

TUOLUMNE COUNTY HOMELESSNESS COMMITTEE

REGULAR MEETING AGENDA

"The purpose of the Tuolumne County Homelessness Committee is to serve the County Board of Supervisors by advising on policy and practices related to services and programs that affect the County's residents who are currently or at risk of experiencing homelessness."

Date/Time: Thursday, July 11, 2024 @ 9:00 a.m.

Location: Tuolumne County Board Chambers, 2 S. Green Street, 4th Floor - Sonora, CA 95370

Email &/or U.S. Mail comments to: Michael Roberson at mroberson@co.tuolumne.ca.us or: CAO Office 2 S. Green St. Sonora CA 95370 no later than 8:00 AM on the morning of the meeting.

CHAIRPERSON

Supervisor David Goldemberg

DISTRICT REPRESENTATIVES

#1 Colette Such

#2 Shelley Muniz

#3 Dawn Lien

#4 Stephanie Foster

#5 Jeanette Lambert

OTHER MEMBERS

ATCAA

-Joe Bors

City of Sonora

-Andy Merrill

Chicken Ranch Rancheria of
Me-Wuk Indians of California

-LeeAnn Hatton

Tuolumne Band of Me-Wuk Indians

-Darla Merlin

Tuolumne County Business Council

-Tom Crosby

Local Service Providers

-Vacant

Lived Experience

-Jennifer Salazar

NON-VOTING ADVISORS

Tuolumne County Sheriff

Tuolumne County District Attorney

STAFF

Homeless Services Coordinator

-Michael Roberson

DSS Unhoused Unit Supervisor

-Robert Smith

I. CALL TO ORDER

II. ROLL CALL

[Michael Roberson/5 minutes]

- Introductions during roll call
- Confirm quorum requirements are met [Quorum = 7 members]

III. APPROVAL OF 6/13/24 MEETING MINUTES

[Committee Chair/Attachment/5 minutes]

Public Comment (limited to three minutes per person)

IV. ORAL COMMUNICATIONS

[Committee Chair/Community Members/15 minutes]

- Members of the public may be heard on any item **not** on the Committee's agenda. A person addressing the Committee will be limited to three minutes. Comments by members of the public on any item on the agenda will only be allowed during consideration of the item by the Committee.

V. TUOLUMNE COUNTY HOMELESS SERVICES STAFF REPORT

[Michael Roberson & HHSA Team Members/ Committee Members/30 minutes]

- Staff will report on Homeless Services priority projects and initiatives.

Public Comment (limited to three minutes per person)

VI. HOMELESS SERVICES PRIORITIES WORKGROUPS REPORTS

[Michael Roberson/Workgroup Members/20 minutes maximum]

- Landlord Education & Engagement Workgroup Report
[Tom Crosby, Michael Roberson]
- Community Toolkit on Homelessness Workgroup Report
[Michael Roberson]
- Life Skills Workgroup Report

[Sheriff's Office, ATCAA, Tuolumne Band of Me-Wuk Indians, Shelley Muniz, Social Services]

Public Comment (limited to three minutes per person)

VII. PRESENTATION & DISCUSSION ON PROPOSITION 47 GRANT

[Sheriff David Vasquez/Committee Members/15 minutes maximum]

- Sheriff Vasquez will present and lead discussion on Proposition 47 and related grant fund possibilities and programs.

Public Comment (limited to three minutes per person)

VIII. FUTURE MEETINGS

[Committee Chair/2 minutes maximum]

- Thursday, August 8, @ 9 a.m. – Board of Supervisors Conference Room
- Thursday, September 12, @ 9 a.m. – Board of Supervisors Conference Room
- Thursday, October 10, @ 9 a.m. – Board of Supervisors Conference Room

IX. ADJOURNMENT



Tuolumne County Homelessness Committee

Minutes of June 13, 2024, Meeting

DRAFT

<u>2024 TCHC Membership</u>	Apr 2023	May 2023	Jul 2023	Aug 2023	Oct 2023	Nov 2023	Dec 2023	Jan 2024	Feb 2024	Apr 2024	May 2024	June 2024
Supervisor David Goldemberg - Chair	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Colette Such, District 1 Rep.	✓	E	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	E	✓	✓	✓	✓
Shelley Muniz, District 2 Rep.	✓	✓	✓	✓	E	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	A
Dawn Lien, District 3 Rep.		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	E	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Stephanie Foster, District 4 Rep.	✓	✓	✓	✓	E	V	V	V	✓	✓	A	✓
Jeanette Lambert, District 5 Rep.	✓	✓	✓	✓	E	✓	✓	✓	A	A	✓	✓
ATCAA	✓	✓	✓	E	✓	✓	E	✓	✓	✓	✓	E
Andy Merrill, City of Sonora Rep.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	A	A
LeeAnn Hatton, Rep. Chicken Ranch Rancheria of Me-Wuk Indians of California	✓	E	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	A	✓	✓
Darla Merlin, Rep. Tuolumne Band of Me-Wuk Indians	✓	A	E	A	A	A	A	E	A	A	✓	✓
Thomas Crosby, Rep. Tuolumne County Business Council	✓	✓	✓	A	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Cathie Peacock, Interfaith	✓	✓	E	✓	✓	✓	E	✓	✓	E	E	V
Jennifer Salazar, Lived Experience	✓	✓	✓	A	✓	A	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
NON-VOTING ADVISORS REP.												
Tuolumne County Sheriff	E	✓	A	A	✓	✓	A			✓	✓	✓
Tuolumne County District Attorney's Office	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	E	A

Present = ✓ Absent = A Excused = E Vacant = V 13 Committee Members = 7 Quorum

<u>Tuolumne County Staff in Attendance</u>	<u>Guests in Attendance</u>
Michael Roberson, Homeless Services Coordinator Robert Smith, DSS Unhoused Unit Supervisor	

I. CALL TO ORDER

Supervisor Goldemberg called the meeting to order at 9:16 a.m.

II. ROLL CALL

Committee Members and staff introduced themselves. Michael Roberson confirmed a quorum was present.

III. APPROVAL OF 05/16/2024 MEETING MINUTES

Member Colette Such requested a grammatical correction of the name 1pileatatime.

Tom Crosby motioned to approve the minutes of the May 16, 2024, meeting. Colette Such seconded the motion.

There were no comments from the community.

The motion passed.

IV. ORAL COMMUNICATIONS

A member of the public shared concern about water availability for those in the encampment adjacent to the Tuolumne County Justice Center.

V. TUOLUMNE COUNTY HOMELESS SERVICES STAFF REPORT

Michael Roberson provided written reports for May 2024 related to his efforts as the Homeless Services coordinator for those months. Roberson provided a specific update on the Sanctioned Camping, the Navigation Center and his transition to Assistant Director of the newly formed General Services Agency.

Member LeeAnn Hatton suggested a “model campsite” be developed as an example for campers instead of having a move-out time for cleaning each week. Member Colette Such asked for clarification on how many people will be moved into the Navigation Center when it first opens and she suggested that the City of Sonora be considered as a part of the allocation for waste disposal under the pilot program that Solid Waste has initiated with 1pileatatime. Member Tom Crosby expressed emphasized that the leadership that the Homeless Services Coordinator had provided be sustained with the staff transition and under Annie Hockett’s leadership.

Committee member Stephanie Foster arrived at 9:32 a.m.

Committee member Merci Rust, representing Tuolumne Band of Me-Wuk Indians, arrived at 9:38 a.m.

Public comment included concerns about how the priority for law enforcement referrals at the Sanctioned Camping site will work, future budget for homeless services in light of County & State budget cuts, the solid waste partnerships with community-based organizations, and who is responsible for services if community-based organizations should stop providing their services.

VI. HOMELESS SERVICES PRIORITIES WORKGROUPS REPORTS

Landlord Education and Engagement: Tom Crosby & Michael Roberson reported out that they has a meeting with a local property manager and the president of the Tuolumne County Association of Realtors to discuss what steps could be taken to develop a process for homeowners/landlords to rent out individual rooms as a house-share agreement instead of renting the house to one person/family only. It was explained that the group is working to develop a type of resource packet for both landlords and renters.

Encampments Sanitation and Fire Abatement: Michael Roberson reported that Deborah Regan, Solid Waste Director, is working for approval to allow Compassion Outreach to dispose of trash picket up form public lands to be dumped without charge. Member Salazar reported that the manager of Wal-Mart has not been available to discuss his offer of garbage bags and fire extinguishers. Roberson stated that he would follow-up.

Life Skills: Michael Roberson reported that the work group met to discuss who should be added to the work group as contributors to the development of a resource list of services for the unhoused.

Committee members and members of the public asked question regarding the development of these programs.

VII. FORMATION OF LIFESKILLS WORKGRORUP

Undersheriff Neal Evans reported that an application for the Proposition 47 Diversion grant was submitted in collaboration with the District Attorney. The grant focusses on vocational programs for those who are justice involved but not incarcerated and will involve several agency within the Tuolumne County Government. Michael Roberson reported that the Homelessness Committee will be given opportunity as a community stakeholder group to interact with Sherriff David Vasquez at future Homelessness Committee meetings.

Members of the committee asked clarifying questions.

There were no public comments.

IX. FUTURE MEETINGS

Supervisor Goldemberg reviewed the schedule of future meetings and stated that there is a possibility of future meetings being relocated to the committee meeting room that is being developed in the Francisco building.

- Thursday, July 11, @ 9 a.m. – Board of Supervisors Conference Room
- Thursday, August 8, @ 9 a.m. – Board of Supervisors Conference Room
- Thursday, September 12, @ 9 a.m. – Board of Supervisors Conference Room

There were no public comments.

IX. ADJOURNMENT

Supervisor Goldemberg adjourned the meeting at 10:22 a.m.

May 2024 Monthly Report

Submitted by
Michael Roberson, Homeless Services Coordinator



The following is a status update of Homeless Services initiatives that have been directed and/or approved by the Tuolumne County Board of Supervisors. The report covers a time period from March 2022 to the present. Every initiative has been a collaborative effort from multiple County departments and staff members.



Represents an initiative that is completed and may be on-going.

Priority & Summary	Status
Homeless Management Information System A Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) is a local information technology system used to collect client-level data and data on the provision of housing and services to homeless individuals and families and persons at risk of homelessness	✓
Coordinated Entry The Coordinated Entry System (CES) is a Continuum of Care (CoC) established system-wide process to quickly and equitably coordinate the Housing & Urban Development (HUD) requirements of access, assessment, prioritization and referrals to housing and services for people experiencing or at imminent risk of homelessness.	✓
Medical Respite Housing Post-surgical rehabilitation housing for the unhoused who need medical procedures that are currently being denied because of their housing status and lack of safe and healthy housing to heal in. The Refuge Recovery in partnership with Healthnet and Anthem have recently opened a supportive housing recuperative care program.	✓
Distributive Housing Distributive housing is a model that Tuolumne County currently uses through services provided by HHSA staff. Homes designated for specific purposes and distributed around the County could be used for Veteran's, women, families, recovery, recuperation, or support to those with a mental health diagnosis. Currently, the county has housing programs in Sonora, Soulsbyville, Jamestown & Columbia.	✓
Homeless Services Data Dashboard Through collaboration of HHSA and GIS staff, a data dashboard has been developed to show referral information, supportive service for both transitional and permanent housing as well as other social service needs. The dashboard can be found at https://www.tuolumnecounty.ca.gov/1505/Homeless-Services-Virtual-Bulletin-Board .	✓

Homeless Services Virtual Bulletin Board A virtual bulletin board has been developed to offer the community information on local, state and nation-wide efforts to reduce homelessness as well as some information specific to Tuolumne County Homeless housing initiatives. The bulletin board can be found at https://www.tuolumnecounty.ca.gov/1505/Homeless-Services-Virtual-Bulletin-Board.	
Community Advisory Teams In neighborhoods where housing initiatives are being developed, advisory teams made up of members of that specific communities have been and are being developed to share updates, progress and problem-solve any type of issue that have arisen.	
Ordinances Two new ordinances (Critical Infrastructure and Clean & Clear) have been developed and enacted to better support law enforcement efforts to abate unsafe and unhealthy encampments.	
Volunteers Volunteers from the community have served at several housing initiatives locations by completing cleaning, organizing and minor repairs tasks. An email list has been created to easily recruit volunteers for future needs.	
Community-Based Organizations Tuolumne County Homeless Services continues to seek partnership with local service providers to reduce homelessness in Tuolumne County. To that end, regular participation in the Central Sierra Continuum of Care as members of the governance committee is a priority. Rapid Rehousing grant funds have been contracted with Amador Tuolumne Community Action Agency for administration through their programs. Support for funding through CalAIM initiatives for delivery of services for Refuge Recovery has been consistent. Collaboration with 1pileatatime is on-going.	
Faith-based Organizations Several faith-based organizations have contributed to the many volunteer opportunities to serve at the various housing initiatives as well as helped to kick off the "Sponsor-A-Room" program at the Navigation Center. Efforts to support and partner in homeless services in the community will continue.	
Homelessness Committee Staff supports the committee chair to create the agenda, post meeting notifications, agendas and final documents as well as support the membership. Several efforts to more greatly align the work of the group with what is expected of a policy advisory committee to the County Supervisors have been completed.	
Grants Management Staff effort and collaboration across most County departments is essential in applying for, managing and reporting on grants. In the last two years, Tuolumne County Homeless Services has been awarded approximately \$12 million in grants for housing and services through the Homeless Housing, Assistance and Prevention grants, Permanent Local Housing Allocation, Encampment Resolution Funds grant, Behavioral Health Bridge Housing grant, and Mental Health Services Act. Researching and applying for future grants is an on-going task	



Represents an initiative that is under development and in-progress.

Transitional Age Youth Housing Development and provision of supportive housing for Transitional Age Youth (TAY) ages 18-25 years old is under way by the Chicken Ranch Rancheria in Jamestown. They recently acquired a triplex and are seeking community service providers to bring services to program participants.	
Community Toolkit on Homelessness A community toolkit will address County policy and practice related to citizen rights, law enforcement efforts and homelessness as well as next steps for both businesses and private priority owners	
Navigation Center Navigation Centers provide intensive case management to connect people to the unique care and housing solutions they need. Clients receive personalized support to help address housing barriers such as lack of personal identity documents, employment opportunities, or histories of eviction. The Tuolumne County Navigation Center has a housing component which is temporary (up to six months) and low barrier with on-site case management, streamlined access to social services and medical care, and coordinated entry into pathways to permanent housing. The County purchased a 50-bed facility in July of 2023 and anticipates opening to services in July of 2024.	
Transitional Housing Transitional housing is temporary housing for up to two years and is offered with supportive services for individuals who need longer housing supports to support better long-term outcomes of self-sufficiency and permanent housing. Tuolumne County has purchased three homes for use as transitional housing that are currently in the architectural design and construction planning stage.	
Safe Parking/Sanctioned Camping A Safe Parking/Sanctioned Camping program is intended for adults who are using their vehicles or tents as housing. The Sanctioned Camping Program will provide an environment on County property where County and community-based service providers will make contact with campers to discuss eligibility and service options as a way to move into more stable housing. The site currently under development is located near the Tuolumne County Law & Justice Center and will include portable toilets, garbage service and potable water and will be regularly patrolled by staff from the Tuolumne County Sheriff's Department. Move-in is anticipated to be mid-June of 2024. This initiative will also support law enforcement efforts to restrict use of public lands for parking and camping by unhoused individuals consistent with the establishment of new County ordinances.	
Landlord Education & Engagement Private market landlords are critical partners in the work to help people quickly exit homelessness. Strong connections to landlords are even more important in high-cost, low-vacancy markets, where affordable housing options are limited and even those with a voucher may find themselves unable to locate a unit. A Homelessness Committee work group is seeking to engage landlords through collaboration with property management companies and the Tuolumne County Association of Realtors to encourage house share programs—a concept built on the principle of leasing rooms instead of a whole house to maximize bed capacity.	
Increase in Permanent Housing Increased capacity for permanent housing in Tuolumne County is paramount to solutions for homelessness. Homeless housing initiative include developing permanent supportive housing. Tuolumne County Community Development is also in collaboration with Stanislaus Regional Housing Authority to coordinate efforts for acquiring grant funds as well as creating partnerships	

with developers and other stakeholders that are attractational and supportive and that will yield an increase in permanent housing capacity. Recent updates to Title 17 address long-term needs and development of housing of all kinds.	
Strategy to Reduce Homelessness County staff across departments worked with an organization called ChangeWell to establish a continuum of housing that is service enriched in an effort to support those who want supportive services. This continuum includes outreach, interim housing, transitional housing, and permanent housing. County staff is mid-way through a second training round with ChangeWell to determine staffing needs and the necessary funding.	
Life Skills Training A Homelessness Committee work group is seeking to gather community partners to establish a resource list of services providers in Tuolumne County that offer services that would help develop skills necessary to be housed. These services may include the development of day labor programs, job boards, internships, health, education, and vocational training programs.	
Landlord Education & Engagement Private market landlords are critical partners in the work to help people quickly exit homelessness. Strong connections to landlords are even more important in high-cost, low-vacancy markets, where affordable housing options are limited and even those with a voucher may find themselves unable to locate a unit. Successful landlord partnerships are locally driven and involve ongoing engagement. No single approach is the answer, the unique needs and assets of each community must be considered. Partnership with Amador Tuolumne Community Action Agency (ATCAA), Stanislaus Regional Housing Authority, Tuolumne County Association of Realtors, local property managers and landlords are essential in this effort. Core components should include a housing locator, a housing manager, a centralized housing hotline, housing search assistance, risk mitigation funds for landlords, mediators, subsidies for flexible funds, education classes and landlord recruitment events.	
Sanitation & Fire Abatement in Encampments Compassion Outreach and 1PileataTlme are providing garbage pick-up service at encampments. For those camps that are on public land the Tuolumne County Solid Waste department is partnering to provide free garbage disposal through a County agreement with Cal-Sierra Waste Management. Future discussion about providing potable water and fire-extinguishers will take place as a part of the scope of work for the Homelessness Committee work group.	
Outreach County Social Services staff teams continue to be involved in outreach efforts and to connect the unhoused to eligible benefits and services. Involvement includes participation in encampment abatements and the City of Sonora HOST(Homeless Outreach Support Team) program.	
Bed Capacity Tuolumne County homeless housing bed capacity under development is 105 and is delineated as follows: Interim Housing (up to 6 months) =50 beds, Transitional Housing (up to 18 months)=18 beds, Permanent Supportive Housing (more than 18 months): 37 beds.	



Represents an initiative that will be developed at a future time.

House Share Program Development of matching system for available bedrooms in homes to connect homeowners and those in need of housing.	
Homelessness Prevention Identifying funding sources and program development to prevent homelessness for those who are vulnerable to homelessness.	



Represents updates to Homeless Services staffing and services

Homeless Services Coordinator As of June 3, 2024, Michael Roberson is serving in the staff capacity as the Assistant Director of the General Services Agency which oversees capital projects, procurement, Information Technology and Facilities Management. His homeless services related responsibilities will continue to be the oversight of the development of the interim, transitional and permanent homeless housing properties. He will continue in collaboration with HHSA to work on transitioning responsibilities for support of the Homelessness Committee and involvement in the Central Sierra Continuum of Care to HHSA. His responsibilities were not related to direct services.	
Homeless Services Direct services will continue to be the responsibility of HHSA under the leadership of Annie Hockett, Agency Director. Plans include the development of a Homeless Services division of Social Service to streamline services and better align staff with clients, available resources, and service delivery.	

June 2024 Monthly Report



*Progress and development of Homeless Services initiatives
Submitted by Michael Roberson, Coordinator*

Collaboration

- Various meetings with HHSA staff on The Navigation Center and Sanctioned Camping programs.
- Team planning meetings with the Roads crew for development of the Sanctioned Camping program.

Community Engagement

- Met with members of the Compassion Outreach team for input and discussion on encampment resolution efforts and the development of the Sanctioned Camping program.
- Meetings with both the Soulsbyville & Columbia Advisory Teams related to housing initiatives in those communities.

Grants

- Administration of Encampment Resolution Funds and the creation of reporting mechanisms through the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS)
- Participate in regular meetings/discussions on Homeless Housing, Assistance and Prevention Round-5 grant application
- Research and discuss with capital projects team grant funds and long term low-interest loans for Veteran's Housing

Homelessness Committee

- Support the Committee Chair, Supervisor David Goldemberg, with the development of the agenda, agenda postings and minutes and minutes postings,
- Lead work groups toward the development of various Homeless Services priority projects for presentation to the Homelessness Committee and the Board of Supervisors as needed.

Sanctioned Camping

- Organize work for site development
- Arrange portable toilets & cleaning service agreement
- Arrange garbage pick-up
- Work with community partners to clean up site
- Discuss services and program expectations with Sherri and HHSA Staff

Housing Acquisition & Development

- Onsite visits with contracted architectural firm for design and construction management services for transitional and permanent housing building renovations
- Start process for ADA parking lot work at the Navigation Center
- Completed HVAC work for Navigation Center



Community Toolkit on Homelessness

Homelessness is an extremely complex social problem that impacts the quality of life in our community. There are no easy solutions. Homeless people are members of our community and should be extended the same level of consideration as those who are housed. However, every private citizen, business and property owner deserves to live their lives free of the negative impacts of those living unhoused.

Homelessness is a significant barrier to success for many in Tuolumne County. Homelessness is a community problem and solutions to homelessness will come from the community. Many people in Tuolumne County have a desire to help—the list below is intended to support those who want to make a difference.

➤ **UNDERSTAND THAT THERE ARE MANY PATHS TO HOMELESSNESS AND THAT NOT EVERYONE EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS IS ADDICTED TO DRUGS AND ALCOHOL.**

Substance abuse can be both a cause and a result of homelessness, but a common stereotype of the homeless population is that they are all alcoholics or drug abusers. Substance abuse often arises after people lose their housing. And losing housing can come in a variety of ways.

- A costly car repair can lead someone to unemployment and ultimately eviction.
- A divorce can lead someone to being unsheltered.
- A medical emergency and lack of familial support can lead someone to homelessness.
- An unpaid utility bill can break a lease agreement and be a boot to the streets.

Most people will never know what it is like to try to survive without housing. Homeless persons and the people who assist them list the following as just some of the realities:

The constant search for temporary shelter

- Inadequate food & nutrition
- Shortage of appropriate clothing
- Sexual victimization
- Harassment and physical assault
- Inadequate medical services
- Negative self-esteem
- Social isolation
- Development of mental health and/or substance abuse problems
- Poor prospects for employment and appropriate permanent housing
- Harassment

➤ **GET CONNECTED WITH COMMUNITY SERVICE PROVIDERS AND FIGURE OUT HOW YOU CAN VOLUNTEER, DONATE GOODS, OR GIVE FINANCIAL SUPPORT.**

Who knows the facts, figures and people experiencing homelessness better than the organizations who are already serving the homeless community? There may be “behind the scenes” information that you are not aware of. Which aspect of homelessness speaks to you the most? Align yourself with an organization who tackles that specifically and be a part of a long-term change. Partner with organizations whose sole mission is to provide support services aimed at making homelessness rare, brief, and non-recurring.

Some of these agencies in Tuolumne County are:

- Amador Tuolumne Community Action Agency—<https://www.atcaa.org/>
- Center For A Non Violent Community—<https://nonviolentcommunity.org/>
- Central Sierra Continuum of Care—<https://www.centralsierracoc.org/>
- Give Someone a Chance—<https://www.givesomeoneachancetc.org/>
- Habitat for Humanity—<http://www.habitattuolumne.org/>
- Interfaith Community Social Services—<https://interfaithsonora.com/>
- Lighthouse Ministries—<http://newlifelighthouse.org/>
- Mother Lode Job Training—<https://www.mljt.org/>
- Nancy’s Hope—<https://www.nancyshope.org/>
- Refuge Recovery—<https://www.therefugeca.com>
- Resiliency Village—<https://resiliencyvillage.org/>
- Tuolumne County Health & Human Services Agency—<https://www.tuolumnecounty.ca.gov/219/Health-Human-Services>

➤ **DON’T AVOID EYE-CONTACT WHEN YOU ENCOUNTER A PERSON EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS BUT RATHER, SAY HELLO AND IF APPROPRIATE, INTRODUCE YOURSELF AND ENTER INTO CONVERSATION.**

Often, homelessness leads a person to experience chronic isolation. The long-term absence of social contact and loneliness morphs into a type of toxic stress which only leads to increased risk for unhealthy outlets. Most people experiencing homelessness are seen as “invisible” and avoided by the public. This type of social response takes a toll on mental health. No one deserves to be treated as if they are invisible. When appropriate, and possible, build relationship and rapport—just this little interaction will help them to feel “visible”. With so many individuals having a lack of community, or healthy community at that, your sincerity is invaluable.

➤ **DON’T EXPECT SOMEONE ELSE TO DO WHAT YOU CAN DO.**

We often assume that somebody will take action but more times than not, nobody does, so nothing gets done. Use your resources and privileges to strengthen your community by being solution driven. It’s important to look at what part you can play in ending homelessness.

- If you are a landlord, can you have forgiveness for eviction history and help someone secure housing?
- If you are a business owner, can you provide an opportunity for financial gain that can help someone out of homelessness?
- If you are a banker, can you offer forgiveness accounts so someone with poor credit history can open a bank account?

- If you are a community member, can you learn about your community and resources to help be an agent of change?

It takes a community to help the community.

➤ REFER YOUR HOMELESS NEIGHBORS TO TUOLUMNE COUNTY HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES AGENCY.

Tuolumne County Health & Human Services Agency has Integrated Case Workers who will help those who are homeless or vulnerable to homelessness to determine if they are eligible for public assistance benefits in the areas of Social Services, Behavioral Health, and Public Health. Health & Human Services will also provide support in connecting people to employment and related services. The Community Roots resource hotline can be reached at 209.533.5711.

➤ INVOLVE LAW ENFORCEMENT WHEN NECESSARY.

If you witness a dangerous situation or are in danger personally, call 911. If you need to contact law enforcement for something that is not an emergency call Sonoma Police Department (209.532.8143) for needs inside city limits or Tuolumne County Sheriff (209.533.5815) for needs outside city limits.

➤ GET INFORMED.

Housing & homelessness is complicated, and solutions are not easy. There are many resourcing agencies who have informative online content. Spend some time reading, watching, discussing, and considering how you can be an agent for social change. Start by connecting to some of the websites below.

- Hunger & Homelessness Awareness Week <https://hhweek.org/>
- Invisible People <https://invisiblepeople.tv/>
- National Association to End Homelessness— <https://endhomelessness.org/>
- National Coalition for the Homeless <https://nationalhomeless.org/>
- Urban Institute <https://www.urban.org/>
- Tuolumne County Homeless Services Virtual Bulletin Board
<https://www.tuolumnecounty.ca.gov/1505/Homeless-Services-Virtual-Bulletin-Board>
- Tuolumne County Homeless Services Data Dashboard <https://www.tuolumnecounty.ca.gov/1505/Homeless-Services-Virtual-Bulletin-Board>

➤ FOR BUSINESS & PROPERTY OWNERS.

If someone is being disruptive, deescalate the situation, if you are comfortable doing so. Politely ask unwanted persons to leave. Identify your personal boundaries and call the Sheriff to report illegal activity. If anyone is interfering with your ability to do business and will not leave, call the non-emergency number of the Sheriff Department to request assistance. If someone is threatening harm to themselves or others, acting violent or reckless, or appearing to be experiencing a crisis, ask them to leave clearly and politely and call 911.

Consider installing motion-sensitive security lights. Set up “no trespassing” and “no overnight camping” signs in line with county ordinance. Lock or turn off exterior power outlets. Install security cameras and signs indicating the area is under surveillance. Keep trash bins, storage areas, and gates locked. Immediately report unwanted occupation of privately-owned areas under your control. Keep the business areas clean to encourage others to respect the space. Report all suspicious activity to the Sheriff as it is occurring, regardless of whether it directly impacts your business, or not.

➤ WHAT TO AVOID.

Avoid offering food, goods, or money as it may encourage repeat requests, panhandling, and could potentially contribute to unhealthy lifestyles. There are local professional organizations that specialize in the charitable distribution of goods. Instead, offer a card or connection to local professional organizations to best help them. Do not allow anyone to camp or store belongings on your property for any amount of time because agreeing to this activity could establish certain rights and make evicting unwanted guests problematic.

➤ LAWS AND HOMELESSNESS.

• IS IT ILLEGAL TO LOITER?

State law prohibits loitering, prowling, or wandering upon private property, at any time, without visible or lawful business with the owner or occupant. For purposes of this law, “loiter” means “to delay or linger without a lawful purpose for being on the property and for the purpose of committing a crime as opportunity may be discovered.” (Cal. Pen. Code §647(h))

• WHAT DO I DO IF SOMEONE IS TRESPASSING ON MY PROPERTY?

Generally speaking, a trespass involves more than a person’s unauthorized entry onto the property of another. Under California criminal law, trespass also requires a specific intent to interfere with or damage the owner’s property or right to property; and interference with or actual damage to the property occurs. The most common ways that California’s criminal trespass laws are violated are the following: (1) entering onto another’s property to interfere with business; (2) entering onto another’s property with the intent to damage the property; (3) unlawfully occupying the property of another; (4) refusing to leave the property of another upon the owner’s request; or (5) refusing to leave a public building during the hours in which the building is regularly closed, after being asked to leave by a person employed there. (Cal. Pen. Code §602) There are two commonly recognized ways to protect yourself from trespass, by enclosing your property with a fence, or by posting “no trespassing” signs at regular intervals (3 per mile, along all exterior boundaries and at all roads and pathways entering the land). Additionally, law enforcement agencies often request a “Letter of Agency” or “Trespass Letter” from property owners. This letter allows them to act as the agent for the private property owner for the purpose of enforcing laws against a person found on the property without the owner’s consent or without lawful purpose. Contact your local law enforcement agency to ask about a Letter of Agency or Trespass Letter form.

If you see someone trespassing on your property, contact the Sheriff’s office immediately, but keep in mind that the Sheriff’s office may not be able to assist if the trespass elements mentioned above have not been met.

• WHAT DO I DO IF SOMEONE IS CAMPING ON MY PROPERTY?

Camping without the property owner’s permission can be considered a trespass, if the person enters and remains on your private property and refuses to leave upon your request. See above for information regarding trespass. What do I do with personal possessions that someone leaves behind on my property?

A private property owner does not generally owe a duty to maintain or safekeep personal property left by a trespasser. However, if you, as the private property owner, have allowed the person to live or remain on the property, you could be considered a “landlord,” in which case you must follow very specific steps before disposing of property that has been abandoned, including: (1) inventorying and storing the property in a safe location; (2) giving the tenant notice of the abandoned property and your intention to dispose of it if they do not claim the property. For more information about what is required for a tenant’s abandoned property, see Cal.

Code of Civil Proc. §§1983-1986. If a trespasser has left unwanted possessions on your property, it is your duty as the property owner to dispose of those items.

- **IS IT AGAINST THE LAW TO CAMP ON PUBLIC PROPERTY?**

Cities and Counties can adopt laws to restrict or prohibit camping on public property. Even with laws in place, however, enforcement of those No Camping laws is difficult due to recent case law, where courts have held that ordinances prohibiting camping and sleeping on public property are unconstitutional when there are a greater number of homeless individuals in a jurisdiction than the number of available shelter beds. The government cannot criminalize indigent, homeless people for sleeping outdoors on public property if there is no option of sleeping indoors. However, ordinances prohibiting camping during hours or in particular places (such as in public rights of way or near critical infrastructure) can be enforced. It is important to note, though, that even when these ordinances are enforced, if there is no shelter to offer the individual, then effectively that person will move to another public area.

- **IS IT LEGAL TO PANHANDLE IN TUOLUMNE COUNTY?**

Technically, no. Panhandling for gratuitous donations is protected under the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution. *Aggressive* panhandling, however, is illegal under California law. The California Penal Code defines aggressive panhandling under its Disorderly Conduct statute as follows: a person “who accosts other persons in any public place or in any place open to the public for the purpose of begging or soliciting alms.” Accosting a person is generally regarded as approaching and/or stopping somebody to speak to that person in an unreasonably insistent, threatening, intimidating or intrusive manner.

Merely requesting and/or receiving gratuitous (free) donations is not a violation of law and cannot form the basis for detention.

- **IS IT ILLEGAL FOR HOMELESS PEOPLE TO LITTER?**

Littering is illegal on public or private property in California. Anyone who violates this law is guilty of an infraction. (Cal. Pen. Code §374.4). Littering is the discarding, dropping or scattering of small quantities of waste matter ordinarily carried on or about the person (e.g., beverage containers, packaging, wrappers, wastepaper, newspapers, magazines) in any place not designated for proper disposal thereof. A littering conviction carries fines of \$250 up to \$3,000 and can include probation time.

- **IS PUBLIC INTOXICATION STILL ILLEGAL? WHAT ABOUT USING ILLEGAL SUBSTANCES?**

In most cases, the possession and use of narcotics, and the consumption of alcohol, in public, are unlawful and should be reported to law enforcement. (Cal. Pen. Code §647(f); Tuolumne County Ordinance Code, Chapter 9.12)

- **DOES TUOLUMNE COUNTY HAVE ANY LAWS OR ORDINANCES RELATED TO HOMELESSNESS?**

At the Board of Supervisors meeting on March 5th, 2024, the Board approved Clean & Clear Homeless Encampment and Critical Infrastructure ordinances. Included in this action was a resolution and a list from the County Administrator’s Office identifying critical infrastructure in Tuolumne County. Follow this link to that meeting and documents:

https://tuolumneco.granicus.com/player/clip/818?view_id=5&meta_id=110017&redirect=true.