



# Tacoma Pierce County Coalition to End Homelessness

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

## What are you doing in response to the increase in sweeps?

### What more should the coalition be doing?

#### Group Discussion Summary • Tacoma Pierce County Coalition to End Homelessness • 5.27.22

“City leadership doesn’t appreciate how harmful and self-defeating sweeps are. Outreach workers are out there building trust and relationships while sweeps undermine those goals and devalue their work.”

### What are we doing (as organizations and individuals)?

- We were all professionals in the work; looking to learn more about what can be done as an individual beyond professional work.
- Trying to create space for coming together to share resources.
- Having to do self-care as an individual to continue in the professional work (so volunteer work/non work time is often in other areas).
- MDC houses folks referred for Coordinated Entry. Outreach workers drop off supplies.
- Tacoma Pierce County Health Dept offers vaccines through Comprehensive Life Resources and Tacoma Rescue Mission.
- Finding the coalition meetings and list-serve really helpful.
- Continue coordination of services pre-sweep.

### What more should the coalition be doing?

#### ***Stronger community organizing and outreach:***

- Are we doing enough advocacy to try to help community members understand the short sightedness, inefficiency, and resource wasting involved in sweeps (“whack a mole”)?
- Idea: how to write to and communicate with local elected officials. What is impactful?
- We need citizen action; politicians are limited in what they can/will do to help.
- Need more appreciation and support for outreach workers.
- We can work together to promote health and survival for people living in tents and cars.
- We can demand a more rapid response to the “emergency” of homelessness. We can continue to reach out to community.

#### ***Do more to articulate the damage that sweeps cause:***

- Retraumatizing people every time they are swept is inhumane and costly.
- We need to be more forceful in articulating how the sweeps are abusive, and that people are understandably reluctant to accept help from their abuser.
- Need to communicate to city that forcing people into services is ineffective, and not everyone wants housing or shelter.
- Discussed frustration of working in a role with city and hearing about the sweeps—hurts heart.
- Sweeps have proven to be a massive waste of public funds. When there are limited places where people can camp, they will continuously loop through these.
- When the city “clears” one site - other camps are destabilized by an influx of new campers.



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## ***Support for advocacy, protests, and direct action to stop the sweeps:***

- Need to stop sweeps and use the money to create housing with supportive services.
- Some expressed reservations about TPCCH itself getting “too political,” but there’s lots of energy for a protest strategy supported by individuals.
- Coalition should NOT take a position on sweeps... but should utilize the time, energy & efforts to advocate for better solutions, particularly with resources to face barriers and longer-term stabilization models.
- The usual "solutions" aren't working. We need to literally stand between encampments and the people coming to sweep them.
- Various partners from within the Coalition can and should work on organizing together and with the larger community to stop the sweeps.
- Discussed the inadequacy of a general Coalition letter opposing sweeps. A letter with a list of all organizations speaking in opposition and reminding the Martin v Boise law, sent to media as well might be stronger.
- Protests! Have a showing of large numbers of people.
- Support for direct actions that are planned with respect for the people we are trying to serve, so the action doesn’t make things more difficult.
- Possible campaigns to model/inspire us San Francisco's <https://solutionsnotsweeps.org/>, <https://housingnohandcuffs.org/>
- Discussed the benefit of coming to witness the sweeps, not wanting to be rubbernecking, humanizing the experience by conversation and welcome supplies, as well as possible signs asking "where can people go?" or posting Laurie’s infographics.

## ***Support alternative sites where people can have stability, safety, and community:***

- Sweeps happen and are increasing because of complaints from neighbors, we need more ways to educate and get the message out so people understand there are literally not enough shelter/housing options for the people being swept. The narrative that people are refusing services must stop.
- We need Safe Sites 4 All. Coalition can define the ideal sanctioned campsite (we did some work on this during the summits). We can create a "best practices" sheet and advocate with passion.
- Need to deal with reality that unhoused people appreciate and desire both community and autonomy.
- Safe encampments need to be established so people have places to go where relationships can be built and trust established.
- We can help people get the resources and management tools they need to make campsites more functional and integrated into the communities they are established in.
- More successes like the RV parking pilot and vets’ encampment.
- Buy more hotels, micro-shelters; convert lots, safe parking and tiny homes.
- Housing for all is a noble goal that will remain out of reach until we regain and build on the public housing we once had.