



**MEMO from...**



**February  
2025**

# **The Unsheltered Workgroup to the Mayor's Technical Working Group**

Oakland/Berkeley Alameda County CoC  
[www.everyonehome.org](http://www.everyonehome.org)



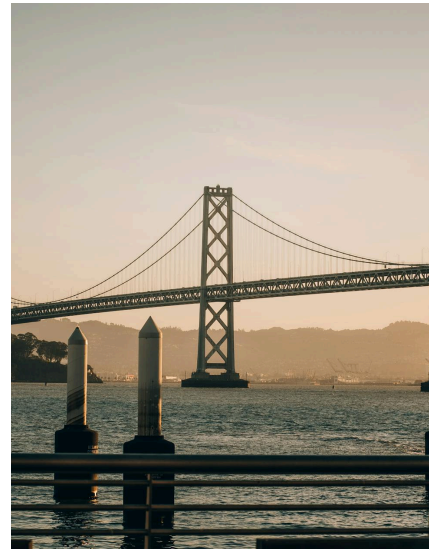
**EveryOneHome**



## Introduction

The Unsheltered Workgroup was established by the Oakland, Berkeley/Alameda County Continuum of Care's Outreach, Access, and Coordination (OAC) Committee on March 13th, 2024 to complete the following tasks:

- Review existing plans to address unsheltered homelessness and identify areas to improve and/or support those plans.
- Identify metrics for evaluating impact of the plans.
- Define CoC role in addressing unsheltered and/or encampments as special populations.



This workgroup is made of community volunteers recruited by EveryOne Home, the Oakland, Berkeley/Alameda County Continuum of Care. It has approximately 15 active members. These members come from People with Lived Experience, Racial Equity Committee members, Homeless Legal Services, Outreach providers, Shelter Providers, City of Oakland, City of Berkeley, City of Hayward and County Workers.

**The conversations focused heavily on defining the CoC role in addressing unsheltered populations. In the spirit of collaboration, The CoC Leadership Board provided the following direction:**

*“Motion to direct the unsheltered workgroup to work with the TWG to suggest edits to the TWG Encampment Prioritization Matrix.”*

**The goal of this collaboration is to incorporate the expertise of the Unsheltered Workgroup volunteers into the Encampment Prioritization Matrix developed by the Technical Working Group of City and County staff at the direction of the Alameda County Mayors' Conference Homeless Working Group. In addition, the work group hopes to increase community support for the Matrix, and overall strengthen Cities' ability to serve the encampment residents to be impacted by the Matrix.**

The purpose of this memo is to highlight the recommended edits to the Matrix as determined by the Unsheltered Workgroup. Comments and questions were grouped by topic and paired with their list of suggested recommendations and next steps directly below. In community with the Technical Working Group, the unsheltered Workgroup is working to provide feedback about the Matrix. **We center the most vulnerable in these approaches and recognize that if the tool must be adopted that all steps should be trauma informed.**

#### Topics Highlighted

- Purpose and Scope of the Matrix Document
- Encampments and Reducing their Risks
- Best Practices – Acknowledging Gaps in Homeless Response System
- Racial Equity and Inclusive Policy Practices
- People Centered Recommendations and Guidance
- Notices and Relocation Protocol
- Health and Safety
- Oversight and Accountability

The Unsheltered Workgroup also recommends the following addendums could be created to work in conjunction with the Encampment Prioritization Matrix. Drafting of these may be done by the CoC, Unsheltered Workgroup, Technical Working Group, or others as appropriate.

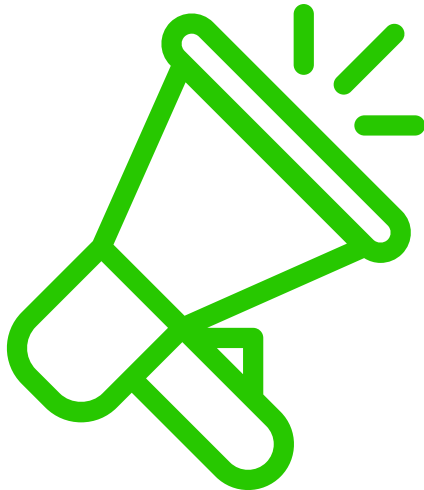
#### Addendum Ideas

- Factor Definitions
- Best Practices for Pre-Sweep Engagement with Encampments
  - Outreach Written Standards
  - Timelines of interventions to be done before sweep
- Updated Shelter Written Standards (reducing barriers to Shelter)

# Topic Highlighted for Review

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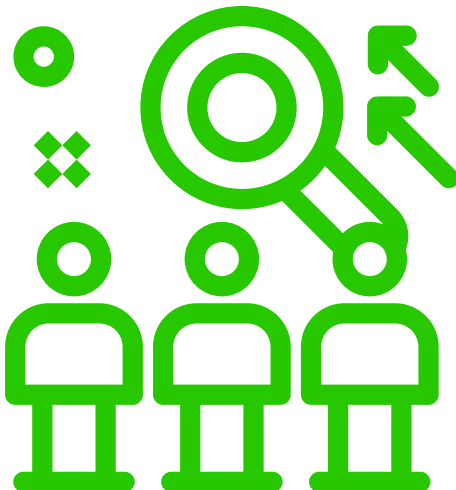
## Purpose and Scope of the Matrix Document



- **Comments/Concerns:**
  - The purpose seems too focused on municipalities. If alignment with CoC/services is the goal, this scope needs expansion, and municipalities must buy in.
  - Include what this document applies to (jurisdictions, public/private property, other authorities).
  - State what this Matrix document is not and acknowledge the lack of local resources to adequately address the problem.
- **Recommendations/Next Steps:**
  - Add a clear statement that the document is not a complete solution and recognizes resource limitations.
  - Expand the purpose to align with CoC and service providers, while requiring municipal agreement for broad implementation.
  - Define the scope, including jurisdictions, the types of property covered (public/private), and roles of non-governmental entities like CalTrans and Union Pacific (UP) in areas beyond typical city authority.

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## Encampments and Reducing their Risks



- **Comments/Concerns:**
  - How can high-risk encampments be supported to reduce closure risk?
  - Encampments provide mechanisms for survival and have positive aspects, such as fostering supportive relationships and improving residents' well-being.
  - Disruptions to encampments without considering these benefits can have negative impacts.
- **Recommendations/Next Step**
  - Develop strategies to reduce closure risk, such as assigning more resources and outreach to high-risk encampments and providing consistent engagement and services.
  - Include a section detailing the positive aspects of encampments and the potential harm caused by poorly planned disruptions.
  - Balance this with an explanation of the need for safety and order, ensuring a nuanced approach.

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## Best Practices - Acknowledging Gaps in Homeless Response system



- **Comments/Concerns**

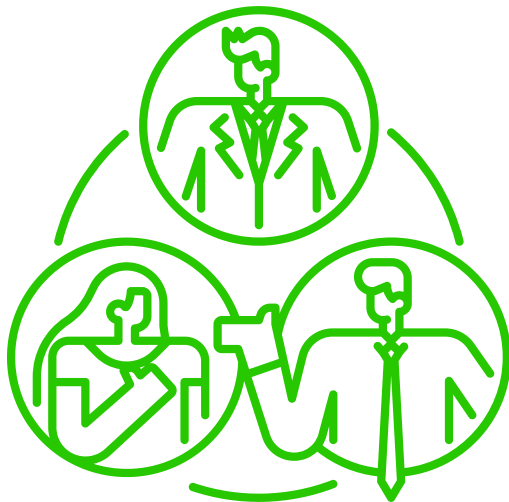
- Clarify the focus of best practices: are they for offering services, conducting clearings, or engaging with encampments to move people into housing?
- Consider pre-sweep engagement expectations, outreach standards, and timelines.
- Include details about preventing re-encampment.
- Some cities have “no camping” ordinances, and the Newsom Order recommends policies from both state and local levels.
- For high-priority cases, actions should not proceed unless sufficient offers of shelter or housing are available, with a set percentage of residents expected to accept these offers.
- Acknowledging that not everyone will accept shelter, what is the right way to handle those left?
- What minimum standards of resources must be offered before mandatory relocation? Can we reference UCSF Benioff Toolkit encampment resolution document and/or other published best practices?
- Private property guidelines (e.g., Caltrans) are hard to implement consistently.

- **Recommendations/Next Steps:**

- Add “No sweeps without sufficient resources” as a guiding principle within matrix document
- Define best practices for each stage: offering services, appropriate engagement, and preventing re-encampment.
- Add timelines and outreach standards, including CES assessments for all encampment residents and a pre-sweep engagement guide.
- Develop policies to establish sanctioned areas or safe parking to mitigate re-encampment risks. If an area has been designated a low sensitivity zone, there should not be any measures (i.e. anti-homeless architecture, painting curbs red) to prevent folks from living in said location.
- Allow displaced encampment residents to relocate to low to moderate sensitivity locations per the matrix.
- Add direct and indirect criminalization as an unacceptable practice in guiding principles.
- Collaborate with state agencies (i.e. CalTrans) and use this document to align local policies with state requirements.

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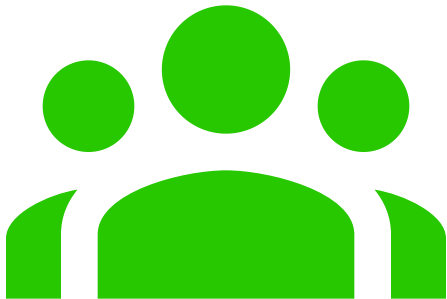
## Racial Equity and Inclusive Policy Practices



- **Comments/Concerns**
  - Racial equity isn't well-reflected in the policy. How will equitable triage look in practice?
  - Are vulnerable populations protected from harmful practices, and how do acceptance rates influence decisions?
  - Can policies like Oakland's equity analysis/assessment be used to track impacts of sweeps and avoid disparities?
  - Shelters often don't meet the diverse needs of individuals, as they must accommodate "people and their privacy as well as their pets, and possessions," and may not be suitable for those with chronic illnesses or compromised immunity. There is a need for more non-congregate settings.
  - It is important to clarify that offers of shelter are not equivalent to offers of housing, to prevent the misconception that homeless people prefer to remain homeless.
- **Recommendations/Next Steps:**
  - Center racial equity to ensure equitable triage and interventions.
  - Acknowledge gaps in resources and when possible allocate sufficient and appropriate resources, with offers tailored to populations (i.e. RV residents may need non-congregate shelter).
  - Acknowledge difficulty in coordination across local jurisdictions when encampment residents move around, or are displaced.
  - Track acceptance rates for congregate versus non-congregate offers and emphasize outreach to build trust and improve acceptance.

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## People Centered Recommendations and Guidance



- **Comments/Concerns**

- Policies should empower collaboration and include the voices of all stakeholders, especially People with Lived Experience.
- Did People with Lived Experience participate in developing the current draft? How can they be involved in refining it?
- Good Neighbor Guidelines place undue burden on encampment residents and require clear definitions, realistic expectations, and resource support.

- **Recommendations/Next Steps**

- Ensure People with Lived Experience participate in ongoing discussions and are engaged in drafting localized guidelines and feedback processes.
- Form Homeless Working Groups that include People with Lived Experience to ensure collaborative, inclusive policy development.
- Ensure “Good Neighbor Guidelines” are co-designed with local encampment residents to reflect their needs and priorities.
- Rename “Good Neighbor Guidelines” to avoid stigma, such as “Community Guidelines” or “Good Neighborhood Guidelines.”
- Ensure guidelines are clear, in plain language, and include resources like trash services.
- Collaborate with PWLE, residents, and businesses when drafting and revising these guidelines.
- Support policy to establish sanctioned sites and safe parking.
- Options available to those in encampments should include permanent housing, sanctioned sites, safe parking, etc.

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## Notices and Relocation Protocols



- **Comments/Concerns**

- Notices lack clarity and sufficient minimum timeframes, creating inconsistency.
- More information is needed about storage policies for belongings. Possessions must be stored adequately, and barriers to reclaiming them (e.g., cost, transportation) must be addressed.
- How you build trust and buy-in to the offers of resources

- **Recommendations/Next Steps**

- Consistently mention a minimum notice period (e.g., 4 weeks) for moderate to emergency levels of sensitivity and ensure notices are clear, in plain language, and posted in accessible locations.
- Develop possession storage policies, ensuring easy retrieval, possibly linked to HMIS for proactive reconnection.
- Develop vehicle (i.e. cars, RVs) relocation policies, ensuring easy retrieval, and providing resources to help keep the vehicle running for easy relocation. We need to acknowledge that some vehicles only need a battery to support individuals in moving them, which is a lower cost option than towing a vehicle.
- 'Sufficient' resources should be offered to those living in an area where a sweep is anticipated.
- Add a subsection to the Coordination and Deployment section outlining pre-sweep engagement expectations, including outreach components and ensuring that a CES assessment is conducted for everyone at the site.
- Support policies to increase resources and improve access to Coordinated Entry (CE) assessments for encampments, such as through coordination with mobile access point teams.

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## Health and Safety



- **Comments/Concerns**
  - Imminent health hazards may extend beyond environmental factors to include individual circumstances. For example, an encampment may have a high population of individuals with chronic health conditions, older population, or other vulnerabilities.
  - It is unclear what resources are provided to prevent and/or mitigate health hazards.
  - It is important to note that sweeps are harmful to all encampment residents. Some vulnerable populations (i.e. aging population, folks with disabilities, drug users and others, including those with multiple vulnerabilities) face greater harm from sweeps. In all cases, potential harm should be minimized through careful planning and resource management.
- **Recommendations/Next Steps**
  - Clearly define health hazards (e.g., rodent infestations, biohazards) and outline preventive measures and resources provided.
  - Reduce sweeps.
  - Identify high-risk individuals in encampment communities and ensure assessors are trained to identify vulnerabilities. Prepare resources to mitigate sweeps' impacts in the context of specific community compositions.

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## Oversight and Accountability



- **Comments/Concerns**
  - Who interprets factors in the matrix, and how is consistency ensured across jurisdictions?
  - How do we prevent cities from signing on but not following the guidelines?
  - Lack of oversight and accountability mechanisms to track the implementation and impact of the policy.
- **Recommendations/Next Steps**
  - Include transparency measures, such as regular reporting and a grievance process for impacted individuals.
  - Define factors explicitly to minimize interpretation disparities and provide oversight mechanisms, such as collaborative weekly meetings to coordinate resources.

# Factor Definitions

The Unsheltered Workgroup found a need to define many of the “factors” provided in the Matrix itself. To establish consistent utilization of the Matrix among Cities, it would be helpful to further define each factor to minimize ‘room for interpretation’ among the variety of staff who may be implementing the Matrix principles. The Unsheltered Workgroup suggests the Mayor’s Technical Working Group on Homelessness clearly define each specific factor as structured below:

Factors	Em.	High	Med	Low	Definition
<i>Public Health</i>					
Imminent health hazard		X			<i>Please define</i>
Active health crisis	X	X			<i>Please define for each level of sensitivity</i>
High percentage of occupants that meet vulnerable risk factors		X			<i>please define</i>
Rodent harborage/other vector conditions  <i>Note: also likely to be present in ‘Low’ perhaps say “Minimal Rodent harborage/other vector conditions” in the “Low” category - use language of degrees. Also perhaps not use the word ‘harborage’ which incorrectly implies residents want to keep the rodents. May also need an explanation as to why it changes categories when switching across sensitivities.</i>			X		<i>please define</i>

Factors	Em.	High	Med	Low	Definition
<b>Public Safety</b>					
History of violent criminal activity		X			please define
Preventing first responders from performing their essential functions			X		please define
Imminent fire hazards		X			please define
Proximity to objective dangers			X		please define
Impeding lawful business and government operations			X		please define
Interfering with construction or other permitted activity			X		please define
Damage to/interference with essential infrastructure			X		please define
Imminent unsafe structures		X			please define
Partial blocking sidewalks or impeding ADA access			X	X	please define for each level of sensitivity
Blocking Bike or traffic lanes	X	X			please define for each level of sensitivity
Imminent risk to life due to weather or disaster	X				please define
Obstruction of sidewalk access		X			please define
<b>Environmental Considerations</b>					
Minimal presence of waste/garbage/debris				X	please define
Excessive waste/garbage/debris			X		please define
Damage or risk to environmentally critical/protected areas or water quality			X		please define
Violating "Good Neighbor Guidelines" or "Encampment Condition Guidelines"			X		please define
Active draining into waterways		X			please define
Presence of toxic materials		X			please define
Imminent health or fire hazards necessitating summary abatement	X				please define
Significant harborage of rodents	X				please define
Confirmation of vector at the location infected with diseases of public health concerns	X				please define

# Best Practices for Pre-Sweep Engagement with Encampments

Applying the Matrix to encampment situations requires great sensitivity on the part of city workers, service providers, and advocates. To support service providers working with encampments prior to a sweep, the Unsheltered Workgroup has determined the need for a 'Best Practices' addendum to complement the Encampment Prioritization Matrix. This may include:

## Outreach Written Standards



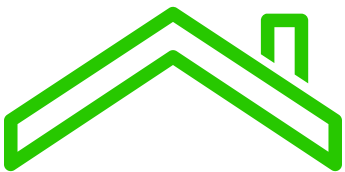
The Outreach Written Standards, for encampments, would emphasize building trust with encampment residents through consistent engagement and providing interim services like health care, sanitation, and low-barrier shelter options. Pre-sweep outreach should prioritize communication, tailored resources, and harm reduction, recognizing the supportive role encampments play for residents. These practices would align with outreach efforts by centering racial equity, incorporating input from people with lived experience, and ensuring services promote dignity and safety.

## Timelines of Interventions



An important component of the addendum would also be to list core actions that are mandatory steps to complete before conducting a sweep. In particular, critical Outreach steps could be given expected timing. This would summarize for providers and Cities a timeline of best practices for various interventions. The Unsheltered Workgroup suggests the Outreach, Access, and Coordination Committee create this document to support the community.

## Shelter Written Standards



The CoC should review and update the existing Shelter Written Standards. These standards must prioritize reducing barriers to entry and accommodating diverse needs like those of individuals with pets or possessions and offering non-congregate shelter options for those with health needs. By focusing on accessibility and tailoring services to the realities of unsheltered individuals, these standards will create a more equitable and effective approach to connecting people with shelter and resources.

The Unsheltered workgroup suggests the CoC Standards, Compliance, and Funding Committee lead this effort as their role and responsibilities highlight the development of written standards for the community. The Unsheltered workgroup and Outreach, Access, and Coordination Committee would provide support in completing this task.

## Conclusion

Collaboration between the CoC, the Technical Working Group, and the community at large is essential to align strategies, policies, and resources effectively. By working together on the Encampment Prioritization Matrix, strengthened by community-informed best practice, we can provide a set of interventions to help support encampment residents while reducing harm. This partnership ensures that interventions prioritize safety, dignity, and inclusivity while fostering trust among unsheltered populations. Through the development of the matrix and addendums, the CoC and Cities can create meaningful progress in supporting long-term stability for vulnerable individuals.