

Police Homeless Outreach Programs

Homeless Strategic Outreach

Albuquerque, NM Police Department

The HSO is composed of police officers, health care outreach workers, job counselors from Goodwill Industries, and a psychiatrist. The team goes out for two hours at a time, three times a week to areas in the city with large concentrations of homeless people. The team discusses with the homeless to hopefully discover an effective means to help them. Another aspect of HSO is the Crisis Outreach and Support Team (COAST) which is a 24-hour on-call civilian staffed support of the APD.

(Homeless Court, Drug and Mental Health Courts, Family Advocacy Courts)

Homeless Evaluation Liaison Program (H.E.L.P.)

Reno, NV

H.E.L.P. was created to serve as an alternative to traditional policing methods. The overall goal of the program is to reunite homeless population with family and friends so that they have support to help them re-establish their lives. The program is stationed in the Greyhound Bus terminal where two police officers patrol the area. After intensive interviews, some are referred to local services such as shelters, rehabilitation programs, or job referrals.

The Reno Police Department implemented this program to assist homeless or potential homeless persons in reconnecting to family and or critical support system. H.E.L.P. recently received a grant to purchase bus tickets for individuals wanting a fresh start or wanting to return home. The goal of the program is not to send anyone in a present homeless situation to another community to suffer the same condition; it hopes to reconnect people with their support systems.

Washington DC Legal Clinic for the Homeless

Washington DC

They began training metropolitan police officers over a decade ago on issues of homelessness including issues on the causes of homelessness, the faces of homelessness, needs and resources of victims of homelessness, skills in dealing with the mentally ill, and the rights of homeless individuals. They also equip officers with a pamphlet titled "Know Your Rights" to give to homeless citizens.

Homeless Outreach Team (HOT)

Washington, DC

The team consists of one sergeant and six officers and select volunteers from the Second District with essential skills required for this area of work. The team was responsible for enforcing "quality-of-life" crimes and handling issues that dealt with the homeless population. These crimes include aggressive panhandling, drinking in public, possession of open containers of alcohol and urinating in public. Mental health workers and doctors provided additional training and resources for the HOT unit.

Police Homeless Outreach Team

Ft. Lauderdale, FL

Task Force For Ending Homelessness

The Police Homeless Outreach Team is composed of a police officer and a volunteer from the Broward Coalition for the Homeless who seek to build relationships and bonds with the homeless in hopes of informing the homeless of various resources and assistance that is available to help them become self-sufficient again. The volunteer is a formerly homeless person which allows the volunteer to identify with the struggles many face now but also to offer personal anecdotes. The police officer wears the uniform because it conveys authority and safety once the relationships are established. Also, the homeless were more receptive of this approach as opposed to the officer and volunteer without any visible identification.

In addition to these program, the Police Department hopes to break the “cycle of homelessness” once individuals are arrested for breaking crimes are discharged so they are not simply released to the streets again. When an individual is booked, police ask certain questions. If the police believe that the person is homeless, then they require him/her to fill out a homeless referral form which goes to the Broward County Social Service Outreach Team. The homeless are contacted by social workers with the goal of placement in appropriate social service upon release from jail.

Clearwater Homeless Intervention Project

Clearwater, FL

The CHIP program has a community policing substation which is housed in the shelter and which also serves as home to the Clearwater Police Department’s Downtown Bicycle Team. In line with Clearwater’s tradition of proactive community policing, officers on bicycles are patrolling the downtown area and getting to know the residents, business owners, and also the homeless population. The Bike Team is taking a very active role in referring clients to CHIP, as well as enforcing the "Rules of Conduct" at the shelter. The shelter provides homeless citizens with opportunities to become self sufficient as well as a day service that serves single individuals, giving them somewhere to stay during the day hours.

Homeless Assistance Collaborative

New Orleans, LA

This initiative began in the fall of 2004 to effectively handle homeless persons and to establish an alternative to arrest for minor offenses. They collaborate with UNITY to move homeless people into permanent housing. Officers are trained to call for a marked NOPD “mobile assistance unit” when approaching a homeless person. The unity helped homeless people with their immediate concerns and provided referrals and assistance to a shelter, hospital, or substance abuse program.

Homeless Liaison Program (H.L.P)

Santa Monica, CA

The H.L.P was established as a partnership between law enforcement and homeless service providers to focus attention on the law enforcement and assistance problems concerning the homeless. The program composed of six-officer unit aims to provide the homeless population with becoming self-sufficient again and improving the quality of life

for the residents, property, and business owners in the community. The officers are trained to handle non-emergency situations and linked with a variety of outreach services.

Homeless Outreach Psychiatric Evaluation Team (H.O.P.E.)

Pasadena, California

A partnership with the Pasadena Police Department and the Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health to provide those in need with mental health services and reducing the duties of patrol officers to arrest. Each team consists of a police officer and licensed clinician (officers may or may not be in uniform and teams respond to calls in unmarked vehicles). They provide referrals and services as part of a long-term approach to assist the homeless, preventing unnecessary incarceration or hospitalization of the homeless. The minimum training for H.O.P.E. officers includes 40 hours post “Crisis Intervention” training, 40 hours ‘Crisis Negotiation’ training, 8 hour post class on “Effective Enforcement Contacts with the Homeless or Mentally Ill,” “Drug and Alcohol Recognition’ class, and monthly, quarterly, and annual update training.

Operation Outreach

San Francisco, CA

Operation Outreach addresses the quality of life for homeless individuals. It consists of a team of 32 officers whose duties include contact homeless individuals and connecting them with people in the appropriate city social services as well as enforcing infractions and misdemeanors. The police officers work in partnership with several agencies to address the issue of homelessness in San Francisco.

Homeless Outreach Team (HOT)

San Diego, CA

The team was formed to help the city and county improve the services available to homeless individuals. The team has San Diego police officers, county Health and Human Services specialists, and psychiatric clinicians from the Psychiatric Emergency Response Team (PERT).

Operation Outreach

Los Angeles County (West Hollywood), CA

Operation Outreach is composed of social workers from West Hollywood Homeless Organization (WHHO), City Environmental Services staff, “shopping cart retrieval service,” and police deputies. The deputies are present to enforce the law and provide an authoritative presence however, if there is no crime then individuals are informed of outreach services by social workers (if desired, the deputy will escort the homeless individual to the shelter).

Community Outreach Officer

Laguna Beach, CA

The Laguna Beach Police Department is partnering with community services to find solutions to community problems including homelessness. The department has created the position of Community Outreach Officer in conjunction with the Laguna Beach City Council to directly respond to homeless-related issues in the community. The duties of

the officer include working with social service agencies in the area to help homeless individuals get help in shelters. The over-arching goals of the new position focus on improving the quality of life for everyone in the community.

Homeless Outreach and Assistance Program

Redding, CA

The Redding Police Department began this program in response to concern of a growing homeless population and a lack of services available to those individuals. The team consists of a doctor, nurse, psychologist, mental health case worker, and a services coordinator from the local Rescue Mission. The team reached out to people suffering from homelessness providing them with medical exams and treatment as well as psychological exams and treatment. The team also referred homeless individuals to services in the area to assist them and the team provided transportation to various appointments and to food and clothing warehouses.

Homeless Outreach Team

San Mateo, CA

HOT consists of members of the San Mateo County Human Services agency, San Mateo Police Department, and non-profit organizations. The team began under San Mateo initiative to rid the area of homelessness by 2015 by assisting homeless individuals secure long-term housing. The program focuses on housing first standard of assistance, under the notion that people are more likely to get clean and sober if they have steady shelter. HOT is also working to help people find supportive housing, such as shelters.

The Police-Homelessness Outreach Program

Ramsey County, Minnesota

The St. Paul Police Department and South Metro Human Services developed a liaison and a relationship through the P-HOP worker. The P-HOP worker and police officers work together to respond effectively to situations involving homeless persons. The P-HOP worker is stationed in a police sub-station to work closely with law enforcement to improve the outcomes for individuals with multiple police encounters. This collaboration involved intense training between South Metro Human Services and the police officers. The initiative helps to provide secure treatment and housing opportunities for individuals who are victims of chronic homelessness as well as to enhance police and community dialogue and awareness of homeless issues through “police-provider forums” and monthly breakfast meetings between police officers and other members of the criminal justice system. The team also diligently works with landlords to improve housing access. It has also served to improve the fields of communication between the police and the homeless.

Area A1 Homeless Task Force

Boston, Massachusetts

A team of Boston police officers meet with homeless advocates and service providers to determine productive and effective ways to work with the homeless. The task force works in collaboration with other organizations to find ways to decriminalize law enforcement interventions while building stronger foundational relationships with the homeless and

other homeless outreach organizations. The Homeless Task Force hopes to prevent death and injury to homeless people by referring them to valuable resources in the surrounding area.

Homeless Outreach Program

Denver, Colorado

The Denver Police Department District 6 are officers whose duties included working consistently with homeless issues. These officers also work with the Denver Outreach Collaborative Central Dispatch which consists of the Colorado Coalition for the Homeless and Denver's Road Home.

Homeless Outreach and Proactive Enforcement (H.O.P.E. Program)

Atlanta, GA

The program targeted towards the high levels of homeless individuals at the Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport. The officers assigned to the Airport precinct and selected to be H.O.P.E. program liaisons receive training through the crisis intervention training from licensed psychologists. The officers are equipped with ways to assist homeless people and are trained to become a referral system to various local social service agencies.

Rescue Mission

Nashville, TN

The Metro Police started this program to assist homeless people by helping homeless people get bus fares out of the city. Through the program homeless people and others stranded in the Nashville area are referred to the private sector which purchases the bus tickets. The goal of the program is not to rid Nashville of the homeless but to provide help to those in need. The program works in conjunction with the Nashville Downtown Partnership.

Homeless Project Officer

Fayetteville, NC

This officer is responsible for the identification and classification of homeless persons. The officer serves as a resource to homeless people in the area assisting them with identification, meals, shelters, and other basic necessities. In addition to these duties, the officer also has to initiate and maintain trespass agreements for vacant homes, lots and businesses after operating hours to reduce criminal activities in the area.

Homeless Outreach Partnership Enforcement (HOPE) Unit

Richmond, VA

The duties of this unit include policing, serving, and protecting the homeless population in the Richmond area. The unit consists of a sergeant, three officers, and City Department of Social Services social work specialist dedicated to homeless services. The unit patrols areas usually populated by homeless individuals and assisting these people by providing them with referrals for homeless services.

Street Outreach Program (STOP)

Birmingham, AL

This initiative is funded by HUD and provides two CDM social workers to work with the City Action Partnership, which is Birmingham's Business Improvement District.