

<p><b>Subject:</b></p> <p>Homeless Encampments, Hot Spots and Pop-ups Procedure</p>	<p><b>Applicable To:</b></p> <p>DHS Adult Services Staff; and DHS Outreach Providers</p>	<p><b>Effective Date:</b></p> <p>May 5, 2017</p>
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<p><b>Administered By:</b></p> <p>Adult Services Division</p>	<p><b>Approved By:</b></p> <p>Steven Banks, Commissioner/Administrator Human resources Administrator Department of Social Services</p>
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**I. PURPOSE**

The Department of Homeless Services (“DHS”) has developed an effective strategy to work with sister City agencies in addressing homeless encampments by focusing on accomplishing two goals: (1) providing street homeless individuals with access to social services, housing and assistance; and (2) dismantling of homeless encampment living spaces in a way that maximizes the prevention of rehabilitation. DHS’ abiding principle is to give priority to the needs of the individual client. Outreach teams work with street homeless clients to establish connections to more humane living conditions and appropriate social services. This procedure memorializes the strategy that has been developed.

**II. INTRODUCTION**

Historically, there have been several dozen homeless encampments and hotspots throughout New York City. The profile of these locations varies considerably. While the average encampment or hot spot will have 3-5 individuals, it is possible, although rare, for some to have as many as 15-20. Some locations are seasonal; others see homeless activity throughout the year. Some are situated in the heart of busy urban life and others are chosen for their seclusion. Individuals living in encampments may sleep on mattresses or cardboard while others may have more elaborate settings, complete with furniture and electricity accessed by tapping nearby power supplies. It is difficult to generalize what these areas look like, as many have their own unique dynamics, but what is abundantly clear is that no one should have to sleep outside in New York City.

### III. DEFINITIONS

- A. **Encampment** – an outdoor location with a visible structure where two or more individuals are gathered, often under bridges or in remote areas where groups can isolate.
- B. **Hotspot** – an outdoor location where two or more individuals are gathered without a structure. This may include parks or other popular areas where street homeless individuals convene.
- C. **Pop-up Location** – a pop-up location that appears quickly and is usually temporary. It includes some level of debris such as carts, cardboard, etc.

### IV. PROCESS for Encampment and Hotspot

DHS Street Outreach teams shall:

- A. **Systematically identify encampment/hotspots throughout the New York City** by means of homeless outreach surveillance, gathering information from sister agencies, 311 calls, community feedback, etc.
- B. Work with other City agencies to **identify property owner(s)** of the location of any encampments/hotspots, if possible, by engaging the property owner and by site visits conducted by the outreach workers.
- C. **Conduct a site visit at the location of an encampment/hotspot with all relevant partners**, including DHS and contracted outreach providers, New York Police Department (NYPD), The Department of Sanitation for New York (DSNY) and the property owner.
- D. **Establish a date and time when the encampment/hotspot cleanup will occur.** The timing will be determined in part by the outreach team’s assessment of how well they know the individuals at the location and how much time the team needs to engage the homeless individuals and work collaboratively with them towards placement into transitional housing and connection to services. The timing is also determined by the group’s assessment of the ways in which the location needs to be altered so that the homeless individuals will not continue to access it. In addition to cleanup of the encampment/hotspot, work is often done - such as fencing - to seal it off. The property owner will post “no trespassing” signs at the location to give the police some leverage in moving people from the location after it has been cleared.
- E. The **date chosen to cleanup the encampment/hotspot is set with sufficient time** to enable the outreach teams and NYPD to notify the homeless individuals in advance of the cleanup date and to begin an intensive process of working to convince the homeless individuals to accept housing. Outreach teams and police typically visit the location multiple times daily in advance of a cleanup to maximize opportunities to engage

clients towards accepting shelter/housing to ensure clients are aware of their options and can secure their belongings. Written notice will be provided by an outreach team prior to cleanup, Notice can be left at the location. At no time shall a Notice be left with client identifying information. (Attachment A)

- F.** On the day of the encampment/hotspot cleanup, the homeless outreach team arrives before the other New York City agency partners to notify clients and offer transportation to various placement options. DHS will have placement options available in the client's borough of preference to increase the likelihood that they will accept placement.
- G.** To the extent that any homeless individuals refuse placement, they will be asked to leave the site during the cleanup for safety reasons. They will be reminded that they should bring anything they deem valuable as well as paperwork and/or medicine. Redeemable bottles and cans may be eligible for vouchers furnished by outreach providers. (Attachment B)
- H.** Outreach Teams must document a summary of the encounter immediately following the operation. The teams must notify DHS via email and include all relevant facts as to: who participated; what actions were taken; where and when the cleanup took place; and, if there were any issues that arose. Client contacts are entered into the DHS CARES system weekly and monthly reports are submitted to DHS outlining the outreach activities for the month.
- I.** The local NYPD precinct completes post-visits to all locations to ensure they are still secured. If a client or debris is present during a post-visit, NYPD will contact DHS which will coordinate a subsequent visit with all relevant parties. This process should take no longer than 5-8 days unless the homeless outreach team requests more time to engage the client.
- J.** An encampment/hotspot will be categorized as closed once it remains clear for three full days following the cleanup.

#### **V. PROTOCOL for Homeless Pop-up Cleanup (Attachment C)**

#### **VI. FORMS USED**

Notice of Department of Homeless Services Cleanup (Attachment A)

Homeless Encampment Redemption Guidelines for Vouchers (Attachment B)

Homeless Pop-up Cleanup Protocol (Attachment C)

**Attachment A**

Notice of Department of Homeless Services Cleanup

## Attachment B

### Homeless Encampment Redemption Guidelines for Vouchers

<b>Number of Bottles</b>	<b>Voucher Value</b>
10-200	\$10.00
201-400	\$20.00
400-600	\$30.00
600-800	\$40.00
800-1000	\$50.00

## Attachment C

### 1. PROCESS for Homeless Pop-up Cleanup

**Pop-up** – a homeless pop-up location that appears quickly and is usually temporary. It includes some level of debris such as carts, cardboard, etc.

DHS Street Outreach receives reports of homeless pop-ups throughout the city of New York from various sources including, but not limited to: DSNY; NYPD; Parks; 311 calls; and, elected officials and community organizations. While encampments generally occur on private property, most pop-ups occur on public property.

When DSNY, NYPD, or Parks report a pop-up to DHS, and authorize outreach and a possible cleanup, DHS shall visit the pop-up to provide social services and assist in coordination of a cleanup, if determined necessary by the relevant enforcement agency.

If the reporting Agencies cannot agree on whether a cleanup is necessary after DHS' provision of outreach services, consultation with the NYC Law Department and/or City Hall may be required. In circumstances where the pop-up is not reported by DSNY, NYPD, or Parks, DHS shall consult with the Law Department and/or City Hall before taking action.

When a pop-up location is reported and a cleanup is authorized, DHS Outreach Teams shall:

- A. Work with Outreach providers to assess the pop-up site for client assessment, social service engagement, and cleanup.
- B. Conduct a site visit at the location of the pop-up by contracted outreach providers to assess whether homeless individuals are on site and what social services they can be offered. Outreach teams will begin notification process (verbal notice, social service offers, and assistance is accessing shelter) and encourage homeless individuals to access shelter.

If notification of the pop-up was made by Parks, DSNY, and/or NYPD, DHS will contact the reporting agency to provide information regarding the site visit including: 1) a recommended time frame to allow social service engagement; 2) a report, to the extent possible, whether the pop-up consists of items of value, personal effects, and/or debris; and 3) the existence of any bottles and cans or hazardous waste.

- C. Establish a date and time when the pop-up cleanup will occur, if necessary. The timing will be determined in part by the outreach team's assessment of how well they know the individuals at the location and how much time the team needs to engage the homeless individuals, however, the timing is quicker than for encampments. Pop-up cleanups and closures are *generally* completed within a week of being reported.

- D. Provide written notice of the cleanup date prior to cleanup; Notice can be left at the location if no one is present. At no time shall a Notice be left with client identifying information.
- E. On the day of the cleanup, notify clients at the pop-up and offer transportation to various placement options. DHS will have placement options available in the client's borough of preference to increase the likelihood that they will accept placement.
- F. To the extent that any homeless individuals refuse placement, ask them to leave the site during the cleanup for safety reasons. They will be reminded that they should bring anything they deem valuable as well as paperwork and/or medicine. Redeemable bottles and cans may be eligible for vouchers furnished by outreach providers.(Attachment 2)
  - 1. Individual(s) on Site at Pop-up Cleanup: Cleanup will occur after individual(s) gather their property and leave the area.
  - 2. No individual(s) at Pop-up Site: If there are no individuals on site at the time of the cleanup of an active pop-up, but outreach teams are aware individuals exist at the site, no cleanup is completed. Outreach Teams wait 15-20 minutes for individual(s) to return. If individual(s) returns, cleanup will proceed as per protocol. If individual(s) does not return and personal belongings are present, cleanup will proceed per protocol. Any debris will be discarded and all non-debris left on site will be vouchered as per Homeless Encampment Procedure protocol.
  - 3. Individual(s) on Site and Refuse to Leave: If individual(s) at the pop-up site refuse to leave, Outreach Teams will encourage individual(s) to leave and/or decrease the number of belongings they have so that a cleanup may be prevented. Outreach teams will photograph any items left by the individual(s) to be discarded. If an individual refuses to leave and is NOT a threat to himself or others or on private property, the individual will be allowed to remain. However, if the individual is determined to be a safety threat to himself or others, the appropriate removal procedures should be followed.
- G. Once the individual(s) gather their belongings, take pictures of any items remaining on site prior to cleanup. Please note that during an encampment cleanup, NYPD will take pictures prior to cleanup of the site.
- H. Document a summary of the encounter immediately following the operation. The teams must notify DHS via email and include all relevant facts as to: who participated; what actions were taken; where and when the cleanup took place; and, if there were any issues that arose. Client contacts are entered into the DHS CARES system weekly and monthly reports are submitted to DHS outlining the outreach activities for the month.
- I. A pop-up will be categorized as closed once it remains clear for three full days following the cleanup.

## **Addendum to DHS Procedure 17-400**

### **Homeless Encampments, Hot Spots and Pop-ups Procedure**

The Department of Homeless Services (DHS, or Agency) is no longer coordinating street outreach operations with the New York City Police Department (NYPD) as a matter of course. Regular operations of DHS and NYPD may bring both agencies into contact with each other, as appropriate, in situations where there is a concern for public safety.

Accordingly, **Sections IV C, D, E, and I** of the Homeless Encampments, Hot Spots and Pop-ups Procedure (Procedure Number 17-400), are revised as follows:

**Section IV C:** Conduct a site visit at the location of an encampment/hotspot with all relevant partners, including DHS and contracted outreach providers, The Department of Sanitation for New York (DSNY) and the property owner. New York Police Department (NYPD) will be engaged, as appropriate, in situations where a concern for public safety emerges during the initial or subsequent site visits.

**Section IV D:** Establish a date and time when the encampment/hotspot cleanup will occur. The timing will be determined in part by the outreach team's assessment of how well they know the individuals at the location and how much time the team needs to engage and work collaboratively with them towards placement into transitional housing and connection to services. The timing is also determined by the group's assessment of the ways in which the location needs to be altered. In addition to cleanup of the encampment/hotspot, work is often done - such as fencing - to seal it off. The property owner will post "no trespassing" signs at the location.

**Section IV E:** The date chosen for cleanup of the encampment/hotspot is set with sufficient time to enable the outreach teams to notify the occupants in advance of the cleanup date and to begin an intensive process of working to convince any occupants of the site to accept temporary housing such as shelter, safe havens, drop-ins or stabilization beds. Outreach teams typically visit the location of a cleanup to maximize opportunities to engage clients towards accepting temporary housing to ensure clients are aware of their options and can secure their belongings. In the instances that occupants are able to move to permanent housing (apartment, room, supportive housing), outreach teams may place occupants in temporary housing while preparing the

paperwork. The outreach team will provide written notice prior to cleanup. The notice can be left at the location. At no time shall a notice be left with client identifying information.

**Section IV I:** DHS and/or contracted outreach providers complete post-visits to all locations. If a client or debris is present during a post-visit, DHS will coordinate a subsequent visit with all relevant parties. This process should take no longer than 5-8 days unless the homeless outreach team requests more time to engage the client.

**Attachment C, Section 1G:** Once the individual(s) gather their belongings, take pictures of any items remaining on site prior to cleanup.