing with complex mental health-related calls.

A major role of the MEU is to train and educate LAPD personnel on mental health issues, their role under California's Lanterman-Petris-Short (LPS) Act, and Department mental illness policy.

The MEU has been successful in diverting mentally ill individuals from the criminal justice system and into treatment programs, reducing the potential for violent encounters between police and the mentally ill, and reducing the stigma associated with mental illness within the Department. Its successes have led to it being a model for other similar initiatives across the U.S.

Examples

The Community Care Response Team (CCRT) developed by the Anaheim Police Department in California demonstrates the effectiveness of such an approach. The CCRT, consisting of caseworkers, health clinicians, social workers, and security officers, extends aid to homeless individuals, linking them with essential services such as mental health support, shelter access, and social programs.

The Homeless Outreach Team (HOT) of the Houston Police Department serves as an illustrative example, having succeeded in building strong ties with homeless individuals and efficiently connecting them to services.

- These teams offer the advantage of forging trustful relationships with homeless individuals, thereby developing effective, personalized responses.
- Specialized teams need continual training, long-term commitment from officers, and substantial resources to navigate complex social services systems.

Multi-Agency Collaborations

- Multi-agency collaborations are partnerships between diverse stakeholders, including police departments, mental health providers, housing authorities, and non-profit organizations within the local Continuum of Care (CoC).
- Specialized Outreach Teams can work with dedicated street outreach organizations or other homeless outreach services within the local CoC to ensure coverage and support engagement.

- Interagency or public-private collaborations aim to address homelessness collectively, leveraging shared resources, and spreading the responsibility.
- Collaborative efforts promise a comprehensive solution to homelessness, tackling the issue from multiple angles.
- Challenges of this model may be conflicting objectives, coordination difficulties, and shared accountability.

Funding Strategies for Integrated Models

- Law enforcement agencies that are smaller or with fewer financial or personnel resources are encouraged to start with an officer or officers who are dedicated to the issue of homelessness and collaboration with services organizations.

The Houston Police Department's Homeless Outreach Team (HOT) is an innovative initiative that strives to build relationships with homeless individuals in the community and to provide them with the necessary resources and services. This unique and specialized approach commenced in 2011 and has shown significant success in addressing homelessness in the city of Houston.

The HOT consists of a select group of police officers, a sergeant, and a mental health professional who have received specialized training to work with homeless individuals. The team's main goal is to help the homeless population secure permanent housing and provide them with appropriate supportive services.

Officers in the HOT patrol areas where homeless individuals are known to congregate. They engage in conversations, build trust, and then guide these individuals towards services and support that can help them transition out of homelessness. These services can include access to medical care, mental health services, substance abuse treatment, housing, and help with obtaining identification cards.

The Houston Police Department's HOT has been instrumental in finding homes for hundreds of homeless individuals in Houston. This, in turn, leads to fewer calls for service to these areas and fewer arrests of homeless individuals. It also provides these individuals with the dignity and respect they deserve and gives them an opportunity to rebuild their lives.

The success of the HOT is largely due to the team's ability to build relationships and trust within the homeless community. Their work showcases the positive impact of police and community collaboration in effectively addressing homelessness.

An instance of such collaboration is _Seattle's Law Enforcement Assisted Diversion (LEAD)_ program, uniting law enforcement, public defenders, social workers, and community organizations to support low-level offenders, including homeless individuals, with vital services rather than resorting to incarceration.

- Larger agencies are encouraged to dedicate special funding or assign officers within the department to create one or more of the models referenced in the Guidebook.
- Officers in any size department can develop expertise by understanding the local homeless community, identifying reasons for their predicament, and exploring opportunities for help.
- Funding for these initiatives can come from diverse sources, including local, state, and federal grants, partnerships with non-profit organizations, or reallocation of existing department resources.

Triage and Prioritizing Response

- Each officer should display interest and compassion toward the issue of homelessness and it will make a substantial difference.
- Homeless-dedicated officers should learn about individuals experiencing homelessness, understand

Seattle's Law Enforcement Assisted Diversion (LEAD) program is an innovative pre-booking diversion program developed with the goal of addressing low-level offenses related to drug use, mental health, and poverty, including homelessness, in the community.

Initiated in 2011, the LEAD program is a collaborative effort among law enforcement agencies, public defenders, human service agencies, business leaders, and community organizations. It represents a unique approach to systemic challenges, by allowing law enforcement officers to redirect low-level offenders involved in drugs or prostitution to community-based services, instead of jail and prosecution.

When a police officer encounters an individual eligible for LEAD, they can use their discretion to either direct that individual towards the program or process them through the traditional criminal justice system. If chosen for LEAD, the individual is connected with a case manager who then helps them access a broad range of services, including drug treatment, housing assistance, healthcare, job training, and mental health support.
The program emphasizes harm reduction over punitive approaches, and case managers work with participants to create individualized service plans that do not necessarily require abstinence from drug use as a precondition for receiving services.

Evaluation of the LEAD program has shown promising results. According to a study conducted by the University of Washington, LEAD participants were 58% less likely to be arrested after enrollment in the program, compared to individuals who went through the "system as usual" criminal justice process.

Overall, the LEAD program is seen as a pioneering and successful model of 'diversion' in the US, where resources are directed away from the criminal justice system and towards community-based, harm reduction services. It has inspired similar programs in other cities across the country.

their unique circumstances, and identify basic opportunities for assistance.

- Dedicated officers should secure quality referral information from community partners to assist individuals in connecting with the appropriate resources and trained in triaging cases based on the immediate needs of the individual including:
  - **Health and Safety:** Immediate health or safety concerns should be addressed as a priority.
  - **Stabilization:** Once immediate needs are addressed, efforts should be made to stabilize the individual.
  - **Social Services:** The individual should be connected to social services for long-term support.
  - **Existing Relationships with Organizations:** Determine if the individual is already working with an organization, and understand the steps already taken.
  - **Gaps in Resources:** Identify if the individual falls into a gap where no resources exist, and collaborate with community partners to address these gaps.

The Anaheim Police Department in California has initiated a program called the Community Care Response Team (CCRT) to address homelessness and mental health issues more effectively in the community.

The CCRT is designed to redirect non-violent, non-criminal calls related to mental health, homelessness, and other social needs away from the traditional policing framework to a response model led by trained clinical workers and case managers. The team consists of a variety of professionals with backgrounds in mental health, homelessness, and emergency medical services, ensuring a comprehensive, empathetic, and appropriate response.

Upon receiving a call, the CCRT responds to assess the situation and provides immediate help or refers individuals to appropriate community services. This might involve helping a homeless person find shelter, linking a person with mental health issues to support resources, or addressing other social service needs.

The CCRT's aim is to provide a more effective and humane approach to social issues traditionally handled by law enforcement, thereby freeing up police resources to focus on public safety and crime. The CCRT model also recognizes that police officers, despite their training, are not always the most appropriate responders for situations involving mental health crises or homelessness.

Early reports indicate the CCRT model has been successful, and it serves as an example of innovative strategies to address complex societal issues.

Introduction to Community Resources and Partnership Planning

While there are not temporary housing or homeless services organizations in each city or town, there are organizations - both public and private - that are responsible for understanding the needs in all localities and creating a response. Social services organization also work together in collaborations or coalitions to share resources and coordinate care.

The broad categories of primary areas that officers may make referrals or respond to special circumstances are in the suggested list below. Following the resource descriptions, please review the recommended objectives and steps to forming partnerships. Please see the Appendix for a *"Partnership Mapping"* Worksheet for your community.

committed to addressing and ending homelessness.
- CoCs are voluntary networks to participate, are required by the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to receive federal funding for homeless housing and services, and are responsible for collecting and reporting unduplicated data on people experiencing homelessness.

- Each CoC has a Coordinated Entry System described in the Introduction for assessing and referring to housing.
- CoCs select a Lead Agency that is contracted to complete the programmatic functions.
- CoC members and volunteers participate in governance including committees that address special issues of the CoC.
- Connecting directly into the CoC is a way for police departments to connect with the larger network of providers at the same time and address issues of homelessness systematically.
- Please view this map and website *Ending Homelessness | Housing Action Illinois* for updated contact information of the CoC that represents your community: *Resources to Prevent and End Homelessness | Housing Action Illinois*

Community Action Agencies
- Community Action changes people's lives, embodies the spirit of hope, improves communities, and makes America a better place to live. We care about the entire community, and we are dedicated to helping people help themselves and each other.
- The Ilinois Association of Community Action Agencies (IACAA) distributes utility assistance, manages state-funded rental assistance programs through their member network, and helps develop affordable housing focused in rural areas of the state. Please see the attachment for a list of IACAA Members.
- *IACAA Member Directory - IACAA (iacaanet.org)*

Homeless Continuums of Care
- There are 19 Continuums of Care in Illinois. A Continuum of Care (CoC) is a public-private collaboration of all community stakeholders

Mental Health

- Mental health concerns are highly prevalent among PEH. The mental health needs might be acute or chronic, and the services needed might be crisis hospitalization and temporary hold, to assessment for service needs.
- Law enforcement should understand referral pathways and non-crisis, voluntary services are available to people who are not getting connected to mental health services through another community-based provider.
- Police Departments should partner with Community Mental Health Centers (CMHC) or other certified mental health providers recognized and funded through the Department of Mental Health and Medicaid. If the person has private health insurance they would need to learn from the insurer about the in-network providers.
- The Illinois Department of Human Services has a Provider Locator to look by service type and by county. *IDHS: Office Locator https://www.dhs.state.il.us/page.aspx?module=12.* Some of the more relevant and common mental health services to connect with in your communities include:
  - **Mental Health Assessment:** Documents of a person's needs and identify a service plan for referrals.
  - **Assertive Community Treatment (ACT) and/or Community Support Teams (CST):** ACT is an intensive and comprehensive team approach combining community-based mental health and supportive services for adults with serious mental illnesses and a history of high use of inpatient services. ACT and CST (no psychiatrist on the team) are delivered by CMHCs.
  - **Living Room Program IDHS:** *Living Room Program (state.il.us):* The Living Room Program (LRP) is for individuals who may be at risk of or entering crisis and that need services and supports that "proactively divert crises and break the cycle of psychiatric hospitalization." The LRP settings are safe and home-like and are supported by Recovery Support Specialists, who help to learn and apply wellness strategies to prevent future crisis events.
  - **Projects for Assistance in Transition from Homelessness (PATH) Programs** are federally funded, coordinated across the state, and administered at a local level. PATH Programs are an essential tool for street outreach to unsheltered homeless individuals. The purpose is to prevent, reduce or eliminate homelessness for individuals with serious mental illnesses or serious mental illness and substance use disorders. *IDHS: PATH Program Locations By Cities/Counties (state.il.us)*

- Many Illinois Communities have 708 (Mental Health), 377 (Developmental Disabilities), or 533 (Substance Use and Public Health) Boards. Local boards follow the Illinois Community Mental Health Act and use local tax levies to raise funds for local human services needs. T*he Association of Community Mental Health Authorities of Illinois* has more information on types of Boards and contact information.
- For more information on more types of mental health services go to: *IDHS: List of Mental Health Treatment (state.il.us)*

Substance Use

The Illinois Department of Human Services has created the Illinois Helpline, *Illinois Helpline (helplineil.org)* as a direct way for individuals, family members, friends, and community organizations to get help with substance use. General community members, including officers or social workers, can create a login to save searches and track services requests.

In the "Get Help" section, users can search for services by type and select the radius to search for services. This portal, while centered on substance use, Medication Assisted Treatment, and overdose prevention, has links to search for a wide variety of services.

Senior Services

- According to Healthcare for the Homeless in Baltimore, people experiencing homelessness have a life expectancy of 48 years, with increased risks of heart disease and stroke as well as injuries that contribute to early death. Still, on average 5 percent of the homeless population is over 62 years old.
- Aging adults are supported in Illinois through Area Agencies on Aging. Area Agencies have the primary task of planning and coordinating services and programs for older people in their respective areas. *Illinois Area Agencies on Aging Map*.
- Police Departments may also seek to partner with Adult Protective Services (APS) when there is a concern for abuse or neglect, including self-neglect. Find more information at *APS Statistics (illinois.gov)*.

Project NOW is a Community Action Agency and CoC Lead Agency that is committed to providing assistance to individuals and families in need in Rock Island, Henry, and Mercer Counties in Illinois. Here's what you should know about Project NOW:

1. **Services:** Project NOW offers a broad range of services to help people meet basic needs and work towards self-sufficiency. These services include:
   a. **Head Start Program:** Promoting school readiness for 330 preschool-aged children from low-income families.
   b. **Utilities Assistance:** Providing utility bill assistance to individuals struggling with increasing fuel costs. During the COVID-19 pandemic, Project NOW provided nine households with utility bill assistance through funding from the Illinois COVID-19 Response Fund.
   c. **Housing Assistance:** Offering rent & deposit payments, transitional housing, and services for the homeless to ensure affordable and safe housing.
   d. **Senior Services:** Delivering meals to seniors as well as offering socialization, counseling, and more at seven sites.
   e. **Emergency Needs Assistance:** This includes dental, car repairs, emergency furnace repair/replacement, and weatherization services.
   f. **Food Assistance:** Assisting individuals and families with access to food.
   g. **RIM Rural Transit Program:** Serving over 2000 seniors with door-to-door transportation.

The organization helps over 7000 households with utility assistance and more than 2000 seniors through various services.

2. **History and Mission:** Project NOW was founded in 1968 and is part of a network of over 1000 Community Action Agencies that originated from the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964. The organization's mission is to strengthen communities by helping people help themselves and one another, and it aims to eliminate the causes of poverty through strategic initiatives and partnerships.
3. **COVID-19 Response:** During the COVID-19 pandemic, Project NOW received a subgrant of $10,000 from Housing Action Illinois, thanks to the Illinois COVID-19 Response Fund. This fund was utilized in providing short-term rental and mortgage assistance to nine households. Additionally, nine households were helped with utility bills, which included families with children and individuals with disabilities as well as people experiencing wage loss.
4. **Contact Information:** For utilities assistance, individuals can call 309-793-6391 to make an appointment. Income guidelines apply for this service.
5. **Area Served:** Project NOW serves Rock Island, Henry, and Mercer Counties in Illinois.

PATH211 for Human Services Regional Phone Directory
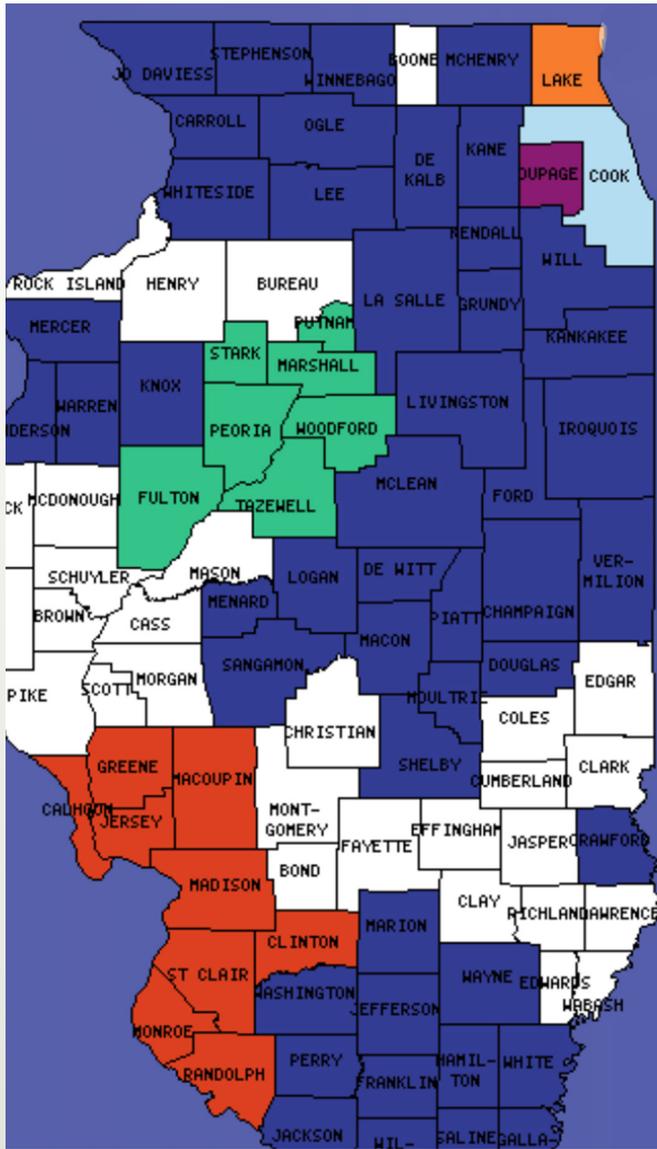
■ PATH - Current Coverage (888) 865-9903
■ PATH - In Planning Process
■ Lake County (855) 677-5253
■ Metropolitan Chicago - Text (773) 362-4401
■ DuPage County (630) 407-6621
■ Heart of Illinois (309) 999-4029
■ Greater St. Louis (800) 427-4626
□ PATH - Potential Implementation

*Accessed on June 25, 2023

Youth - Child Welfare

- Young adults being discharged from the Child Welfare system are at particular risk for homelessness. This group of young adults - single or parenting with children - potentially have additional resources available to assist their transition out of homelessness.
- It is important for law enforcement to know who the providers are of youth housing and services, and the providers that are funded through the Department of Children and Family Services to administer special resources like cash assistance.
- Additional information can be found here: *Homeless Services (illinois.gov)*

211 for Human Services

- The Federal Communications Commission created the 211 telephone number to streamline access to health and human services. 211 is intended to be available on a 24-hour basis to connect residents to a wide variety of human services or social services across the state.
- States, local communities, or regions must establish

and pay for the 24-hour hotline. The State of Illinois is piloting 211 in limited locations.

- Resources can also be found online at *www.findhelp211.org.* Find more information about PATH and Illinois 211 at *Human Services Online Database - Path Crisis 211*

▪ PATH	(888) 865-9903
▪ Lake County	(855) 677-5253
▪ Metropolitan Chicago *Text*:	(773) 362-4401
▪ DuPage County	(630) 407-6621
▪ Heart of Illinois	(309) 999-4029
▪ Greater St. Louis	(800) 427-4626

Building Effective Partnerships with Social Service Agencies, Outreach Teams, and Mental Health Providers *(click here to view program)*

Objective: To create a solid foundation of support and resources for those experiencing homelessness through effective partnership building.

Steps for Implementation:

1. **Identify Potential Partners:** Seek out social service agencies like Project Now of Illinois, outreach teams, and mental health providers that align with your objectives. Research their programs, community impact, and reach within the community. *(Partner Resource)*
2. **Initiate Collaboration:** Reach out to identified agencies expressing your interest in collaboration. Discuss mutual benefits and potential areas of cooperation, such as providing housing assistance, job placement, or mental health services.
3. **Develop Communication Channels:** Establish regular communication channels for sharing information about unsheltered populations, such as their locations, changes in the community, and their shelter needs.
4. **Coordinate Outreach Efforts:** Work together to synchronize outreach efforts, ensuring that the provided support effectively reaches those in need. Regular meetings and updates can help streamline this process.

Healthcare Partnerships *(click here to view)*
Objective: To improve healthcare access and outcomes for homeless individuals and better utilize police resources.

Steps for Implementation:

1. **Establish Response Partnerships:** Engage with local healthcare providers and express your interest in establishing a response partnership. Highlight the mutual benefits, such as improved health outcomes and freeing up police resources.
2. **Assign Liaisons:** Appoint a dedicated contact person within the department to liaise with healthcare providers. This person would be responsible for coordinating responses and updating both parties on relevant developments.

3. **Develop a Response Protocol:** Collaboratively devise a protocol where healthcare providers take the lead in responding to medical crises. The police can support by ensuring safety and order during such interventions.

Participation in Continuum of Care (CoC) and Other Service Network Meetings
Objective: To stay abreast of available resources, efficient referral pathways, and evolving best practices within the community.

Steps for Implementation:

1. **Identify Relevant Networks:** Determine which local CoC or similar network meetings would be most beneficial for your department. Consider their focus areas, community impact, and potential for collaboration.
2. **Regular Attendance:** Designate a representative from your department to regularly attend these meetings. The representative should report back regularly on any useful insights gained.
3. **Apply Learned Knowledge:** Implement the knowledge gained from these meetings to improve your department's response to homelessness. This could be in the form of new referral pathways, improved outreach techniques, or new partner organizations.

Assessing Community-Specific Factors, Challenges, and Resources

Objective: To develop a comprehensive understanding of the unique factors, challenges, and resources present in your community, shaping a more effective localized response to homelessness.

Steps for Implementation:

1. **Conduct a Thorough Assessment:** Research and gather data on local factors contributing to homelessness and the resources currently available. This could involve surveys, community meetings, and data analysis.
2. **Identify Resource Gaps:** Analyze the collected data to identify gaps, such as a lack of fixed shelter. Engage local stakeholders in discussions about potential solutions.
3. **Understand the Root Causes:** Identify the primary reasons for homelessness in your locality and devise strategies to address these. This could involve partnerships with job placement agencies, affordable housing providers, or addiction treatment centers.

Setting Goals, Outcomes, and Metrics for Partnerships *(click here to view)*

Objective: To track the effectiveness of partnerships and provide a basis for ongoing improvement.

Steps for Implementation:

1. **Define Partnership Goals:** Clearly state the goals and expected outcomes of each partnership. This might include a reduction in homelessness, increased engagement with services, or decreased emergency calls to police.
2. **Establish Tracking Metrics:** Develop a system for tracking these outcomes. This could include a database for the number of people served, call tracking for emergency services, or surveys for service users.
3. **Regular Review and Adaptation:** Regularly review these metrics and adjust your strategies and implementation as needed. This could be achieved through regular partnership meetings, internal reviews, and community feedback. Regular adaptation ensures the partnerships remain relevant, effective, and beneficial to the community.

Illinois Partnership Case Studies

Rock Island/Moline (Quad Cities) Project Now Service Resource Partnership *(click here to view)*

Project Now is a Community Action Agency and lead agency for the Northwestern Illinois CoC. Project Now works with multiple Police Departments where they both provide information and resources to police departments and where they work with officers to help with homeless individuals. Project Now develops the community resource information to give to police departments so they know how and where to make appropriate referrals for assistance. Project Now collaborates with officers to conduct joint street outreach, especially to locations that are in more secluded areas to assist with staff safety and security.

Springfield Police Department Homeless Outreach Team and Mental Health Crisis Response *(click here to view)*
The Springfield Police Department has a Homeless Outreach Team (HOT) that includes a lead officer and a social worker. This team conducts joint outreach to people experiencing homelessness that are living outside. Their role is relationship building, resource and referral, assessment and placement. The HOT partners with local homeless services organizations and supports the broader network that works to rehouse individuals and families.

The HOT also partners with Springfield Memorial Hospital, where officers can request mental health crisis services to come out into the community. This provides real-time access for assessment, stabilization, and access to a service through the hospital or mental health outpatient clinic.

HOT officers have access to emergency and transitional housing placements through the local Salvation Army in Springfield. Officers can make placements of people who are intoxicated who can safely be sheltered and are not in need of medical detox.

Madison County Sheriff's Department and Eviction Court
Madison County is working to address and prevent evictions resulting in homelessness. The Circuit Court Judge evaluates if the eviction being filed is a proper and legal eviction and dismisses cases of evictions. Land of

Lincoln Legal Aid is located in Eviction Court to provide representation and mediation and can help households access **_Court-Based Rental Assistance_**. If an eviction is proceeding to judgment, the Sheriff's Department coordinates with the Madison County Community Development to identify currently available alternative housing options or other emergency placements.

Elgin and Aurora Police Departments Addressing Chronic Homelessness

The Elgin Police Department and Aurora Police Department are both located in Kane County and share the same Continuum of Care. Each Police Department initiated a community collaboration on homelessness with other first responder agencies, hospital leaders, and homeless services. These collaborations initially focused on the people with the highest numbers of contacts with the goal of breaking the cycle and creating more stable interventions like housing and services.

In both communities, the police officers were the ones who had the most consistent contact and relationship with people living outside. Shelters operated on a 12-hour basis and either had barriers to entry or caps on length of stay, or were very far from other resources causing people to be transported by police to the shelter or by EMT to the hospital. The community partners came together to focus on the individuals in need. They conducted a by-name census and gathered specific information about their service needs and obtained a consent to coordinate services and share names and specific information across the project partners.

One of the outcomes of this effort in Elgin was the creation of the Collaborative Crisis Services Unit (CCSU). According to the City's website, "CCSU is responsible for conducting follow-up visits for individuals who could benefit from mental or behavioral health services. CCSU utilizes community resources, including the Elgin Police Department's own Social Services Unit, to connect individuals with appropriate services. This, in turn, may also reduce patrol calls for service. CCSU has three primary areas of focus: mental and behavioral health, substance use disorder services, and homelessness issues.

The primary model used by CCSU is a co-response model, which pairs a police officer with a mental health professional. CCSU currently has four officers (3 Detectives, 1 Comfort Dog, 1 Supervisor) and three mental health professionals - one full-time and two part-time - who are contracted through Ecker Center, a local mental health agency.

The Aurora Police Department (APD) has dedicated two primary Homeless Liaison Officers. These officers work with the local service providers to facilitate outreach to the homeless population as well as problem solving and strategize on periphery issues that come up with the homeless population (i.e. frequent hospital transports, nuisance crime issues, and mental health problems). The Crisis Intervention Unit works with local homeless outreach teams and shelter case managers on a system-coordination and case-by-case basis. The two APD units - Homeless Liaison and CIU - are represented as a collaborative effort on the Frequent Utilizer population that have the most encounters across departments and systems.

Law enforcement experts recommend that officers receive training related to homelessness on a bi-annual basis at minimum. Conducting in-service training on a regular basis will ensure that each agency can refresh its resources and identify community partners that can work with departments. Effective interaction with individuals experiencing homelessness requires specific knowledge and skills. This guidebook promotes comprehensive training policies to ensure that officers are well prepared to handle these encounters with understanding and compassion.

Overview of Recommended Training Curriculum:

1. **Understanding Homelessness:** Officers should receive comprehensive training on the complexities of homelessness, including the social, economic, and personal factors that contribute to housing instability. This understanding can help officers interact more effectively and empathetically with individuals experiencing homelessness. This training would cover a baseline understanding of the Homeless Guidebook.
2. **Communication and Engagement Skills:** Training should include techniques for effective communication and engagement, emphasizing active listening, empathy, and de-escalation strategies. Building rapport and trust with individuals experiencing homelessness can make encounters more positive and productive.

3. **Mental Health Awareness:** Many individuals experiencing homelessness also deal with mental health issues. Officers should receive training on how to recognize the signs of a mental health crises and how to respond appropriately, including understanding when and how to refer individuals to mental health resources.

4. **Legal and Policy Framework:** Officers must be well versed in the laws and policies related to homelessness, including local ordinances, state and federal laws, and anti-discrimination laws. Understanding these legal frameworks can help officers ensure the rights of individuals experiencing homelessness are protected during encounters.

Ongoing Training and Professional Development:

1. **Refresher Courses:** Regular training sessions can help officers keep up-to-date on best practices and changes in legislation. These sessions can also reinforce the principles of compassionate interaction and de-escalation techniques.
2. **Continuing Education:** Officers should be encouraged to seek out further training opportunities related to homelessness. This could include attending conferences, seminars, and workshops offered by organizations specializing in homelessness and mental health.

3. **Interagency Collaboration:** Collaborative training opportunities with local homeless service providers, outreach organizations, and mental health agencies can enhance officers' understanding of the resources available in their community. This can also foster stronger relationships between the police department and these organizations, leading to more coordinated and effective responses to homelessness.

Here Are Resource Links for Training to Assist with Your Agency's Planning:

SAFE-T Act and Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) Training

- As outlined in the SAFE-T Act of 2023, all officers will receive CIT training every three years.
  - ° CIT training reinforces the foundations of de-escalation and educates officers on recognizing signs of mental health and substance use. This training is an essential function of working with people who are unhoused living alone in encampments and in shelter.
  - ° Officers who are detailed to homeless outreach or in community areas with higher rates of mental health and substance use should be encouraged to take CIT training annually.
- Arrests that result from incidents caused by mental health and substance use can compound an individual's challenges in accessing care or stable housing in the future. The National Alliance on Mental Illness estimates that between 25 percent and 40 percent of all mentally ill Americans will be jailed or incarcerated at some point in their lives. By contrast, about 6.6 percent of the general population will experience this. *Fact Sheet: Incarceration and Mental Health | Weill Cornell Medicine Psychiatry.* These facts underscore the importance for Law Enforcement to invest in alternative approaches that divert people from jail and incarceration.
- The Illinois Law Enforcement Training and Standards Board has regular CIT training and an annual

conference. *ILETSB - Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) (https://www.ptb.illinois.gov/training/crisis-intervention-team-cit/)* Its mission is to "provide standards and training which enhance the ability of law enforcement to readily and quickly adapt to our rapidly changing society and which can lead to public recognition of law enforcement as a profession."

Continuum of Care Training

- There are 19 Continuums of Care in Illinois (see Community Partnerships and Planning Section and attachments). Each CoC holds local trainings and police departments can request the CoC lead agency to conduct annual training for the department on homelessness data and initiatives.
- Some CoC's have established online training platforms on a range of topics related to service delivery, programs, and policies. Interested individuals do not have to live within the CoC geography to access training content. Two online platforms are:
- All Chicago Making Homelessness History: *All Chicago | Course catalog (talentlms.com)*
- Alliance to End Homelessness in *Suburban Cook County: Suburban Cook Alliance | Course catalog (talentlms.com)*

Homeless Training

- The former Executive Director of Hesed House in Aurora has created an online training site for fee-based resources on homelessness, called Homeless Training. *https://www.homelesstraining.com/about/*
- This site offers low-cost individual sessions or bundles, and can also develop and deliver training for organizations. These are live and on-demand training options.
- **Some of the topics include:**
  - . **Fights:** How to prevent and stop fights safely
  - . **Backup:** How to backup a coworker during a crisis
  - . **Police:** How to reduce police calls and keep everyone safe in your organization
  - . **Mental Illness:** How to handle problematic behavior
  - . **Homelessness 201:** Advanced understanding of homelessness
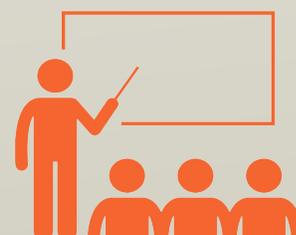
When engaging with individuals experiencing homelessness, law enforcement officers often encounter a wide array of scenarios, each necessitating a specific and considered response. This chapter provides guidance for managing these encounters, with emphasis on proactive contact, well-being checks, transportation-related considerations, referral processes, and the critical role of empathy, respect, and de-escalation techniques.

Initiating/Proactive Contact and Relationship Building

It is crucial that officers dedicate time to making proactive contact with people experiencing homelessness when there is no emergency. For instance, the *Houston Police Department's Homeless Outreach Team (HOT)* is recognized for their effective outreach activities, fostering relationships with homeless individuals and providing them with much-needed resources. Officers can incorporate such outreach into their rounds at known locations where homeless individuals gather.

Understanding that people may initially be wary, it's essential to gradually build trust, showing that the police can be a helpful resource rather than a threat. Consistent, respectful engagement can cultivate trust over time, and significantly change the nature of police-community relations.

Incorporate the following strategies:
1. **Dedicate officer time:** Allocate specific hours or shifts for officers to proactively engage with individuals experiencing homelessness. This allows officers to approach them without the immediate pressure of an emergency situation, making it more likely for trust to be built over time.
2. **Work outreach into rounds at known locations:** Identify known areas where homeless individuals tend to gather and incorporate regular outreach visits into patrol rounds. Consistent contact helps establish familiarity and can contribute to more meaningful interactions.
3. **Establishing officers as resources:** Understand that homeless individuals may initially be hesitant and untrusting of law enforcement. However, through continued engagement and demonstrating genuine care and assistance, officers can establish themselves as valuable resources for those in need.

Well-being checks

Performing well-being checks in high traffic areas where homeless individuals are known to gather can be an important part of community policing. It is essential to balance the desire to help with respecting individuals' privacy and autonomy.

Consider the following approach:
1. **Regular checks:** In areas where there are regulars who may attract concern, officers can periodically drive by and visually assess their well-being. This approach helps maintain a presence without unnecessarily disturbing individuals who may prefer to be left alone.
2. **Responding to calls:** When receiving calls expressing concern for the well-being of a homeless person, evaluate the situation and determine whether immediate police intervention is required. If it is not an emergency, engage in triage over the phone, coach the caller, and assess whether the situation can be resolved through interaction with shelter staff or other appropriate resources.

Medical and Mental Health/Intoxication

When encountering homeless individuals who require medical or mental health assistance, it is crucial to involve the appropriate professionals while ensuring the safety of all parties involved.

Follow these guidelines:
1. **Primary responder:** In cases where the situation is purely medical, emergency medical services should be dispatched without police involvement. However, if the situation involves mental health issues, intoxication, or at the person's request for police assistance, the police should respond accordingly.
2. **Police standby:** While medical staff or mental health professionals conduct interventions, the police can provide a standby presence to ensure safety and assist if needed. Collaboration between different agencies is essential in these situations.

3. **Shelter considerations:** If the intervention necessitates the removal of individuals from shelters due to safety concerns or disruptive behavior, alternative arrangements must be made to ensure they have access to suitable accommodation and support services.

Calls Made by Shelter Residents

When shelter residents contact law enforcement, it is essential to assess the situation to determine the appropriate response. Often, these calls involve conflicts or issues that may require police intervention. However, in non-emergency situations, encourage mediation and coaching over the phone, emphasizing the role of shelter staff.

Consider the following steps:

1. **Triage over the phone:** Engage in a conversation to understand the nature of the issue. If the situation can be resolved through a few questions and guidance, encourage the resident to work with shelter staff for a resolution.

2. **Face-to-face interaction:** If conflicts or issues persist and cannot be resolved over the phone, officers should be prepared to meet with the shelter resident in person. Face-to-face communication can facilitate a more comprehensive understanding of the situation and enable officers to provide appropriate support and mediation.

The Stranded Travelers Program, operated by the Salvation Army, plays a vital role in helping homeless individuals return to their homes. This program focuses on providing financial assistance and transportation support to those who find themselves stranded without means of returning home. Here is an overview of the program with a specific emphasis on its connection to assisting homeless persons:

Financial Assistance and Travel Expenses:
The Salvation Army, in collaboration with Travelers Aid International and Greyhound Bus Company, offers financial assistance to homeless individuals who are stranded and need support to return home.
Once the identity of the individuals is verified, the program ensures that someone will be available to receive them upon their return home.

The program may assist in arranging bus fares or other transportation options to help homeless individuals reach their desired destinations.

Shelter:
While the primary focus of the Stranded Travelers Program is on providing financial assistance for transportation, the Salvation Army also offers temporary shelter to homeless individuals during their transition back to their hometowns.
In cases where homeless individuals need a safe place to stay while awaiting their journey home, the Salvation Army provides them with temporary shelter and necessary amenities.

Social Services:
The program acknowledges the unique challenges faced by homeless individuals, including the lack of identification documents.

The Salvation Army's social workers assist homeless travelers in obtaining necessary identification documents, such as birth certificates or other forms of identification required to access services or secure transportation back home.
Social workers may also provide guidance and support to help homeless individuals connect with resources in their hometowns, such as shelters, support services, or community organizations that can aid in their reintegration process.

It is recommended that homeless individuals seeking assistance from the Stranded Travelers Program contact their local Salvation Army chapter or community center for information on eligibility and available resources.

Identifying Transportation-related Considerations

Considerations related to transportation can be critical. Identify and collaborate with organizations that offer transportation assistance and resources. Examples of such programs can include:

The Salvation Army: This organization often provides transportation assistance to homeless individuals, helping them reach their desired destinations or reunite with family. The law enforcement agency can establish a partnership with the Salvation Army and promote their resources to officers and individuals in need.

Hitchhiking and Human Trafficking

As law enforcement officers in Illinois, it is crucial to recognize the intersection between human trafficking and homelessness within the state. Homeless individuals in Illinois are particularly vulnerable to exploitation and manipulation by traffickers. This section aims to deepen your understanding of the connection between human trafficking and homelessness in Illinois, shed light on its prevalence, and provide insights on how to identify and address potential human trafficking cases within the homeless population in our state.

Prevalence of Human Trafficking in the Homeless Population in Illinois:
- Since 2007 the *Human Trafficking Hotline* has identified nearly 5,000 human trafficking victims. The Hotline works with law enforcement and other partners. The Hotline is 1-888-373-7888 and text to 233733.
- Understand that individuals experiencing homelessness in Illinois face a higher risk of falling victim to human trafficking due to their vulnerability, lack of stable support systems, and limited resources.
- Recognize the tactics employed by traffickers who exploit the vulnerabilities of homeless individuals in Illinois through coercion, manipulation, and false promises of shelter, employment, or assistance.
- Officers should be provided with comprehensive information on the indicators of human trafficking. This can include training sessions, informational materials, and regular updates on new trends or findings related to human trafficking. Awareness of physical, behavioral, and circumstantial indicators, as outlined in the previous message, can equip officers with the knowledge to identify potential victims more accurately.

Human Trafficking Indicators: *(click here to view website)*
1. **Physical Indicators:** The person may show signs of physical abuse, malnourishment, or medical neglect. They might have branding marks or tattoos that suggest ownership. The person might also appear to be in poor health or overly tired, indicating excessive work or lack of proper rest.

2. **Behavioral Indicators:** The person may seem fearful, anxious, depressed, submissive, or paranoid. They may avoid eye contact, appear nervous when law enforcement is present, or provide scripted or inconsistent stories about their situation. The person might also show signs of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).
3. **Lack of Personal Possessions:** The person may have few personal items or clothing, often carrying everything they own with them. They may lack identification documents, or someone else may control their documents.
4. **Lack of Control Over Personal Circumstances:** They may not be free to come and go as they wish, or they may have a highly structured or controlled schedule. They might live and work in the same place or have limited social interaction.
5. **Debt Bondage:** The person may be in a situation of debt that they are unable to pay off, or their earnings may be controlled by someone else.
6. **Age:** Minors involved in commercial sex are automatically considered trafficking victims under U.S. law.
7. **Lack of Knowledge About Their Location:** The person may not know what city or town they're in, or they may not be able to share their home address. This is common in cases where traffickers frequently move their victims to disorient them and prevent them from forming connections.
8. **Inconsistent History:** The person may provide a story that seems rehearsed or inconsistent, or they may provide vague or inconsistent details about their living situation, their job, or their employer.
9. **Third Party Control:** Conversations may be monitored, or someone else may insist on speaking for the person. They may never be alone or may always have someone accompanying them who appears to control or dictate their actions.

Stranded Motorists and Available Resources

- Stranded motorists, much like hitchhikers, can be vulnerable to exploitation, including human trafficking.
- Officers should be aware of resources available for stranded motorists, which can include local roadside assistance programs, transportation agencies, or emergency shelter options.
- The Illinois Department of Transportation provides a Highway Emergency Lane Patrol (HELP) program that can assist stranded motorists. Understanding these resources and how to connect individuals with them can provide immediate support and lessen the vulnerability of these individuals.

Example Scenario:

On a particularly frigid night, an officer encounters an individual named John who is currently experiencing homelessness. John expresses that he is seeking shelter due to the extreme cold. Here's how the officer might proceed:

Identify the Need: The officer first ensures that John is safe and not in immediate medical danger due to the cold. They offer him a hot beverage from a patrol car's emergency supply, providing temporary relief from the cold.
Referral Process: The officer is familiar with the referral processes for local shelters, having reviewed the referral guidelines provided by the local homeless outreach programs. They use their patrol car computer or a designated app on their police department-issued cell phone to access a real-time database of available shelter beds in the area.
Contact the Shelter: The officer contacts a nearby shelter that has available space. The officer confirms the shelter's intake hours, making sure John can be accepted when he arrives, and verifies any requirements John needs to meet, such as an ID or health check.
Provide Transportation: Given the cold weather and the urgency of the situation, the officer provides John with a bus pass for immediate transportation to the shelter. The officer ensures John knows the bus route to take, explaining it clearly or providing a map if necessary.
Follow-up: After John boards the bus, the officer contacts the shelter to let them know John is on his way. The officer provides a brief description of John to the shelter staff and estimates his arrival time.
Documentation: The officer documents the encounter, noting the referral and any relevant details about the interaction. This information will be useful for potential follow-ups and contributes to the department's understanding of local homelessness.
Continued Support: The next day, the officer checks in with the shelter to confirm that John arrived safely and to see if there are any additional ways they can assist.

By following these steps, the officer ensures John is provided with immediate shelter in a harsh weather situation, using the resources and processes established by law enforcement. The success of this approach depends on well-established referral processes, effective collaboration with local shelters, and the empathetic, respectful conduct of the officer.

Example Scenario with Unavailable Shelter:

Consider the same setting: a particularly frigid night where an officer encounters an individual named John who is currently experiencing homelessness. John again expresses his need for shelter due to the extreme cold. However, this time the local shelters are at capacity and can't take in more individuals. Here's how the officer might proceed:

Identify the Need: The officer first ensures that John is safe and not in immediate medical danger due to the cold. They offer him a hot beverage and a blanket from the patrol car's emergency supply, providing temporary relief from the cold.
Referral Process: The officer uses their patrol car computer or a designated app on their police department-issued cell phone to access a real-time database of available shelter beds in the area. They find that all local shelters are currently at capacity.
Alternative Solutions: Recognizing that John cannot stay outside in the freezing weather, the officer considers alternative solutions. They recall the law enforcement's partnership with local hotels and motels that offer emergency accommodations in such situations.

Contact the Hotel: The officer contacts a nearby hotel that participates in the emergency accommodation program. After explaining the situation, they secure a room for John for the night.

Provide Transportation: Given the cold weather and the urgency of the situation, the officer arranges transportation to the hotel. If department policy allows, they might transport John directly. Alternatively, they could arrange a ride via a local taxi service or rideshare covered by the department's emergency assistance funds.

Ensure Smooth Transition: Upon arrival at the hotel, the officer assists John with check-in to ensure a smooth transition. They confirm with the hotel staff that John will be staying for the night under the emergency accommodation program.

Follow-up: After leaving John at the hotel, the officer contacts their department's homeless outreach liaison or social worker to inform them about John's situation. This will help in making follow-up arrangements for the next day, such as connecting John with local resources, case management services, or longer-term housing solutions.

Documentation: The officer documents the encounter, noting the referral to the hotel and any relevant details about the interaction. This information will be useful for potential follow-ups and contributes to the department's understanding of local homelessness.

By following these steps, the officer ensures that John is provided with immediate shelter in a harsh weather situation, despite local shelters being at capacity. This approach requires effective collaboration with local businesses and organizations, flexible resources for emergency accommodation, and the empathetic, respectful conduct of the officer.

- Officers should engage in case scenarios and role-playing examples in training to help in handling hitchhikers and stranded motorists to incorporate elements of human trafficking. This will enable officers to apply their knowledge of indicators in a practical context. This approach can also help them understand how to use available resources effectively and provide support to individuals they encounter.

Evaluating and Improving Referral Processes
(click here to view report)

Making effective referrals to local shelters or outreach programs requires a well-defined process and collaboration with relevant agencies.

Confirming Referral Processes

- Effective referrals to local shelters or outreach programs are integral to addressing homelessness.
- To ensure that these referrals are beneficial, it's crucial to have a well-defined and understood process.
- This is achieved by requesting written referral guidelines from the agencies operating the shelters or outreach programs. These guidelines should detail the protocol that officers need to follow when making referrals.
- Guidelines should include information on the eligibility criteria for individuals to be accepted into programs, what documentation might be needed, the times when referrals can be made, and any specific processes that need to be followed.
- Officers should work with their Commanders and other partners if there are barriers to referrals for the people being engaged by law enforcement.
- Standard processes are important for consistency and efficiency. Officers can then familiarize themselves with these guidelines and ensure they are adhered to during the referral process.

- It will also be important for law enforcement to advocate with the referral organizations for their needs such as time sensitivity and diversionary options to arrest.

Planning Logistical Steps

- Officers and departments should prepare the logistical steps to make effective referrals.
- The primary concern in planning referrals is transportation to the designated shelter or program.
- Departments can equip officers with resources such as bus passes or contacts for transportation services that can facilitate this travel and incorporate this into the law enforcement budget.
- Officers should be informed about the intake hours and requirements of local shelters, ensuring they only direct individuals to these facilities when they are accepting new entries. This can prevent situations where individuals are left stranded without shelter due to miscommunication or misunderstanding of shelter operations.

Collaboration for Dedicated Referral Partnerships

- To further streamline the referral process, law enforcement can leverage their local collaborative partnerships to establish dedicated referral partnerships that provide a more effective and integrated approach to addressing homelessness.
- This collaboration can involve joint training sessions where police officers and service providers learn about each other's roles, responsibilities, and processes. It can also include regular information sharing sessions, where updates on available resources, changes in procedures, or trends in homelessness are discussed.
- Maintaining regular communication channels can help to promptly address any challenges or obstacles that may arise during the referral process. By working closely together, the police department and service providers can leverage their combined expertise and resources to address the needs of individuals experiencing homelessness more effectively and efficiently.

Importance of Empathy, Respect, and De-escalation Techniques

In encounters with individuals experiencing homelessness, it is vital for officers to approach situations with empathy, respect, and de-escalation techniques in mind. These practices can help defuse potentially tense or volatile situations. Training officers in the following areas is crucial:

1. **Empathy:** Encourage officers to view the situation from the individual's perspective and understand the underlying challenges they may be facing. Demonstrating empathy can foster trust and help establish rapport.
2. **Respect:** Treat all individuals, regardless of their housing status, with dignity and respect. Avoid stigmatizing language or behavior and maintain a non-judgmental approach.

3. **De-escalation Techniques:** Officers should be trained in de-escalation techniques such as active listening, keeping a safe distance, using a calm voice, avoiding aggressive body language, and offering help or solutions. It's essential to create a sense of safety and control in the situation, allowing the individual to feel respected and heard. This approach can often lead to more peaceful resolutions and a better understanding of the person's needs and circumstances.

De-escalation Techniques *(click here to view)*

1. **Active Listening:** This involves more than just hearing what the other person is saying. Active listening includes showing interest, reflecting back what you hear, summarizing their points, and asking clarifying questions. This technique helps the individual feel heard and understood, which can reduce frustration and anxiety.
2. **Maintaining a Calm Demeanor:** An officer's own behavior can significantly influence the direction of the encounter. By staying calm and composed, officers can model the behavior they want to see in the individual they're interacting with. This includes maintaining a steady, calm voice and avoiding any signs of frustration or impatience.
3. **Non-Threatening Body Language:** The way an officer stands and moves can also escalate or de-escalate a situation. Non-threatening body language includes maintaining a relaxed posture, avoiding direct eye contact, and keeping hands visible and open. This can help to make the individual feel safer and less defensive.
4. **Creating Space and Slowing Down:** If the situation allows, officers should maintain a safe distance and avoid rushing the interaction. This can provide the individual with a sense of personal space and time to process the situation, reducing feelings of being overwhelmed or cornered.
5. **Using Empathetic Statements:** Empathy can be a powerful de-escalation tool. By acknowledging the individual's feelings and showing understanding, officers can help to create a connection and diffuse anger or fear.
6. **Offering Help and Resources**: By providing practical solutions or resources, officers can help the individual see a way out of their current situation. This might involve connecting them with social services, medical care, or other community resources.
7. **Limiting Force:** Whenever possible, officers should avoid the use of force, as this can significantly escalate the situation. If force must be used, it should be the minimum amount necessary to safely resolve the situation.

This section aims to inform officers and leadership about policies and considerations in addressing encampments and establishing collaborative policies. These actions alone will not solve homelessness and have the potential to move them to another community. Therefore it is important to plan in advance and coordinate with other parties for solutions and strategies. Below is a brief overview and reflects the experiences of Illinois' officers and experts. The *Arizona State University Center for Problem-Oriented Policing* addresses additional steps and context.

Understanding different types and characteristics of encampments

- Encampments are understood as unsheltered locations where individuals or groups of people have established a fixed, outdoor location. The size of the group is not always indicative of the need to respond to an encampment.
- Encampments may appear in remote, rural or wooded locations where the individuals are intentionally living out of sight. Others are much more visible, taking space on sidewalks, underpasses, or in parks. In either setting, persons may be on public or private land which impacts an officer's response or proactive outreach to people living there.
- Encampments typically emerge due to the lack of shelter capacity in a community or region, or the existing shelter locations have higher barriers to entry, or the individuals do not want to give up their autonomy to comply with shelter rules.
- There may be instances when an encampment must be relocated or where people are asked to move locations. In other cases law enforcement needs to secure locations that could become encampment locations or are very secluded and unsafe.

Responding to complaints from private property owners and concerned community members

- When community members find someone living on their property or are in the public way, they typically call police to complain and seek resolution.
- Officers have had success in going out, engaging the individual, notifying them that they are on private property and asking if they have an alternative place to move their belongings. Oftentimes people do not know they are on private property and move willingly. Officers should offer transportation and also to connect the person to a shelter, services, or discuss if they need relocation assistance to their community of origin.

- If a person is on public property, the appropriate response from officers is to conduct a well-being check and offer services.
- Police departments should make every effort to decriminalize homelessness and uphold the Illinois Homeless Bill of Rights that protects personal belongings as well as access to services.
- Typically, the volume of complaints, as well as the source of complaints, will drive the response at the department level.
- Please consult the Policy Section of this Guidebook for suggested policy on addressing encampments. Being prepared, proactive, and collaborative will make the difference for officers implementing relocations.

Clearing Encampments: Role of Homeless Outreach Teams (HOT) vs. Standard Patrol/ Beat Officers

- In the case of encampments in and around highways, the Department of Transportation will request assistance to clear the area and ensure the safety of people who could be affected by the construction and falling debris.
- If your police department has a designated HOT team or officers who are more regularly connecting with people experiencing homelessness, it is recommended to segment the responsibilities when it comes to clearing encampments. This will allow homeless-designated or HOT officers to maintain a trusting relationship that has prioritized services and engagement designed to divert from enforcement.
- In the capacity of clearing an encampment, homeless outreach officers may focus on advance notification and resource offering, and planning any advance relocation support and storage for personal belongings in conjunction with community partners.

- Standard Patrol and Beat Officers will likely be more involved in enforcement of the order to clear an encampment. In this capacity they are executing the relocation orders, supporting a safe, secure and calm process, safety and security of the people leaving the encampment, supporting mediation and de-escalation, helping to secure personal property, and ensuring that personal property rights are upheld.

Collaboration with Continuums of Care (CoC) and local homeless systems

- Collaboration between law enforcement and social service agencies is crucial in dealing with homelessness effectively. Most local and regional systems of care have at least one outreach worker or program that can partner to help with encampment outreach.
- When an encampment is identified to be cleared, law enforcement can invite community agencies to do outreach up to 6-weeks in advance or more as time permits.
- The purpose of advance coordination is to determine who is already working with encampment dwellers, available shelter and housing resources as alternatives, and arrange for other needs like storage or specialized services.
- Please read more about *"Understanding Encampments."*

Scenario:

An encampment developed in a mid-sized community in a secluded area near a river. The community did not have a regular social services street outreach team but did have a dedicated officer who visited the encampment for well-being checks and to monitor safety needs of the area. Law enforcement and local hospitals noticed a pattern of transportation to hospital and discharge back to homelessness related to the encampment.

Response:

Local city leaders brought law enforcement, hospital, fire, social service and shelter agencies to a table for improved planning. They developed and implemented a process of regular engagement, identification, and referrals to shelter. The team also obtained individual consent to coordinate around their specific needs. This process showed that residents of the encampment were not connected to services but wanted assistance with finding housing and other resources.

Result:

As a result, the city provided financial resources to a community agency for dedicated outreach and coordination with law enforcement. The local shelter also reviewed its own criteria for entrance and length of stay to be more flexible, and agreed to work with partners on expanding available shelter. The local mental health agency also agreed to develop the capacity for serving referrals from the encampments for assessment and case management.

Scenario:

A long-term encampment is established at an underpass of a highway. The highway has been slated for construction by the Department of Transportation and the encampment must be moved. The encampment is a part of regular contact by the local law enforcement Homeless Outreach Team and social services outreach. Members of the encampment community are beginning to show signs of trust and acceptance of basic services and housing assessments. There are 15 regular dwellers with an additional 5 to 15 people coming and going at any time, and several have pets.

Response:

The HOT advocated with their commanders to convene a group inclusive of community partners to plan for outreach and relocation of the encampment residents. The group determined that it needed 8-weeks of planning and engagement to offer shelter or transitional housing to the 15 people living regularly in the encampment. A schedule is created, resources are aligned, and the team works to assess each person and make arrangements for relocation to more stable housing including options that allow pets. This includes arranging for movers and temporary storage of belongings. It is determined during the outreach phase that the HOT team would remain engaged but would not conduct the enforcement of the relocation when the final day arrived.

Result:

During the 8-week period, the encampment team was able to assess all 15 people for housing and offered general assistance to those who came and went. All were notified of the closure of the encampment. At the end of the period, five people accepted to move into shelter temporarily while they secure other housing. The remaining 10 did not accept shelter but relocated their belongings to another area. The encampment enforcement was completed, and the underpass was sealed off. The new encampment moved to an alternative underpass about one-mile away.

Law Enforcement must establish policies that outline how its agency and officers will address homelessness. Given the scope of homelessness, an agency should have multiple policies breaking down various scenarios and activities related to addressing the issue. Below are links to sample policy planning documents by topic and what should be included and adapted.

This guidebook highlights three local agencies that have established policies that align with the goal of this Guidebook.
1. Crystal Lake Police Department combines its approach to homelessness, staffing, and mental illness in one policy document.
2. Bartlett Police Department and Chicago Police Department reaffirm the Illinois Homeless Bill of Rights.

Specific Policy Areas
(Click on each topic below for more information)
1. ***Homeless Encampments:*** Develop policies on engagement with homeless encampments, including protocols for addressing health and safety concerns and providing advance notice when clearing encampments.
2. ***Communication and Engagement:*** Emphasize respectful and empathetic communication when interacting with individuals experiencing homelessness. Develop protocols for de-escalation techniques and conflict resolution to promote positive interactions and minimize the use of force.
3. ***Referral and Resource Coordination:*** Develop policies on referring individuals experiencing homelessness to appropriate community resources, shelters, and support services.
4. ***Personal Property:*** Outline procedures for handling and safeguarding personal property of individuals experiencing homelessness during encounters or arrests.
5. ***Mental Health and Crisis Intervention:*** Develop policies on responding to mental health crises involving individuals experiencing homelessness, including training requirements for officers.
6. ***Training and Education:*** Outline ongoing training requirements for officers on issues related to homelessness, including understanding the causes and complexities of homelessness, effective communication techniques, and de-escalation strategies.
7. ***Data Collection and Analysis:*** Develop policies on collecting and analyzing data related to homelessness encounters, arrests, and interactions to inform decision-making, evaluate effectiveness, and identify trends or areas for improvement.
8. ***Community Partnerships and Collaborations:*** Establish policies on creating and maintaining collaborative partnerships with local homeless service providers, outreach organizations, and community stakeholders.
9. ***Homelessness Prevention:*** Outline proactive measures and partnerships with community organizations to prevent homelessness, including early intervention programs and supportive services.
10. ***Compliance with Laws and Regulations:*** Ensure compliance with local, state, and federal laws, as well as constitutional rights, in all interactions with individuals experiencing homelessness.

Conclusion:
This Guidebook is intended to extend education and planning for law enforcement on the issue of homelessness. Homelessness is connected to numerous other societal issues that are exacerbated and complicated to address without a fixed and safe place to live. Local agencies are encouraged to adopt the Guidebook and use and modify the resources to become applicable to their local needs.

Please see the attachments and appendices for more information.
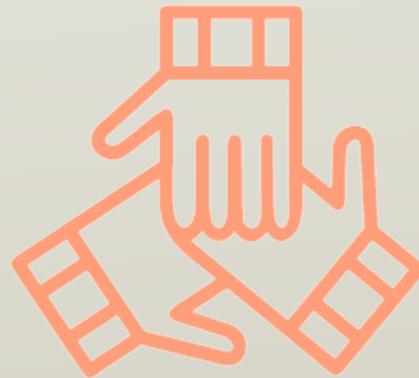
Appendix A: Resource Page *(Click on each topic below for more information)*

Section: Introduction to the Homeless Guidebook
Home Illinois: Illinois Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness
The Police Response to Homelessness

Section 1: Response Modalities to Homelessness: An Integrated Approach
Assessing the Impact of Co-Responder Team Programs: A Review of Research
Los Angeles Police Department's Mental Evaluation Unit (MEU) Operations Guide
The Community Care Response Team (CCRT) developed by the Anaheim Police Department
City of Anaheim Recovery Plan
The Homeless Outreach Team of the Houston Police Department
Seattle's Law Enforcement Assisted Diversion (LEAD)
Seattle's Law Enforcement Assisted Diversion (LEAD): Program effects on recidivism outcomes

Section 2: Introduction to Community Resources and Partnership Planning
Partnership Mapping Resource
Ending Homelessness: Housing Action Illinois
Resources to Prevent and End Homelessness: Housing Action Illinois
IACAA Member Directory - IACAA (iacaanet.org)
IDHS: Office Locator (state.il.us)
IDHS: Living Room Program (state.il.us)
IDHS: PATH Program Locations By Cities/Counties (state.il.us)
Association of Mental Health Authorities of Illinois
IDHS: List of Mental Health Treatment (state.il.us)
Illinois Helpline (helplineil.org)
Illinois Area Agencies on Aging Map
APS Statistics (illinois.gov)
Youth: Homeless Services (illinois.gov)
PATH Crisis Center Resource Directory
Human Services Online Database - Path Crisis 211
Responding to Homelessness: Police-Mental Health Collaboration (PMHC) Toolkit
Strengthening Partnerships Between Law Enforcement and Homelessness Services Systems
Police-Mental Health Collaborations: A Framework for Implementing Effective Law Enforcement Responses for People Who Have Mental Health Needs
Building Bridges: 10 Essential Elements for Effective Community Partnerships between Law Enforcement and Mental Health

Section 2: Illinois Partnership Case Studies
Rock Island/Moline (Quad Cities) Project Now Service Resource Partnership
Springfield Police Department Homeless Outreach Team and Mental Health Crisis Response
Madison County Sheriff's Department and Eviction Court: Court-Based Rental Assistance

Section 3: Training Resources
Fact Sheet: Incarceration and Mental Health | Weill Cornell Medicine Psychiatry
ILETSB - Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) (illinois.gov)
All Chicago | Course catalog (talentlms.com)
Suburban Cook Alliance | Course catalog (talentlms.com)
Homeless Training Online Training

Section 4: General Encounters and Scenarios
The Stranded Travelers Program, operated by the Salvation Army
Human Trafficking Hotline
Human Trafficking Indicators
The Law Enforcement Response to Homelessness
De-escalation: Guidelines For How To Begin Evaluating Your Agency's De-escalation Practices

Section 5: Encampments
Arizona State University Center for Problem-Oriented Policing
"Understanding Encampments"

Section 6: Policy Development
Crystal Lake Police Department
Bartlett Police Department
Chicago Police Department

Sample Policy Areas:
Homeless Encampments
Communication and Engagement
Referral and Resource Coordination
Personal Property
Mental Health and Crisis Intervention
Training and Education
Data Collection and Analysis
Community Partnerships and Collaborations
Homelessness Prevention
Compliance with Laws and Regulations

Appendix B: Partner Resource, Referral, and Coordination Planning Document

This document will help track the resources in and near your community, and include information on how to access services. Add as many rows as needed. Please consult the Continuum of Care websites, local community development or human services offices, and 211 Human Services Helpline information to complete the form.

Homeless Services

Organization	Program Type	Location Information	Contact	Notes on Referrals
	Shelter			
	Coordinated Entry Assessment			
	DV Shelter			
	Prevention			

Coordinated Street Outreach

Organization	Program Type	Location Information	Contact	Notes on Referrals
	PATH			
	Outreach and Engagement			
	Daytime Drop-in			

Mental Health

Organization	Program Type	Location Information	Contact	Notes on Referrals
	Assertive Community Treatment (ACT)			
	Case Management			
	Residential			
	Crisis Intervention			

Substance Use

Organization	Program Type	Location Information	Contact	Notes on Referrals
	AA/NA			
	Methadone Clinic			
	Outpatient			

Hospitals/Community Health Centers

Organization	Program Type	Location Information	Contact	Notes on Referrals
	Federally Qualified Health Center			
	Primary Care Clinic			

Ancillary Services: Food, Clothing

Organization	Program Type	Location Information	Contact	Notes on Referrals
	Food			
	Furniture Bank			
	Transportation			

Appendix C: Illinois Continuums of Care: Please consult each website for contact information and meetings.

Continuum of Care Name	Counties/Coverage Area	Website
Northern Illinois Homeless Coalition	Winnebago, Boone, DeKalb	https://www.northernillinoishomelesscoalition.org/about-the-coalition
McHenry CoC	McHenry	https://www.mchenrycountyhomeless.org/#:~:text=The%20McHenry%20County%20Continuum%20of%20Care%20%28CoC%29%20is,of%20housing%20and%20services%20to%20help%20homeless%20individuals%2Ffamilies
Kane County CoC	Kane	https://www.countyofkane.org/Pages/ocr/continuumCare.aspx
Lake County CoC	Lake	https://www.lakecountyhomeless.org/
DuPage County CoC	DuPage	https://dupagehomeless.org/
Will County	Will, Kendall, Grundy	https://willcountycoc.com/
Alliance to End Homelessness in Suburban Cook County	Suburban Cook	www.suburbancook.org
All Chicago Making Homelessness History	Chicago	www.allchicago.org
Heartland CoC	Sangamon	https://heartlandhoused.org/
Macon County Continuum of Care & Homeless Advisory Council	Macon	https://www.doveinc.org/information/macon-county-continuum-care-homeless-advisory-council
Champaign County Continuum of Service Providers to the Homeless	Champaign	https://ccrpc.org/committees/continuum-of-care/
Central Illinois CoC	DeWitt, Ford, Iroquois, Kankakee, Livingston, Logan Mason, McLean, Menard Piatt, Vermilion	https://centralillinoiscoc512.wordpress.com/

Madison County Partnership to End Homelessness	Madison	https://www.madisoncountyil.gov/departments/community_development/continuum_of_care.php
Homeless Action Council CoC	St. Clair	https://www.scccoc.org/
Home for All Coalition	Peoria, Tazewell, Woodford, Fulton	https://homeforallcoc.org/
South Central CoC	Western Region: Calhoun, Greene, Jersey and Macoupin counties Central Region: Christian, Clay, Effingham, Fayette, Montgomery, Moultrie and Shelby counties Eastern Region: Clark, Coles, Crawford, Cumberland, Douglas, Edgar and Jasper counties	https://scilcoc.org/
West Central Illinois CoC Consortium	Adams, Brown, Cass, Hancock, Henderson, McDonough, Morgan, Pike, Schuyler, Scott, Warren	https://wciccc.com/
Northwestern Illinois CoC	Bureau, Carroll, Henry, JoDaviess, Knox, LaSalle, Lee, Marshall, Mercer, Ogle, Putnam, Rock Island, Stark, Stephenson, Whiteside.	https://projectnow.org/coc.php#:~:text=The%20Northwestern%20Illinois%20CoC%20is%20group%20of%20government,for%20linkages%20with%20mainstream%20housing%20and%20services%20resources
Southern Illinois CoC Network	Bond, Clinton, Washington, Monroe, Williamson, Randolph, Perry, Jackson, Marion, Wayne, Jefferson, Lawrence, Richland, Wabash, Edwards, White, Gallatin, Hamilton, Saline, Hardin, Massac, Pope, Johnson, Pulaski, Alexander, Franklin, Union	https://sites.google.com/pcni.org/sicocn/home

Appendix D: Sample Policy: Homeless Encampments

Policy Statement:

The [Police Department Name] recognizes the importance of addressing health and safety concerns related to homeless encampments while respecting the rights and dignity of individuals experiencing homelessness. This policy outlines guidelines for engagement with homeless encampments and establishes protocols for clearing encampments when necessary.

Engagement with Homeless Encampments:
A. Officers shall approach homeless encampments with empathy, respect, and sensitivity to the unique challenges faced by individuals experiencing homelessness.
B. Officers will prioritize building rapport and establishing open lines of communication with individuals in the encampments to better understand their needs and circumstances.
C. Engagements with homeless encampments shall focus on providing information about available community resources, shelters, and support services.

Health and Safety Assessments:
A. When encountering a homeless encampment, officers shall conduct assessments to identify any immediate health or safety concerns.
B. Officers will coordinate with appropriate agencies, such as public health departments or social service providers, to address identified health and safety issues.

Notice and Outreach:
A. Prior to clearing an encampment, officers shall provide reasonable advance notice, considering the circumstances and resources available, to individuals residing in the encampment.
B. Notice shall include information on available alternatives, such as nearby shelters, transitional housing, or other suitable options.
C. Officers will coordinate with local homeless service providers or outreach organizations to provide on-site outreach and support during the notice period.

Collaborative Approach:
A. The [Police Department Name] will maintain collaborative partnerships with local homeless service providers, outreach organizations, and community stakeholders to enhance support and resources for individuals experiencing homelessness.
B. Officers will collaborate with relevant agencies to ensure that clearing encampments aligns with broader community plans and efforts to address homelessness.

Encampment Clearances:
A. Encampments may be cleared when necessary due to imminent public health or safety concerns, illegal activities, or violation of local ordinances or laws.
B. Clearances will be conducted with sensitivity and care, ensuring the well-being and dignity of individuals affected.
C. Officers will coordinate with homeless service providers to offer immediate assistance, referrals to support services, and connections to available resources during and after encampment clearances.

Documentation and Reporting:
A. Officers involved in engagements with homeless encampments shall maintain accurate and comprehensive documentation of interactions, assessments, actions taken, and services offered.
B. Supervisors shall review and monitor the documentation to ensure compliance with departmental procedures and policies.

Note: This is a sample policy for engagement with homeless encampments and should be adapted and tailored to meet the specific needs and legal requirements of the police department. It is recommended to consult with legal advisors, stakeholders, and local ordinances when developing and implementing such policies.

Appendix E: Sample Policy: Communication and Engagement with Individuals Experiencing Homelessness

Policy Statement:

The [Police Department Name] is committed to conducting respectful, empathetic, and effective communication and engagement with individuals experiencing homelessness. This policy establishes guidelines for officers to interact with compassion and professionalism when encountering individuals in homeless situations.

Empathetic and Respectful Communication:

A. Officers shall approach individuals experiencing homelessness with empathy, recognizing the challenges they may face and the diverse backgrounds and circumstances they come from.
B. Communication with individuals shall be respectful, non-judgmental, and free from stigmatizing language or behavior.
C. Officers will listen actively, showing genuine interest and concern while creating a safe and supportive environment for open dialogue.

Building Rapport and Trust:

A. Officers shall strive to establish rapport and trust by demonstrating sincere interest, respect, and understanding during interactions.
B. Engaging in active listening, officers will seek to understand the individual's unique circumstances, needs, and perspectives without making assumptions.
C. Respect for personal boundaries and privacy shall be maintained, allowing individuals to share information voluntarily.

De-escalation Techniques:

A. Officers will receive training in de-escalation techniques to effectively manage encounters with individuals experiencing homelessness, minimizing the use of force and promoting peaceful resolutions.
B. De-escalation strategies shall prioritize communication, active listening, empathy, and the recognition of signs of distress or crisis.
C. Officers will seek to defuse tense situations by remaining calm, composed, and respectful, while considering the safety and well-being of all involved parties.

Cultural Competency and Sensitivity:

A. Officers will receive cultural competency training to enhance their understanding and sensitivity to diverse backgrounds, including cultural, racial, ethnic, and LGBTQ+ considerations.
B. Communication and engagement strategies shall be adapted to accommodate different cultural norms, beliefs, and practices, ensuring equal treatment and respect for all individuals.

Collaborative Problem-solving and Referrals:

A. Officers will actively seek opportunities for collaborative problem-solving, working with individuals to explore options and connect them with appropriate community resources, including shelters, outreach programs, mental health services, and social support agencies.
B. Referrals to community resources shall be made with clear explanations and assistance to overcome any potential barriers to accessing services.
C. Officers shall maintain accurate records of referrals made, ensuring follow-up and necessary documentation.

Ongoing Training and Development:

A. The [Police Department Name] will provide regular training and professional development opportunities to officers to enhance their communication skills, cultural competency, de-escalation techniques, and understanding of homelessness-related issues.
B. Training programs shall be updated periodically to reflect evolving best practices, community needs, and legal considerations.

Note: This is a sample policy for communication and engagement with individuals experiencing homelessness and should be adapted to meet the specific needs and legal requirements of the police department. It is recommended to consult with legal advisors, stakeholders, and community organizations when developing and implementing such policies.

Appendix F: Sample Policy: Referral and Resource Coordination

Policy Statement:

The [Police Department Name] recognizes the importance of effectively referring individuals experiencing homelessness to appropriate community resources and coordinating support services. This policy establishes guidelines for officers to facilitate seamless referrals and ensure individuals receive timely access to the necessary resources.

Referral Process:

A. Officers shall be knowledgeable about available community resources, including shelters, outreach programs, healthcare providers, mental health services, and social support agencies.
B. When encountering individuals experiencing homelessness, officers will assess their immediate needs and determine if a referral is appropriate and necessary.
C. Referrals should be made based on the individual's preferences, eligibility criteria, and the availability of relevant services.

Collaboration with Community Partners:

A. The [Police Department Name] will maintain collaborative partnerships with local homeless service providers, outreach organizations, and community stakeholders.
B. Officers shall actively engage in coordination efforts to streamline the referral process and ensure individuals receive comprehensive support.

Providing Information and Assistance:

A. Officers shall provide individuals with clear and accurate information regarding available resources, services, and eligibility requirements.
B. Officers will offer assistance to individuals in overcoming any potential barriers to accessing resources, such as transportation issues or identification requirements.

Referral Follow-up and Documentation:

A. Officers shall maintain accurate records of all referrals made, including the date, contact information, and details of the referred service or resource.
B. Officers will follow up on referrals to ensure individuals successfully access the referred services, addressing any challenges or concerns that may arise.

Training and Education:

A. The [Police Department Name] will provide officers with training and education on available community resources, eligibility criteria, and referral processes.
B. Officers will receive training on effective communication strategies to assist individuals in understanding and navigating the referral process.

Confidentiality and Data Privacy:

A. Officers shall handle and protect individuals' personal information in compliance with applicable laws and regulations governing data privacy and confidentiality.
B. Referral information should only be shared on a need-to-know basis with relevant parties involved in the referral process.

Continuous Improvement and Collaboration:

A. The [Police Department Name] will collaborate with local agencies and service providers to regularly review and update resource information, ensuring accurate and up-to-date referrals.
B. Officers are encouraged to provide feedback on the effectiveness of the referral process, contributing to continuous improvement efforts.

Note: This is a sample policy for referral and resource coordination and should be adapted to meet the specific needs and legal requirements of the police department. It is recommended to consult with legal advisors, stakeholders, and community organizations when developing and implementing such policies.

Appendix G: Sample Policy: Personal Property and Treatment of Individuals Experiencing Homelessness

Policy Statement:
The [Police Department Name] is committed to treating individuals experiencing homelessness with respect, dignity, and fairness. This policy establishes guidelines for officers regarding the treatment of personal property and interactions with individuals in homeless situations, aligning with the principles of the Homeless Bill of Rights and applicable laws.

Respect for Personal Property:
A. Officers shall respect the personal property of individuals experiencing homelessness and refrain from unnecessary searches or seizures without lawful justification.
B. Officers will handle personal belongings with care and avoid damage, loss, or unnecessary disposal, except in cases where public safety or criminal investigations require immediate action.

Documentation of Personal Property:
A. When encountering individuals experiencing homelessness, officers shall document the presence and description of personal property, if applicable, as part of incident or field interview reports.
B. Officers will provide individuals with a copy of the property documentation whenever possible.

Storage and Safekeeping:
A. Officers shall make reasonable efforts to ensure the safekeeping and storage of personal property when individuals are temporarily detained, arrested, or required to leave an area due to safety concerns.
B. When necessary, officers will provide information about local storage facilities or resources available for individuals to safely store their belongings.

Notice and Retrieval of Personal Property:
A. Officers shall provide individuals with clear and timely notice regarding the storage, retrieval, and reclaiming of their personal property, including contact information for retrieval inquiries.
B. Officers will facilitate the prompt return of personal property to individuals upon their release or when it is safe to do so, ensuring proper documentation and identification processes are followed.

Compliance with the Homeless Bill of Rights:
A. The [Police Department Name] acknowledges the principles outlined in the Homeless Bill of Rights and will ensure officers' compliance with the rights and protections afforded to individuals experiencing homelessness under relevant legislation.
B. Officers shall be knowledgeable about the Homeless Bill of Rights and any local ordinances or policies that protect the rights and dignity of individuals experiencing homelessness.

Training and Education:
A. The [Police Department Name] will provide officers with training and education on the rights of individuals experiencing homelessness, including the Homeless Bill of Rights and relevant laws and regulations.
B. Training programs shall emphasize respectful interactions, cultural sensitivity, and the proper handling of personal property.

Accountability and Reporting:
A. Officers shall report any incidents involving the mishandling, loss, or damage of personal property to their supervisors or appropriate internal channels.
B. Supervisors shall review and address reported incidents in accordance with departmental procedures and take appropriate corrective actions when necessary.

Note: This is a sample policy for the treatment of personal property and individuals experiencing homelessness and should be adapted to meet the specific needs and legal requirements of the police department. It is recommended to consult with legal advisors, stakeholders, and community organizations when developing and implementing such policies.

Appendix H: Sample Policy: Mental Health and Crisis Intervention

Policy Statement:

The [Police Department Name] recognizes the importance of responding effectively to mental health crises involving individuals experiencing homelessness. This policy establishes guidelines for officers to safely and compassionately engage with individuals in crisis, prioritize their well-being, and collaborate with mental health professionals.

Training on Mental Health:

A. The [Police Department Name] will provide officers with comprehensive training on recognizing and responding to mental health crises, including those involving individuals experiencing homelessness.
B. Training programs shall cover topics such as recognizing signs of mental distress, de-escalation techniques, trauma-informed care, and relevant laws and regulations.

Collaborative Approach:

A. Officers shall prioritize the safety and well-being of individuals experiencing homelessness during mental health crises, while balancing the need for effective intervention and access to appropriate care.
B. Officers will collaborate with mental health professionals and agencies to ensure individuals receive the necessary support and follow-up services.

Crisis Response and De-escalation:

A. Officers shall approach mental health crises involving individuals experiencing homelessness with a focus on de-escalation, utilizing techniques to minimize the use of force and promote peaceful resolutions.
B. Communication strategies should prioritize active listening, empathy, and empathy, and the use of non-confrontational language to establish rapport and build trust.

Coordinated Referrals:

A. Officers shall collaborate with mental health professionals to facilitate immediate access to crisis intervention services, including psychiatric assessments, counseling, or emergency psychiatric care.
B. Officers will coordinate with mental health agencies or crisis response teams to ensure timely referrals and appropriate follow-up care for individuals in crisis.

Community Support and Resources:

A. Officers shall be knowledgeable about local mental health resources, crisis hotlines, and mobile crisis teams available to provide assistance during mental health crises involving individuals experiencing homelessness.
B. Officers will provide individuals with information about available resources and support services, assisting them in connecting with appropriate community organizations.

Documentation and Reporting:

A. Officers shall maintain accurate and comprehensive documentation of interactions involving mental health crises, including assessments, actions taken, referrals made, and relevant follow-up information.
B. Supervisors shall review and monitor documentation to ensure compliance with departmental procedures and policies.

Ongoing Collaboration and Training:

A. The [Police Department Name] will collaborate with mental health professionals and organizations to regularly review and update training materials and protocols for responding to mental health crises involving individuals experiencing homelessness.
B. Officers shall participate in ongoing mental health training and education to enhance their knowledge and skills in crisis intervention and engagement with individuals experiencing homelessness.

Note: This is a sample policy for responding to mental health and crisis situations involving individuals experiencing homelessness and should be adapted to meet the specific needs and legal requirements of the police department. It is recommended to consult with legal advisors, mental health professionals, stakeholders, and community organizations when developing and implementing such policies.

Appendix I: Sample Policy: Training and Education

Policy Statement:

The [Police Department Name] is committed to providing officers with the necessary knowledge, skills, and resources through comprehensive training and education programs to effectively respond to homelessness-related issues. This policy outlines guidelines for ongoing training and development opportunities to enhance officers' understanding and capacity to address homelessness.

Training Curriculum Development:

A.   The [Police Department Name] will develop a comprehensive training curriculum that includes dedicated modules addressing homelessness-related topics.

B.   The curriculum shall cover areas such as understanding the causes and complexities of homelessness, effective communication techniques, de-escalation strategies, and legal considerations.

Collaborative Approach:

A.   Officers shall prioritize the safety and well-being of individuals experiencing homelessness during mental health crises, while balancing the need for effective intervention and access to appropriate care.

B.   Officers will collaborate with mental health professionals and agencies to ensure individuals receive the necessary support and follow-up services.

Initial Training:

A.   All officers, upon joining the department, shall receive training on homelessness-related topics as part of their basic training curriculum.

B.   The initial training shall provide officers with an overview of the challenges faced by individuals experiencing homelessness and emphasize the department's commitment to treating them with dignity and respect.

Ongoing Training and Professional Development:

A.   The [Police Department Name] will provide regular opportunities for officers to engage in ongoing training and professional development related to homelessness.

B.   Training programs shall cover emerging issues, best practices, policy updates, community resources, and relevant legal developments.

C.   Officers will be encouraged to participate in external training opportunities offered by reputable organizations focusing on homelessness-related topics.

Collaborative Training:

A.   The [Police Department Name] will collaborate with local homeless service providers, outreach organizations, mental health agencies, and subject matter experts to deliver specialized training sessions.

B.   Collaborative training shall provide officers with insights into the unique challenges faced by individuals experiencing homelessness and enhance their understanding of community resources and support systems.

Training Evaluation and Feedback:

A.   The [Police Department Name] shall establish a process for evaluating the effectiveness of training programs, soliciting feedback from officers, supervisors, and external stakeholders.

B.   Training evaluations shall inform continuous improvement efforts and enable adjustments to be made to the training curriculum as needed.

Training Records and Documentation:

A.   The [Police Department Name] shall maintain accurate records of officers' training completion, including the date, duration, and content of each training session.

B.   Training records shall be securely stored and readily accessible for compliance, accountability, and reporting purposes.

Training Resources and Materials:

A.   The [Police Department Name] will ensure the availability of up-to-date training resources, materials, and reference materials related to homelessness.

B.   Training resources may include videos, handouts, online modules, and case studies to support officers' understanding and application of homelessness-related knowledge and skills.

Note: This is a sample policy for training and education related to homelessness and should be adapted to meet the specific needs and legal requirements of the police department. It is recommended to consult with legal advisors, stakeholders, and community organizations when developing and implementing such policies.

Appendix J: Sample Policy: Data Collection and Analysis

Policy Statement:

The [Police Department Name] recognizes the importance of collecting and analyzing data related to homelessness encounters and interactions. This policy establishes guidelines for the systematic collection, secure storage, and analysis of data to inform decision making, evaluate effectiveness, and identify trends or areas for improvement.

Data Collection:

A. The [Police Department Name] shall establish protocols for the systematic collection of data related to encounters with individuals experiencing homelessness.

B. Data collection shall include information such as date, time, location, nature of the encounter, demographic information (where permissible and relevant), and any actions taken.

Standardized Data Elements:

A. The [Police Department Name] will utilize standardized data elements and codes to ensure consistency and compatibility with regional, state, or national reporting requirements, where applicable.

B. Officers shall be trained on the proper use and documentation of data elements to ensure accuracy and completeness.

Data Storage and Security:

A. The [Police Department Name] shall implement secure data storage and management practices to protect the privacy and confidentiality of collected data.

B. Access to data shall be restricted to authorized personnel only, in accordance with applicable laws and regulations governing data privacy and confidentiality.

Data Analysis and Reporting:

A. The [Police Department Name] shall conduct regular data analysis to identify trends, patterns, and areas for improvement related to encounters with individuals experiencing homelessness.

B. Analysis findings shall be documented and reported to relevant stakeholders within the department, as well as external partners or agencies as appropriate.

C. Analysis results shall inform decision-making processes, policy development, and resource allocation efforts.

Collaboration and Information Sharing:

A. The [Police Department Name] shall collaborate with local homeless service providers, outreach organizations, and community stakeholders to share relevant data and facilitate a coordinated response to homelessness.

B. Data sharing shall adhere to applicable laws, regulations, and data sharing agreements to protect privacy and confidentiality.

Data Integrity and Quality Assurance:

A. The [Police Department Name] shall implement quality assurance measures to ensure the accuracy, integrity, and reliability of collected data.

B. Regular data audits and validation procedures shall be conducted to identify and address any inconsistencies, errors, or gaps in the data.

Transparency and Accountability:

A. The [Police Department Name] shall strive for transparency by providing access to relevant homelessness-related data to stakeholders, subject to legal and privacy constraints.

B. The department shall be accountable for the responsible management, analysis, and reporting of collected data.

Note: This is a sample policy for data collection and analysis related to homelessness encounters and interactions and should be adapted to meet the specific needs and legal requirements of the police department. It is recommended to consult with legal advisors, stakeholders, and data privacy experts when developing and implementing such policies.

Appendix K: Sample Policy: Community Partnerships and Collaborations

Policy Statement:

The [Police Department Name] recognizes the importance of establishing and maintaining collaborative partnerships with local homeless service providers, outreach organizations, and community stakeholders. This policy outlines guidelines for fostering community partnerships to enhance support, resources, and responses to homelessness.

Partnership Development:

A.   The [Police Department Name] shall actively seek opportunities to establish and maintain collaborative partnerships with local homeless service providers, outreach organizations, and community stakeholders.

B.   Partnerships shall be based on shared goals, mutual respect, and a commitment to addressing homelessness in a comprehensive and compassionate manner.

Regular Communication and Engagement:

A.   The [Police Department Name] shall maintain regular communication and engagement with community partners to facilitate information sharing, collaboration, and coordination.

B.   Communication channels may include meetings, forums, working groups, email correspondence, or other means as deemed appropriate.

Joint Planning and Initiatives:

A.   The [Police Department Name] shall actively participate in joint planning efforts and initiatives focused on addressing homelessness in the community.

B.   Collaborative planning shall include the development of shared goals, strategies, and action plans to enhance services, resources, and responses to homelessness.

Information Sharing:

A.   The [Police Department Name] shall collaborate with community partners to share relevant information, data, and resources to enhance coordination and support individuals experiencing homelessness.

B.   Information sharing shall adhere to applicable laws, regulations, and data privacy agreements to protect privacy and confidentiality.

Resource Coordination:

A.   The [Police Department Name] shall work collaboratively with community partners to coordinate and leverage available resources, maximizing their impact in addressing homelessness.

B.   Resource coordination efforts may include joint funding applications, shared service provision, and the development of referral networks.

Community Outreach and Education:

A.   The [Police Department Name] shall actively engage in community outreach and education efforts to raise public awareness, combat stigma, and promote understanding and support for individuals experiencing homelessness.

B.   Collaborative outreach initiatives may include public events, workshops, training sessions, or awareness campaigns.

Evaluation and Feedback:

A.   The [Police Department Name] shall regularly evaluate the effectiveness of community partnerships and collaborative initiatives, soliciting feedback from stakeholders and community members.

B.   Evaluation findings shall inform continuous improvement efforts, strategic planning, and adjustments to partnership activities as needed.

Documenting and Recognizing Partnerships:

A.   The [Police Department Name] shall maintain records of community partnerships, including contact information, collaborative activities, and outcomes achieved.

B.   Recognizing the contributions and efforts of community partners, the department shall publicly acknowledge and appreciate their collaboration.

Note: This is a sample policy for community partnerships and collaborations related to homelessness and should be adapted to meet the specific needs and legal requirements of the police department. It is recommended to consult with legal advisors, stakeholders, and community organizations when developing and implementing such policies.

Appendix L: Sample Policy: Homelessness Prevention

Policy Statement:

The [Police Department Name] is committed to preventing homelessness by implementing proactive measures, collaborating with community organizations, and providing support to individuals at risk of becoming homeless. This policy outlines guidelines for homelessness prevention efforts to help individuals maintain stable housing and avoid the cycle of homelessness.

Proactive Outreach and Engagement:

A. The [Police Department Name] shall proactively engage with individuals and families at risk of homelessness to identify their needs and connect them with appropriate resources.

B. Officers shall receive training on recognizing signs of housing instability and early intervention strategies to prevent homelessness.

Collaboration with Community Organizations:

A. The [Police Department Name] shall establish and maintain partnerships with community organizations, housing agencies, social service providers, and other relevant stakeholders to enhance homelessness prevention efforts.

B. Collaborative efforts shall focus on sharing information, coordinating services, and developing joint initiatives to address the underlying causes of homelessness.

Housing Assistance Referrals:

A. Officers shall be knowledgeable about available housing assistance programs, subsidies, rental assistance, and other resources aimed at preventing homelessness.

B. Officers shall provide individuals and families at risk of homelessness with information and referrals to appropriate housing assistance programs and organizations.

Mediation and Conflict Resolution:

A. The [Police Department Name] shall develop protocols for mediating and resolving disputes related to housing, landlord-tenant issues, and other factors contributing to homelessness.

B. Officers shall be trained in conflict resolution techniques to help individuals and parties involved reach mutually acceptable resolutions.

Supportive Services and Case Management:

A. The [Police Department Name] shall collaborate with social service agencies and case management providers to offer supportive services to individuals at risk of homelessness.

B. Officers shall refer individuals to case managers who can assess their needs, develop personalized support plans, and connect them with appropriate resources.

Public Awareness and Education:

A. The [Police Department Name] shall conduct public awareness campaigns and educational initiatives to raise awareness about homelessness prevention, housing rights, and available resources.

B. Educational efforts may include workshops, community presentations, online resources, and distribution of informational materials.

Evaluation and Program Improvement:

A. The [Police Department Name] shall regularly evaluate the effectiveness of homelessness prevention efforts, including data analysis, stakeholder feedback, and program outcomes.

B. Evaluation findings shall inform program improvements, resource allocation decisions, and strategic planning efforts.

Continuous Learning and Collaboration:

A. The [Police Department Name] shall stay informed about best practices, emerging research, and innovative approaches in homelessness prevention through ongoing learning and collaboration with local, state, and national partners.

B. Officers shall participate in relevant training and professional development opportunities to enhance their knowledge and skills in homelessness prevention.

Note: This is a sample policy for homelessness prevention efforts and should be adapted to meet the specific needs and legal requirements of the police department. It is recommended to consult with legal advisors, stakeholders, and community organizations when developing and implementing such policies.

Appendix M: Sample Policy: Compliance with Laws and Regulations

Policy Statement:

The [Police Department Name] is committed to ensuring compliance with local, state, and federal laws, as well as constitutional rights, in all interactions with individuals experiencing homelessness. This policy establishes guidelines for officers to uphold legal standards while responding to homelessness-related situations.

Legal Compliance:
A. Officers shall familiarize themselves with local, state, and federal laws, regulations, and ordinances pertaining to homelessness, housing rights, civil rights, and related areas.
B. Officers shall conduct themselves in a manner consistent with the law and respect the constitutional rights of individuals experiencing homelessness.

Constitutional Rights:
A. Officers shall respect the constitutional rights of individuals experiencing homelessness, including the rights to freedom of speech, freedom from unreasonable searches and seizures, due process, and equal protection under the law.
B. Officers shall not engage in discriminatory practices or profiling based on housing status, race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, or other protected characteristics.

Procedural Justice:
A. Officers shall employ procedural justice principles in their interactions with individuals experiencing homelessness, ensuring fairness, transparency, and respect.
B. Officers shall explain their actions, listen attentively, treat individuals with dignity, and provide opportunities for individuals to be heard and express concerns.

Use of Force:
A. Officers shall use force, including physical or less-lethal force, only when necessary and in accordance with departmental policies and applicable laws.
B. Use of force shall be proportionate, justifiable, and reasonable under the circumstances, with the primary objective of protecting life and ensuring public safety.

Search and Seizure:
A. Officers shall adhere to the legal standards governing search and seizure when engaging with individuals experiencing homelessness, ensuring compliance with Fourth Amendment protections.
B. Searches and seizures shall be conducted based on reasonable suspicion or probable cause, as required by law.

Anti-Harassment and Anti-Discrimination:
A. The [Police Department Name] prohibits any form of harassment or discrimination against individuals experiencing homelessness.
B. Officers shall not engage in bias-based policing, stigmatizing language, or actions that target individuals based on their housing status.

Training and Education:
A. The [Police Department Name] will provide officers with training and education on laws, regulations, and constitutional rights relevant to interactions with individuals experiencing homelessness.
B. Training programs shall emphasize legal compliance, procedural justice, de-escalation techniques, and respectful communication.

Accountability and Complaint Procedures:
A. The [Police Department Name] shall establish procedures for receiving, investigating, and addressing complaints related to alleged violations of laws, regulations, or constitutional rights in interactions with individuals experiencing homelessness.
B. Complaints shall be addressed promptly, thoroughly, and impartially, ensuring appropriate disciplinary measures are taken if misconduct is substantiated.

Note: This is a sample policy for compliance with laws and regulations related to interactions with individuals experiencing homelessness and should be adapted to meet the specific needs and legal requirements of the police department. It is recommended to consult with legal advisors, stakeholders, and community organizations when developing and implementing such policies.