

ENCAMPMENT SERVICES TEAM FAQ

What are encampments?

Homeless encampments take a variety of forms, including groups living under freeway overpasses, sleeping in parks, living on sidewalks or in vehicles/RVs. Encampments include those living with nothing more than sleeping mats, within makeshift cardboard configurations, or in tents.

What is the Encampment Services Team (EST) and who is on this team?

The EST is a collaborative, inter-agency, multidisciplinary outreach team that engages individuals experiencing unsheltered homelessness where they are to develop trust, address immediate needs, and provide supportive linkages to interim shelter or permanent housing.

The EST staff directly working in encampments include:

- Mental Health Counselors
- Behavioral Health Peer Specialists
- Contracted Outreach Navigators

What is the goal of the EST?

The EST aims to 1) connect individuals to shelter, housing and supportive services and 2) support the County's broader efforts to reduce the health, sanitation, and safety issues associated with living unsheltered that affects all Sacramento residents.

What services will be provided to persons?

- Support with connecting to and entering shelter or permanent housing;
- Enrollment in public benefits (CalFresh, CalWorks, etc.);
- Referrals to CalAim or other healthcare plans and providers;
- Referrals for substance use treatment services;
- Referrals to mental health providers and services;
- Supporting the coordination of water delivery and sanitation services

How will sites be prioritized?

Encampments located in the unincorporated County are prioritized considering several factors, including: the size of the encampment; the percentage of highly vulnerable individuals in the encampment; the encampment's longevity; and any associated public health, safety or sanitation issues that impact all Sacramento residents, regardless of housed status.

Will encampments be closed?

The intent of the broader County encampment coordination effort is to reduce the number of encampments through sustained monitoring by County departments and ongoing engagement.

The County understands the community's frustration with the return of encampments; however, the County is working within the legal constraints that require adequate notice and due process prior to resolving encampments.

The key to supporting people on a pathway out of homelessness is through building a **strong and trusting relationship over time.**



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If there are services and shelter available, why do some people refuse them?

While everyone is different and reasons for rejecting shelter vary, it is not uncommon for some people to reject services. Outreach workers cannot force people to accept shelter or housing, however, they have many tools to help motivate and encourage people to move, the most important of which is **building a strong and trusting relationship**.

Individuals may choose to not go into shelter for a number of reasons including:

- Unwillingness/inability to go to shelter (reasons for this can range from previous bad experience, concern about losing a partner, pet or their possessions, perception of shelter as being a dirty place, history of incarceration, lack of reliable transportation, etc.)
- Current encampment location provides protection from natural elements
- Encampment provides a sense of community and safety
- Individual(s) feel a connection to the surrounding neighborhood
- Mental health condition may hinder them from accepting services

For more information, visit the Sacramento County Responding to Homelessness website at schs.saccounty.gov.

