

**we
are
santa
monica.**

**a practical toolkit about
homelessness**

hello.

Homelessness has become a very painful reality for thousands of individuals across the area, and we are aware that this issue comes with many questions and concerns. This toolkit was designed to help the Santa Monica community know what to do and how to make a difference when faced with the reality of homelessness in our city. There is background info for understanding a bit about the issue, context for what the City and its partners are doing, and practical advice on ways we can all jump in and help.

Thankfully, with so many people already working together to provide immediate and long-term support, this toolkit reflects our community-wide effort to respond with compassion for everyone and at all levels.

We are inviting you to join us, our neighbors, local nonprofits, businesses, and community organizations in creating a stronger community for all.

We are Santa Monica.

weare.santamonica.gov

we are experiencing a regional crisis.

23%

countywide increase
in homelessness

Homelessness recently increased 23% countywide, impacting almost 58,000 individuals. In Santa Monica, more than 900 people are living without a home, 26% above previous years.

13,000

people lose their
housing every month
in LA County

Due to many systemic problems—including rising rents, stagnant wages, and decreased development of affordable housing—more than 13,000 people lose their housing every month in LA County; in Santa Monica, approximately 29% of homeless individuals have been without a home for less than a month.

1 to 4

ratio of beds available
to those experiencing
homelessness

Many people are living on the streets and in public spaces because there is a shortage of shelter beds. Across LA County, there is only 1 bed for every 4 homeless individuals. In Santa Monica, there is 1 bed for every 2.2 homeless individuals.

we are here to help.

If you or someone you know is on the brink of losing housing, there are services available locally. Contact the City and local nonprofits to find out what assistance is available.

- If you or someone you know is **at risk of losing housing**, the Santa Monica Housing Division is your first stop. Call **310.458.8743**. For LA County help, call **310.258.7400**.
- **If you are having trouble paying your mortgage**, call the Los Angeles Center for Foreclosure Solutions at **1.888.995.HOPE**.
- If you are currently homeless and **know a friend or family member who can offer permanent housing for you**, Project Homecoming might be a helpful option for you. Call SMPD HLP Team at **310.458.8953** to find out more.
- West Coast Care also helps with **family reunification**. Call **310.351.2565**.
- **If you are a renter in your home in Santa Monica**, you have a number of rights and resources available to you. Find out more about fair housing and your rights by visiting **smgov.net/consumer**.



we are making a difference.

In Nov 2017, the City of Santa Monica authorized \$1.4M in one-time funds to support the roll out of an Action Plan including new outreach teams, proactive place-based engagement strategies, and additional library resources, building on decades of getting people housed and connected to services.

Over the last few years, residents across LA County voted to move forward with historic legislation that will build more housing (Measure HHH) and provide even more life-changing services to people experiencing homelessness (Measure H).

Here are the new investments we are making:

Human Services

- **10-12 new outreach workers** through contracts with LA County and local nonprofits. More service professionals will engage directly with the homeless in our parks, beaches and public spaces.

Police

- **Every officer will be trained, informed and engaged on homeless issues** and work in coordination with service providers and other City departments.
- **New officers on the Homeless Liaison Program** team and expanded partnerships with West Coast Care and the Department of Mental Health.

Housing

- **Prioritize federal housing vouchers** for households at risk of homelessness and for persons who became homeless, with the highest priority for seniors and persons living with disabilities.
- **Expand the continuum of housing** by creating a new path for persons who were formerly homeless to “graduate” to less service-enriched housing.
- **Initiate pilot programs to prevent homelessness** by providing a basic needs subsidy to seniors who are extremely low-income and paying more than half their income toward rent.

Library

- **Pop-up resource fairs** provide direct access to services.
- **Two new library services officers** to help create a welcoming and positive environment for all visitors, and continued funding for one outreach specialist at all locations.
- **Dedicated library social worker** for those who do not receive or are ineligible for services.

Fire

- **Explore deployment** models that more efficiently address low acuity homelessness responses that impact local emergency rooms.
- Explore adding a **social worker at high impact stations**.
- New software program that **uses data to predict needs by area and time of day**, while maintaining response times.

how you can make a difference.

➤ start somewhere.

One of the most common experiences in increased homelessness is feeling uncomfortable and totally powerless. However, there are proactive steps you can take to address this issue, even if you feel overwhelmed or scared.

- Take some time to **read up on the issue**. Read **Seascape's** special February edition on homelessness at **smgov.net/seascape** which spotlights local nonprofits working on this issue, a story

about a formerly-homeless woman, and answer frequently asked questions.

If you are a parent or caregiver, **help your child understand what's going on**.

- Answer questions simply and honestly.
- Express empathy for the person, and if your child is interested in doing something to help, find a local organization you can donate to or volunteer with together.
- Like with any stranger, encourage your child to be cautious and safe.

contact the experts.

If you see someone regularly who appears in need of non-emergency assistance, contact **a trained individual or outreach team who knows what to do.**

 Santa Monica's Police Department has a special unit called the **Homeless Liaison Program (HLP)** that uses both law enforcement and social service strategies to address homeless issues, especially mental illness. Save their number in your phone: **310.458.8953.**

If there is suspicious activity going on, connect to officers in your neighborhood by calling the Police Dispatch: **310.458.8491.** If there is a medical emergency or you feel threatened in any way, call 9-1-1.

If there's **something that you're specifically concerned about**, like trash or alley issues or would like to improve street lighting, submit comments, complaints or service requests 24/7 at **santamonica.gov/works.**

If you **run a local business** and would like to connect with the local police about keeping the area safe, call about the Business Watch Program at **310.458.8474.**

➤ **know what to say.**

The most resounding advice from both formerly-homeless individuals and experts on the issue is to treat all people with respect, no matter their circumstance. Many people who live on the streets often feel inadequate or nonexistent to the rest of the world, but thoughtfully acknowledging and connecting with them can go a long way.

- **Make casual eye contact** and say “good morning”, “hello” or simply smile.
- If you have a minute, **ask how they are doing and if they’d like to talk.**
- If asked for money, you can decline or kindly refer them to **St. Joseph Center’s Homeless Service Center** (404 Lincoln Blvd., Venice) for food,

shelter/housing referrals, and other resources from M-F starting at 7:30am. If the person is 12 - 25 years old, you can refer them to the **Safe Place for Youth** (2469 Lincoln Blvd., Venice) for drop-in services Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday from 1-5pm.

- If you want to provide immediate assistance, consider **food gift cards** or personal care items instead of cash.
- If you attempt to talk to them but they are unwelcoming or make you feel uncomfortable, **walk away and contact the experts.** On **page 4**, there are suggested phone numbers if you’d like to call for help.

get involved.

Volunteering and participating in local events are great ways to not only provide real support to direct relief programs, but also meet people in the community who are experiencing homelessness.

 **Volunteer with one of our service providers.** Each organization has a wide range of needs, from administrative support to preparing and handing out meals to helping people prepare for a job to assembling welcome home kits to immediately help those recently housed. You can find a full list of service providers at the end of this toolkit or online at **weare.santamonica.gov**. We are working on identifying specific needs and sharing this information in an easier format, so please sign

up at **weare.santamonica.gov** to get notified of upcoming events and opportunities!

-  Volunteer for the **Annual Homeless Count**, which happens on the last Wednesday of every January. Mark your calendar for next year!
-  **If you're an employer**, hire someone who is formerly homeless to jumpstart their transition to independence through employment.
-  **If you're a landlord**, offer housing to a Santa Monica Housing Voucher holder. Contact the Santa Monica Housing Division at **310.458.8743** or visit **smgov.net/housing** to ask about current incentives.

➤ give generously.

Giving money to a homeless person on the street can feel like an emotional tug-of-war — you want to immediately alleviate their needs, but you are also worried of perpetuating a painful cycle. While panhandling is not illegal, giving them cash isn't recommended, as it doesn't encourage long-term relief or connection to services that can set individuals up for permanent housing and other solutions.

Instead, **donate to our local service providers.** Your generous gift will provide access to vital resources to help homeless individuals get back on their feet.

If you'd like to **give directly to a homeless person**, consider the following alternatives to cash donations:

- Ask what they need right now, such as **personal care items, gift cards or food**, and see if you can immediately provide that.
- Have **personal care packages** ready to hand out. Recommended items include socks, hygiene items (toothbrush, soap, comb, etc), snacks and water, and a personal note.
- **Hand out TAP cards and purchase dog vaccinations or crates.** Both are practical and great opportunities to give!

➤ **advocate for change.**

City and neighborhood council meetings are happening every week, and this is where we have the chance to listen and provide feedback on how policies are being implemented.

- The **Santa Monica City Council** regularly meets at 5:30 p.m. on the second and fourth Tuesday of each month, and holds additional special meetings, as needed.
- Attend the next **Homelessness Steering Committee** meeting. This diverse set of stakeholders—social service providers, businesses, nonprofits, healthcare providers, residents and community leaders—are all concerned about this very important topic. For info about the next meeting, email **humanservices.mailbox@smgov.net**.

➤ **contact representatives.**

Federal

- **Congressman Ted Lieu**
Phone: **323.651.1040**
- **Senator Kamala Harris**
Phone: **213.894.5000**
- **Senator Dianne Feinstein**
Phone: **310.914.7300**

State

- **Senator Ben Allen**
Phone: **310.318.6994**
- **Assemblymember Richard Bloom**
Phone: **310.450.0041**

County

- **Supervisor Sheila Kuehl**
Phone: **310.231.1170**

service providers.

If you are looking to **directly connect with service providers** in the area:

Chrysalis: employment workshops and job readiness assistance
310.401.9400

CLARE Foundation, Inc.: residential and outpatient alcohol, substance abuse, and behavioral treatment
866.452.5273

Disability Community Resource Center: a non-residential service center dedicated to enhancing the quality of life for persons with disabilities
888.851.9245

Legal Aid Foundation Los Angeles: full range of legal services to low-income residents
310.899.6200

Meals on Wheels West: home delivered meals to house-bound seniors and people with disabilities
310.394.5133

New Directions for Veterans: services and housing for homeless veterans
310.914.4045

St. Joseph Center: provides information on permanent affordable housing, case management, treatment, and food pantry
310.358.2835

Step Up on Second: case management, treatment, and permanent supportive housing for individuals affected by severe and persistent mental health issues, and young adults who have experienced trauma and are at risk of developing mental health issues
310.394.6889

The People Concern (formerly OPCC): interim housing, permanent affordable housing, case management, and

treatment for homeless individuals, victims of domestic violence, at-risk youth, Veterans and people dealing with severe physical and mental illness or substance abuse
310.450.4050 (Olympic)
310.450.0650 (Cloverfield)

Upward Bound House: interim and permanent housing for homeless families
310.306.1865

Venice Family Clinic: free, quality health care to homeless and low-income residents
310.392.8636

Westside Food Bank: provides food to local food pantries and help low-income residents of Santa Monica to stay in their homes
310.828.6016



weare.santamonica.gov