

POLICE PROTOCOL FOR INTERACTING ON THE STREETS & IN CAMPS

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Cincinnati, OH

<http://www.cincinnati-oh.gov/police/assets/File/Procedures/12111.pdf>

- This is a link to the city of Cincinnati's protocol for Police Interaction with Homeless Encampments. This document gives the policy as well as the procedure for police interaction with homeless encampments in Cincinnati. The purpose given is "To provide guidance for all officers to ensure the fair and equitable treatment of homeless persons. To ensure that notice is given to those who are unlawfully trespassing on public property and that personal property is safeguarded according to law and Department procedure."
- Police officers who encounter homeless encampments trespassing on public property must notify their Neighborhood Squad supervisor for investigation and action.
- The encampment will receive 72 hours notice before arrest and confiscation of property.
- They state that they recognize "the plight of the homeless person" and that it may not be able to be controlled, but "law violations will not be ignored or be permitted to go unattended."
- The procedure is to:
 - Respond and assess
 - Discuss presence with residents and discover purpose, length of stay, and permission (or lack of permission)
 - Inspect area for health or safety violations and act upon immediate issues
 - Complete a "Community Problem Solving Worksheet" to be submitted to the Neighborhood Squad supervisor.
 - Neighborhood Squad supervisor must: Assign personnel to assess the situation, file a notice, and either encourage people to take property with them upon leaving or confiscate their property upon arrest.

Boise, ID

https://policeoversight.cityofboise.org/media/10768/Interactions_Between_BPD_and_Homeless.pdf

- When a person is arrested for the violation of a local ordinance, the cost of housing the inmate is charged to the City
- if a person is arrested on a warrant for failing to appear in court for the violation of a city ordinance, charged to City
- City of Boise pays the Ada County Jail between \$15,000 and \$17,000 per year for the costs of incarceration from quality of life violations

San Francisco, CA

<http://sf-police.org/index.aspx?page=4441>

- This is a link to the San Francisco Police Department's page on Public Interaction with the Homeless. The information here is much broader and more general, but it does outline a few ways the San Francisco Police Department interacts with people experiencing homelessness.
- They have developed a special unit for interacting with the homeless community in San Francisco called Operation Outreach

- “This unit is tasked with handling quality of life related incidents and impacts of homelessness at the neighborhood level. The mission of Operation Outreach is to locate the homeless wherever they might be and to determine their needs.”
- “The Outreach Officers work with the Department of Public Health’s Engagement Specialist Team, who provide targeted street outreach with the goal of engaging San Francisco’s most vulnerable street population. The San Francisco Police Department and Operation Outreach work closely with the Mayor’s Office of Housing Opportunity Partnership and Engagement to address neighborhood issues related to homelessness.”

District of Columbia

<https://go.mpdconline.com/GO/GO-OPS-308-14.pdf>

- This is a link to a District of Columbia general order for police department “interaction with homeless persons.”
- “The purpose of this policy is to ensure that members of the Metropolitan Police Department (MPD) understand and are sensitive to the needs and rights of homeless persons in the District of Columbia, and to set forth procedures for members to follow during contacts with homeless persons. This policy recognizes that all persons, including people experiencing homelessness, have the right to be peacefully in any public place of the District of Columbia as long as their activities are lawful. It also explicitly affirms that homelessness is not a crime.”
- It states that they would rather refer people experiencing homelessness to service organizations than initiate contact that interrupts innocent activity.
- Procedures:
- Any officer may interact with a person experiencing homelessness to offer advice about shelters or services, and may also contact an outreach worker. The person has the choice whether or not to accept.
- Officers may not engage in “law enforcement action” with any person based only on the status or appearance of being homeless.
- Officers may not communicate that any person is not allowed to be in a public area because of their homeless status.
- Officers may not order people to move if they have “constitutionally permissible reasons” for being there.
- Officers must treat personal property of those experiencing homelessness just as they would any other personal property, and must notify a Watch Commander if it poses a safety risk.
- Arrests may still be made in the event of an actual crime.

Philadelphia, PA

- Officers must have training in approaching and assisting with connecting to services
- The Sidewalk Behavior Ordinance - Before citation, an officer must:
 - Give verbal warning to relocate
 - Give written warning
 - Then call Outreach Team, team designated by Dept of Public Health
 - Try to get them connected to services/in a bed/etc
- No jail time for violating this ordinance

Miami and Ft. Lauderdale, FL

- No shelter beds = no arrests

- Training for officers
- Officers encouraged to form relationships with those on the street for outreach
- Written protocol for officers
- Lots of writing done about interactions
- Protocol states homelessness is not a crime

Seattle, WA

- Three day local training for new officers about homelessness
- Spend the day in plain clothes and figure out what organizations are out there and what they offer
- Puts face on homelessness

Santa Cruz, CA

- Homeless Resource Officer in the PD
- Referrals (only one officer)

Reno, NV

- HELP program
- Says that taking negative action against someone for being homeless is improper conduct
- If a person is sober and nonviolent, refer to HELP program
- Officers on bike patrol bus station, parks & respond to citizen complaints

Clearwater, FL

- PD+ Housing Authority+other agencies = increased public awareness of the needs & more funding
- They recommend having a written, binding document of police protocol that would oversee:
 - Police/individual interaction
 - Police/shelter interaction
 - Require training for officers to know the service organizations available
 - Create a resource guide that officers give out (like the Contributor's)

Additional Resources

http://cops.usdoj.gov/html/dispatch/12-2015/alternatives_to_criminalization.asp

This is a very interesting article that does not deal with protocol per se, but does share information about the criminalization of homelessness many police departments are enforcing as well as the programs some police departments have developed to combat this criminalization.