



# Tacoma Pierce County Coalition to End Homelessness

<https://pchomeless.org/> - [info@pchomeless.org](mailto:info@pchomeless.org)

## Statement on Sweeps of Encampments

Approved in a Friday Tacoma Pierce County Coalition to End Homelessness Meeting,  
October 15, 2021

### NO SWEEPS

People experiencing homelessness often make their homes in tents or vehicles. Despite Federal and State protections and CDC COVID guidance, local jurisdictions continue to conduct removals of people living in encampments. In each case, we expect the jurisdiction to use planning and care and minimize human harm.

There is nothing acceptable about forced encampment moves when there is no place for the people living in these sites to go. We all know we simply lack the housing required for all of our unsheltered people. And there is nothing acceptable about forcing people who have no homes to move their tents or vehicles without a safe and decent place to go.

#### Before Authorizing a Sweep:

- Set the Sweep date at least four weeks from the date of posting notice of the sweep.
- Shelter options: Identify enough safe sites plus 20% prior to the posting of the sweep notice. Encampments are fluid. Campers know that the City of Tacoma's HOT team can offer longer term shelter options: The Stability Site, TEMS (tiny) homes, Shiloh Retreat Center. New campers sometimes join the encampment for those options.
- Camping sites: Designate a publicly-owned site for low barrier camping and Safe Parking.
- Storage: Secure short term storage for all of the belongings of people who require more than what the City can store off-site.
- Weather: Just as the Departments of Emergency Management have triggers for heat and cold and air quality, there should be weather conditions under which a sweep simply cannot happen. We cannot force people to move in the rain, during storms or cold weather events. How will they ever dry their tents? Their belongings? Themselves?
- Neighborhood impact: Reach out to likely impacted neighborhoods and develop a plan for both the housed and unhoused people. Be sensitive to neighborhoods already hosting unsheltered people.
- Ensure basic services continue through the sweep: Porta potties, hygiene stations, on-site assistance including Safe Parking site options for those living in vehicles, "hot spots" or other means of communication,
- Support services: Plan the commitment of daily support services even when people say "no" and say "no" and say "no" yet again. Why? Because experience tells us that one day, they will say "yes." We want them alive and able to make that response.



## Tacoma Pierce County Coalition to End Homelessness

<https://pchomeless.org/> - [info@pchomeless.org](mailto:info@pchomeless.org)

- Incentivize the move. We're having success in COVID vaccinations with bringing vaccines TO people experiencing homelessness and providing a \$50 cash card for each shot. We don't know what might incentivize people in an encampment to move so let's ask them.
- Notification: the Tacoma Pierce County Health Department, the Tacoma Pierce County Coalition to End Homelessness.
- Trash pick-up: arrange for daily pick up of garbage bags and discarded property.

### **Sweep-related Outreach Services**

- Provide each person with an appropriate shelter option AND a permanent housing intervention. The model is called "Built for Zero" and it underlies our work on the Pierce County Comprehensive Plan to End Homelessness Steering Committee; a plan that the City of Tacoma has promised to align with.
- Identify all formal and informal Outreach teams and volunteers for the encampment
- Designate the Outreach Leads: formal informal, people with lived experience
- Coordinate formal and informal Outreach teams and volunteers
- Engage people with lived experience to help people relocate as humanely as possible.
- Maintain ByNameLists of all campers. Such lists should include street names as well as legal names.
- Keep a Record of campers who have formed a community and want to move together
- Daily Outreach conferencing to include:
  - Status of each person on the ByNameList
  - Record of eligibility for special services: veteran, Trueblood, housing voucher holder, etc.
  - Medical assessment of each camper. Medical care on site
  - COVID vaccine status of each camper
  - At least two safe shelter options for each camper
  - Pets, possessions, behavioral health, household composition
  - Initial permanent housing intervention
  - Current ID status
  - Key barriers to permanent housing
- Keep track of where each camper goes; ensure a "warm handoff" to a case manager

### **Individual and Group Relocation Services Up To and Including the Date of the Sweep**

- Provide each person with garbage bags - enough for their belongings and enough for their trash.
- Have trucks and drivers available from the date and time the sweep notice is posted to help people move.

### **Public process for Decision on Sweeps including those conducted for "Health and Safety" or "Construction"**

Who initiates sweep?

Who authorizes sweep?

Who notifies Council?

These tents and vehicles are people's homes; these encampments their community.

The people living in these tents and vehicles are part of our community, our beloved community.