



Tacoma Pierce County Coalition to End Homelessness

<https://pchomeless.org/> - info@pchomeless.org

What are different ways that coalition members can respond to ongoing sweeps?

Group Discussion Summary • Tacoma Pierce County Coalition to End Homelessness • 7.22.22

"There are big frustrations about the city and county's whack-a-mole approach that shifts the impact of unsheltered homelessness around without solving any structural problems."

"This is a political problem, not a social service problem. Without policy changes, there is not much we can do."

Support the people in the encampments

- Since sweeps conducted in response to 3-1-1- and 9-1-1 calls, people doing outreach should call these numbers and report distress that people are experiencing. It would also be great if people on the streets used these numbers to report their distress. This system is supposed to be for everyone.
- Advocating for safe spaces to go after sweeps – where can they go?
- Continue witnessing. Add photography to document.
- Since the sweeps usually happen so fast, it's hard for us to get together and have a unified voice. Individuals should contact local officials and government agencies to speak out against the sweeps.
- Maybe every time we know there is going to be a sweep we can alternate which agency can be at a local library to offer assistance/resource finding – like a disaster response. That way we share the responsibility and it doesn't fall to just once agency.
- Know Your Rights campaign (especially around property destruction).
- Everybody doesn't know that they have certain rights – so like mini pop up workshops – can we get you a house tonight? But here is what you can know about resources.
- Lakewood years ago closed a bunch of hotel/motels and LASA came up with a binder of what to do if they were being moved. It wasn't prevention – but it's intervention, how to provide a safety net.
- Find places publicly owned. Map out places where people could go and try to get toilet facilities there.
- Be proactive with outreach. Navigate encampments early. Find housing first per individual. Keep partnering with Heal etc.
- Find safe parking if needed, or hotel programs.
- Continue observing sweeps (like Richard has been doing) to report on the actual "services offered" and "services refused."
- Monitor sweeps planned and ensure occupants get maximum notice.
- Discussion of unsustainable situations such as the overcrowding and criminal activity at the G street mural site. Need creative alternatives for small sites. Possible creation of map of public properties that might be less likely to be "swept" if only a few campers.
- Tip sheet for people as they have to move on what might lessen chances of being seen as a site "needing" to be swept.
- Keep responding politically. Vote for city and county representatives who will end sweeps as the "solution" to homelessness.

Support affected businesses and other neighbors

- Outreach to businesses reporting camps – doing mediation when possible (on certain issues: garbage, waste). Health dept team starting to talk about this.
- Facilitating ongoing resources to camps (giant trash bags, sharps containers).



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- Purple bag program? Can coalition members assist with pick up?
- Would the city give outreach groups free dumping? Could there be a voucher?
- Spoke of need to build alliances with affected property owners, and how many property owners are seeking long-term, solutions as well and are also frustrated over the absence of real solutions. Our interests are perceived to be in opposition, even when they are not.
- A property owner in our group talked about how their family owns a lot and has spent about \$30K to mitigate impact of camping on their property, and are now facing legal sanction from the county that shifts blame to the property owners for not doing enough.

Escalate the tactics

- Get LOTS of people to show up at sweeps to show support for campers.
- Get someone to Facebook Live a sweep
- More people in support of unhoused people need to show up to the sweeps in solidarity. What if there were 100 or 200 of us there, showing compassion? This would be powerful. This could be a good way to bring other people who might not understand how sweeps work see firsthand what's happening and interact with homeless folks. Having the lived experience committee members there is great, too.
- Physical sweep defense – joining together.
- Saw footage on Unicorn Riot in Minneapolis: there were anarchists who tried to physically stop the sweeps.
- Can privileged people camp out in front of the mayor's house?? Activism!