

Sanctioned Homeless Encampments

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)



As the largest provider of social services in the county, Sacramento County offers an array of services aimed at helping individuals and families experiencing homelessness to regain health, income and permanent housing stability. The County has been, and will continue to be, committed to funding and providing services, mitigating neighborhood impacts and promoting smart strategies and coordination related to those experiencing homelessness with compassion and dignity.

The Board of Supervisors has significantly increased funding committed to expand outreach, shelter and housing services for people living unsheltered in encampments, in vehicles and along the American River Parkway through the American Rescue Act Plan funding as well as within the fiscal year budgets. Included in these commitments is funding to open and operate sanctioned encampment sites, also known as "safe stay communities," to help transition occupants of encampments into longer term shelter and permanent housing and to reduce the number of scattered encampments in the unincorporated County.

What is a sanctioned encampment?

A sanctioned encampment, also known as a "safe stay community," is a temporary shelter setting with lower-barrier entry for our unhoused community members to stay in a safer and more sanitary environment, without the risk of being arrested or cited. These areas are bound by code of conduct and good neighbor policies, and on-site sanitation and food services. Additionally, the County will concurrently be standing up an Encampment Services Team to provide occupants with deeper connections to County behavioral health services, connection to benefits like CalFresh, CalWorks, Medi-Cal, etc., linkages to longer-term shelters, and flexible funding to help support individuals' transition into permanent housing. Ultimately, these sites should be considered as stepping stones to stabilize and support individuals on a pathway to permanent housing.

Where is the County looking to site the safe stay communities?

The County is looking at properties throughout the unincorporated County that are approximately one acre (or more) in size, have access to infrastructure, are close to existing homeless encampments, are relatively close to public transportation lines and services, and that do not have obstructions to development (e.g. utility easement through property, excessive sloping terrain, etc.).

What are the benefits?

Stable housing that people can afford, with appropriate services and support is what ends homelessness. However, safe stay communities can provide us the opportunity to provide immediate safe and hygienic locations for our neighbors experiencing homelessness to live and access services. They also provide a consistent location for service providers and outreach workers to engage on a more regular basis with residents. Additionally, some of the broader community benefits include a reduction in trash and debris, the mitigation of environmental and health hazards, and the ability to restore land previously occupied by scattered encampment sites to its intended use.

How large will the safe stay communities be?

Each site will be scaled to reflect the size of the parcel, community needs, and to ensure appropriate services can be offered to the population.

What types of sleeping facilities (tents, tiny homes, etc.) will be used at the sites?

The safe stay communities are intended to be an interim solution between unsheltered homelessness and traditional shelter or housing. As compared to a traditionally constructed, permanent shelter, any built facilities at a safe stay site will be temporary as well. Some sites may accommodate safe parking where a household currently living in their vehicle can safely park their vehicle within the facility, and transition either directly from the vehicle into housing or into a shelter facility offered on site. For the shelter facilities built on site, the County is exploring a number of manufactured “sleeping cabin” products as a way to provide safety and dignity to the occupants and to ensure we can meet social distancing needs. Staff facilities, such as private offices for conducting case management sessions, will also be provided.

Will the safe stay sites provide on-site restrooms and showers?

Yes. The safe stay communities will provide on-site restrooms and showers using portable units, which will be regularly serviced to ensure proper sanitation.

Will the safe stay sites provide on-site debris collection and removal?

Yes. The safe stay communities will provide on-site trash receptacles that will be regularly serviced by a commercial waste management company. The on-site operator will be responsible for daily cleaning of the site and the immediate perimeter and ensuring that occupants pick up after themselves.

Will the sites be fenced?

Yes. The County has design staff who will be preparing site plans for each site that will include security fencing/gating to ensure that access in and out of the site can be supervised. The on-site operator will be responsible for monitoring the access points, and ensuring that only registered occupants, service staff, County staff, and emergency personnel have access.

How long will the safe stay communities be open?

The safe stay communities are intended to be an interim solution to addressing unsheltered homelessness in the County. The County will work with property owners and the surrounding community for each individual site; it is anticipated that initial occupancy of most sites will be 24 months, with extensions considered site by site.

Who will be operating the safe stay communities?

The County will contract with an experienced shelter operator(s) for daily operational responsibilities. That operator will be responsible for 24/7 operations, provision of food and other supplies, regular cleaning and maintenance of the site, safety and security services, managing entry and exit from the site, engaging with occupants and connecting them to other services (including behavioral health services), providing individualized case management and housing support services, and on-going data collection and reporting.

What kinds of services will be offered at the safe stay communities?

In addition to the day-to-day operational services described above, through the County’s new Encampment Service Teams, deeper connections to County behavioral health services will be available, connections to longer term shelters, and flexible funding to help support transition into permanent housing, as well as support connecting to benefits such as CalFresh, CalWorks, Medi-Cal, etc.

How will food be provided?

The on-site operator will be required to provide daily meals, snacks and water to all occupants. This could be through the provision of pre-packaged, non-perishable food and/or partnerships with food preparation services that cook meals off site and deliver them to the occupants.



Who will be staying at the safe stay communities and how is access managed?

Access to the sites is by referral only through the County Encampment Service Team. The Encampment Service Team works with outreach partners and community advocates to engage people experiencing homelessness in the surrounding community and invite them into the sanctioned encampment. There are no walk-up referrals to the site and currently the Safe Stay Communities are designed for adults only (no minor children).

Will people be allowed to bring items and pets?

Yes. In an effort to reduce barriers to people's ability/willingness to enter shelters, pets will be allowed on site and provisions for storage of personal belongings will be made, although efforts will be made to support people with de-cluttering as a way to prepare for movement into permanent housing. Pet policies will be established and enforced by the on-site operator that will include rules around restraining the animals, care and feeding, and cleaning up after them.

How long will people be allowed to stay at the safe stay communities?

The safe stay communities will have a goal of moving people out of the site(s) into other longer term shelter programs or housing as soon as possible. However, people will not be "kicked out" after a predetermined length of stay, so long as they are complying with rules and engaging with service team members.

What happens when people leave the safe stay communities, either on their own or if asked to leave by the operator?

The on-site operator will make every effort to engage occupants on-site and limit the necessity of leaving the site to meet daily needs by providing necessary services and supports on site. Service providers working with the occupants will support this by arranging transportation to appointments, to view housing, or for medical needs. Sites will have curfews after which (except in the case of a documented exception, such as employment) all occupants must be on site for the night.

If a person leaves on their own, the operator will be responsible for arranging transportation, either by taxi or by a shuttle. In the case when a person is asked to leave, it will only be in limited circumstances, and the operator will have an exit plan for that guest.

