Vehicular Outreach 101
EVERYONE SHOULD HAVE A HOME.
Why do people become homeless?

- There is no single cause for homelessness
- Each person has their own story
- Homelessness is a systemic issue
- It usually takes a compounding of several issues to eventually lead to homelessness

*Homeless people are the sum total of our dreams, policies, intentions, errors, omissions, cruelties, and kindnesses as a society.* - Peter Marin, Sociologist
What is Street Outreach?

- Outreach is the initial and most critical step in connecting, or reconnecting a homeless individual to needed health, mental health, recovery, social welfare, and housing services.

- Outreach is primarily directed toward finding homeless people who might not use services due to lack of awareness or active avoidance, and who otherwise might be ignored or underserved.
What is Street Outreach?

- Street Outreach is viewed as a process rather than an outcome, with a focus on establishing rapport and a goal of eventually engaging people in the services they need and will accept.
  - Engagement - begin to develop trust
  - Assessing and caring for immediate needs
  - Building rapport – consistently and regularly meeting clients where they are at
  - Provide linkages to services and resources
  - To help people connect to mainstream services and ultimately into the community through a series of phased strategies
Why individuals may reject help

- Bad experiences with social services
- Broken promises in the past
- Symptoms are difficult to assess and treat
- Fear of failing
- Fear of the unknown
- Not wanting to comply with rules
- Undiagnosed mental health issues
- Substance abuse
- Feel comfortable and safe on the street
- Do no want to live within four walls
Obama ain't the only one who wants change.
Good judgment, intuition, and street sense

• An important practice includes being observant and vigilant for oneself and for the homeless person, as well as using good common sense. Strategies include avoiding closed, remote or dangerous areas, developing a relationship with local police, carrying a cellular phone, and assessing the situations before acting.
Seven Simple Rules: Best Practices
1. Personal orientation

Dealing with clients as people

- Best practices include a philosophy that aims to restore the dignity of homeless persons.
- Treat them as you would any other individual you may encounter.
2. Empowerment and self-determination

- Facilitate this by presenting options and potential consequences rather than solutions, by listening to homeless persons rather than “doing” for them, and by ensuring a balance of power between homeless individuals and service providers.
3. Respect for the recovery process

- The process of behavior change is slow and occurs along a continuum, and both the services provider and the client must recognize small successes. Any move toward safer/healthier activities is viewed as a success. Positively reinforce that the client is taking a step towards improving their current situation.
4. Client-driven goal setting

- Services and strategies should be tailored to meet the individuals’ unique needs and characteristics. Clients need to recognize for themselves how change may be beneficial in relationship to their own goals. The service provider should start with clients’ perceived needs and goals, and go from their goals.
5. Start from a place of respect

- Be respectful of homeless people, including their territory and culture. The service provider must take the role of consultant into that lifestyle and must view clients as experts in their life and on the streets.
6. Instilling hope

- Instill a sense of hope for clients while helping them maintain positive, realistic expectations. Unrealistic expectations may bring on cycles of frustration, despair, and hopelessness, as well as anger at the person offering assistance. The service provider needs to communicate to the client that changes may take considerable time, effort, and patience.
7. Generating kindness

- Homeless people should always be treated with warmth, empathy, and positive regard, regardless of their behavior or presentation.
Up close and personal

- Introduce yourself and make those you approach aware of what you are doing and why. (Be direct)
- Never approach anyone giving “signs” indicating they do not want to be bothered.
- Maintain the confidentiality of the clients you meet.
- Do not stand and argue with someone who does not agree with what you are doing or saying.
Up close and personal

- Do not accept gifts, food, personal items, or buy merchandise from clients.
- Do not lend or give money to clients.
- Do not give out your personal information: last name, phone number, address, etc.
- Give them information to connect them to an outreach team or social services organization.
Safety Guidelines

• NEVER enter any client’s car, “home”, or enclosed encampment area.
• Do not carry valuables.
• Always carry I.D. with you.
• In case of emergency, call 911.
Things you should do

- Be direct when instructing a client and give a firm timeline.
- Follow-up and follow through
- Be mindful of items that can be used as weapons and keep your distance (knives, sharp objects, glass bottles, needles, sticks)
- Call police or emergency services, if necessary
- Contact members of the Outreach team for support
BEFORE YOU TURN AWAY PUT YOURSELF IN MY PLACE
Collaboration is key

- The causes and solutions are so complex that they are solved best with the collaboration of a comprehensive network of providers. Utilizing your local homeless network helps provide:
  - An effective use of program/agency resources
  - Avoids duplication of services
  - Appropriately refer clients to the correct services
  - Saves time
  - Clients are less frustrated with the process
  - Identify the strengths of each agency
Remember

- The acceptance of services offered is purely voluntary on the part of the client.
- Move at the pace and in the direction the client would like to go.
- Always treat a homeless individual with respect and kindness.
Scenario/Role Play

- #1: What is this?
- #2: What do you do with a client who cannot speak?
- #3: Surprise...