



## MEMORANDUM

**TO:** Mayor and Council Members

**FROM:** Stephanie Hayden-Howard, LMSW, Assistant City Manager *Stephanie Hayden-Howard*  
Rey Arellano, Assistant City Manager *Rey Arellano*  
Gina Fiandaca, Assistant City Manager *Gina Fiandaca*

**DATE:** August 22, 2022

**SUBJECT:** Launch of Cross-Departmental Homeless Encampment Response Process

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This memorandum announces the launch of the Homeless Encampment Management Team. In November 2021, Interim Deputy City Manager Anne Morgan sponsored an initiative to streamline and improve management of public spaces which are currently occupied by homeless encampments. The goal of that initiative was to strengthen cross departmental communication, tracking, and coordination of this important work. Fifteen key stakeholder departments came together to generate ideas and develop recommendations to achieve this goal.

Two key recommendations that came out of their work: 1) implement a central response structure; and 2) develop and implement a citywide homeless encampment tracking and prioritization tool. Both recommendations allow the City of Austin to apply a citywide lens to encampment response, so action is prioritized, and resources deployed to encampments that present the highest risk to health and safety. They also support consistency in encampment actions and improved communication across departments and with the public. Additionally, the tool supports consistent data capture and improves our understanding of needs, risks, and trends across encampments citywide.

After several months of cross departmental collaboration to develop these recommendations, we are pleased to announce that the central response structure and tool is fully launched.

Staffed by members from various city departments, the central response structure referred to as the Homeless Encampment Management Team is made up of a leadership team and three sections with the following responsibilities:

- The **Leadership Team** establishes goals and objectives; sets long-term strategy; and reviews and approves prioritization, response, and operations plans from the other sections. Greg McCormack from the Homeless Strategy Division (HSD) of Austin Public Health (APH) is the chief of this team.
- The **Planning Section** maintains situational awareness of homeless encampments citywide and develops prioritization and response plans using the prioritization tool to support decision making, with each department bringing its unique perspective to the decision-making process. When planning, this team will prioritize health and safety while also considering impacts to infrastructure, property, environmental health, and public access. Christopher Meyer from Watershed Protection will act as the chief of this section until HSD is able to hire a Public Space Management Manager to assume the chief role. The position in HSD is currently vacant and the hiring process underway.
- The **Operations Section** develops operational plans, including identifying resource needs/commitments, and carrying out camp cleaning and closure plans. This section is led by a single point of contact (SPOC) from the land-owning department where the camp is located. When a camp has been identified for Housing-focused Encampment Assistance Link ([HEAL](#)) intervention, the land-owning department will work closely with HSD to develop operational plans.
- The **Policy Section** develops homeless encampment citywide policies and procedures (i.e., closure protocol, biohazard, property). This section will be activated as policy needs are identified by the Leadership Team.

A copy of the Homeless Encampment Management Team Organizational Structure is attached for reference.

The Homeless Encampment Management Team has been activated and the land-owning departments will use the Homeless Emergency Management (HEM) Tracking and Prioritization Tool to score encampments on their property, participate in the planning section if encampments are present on their property, and will not undertake a camp closure outside of the Homeless Encampment Management Team process, except in cases when immediate action is required because an encampment poses an immediate hazard or obstruction based on the following definitions:

- **Immediate Hazard Encampment** means an encampment where people camping outdoors are at imminent risk of serious injury or death beyond that caused by increased exposure to the elements, or their presence creates a risk of serious injury or death to others; including but not limited to encampments on a high-speed roadway, including underneath overpasses, highway shoulders, and entry/exit-ramps; any other areas exposed to moving vehicles.
- **Obstruction** means personal property, garbage, debris, or other objects related to an encampment that interfere with the pedestrian or transportation purposes of public

rights-of-way; or interfere with areas that are necessary for or essential to the intended use of a City property or facility, including but not limited to blocking entryways, on or near equipment intended for use by children, or blocking access to repair/maintain City equipment.

We want to acknowledge the hard work and resources that so many departments commit to homeless encampment management daily. We also want to thank everyone that participated in the development and implementation of these recommendations and acknowledge the continued work that will be necessary to maintain and refine the Team and Tool.

Please contact Greg McCormack at [Greg.McCormack@austintexas.gov](mailto:Greg.McCormack@austintexas.gov) should you have any questions.

cc: Spencer Cronk, City Manager  
Anne Morgan, Acting City Manager

Attachment: Homeless Encampment Management Team Organizational Structure

# Homeless Encampment Management Team

