



Weekly Update from the Coalition for the Homeless
June 6, 2018

- The work currently underway at Wheeler Encampment is new for The Way Home; large encampments are relatively new to our city. As outreach teams are working with clients and as the Coalition is working with the neighborhood, we are taking note of what works, what doesn't, and what new issues arise and continue to refine our actions.
 - o One new issue that we have noted is what happens when clients are housed from encampments, specifically, what happens with their belongings. Housing navigators often have personal/work vehicles that are not very large, so client belongings must be moved in over multiple trips. We are currently figuring out how/if we can make this process quicker.
 - o Clients may return to the encampment after they are housed for a few reasons: to collect additional belongings, and/or because they miss their friends and their communities. Depending on where clients are housed, it can be challenging for them to find new friends and groups to socialize with.
 - o The Coalition is also figuring out how to balance our desire to be transparent with neighborhoods impacted by homeless encampments with clients' right to privacy. The Coalition cannot share specific client stories by name.

- Public Education Campaign update:
 - o Short-term: engaging the neighborhood in advocacy to find a way to close the encampment and prevent new individuals from moving into the encampment.
 - o Long-term: a "Better Way To Give" public education campaign to educate charities and groups about how to get involved with organizations who can help end homelessness instead of just managing it.
 - o Homeless service agencies who are partners of The Way Home may conduct outreach at encampments in addition to other Housing and Encampment Housing Navigators. These homeless outreach partners may use food, toiletries, and other items to encourage homeless individuals to engage with them. These agencies can connect homeless individuals with housing and so are different than well-meaning individuals and charity groups who bring food and leave without making a more permanent impact.



- Update on the status of the “by-name” list of individuals experiencing homelessness and living at Wheeler encampment:
 - 71 homeless individuals were identified as living at Wheeler encampment on April 25, 2018.
 - Of those 71 homeless individuals, 10 of them are not chronically homeless and therefore don’t qualify for The Way Home’s housing programs – but they have been referred to Income Now so they can access employment and income as a means to resolve their homelessness.
 - Of those 71 homeless individuals, 61 of them fit the definition of being chronically homeless and were referred to both a Permanent Supportive Housing program and a Housing Navigator who will help them move into that program.
 - **Of those 61 chronically homeless individuals, 25 people have been housed since April 25, 2018.**
 - Initially, the pace was quicker because of a new PSH development that had opened. That development is now full, so staff are having to re-route some referrals to housing.
 - Another reason for the slowing pace is that a large portion of the population living at the encampment are very difficult to engage with. In addition to barriers like substance abuse, mental illness, and challenging criminal backgrounds, other obstacles to housing include:
 - Someone who works full-time and is having a hard time making appointments for housing lest she lose her job,
 - Someone who is waiting on paperwork and identification documentation to arrive from out of state
 - Another person has been referred to Homeless Court but is afraid he will be arrested again (although no one gets arrested at Homeless Court).
 - Another 8 of those 61 chronically homeless individuals have left the encampment and/or can no longer be located.
 - During the day, there are anywhere from 15-30 “hangers on” at Wheeler encampment who are not homeless and do not sleep in the encampment, but they loiter, prey on the homeless individuals living at Wheeler, abuse drugs, etc. Typically, these “hangers on” leave the encampment when homeless agency staff members show up.
 - Since April 25, 3 new individuals have shown up to and are living at the encampment. The Way Home housing navigators are still concentrating on the original list, but are taking note of those arriving for the next wave of outreach and engagement.
 - For example, one of the new people who arrived at the encampment is a homeless Veteran; since The Way Home has effectively ended Veteran homelessness, he is being immediately connected with rental assistance through the VA’s Permanent Supportive Housing Program.