

# HOMELESS STRATEGY OFFICE CITY OF AUSTIN

*PUBLIC SAFETY COMMISSION*

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# HOMELESS STRATEGY OFFICE

## *DEPARTMENT OVERVIEW*

The Homeless Strategy Office (HSO) collaborates with public agencies, community organizations, and individuals to make homelessness rare, brief, and nonrecurring.

### **Homeless Strategy Office Core Objectives**

1. Manage the City of Austin's homeless response resources.
2. Produce more shelter and housing options for people experiencing homelessness.
3. Coordinate cleanups and closures of encampments on public land.
4. Collaborate with research partners to incorporate best practices into services.
5. Communicate the City of Austin's efforts and initiatives regarding homelessness.
6. Broaden the base of financial support for local initiatives and organizations.



# HOMELESS STRATEGY OFFICE

## COLLABORATIONS WITH PUBLIC SAFETY AGENCIES

**Street Outreach:** Activities that meet the immediate needs of people living unsheltered.

**Public Space Management:** Activities that ensure public spaces are safe, accessible, and welcoming for all community members.

**Emergency Shelters:** Facilities that provide people experiencing homelessness with access to food, sleep, medical care, and safety.

\*Other HSO strategies include:

- Homeless Prevention
- Diversion/Rapid Exit
- Rapid Rehousing
- Permanent Supportive Housing



*HSO staff helping unhoused client move into shelter.*



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## *COLLABORATIONS WITH AUSTIN POLICE DEPARTMENT*

### Street Outreach

APD is part of the interagency Homeless Outreach Street Team (HOST), which aims to address peoples' needs using appropriate resources before they reach a state of crisis.



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### Public Space Management

HSO and APD coordinate homeless encampment cleanups and closures daily. Also, APD enforces "Keep Clear Sites" following Housing-Focused Encampment Assistance Link (HEAL) Initiatives.



### Emergency Shelters

HSO has beds at the Marshalling Yard Temporary Shelter designated for APD. During Cold Weather Shelter activations, APD transports clients to embarkation or directly to overnight shelters.



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## COLLABORATIONS WITH AUSTIN FIRE DEPARTMENT

### Street Outreach

To support AFD's fire prevention efforts, last year HSO and partners distributed more than 300 fire extinguishers to prevent the spread of fires.

### Emergency Shelters

HSO prioritizes some shelter beds for individuals residing in AFD-designated high wildfire risk areas.

### Public Space Management

Each week, AFD provides HSO with an update on homeless-related fire calls. HSO uses this information to plan outreach and engagement.

### Lagniappe

HSO and AFD participate on a task force that addresses squatting in vacant structures.



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## *COLLABORATIONS WITH EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES*

### Street Outreach

EMS is part of the interagency Homeless Outreach Street Team (HOST). Also, EMS and HSO collaborated to ensure unhoused individuals had Narcan for themselves and others during last year's opioid outbreak.



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### Emergency Shelters

HSO and EMS collaborate to provide shelter to individuals in need of safe accommodations. During Cold Weather Shelter activations, EMS transports clients to embarkation or directly to overnight shelters.



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# ENHANCING OUR EFFORTS

## *OPPORTUNITIES TO BUILD ON OUR SUCCESS*

### Additional Training

HSO is preparing training materials focused on best practices for street outreach and public space management. The materials will reinforce new policies regarding homeless encampment cleanups/closures.

### Leveraging Technology

HSO is revamping the Homeless Encampment Management Tool, an internal platform used by multiple City departments to more quickly report and track needs and services at encampments.

### Shelter, Respite, and Mental Health Beds

Adding more homeless shelter beds, medical respite beds, and mental health services will enhance HSO and public safety agencies' abilities to get individuals indoors and connected with vital services.

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