

Los Angeles County Encampment Resolution Guidance for Local Jurisdictions

Guidance for local jurisdictions on a housing-focused approach to unsheltered homelessness.

Purpose:

This guide summarizes how Los Angeles (LA) County tracks and responds to people experiencing unsheltered homelessness in encampments. Through county-wide investments in the outreach and rehousing systems, along with tiered protocols for conducting encampment resolutions, cleanups, and closures, LA County has multiple methods to respond to the housing and humanitarian crisis on public property. This resource includes guidance for local jurisdictions interested in resolving homelessness for people living in encampments, based on lessons learned from LA County's methods.

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About LA County’s Unsheltered Homeless Crisis

On any given night in LA County, over 75,000 people are experiencing homelessness. Almost 70% of these individuals are surviving outside on public streets, in tents, makeshift shelters, vehicles, and RVs. The City of LA accounts for more than half of the unsheltered population, but none of LA County’s 88 cities and 120 Unincorporated Areas are immune to this crisis. To learn more about the volume, prevalence, and regional distribution of LA County’s Unsheltered Homeless Crisis, visit the [Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority’s 2024 Localities Dashboard](#).

How LA County Tracks Unsheltered Homelessness & Encampments

Like every other jurisdiction in the United States, LA County relies on the federally mandated Point-in-Time (PIT) Count to estimate the prevalence of sheltered and unsheltered homelessness on any given night. In addition to the PIT Count, LA County uses a federally-mandated Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) to capture outreach encounters, service transactions, shelter placements, and housing outcomes for all people experiencing homelessness. The HMIS system is used primarily to deliver and document services, but the underlying data is also used to understand patterns and trends, like where people have a history of experiencing homelessness.

Since HMIS contains legally protected personal information, it is not available to the general public. However, LA County also maintains two systems for the public to use when they have concerns about homeless individuals, encampments, or the presence of abandoned property or debris:

- [The Los Angeles Homeless Outreach Portal \(LA-HOP\)](#) provides those concerned about a person experiencing homelessness with an avenue to dispatch an outreach team to the area.

- [The Works App](#) offers a one-stop shop solution for County residents to report and track Public Works services. Residents can report abandoned property or illegal dumping in LA County's unincorporated areas through a mobile app. If the service is not handled by LA County, then the app will provide you with the appropriate contact information.

The LA County Chief Executive Office – Homeless Initiative (CEO-HI) uses data from all these sources to maintain an internal system called the Homeless Encampment Automated Reporting System (HEARS), which helps County Departments track requests for services linked to encampments in unincorporated areas and schedule cleanup and resolution procedures described in this guide. The HEARS system is not available to the general public, but Supervisory Districts have view-only access to see encampments and their cleanup status.

How LA County Responds to Unsheltered Homelessness & Encampments

LA County funds homeless services programs and the coordinated entry system that facilitates access to those programs. These programs and systems are divided into [five strategies](#), monitored for progress by CEO-HI:

1. **Coordinate** – Create a coordinated system that links critical infrastructure and incorporates best practices
2. **Prevent** – Provide prevention services to avoid entry or a return to homelessness
3. **Connect** – Link and navigate everyone to an exit pathway from homelessness
4. **House** – Rapidly rehouse using temporary and permanent housing
5. **Stabilize** – Scale services critical to rehousing and stabilization success

Homeless Encampment Protocol for Cleanup Operations

LA County conducts cleanups in specific geographies (County property, County roads, and County-maintained Flood Control Districts) using a 'Homeless Encampment Protocol'. The Protocol defines the steps, timeline, and roles between CEO-HI, the Department of Public Works (DPW), the Los Angeles Sheriff's Department (LASD), and the Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority (LAHSA). The LAHSA and LASD Homeless Outreach Services Team (HOST) are explicitly a services-led co-response model. The Protocol starts with the submission of a request into HEARS; followed by a site assessment of households and dwellings; outreach and engagement to those unsheltered households; and finally an operation that combines offering services and housing, with the removal of abandoned property and debris.

The partners participating in following the Protocol conduct two types of clean-ups: **non-displacement**, where dwellings are not removed, and **full-displacement** cleanups, where all belongings and debris are removed. That determination is based

on a number of factors, informed by the assessment. When DPW initially assesses a site, it is to ascertain the amount of debris, if it poses health or safety hazards, and an estimated population of the encampment. These factors also determine the expected duration of the operation, and how it can fit into a packed schedule.

Non-Displacement Cleanups

While they follow the same process, non-displacement cleanups only remove voluntarily relinquished belongings and unclaimed trash or debris. These clean-ups are important to mitigate the health risks associated with trash pile-up, which is a concern to the residents of the encampments as well as neighbors and business owners. The HOST teams provide resources and referrals to people in the encampments before the clean-up occurs, and always record consent for the forfeiture of personal property to ensure LA County is protecting the constitutionally-protected rights of impacted individuals..

Full Encampment Cleanups

Full encampment clean-ups, also known as displacement operations, occur when people residing in the area cannot stay there for safety reasons, and any belongings remaining will be removed by DPW. However, even with these clean-ups, the focus is on providing housing and services, and voluntary relinquishing of belongings. Because of the greater impact on clients, it is important to pair full clean-ups with more housing resources.

Encampment Resolutions

Pathway Home

Encampment Resolution differs from County Protocols because of the intentional pairing of specific housing resources, aligned with the CEO-HI's Strategies. LA County conducts its own encampment resolution program, **Pathway Home**, which has the explicit goals of resolving unsheltered homelessness and attaining stable housing for participants. Pathway Home funds three component steps of this journey for clients: interim housing, to provide immediate stability; housing navigation, for unit search and application support; and time-limited subsidies, to support the transition into stable housing.

Inside Safe

LA County also supports other Encampment Resolution programs, most notably the **City of Los Angeles' Inside Safe program**. Support is offered at each phase of their operation. CEO-HI acts throughout as the information pivot, distributing the operation Action Plan to all other involved County Departments, and providing a staff member day-of to act as a liaison. CEO-HI is also responsible for ensuring that relevant County Departments, and County-funded assets, understand their roles and are present as requested by the Mayor's Office. When an Inside Safe Operation falls partially or fully within a County right of way, CEO-HI coordinates with County

Departments [DPW, Department of Mental Health (DMH), LASD] to address our portion of the encampment. These supports are expanded upon in 'Protocol for Coordinating County Services for Inside Safe' in the Appendix.

Service Connection Events

In support of the various encampment resolution programs countywide, LA County has piloted and implemented a Service Connection Day model for following people experiencing homelessness (PEH) as they come indoors. The goal of the program is to further stabilize and ensure continuity of services as people settle into their new location. Additionally, it is an opportunity to get people document-ready so they can be connected to permanent housing resources.

Specifically, when an encampment resolution operation is collaboratively planned, the County mobilizes various departments to activate a day of resource navigation at the site where PEH are newly housed. This usually takes place at the site 3-4 weeks after move-in day to let people acclimate to their new location and to give the interim housing provider ample time to develop an interest list for services from their new residents. This is currently facilitated by CEO-HI staff with robust collaboration across County Departments and non-County agencies.

Additional Programs

There are other large-scale programs LA County supports that are bringing clients inside from the region's largest encampment – Skid Row., The **Every Woman Housed** (EWH) program serves women, families, and gender-diverse individuals in Skid Row. EWH provides outreach, access to safe interim housing, and comprehensive services to support long-term permanent housing. The program began ramping up in September 2021. In April 2023, LAHSA was awarded \$15 million through the State Encampment Resolution Grant to help bolster the program, and the County allocated \$10M in Measure H funding. Since the program launched, 485 participants have exited to permanent housing.

Second, the year after the EWH ERF Grant was awarded, the Department of Health Services (DHS) received an additional \$60 million for the **Skid Row Action Plan (SRAP)**, which got paired with \$20M in Measure H funding. SRAP is a collaborative and comprehensive approach that invites all Skid Row stakeholders, including residents, to design the implementation of additional interim and permanent housing, health services, and other supports.

Roles and Responsibilities in Encampment Resolution

Chief Executive Office - Homeless Initiative (CEO-HI) – the central coordinating body for homelessness in the County. Provides high-level vision, strategy and direction of encampment resolution efforts; leads and/or coordinates County encampment resolution operations (e.g., Pathway Home); organizes Service Connection Events with partners; collaborates with LASHA and DHS on supporting

and monitoring program performance in a funded portfolio of interim housing, housing navigation and time-limited subsidy programs.

Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority (LAHSA) – Coordinates street outreach efforts across agencies and departments for each operation; conducts street outreach at encampments, including alongside LASD HOST Deputies (see LASD); completes program enrollments and data validation during operations; and provides programmatic and monitoring support to interim housing programs contracted under their portfolio.

Department of Health Services (DHS) – Directs participation of DHS-funded MDTs in outreach and supports with mobile medical clinic deployment; participates in Service Connection Events; provides programmatic and monitoring support to interim housing programs contracted under their portfolio.

Department of Mental Health (DMH) – Participates in outreach, particularly supporting highly vulnerable clients, through Homeless Outreach and Mobile Engagement (HOME) staff; participates in Service Connection Events; supports clients at interim housing with the recently established Interim Housing Outreach Program (IHOP).

Department of Public Works (DPW) – Assesses locations for hazards and provides operation leadership on property and debris removal; supports logistical aspects of encampment resolution operations.

Los Angeles Sheriff's Department (LASD) – Provides operation leadership on safety; records consent if operation is following LA County Encampment Protocol; conducts outreach through HOST Deputies alongside LAHSA HOST outreach workers.

Homeless Service Providers / Community-based Organizations (CBOs) – Participate in street outreach at encampments scheduled for resolution on invitational basis; contracted to provide interim housing, housing navigation and time-limited subsidy program services to Pathway Home participants.

Department of Animal Care & Control (DACC)– Provides care and shelter for stray or abandoned animals; provides information and services to households with animals, including both pets and service animals.

Motel Owners – Provide safe, clean, and adequate temporary housing to program participants for operations where motels are used as the interim housing site.

Local Jurisdiction Partners – Prioritize locations based on evidence-based criteria; allow encampments to temporarily 'settle' to avoid displacing potential participants immediately prior to operations; communicate appropriate information about encampment resolution operations with local departments, residents and businesses to ensure situational awareness; coordinate with all jurisdictions and stakeholders to follow the appropriate local protocols for personal property and encampment resolution.

Guidance for Local Jurisdictions

We have found it beneficial to have a consistent and shared definition of an encampment as a common reference with partners. The County's definition of an encampment is five or more structures, including tents, makeshift shelters, and vehicles. Despite using this working definition, our experience with Pathway Home has shown that other modalities of unsheltered homelessness can be resolved through encampment resolution efforts. For example, hotspots where people experiencing homelessness congregate during the day, but disperse to other locations to sleep overnight, can also benefit from similar operations and housing resources.

Values

LA County further grounds its encampment resolution work, specifically Pathway Home, in six values, to ensure a common foundation for partners. These values are **Unity of Effort; Housing Focus; Racial Equity; Trauma Informed; Consistency; and Flexibility**. We have found that defined values support collaborative decision-making processes and promote transparency. The values offer an anchoring point for the difficult conversations or choices that arise in encampment resolution work.

Partners

Common definitions and values support productive and open partner relationships. Two of the most vital relationships for successful encampment resolutions are with **property owners/managers and service providers**.

LA County uses a contracted real estate broker to identify **motels** interested in partnering with the County on encampment resolution and supportive housing development. One important consideration for motel partnerships is that service providers already rely on motels to help unsheltered households quickly. We are aware that motel acquisition can displace people and deny providers future access to emergency voucher. To mitigate this, we support displaced persons with their exit plan and share motel owner contact information so that providers can establish relationships with motels that aren't appropriate for or interested in partnering with Pathway Home.

Service providers are identified by their capacity and qualifications to do the work of stabilizing formerly unsheltered people into interim and permanent housing. Both LASHA and DHS maintain a list of organizations qualified to do the component parts of Pathway Home – interim housing, housing navigation, and time-limited subsidies. Provider relationships are maintained by ensuring shared and achievable objectives and expectations, transparent communications, and a supportive approach.

Phases

CEO-HI defines Encampment Resolution into distinct phases, to better organize activities into discrete time windows, with specific partner involvement articulated at each phase. These phases are:

1. **Planning** – preparation of necessary information, personnel and resources to align with forecasted operational needs;
2. **Response** – operationalization of the encampment resolution, beginning with the deployment of personnel and assets and concluding with all placements attained;
3. **Stabilization** – provision of housing-focused supports to formerly unsheltered residents, including wraparound services focused on health and social supports; and
4. **Mitigation** – implementation of complementary strategies to prevent recurrences of unsheltered homelessness at the location(s) where the encampment resolution occurred.

Guidance for the Planning Phase

The Planning phase should start with a **site assessment**, to determine whether the operational needs align with interim housing bed capacity. For Pathway Home, sites are selected based on an intersection of the following criteria:

- Prioritization by Board offices and local jurisdiction leadership,
- Historic, current, or projected needs based on data from the PIT Count, HMIS, and HEARS
- Community equity data using the geospatial analysis from the LA County CEO Anti-racism, Diversity, and Inclusion Initiative (ARDI)

Conducting the assessment first ensures that the resources and partners involved in the operation are aligned with the needs of the encampment residents. The assessment, as implemented in HEARS, includes a description of the items seen within the encampment (both belongings and debris), the number of individuals and households, and potential health and safety risks. The outreach assessment is also an opportunity for outreach partners to start a single, **unified by-name List (BNL)**.

A BNL is an integral tool for understanding encampments as communities of people with unique histories and service needs. For encampment resolution operations, BNLs are populated by outreach teams who can verify location and service history of clients. The BNL is limited to a number of 'slots' equal to the number of beds or rooms available for the operation, to avoid overpromising resources. A BNL also includes demographic information and case history, so that we plan appropriately for the individuals coming inside.

Operational planning requires **consistent communication**. CEO-HI maintains a brief, daily meeting with essential encampment resolution partners to share updates, address questions and concerns, and fine-tune our plan. Each operation also includes a **kick-off, dry-run, and final-run** with site-specific partners, to explain

what Pathway Home entails, review the flow for the day, and walk through each step of the operation. These meetings are limited to key operational partners to ensure critical information such as date and time, encampment location, and staging area is held on a need-to-know basis.

Confidentiality helps ensure that only clients who've received messaging, as detailed in an **Encampment Resolution Messaging Guide for Outreach**, are present, and the housing resources needed do not exceed those attained for the operation. The Messaging Guide is a shared document with LAHSA's Unsheltered Strategies team which delineates how information is shared at each stage of the operation. Messaging discipline is critical to avoid overpromising and underdelivering, which negatively impacts rapport. Messaging discipline also helps provide consistent information so people can give informed consent to participate in Pathway Home.

Guidance for the Response Phase

The Response phase is the operation itself, starting with setting up a command post and staging area, and concluding with the final intakes at the interim housing site. These operations are logistically complicated, and their success is derived from fully using the Planning phase, adhering to the unified event command structure and standard operating procedures, and trusting our partners to perform their assigned roles.

These operational roles are defined by a **unified command structure**, akin to those used in emergency management, which is shared with partners as part of the **Encampment Resolution Action Plan (ERAP)**. The command structure ensures involved departments and partners follow a common set of objectives and activities, while still retaining authority and responsibility for their personnel and resources. Importantly, the command structure involves key team members both at the encampment and at the interim housing site, to guarantee the flow of information and a smooth transition for encampment residents.

Most encampments will have **animals**, including emotional support animals, pets, and strays. LA County's DACC is a vital partner.

Operations focused on **vehicular-dwellings** should have additional procedures in place for determining vehicle ownership and facilitating the safe relinquishing, towing, storage, and potential dismantling of the vehicles depending on their condition. Pumper and tow trucks are important resources to arrange and should have a designated team member as point of contact in the command structure.

Guidance for the Stabilization Phase

The stabilization phase is a partnership between the service providers offering the interim housing, housing navigation, and time-limited subsidies, as well as County Departments and other entities that can offer wraparound supports towards income, health and benefits enrollments, and other client needs. The **interim housing providers** for Pathway Home have a specific Scope of Work that details expectations for client engagement from intake through move-in, as well as site

expectations for meal provision and on-site security. This Scope ensures consistency, values alignment, and access to supportive services ranging from basic needs to higher-level interventions, such as behavioral health service connection and harm reduction.

There are two specific practices that support stabilization. First, CEO-HI coordinates **Service Connection Events** at each motel-based interim housing site within three weeks of the operation. The event brings together over a dozen stakeholders, including government agencies and community-based organizations, to provide essential services. The event is an opportunity for participants to get document-ready so they can be connected to permanent housing resources. Some partner agencies who attend the Service Connection Events are Department of Animal Care and Control, Department of Health Services Mobile Clinic, Department of Mental Health, Department of Motor Vehicles, Department of Public Social Services, L.A. Care, and Metro.

Second, at County-contracted and County-funded interim housing sites, regular **case conferencing sessions** with the service provider case managers help advance the housing and service plans for each resident and troubleshoot any barriers to housing. This case conferencing process creates focused attention on households most likely to stall in the rehousing system and also facilitates connections to city and county departments, which may provide easier access to benefits, employment resources, or health services. This additional layer of support ensures that clients receive a comprehensive range of assistance, optimizing their stability and success in securing permanent housing.

Guidance for the Mitigation Phase

Mitigation is a concurrent phase with stabilization. The County's primary mitigation strategy is to help encampment residents attain permanent housing and prevent them from returning to unsheltered homelessness. Additional mitigation strategies depend on the physical characteristics of the encampment site; those characteristics determine the feasibility of preventative elements like signage and fencing, and access for ongoing outreach presence. In general, effective mitigation combines housing-focused solutions with debris removal, site cleaning, site upgrades, and ongoing outreach and patrol.

One additional consideration for mitigation is the activation of the space to ensure it is used by the community. CEO-HI has considered the use of public art, particularly murals, leveraging a solicitation for an Art Consultant to work with community members on art installations. Other activation strategies can involve engagement with local businesses and property owners. Several Pathway Home locations now have food trucks parked where dilapidated RVs were once located.

CEO-HI shares the **outcomes** of each completed operation, as well as the program overall, so that the impact and efficacy is publicly available. While most information and media is available on the Pathway Home [webpage](#), which includes a Data

Dashboard, there are also fact sheets for each operation that show the results of the process outlined above. Sharing both quantitative results and qualitative feedback leads to continual improvement, and trust in the effectiveness of this collaborative work.