

Environmental and Health Services Department

Crisis Intervention Unit

**Therapeutic Strategy to Address Homeless
Encampments**

Presented to the
Neighborhood Quality of Life Committee
June 12, 2006

Purpose of the Briefing

- The purpose of this briefing is to update this committee on the new strategy designed to provide a therapeutic approach to addressing homeless encampments.

Definitions

- Encampment: A public or private place used by the homeless for sleeping
- Permanent Encampment: A place where the homeless sleep by erecting temporary or semi-permanent shelters such as camping tents, reinforced crates, and tarpaulin tents
- Situational Encampments: A temporary place where the homeless sleep or gather for socializing. Example: Hobo/Transient site, or a place where the mentally ill homeless sleep during the day to await evening shelter openings

Traditional Approach

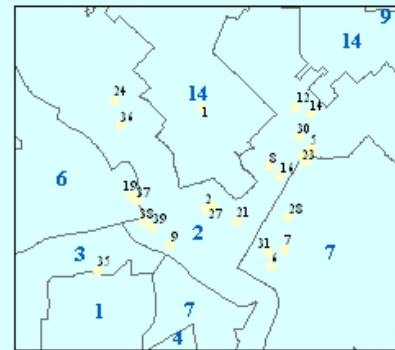
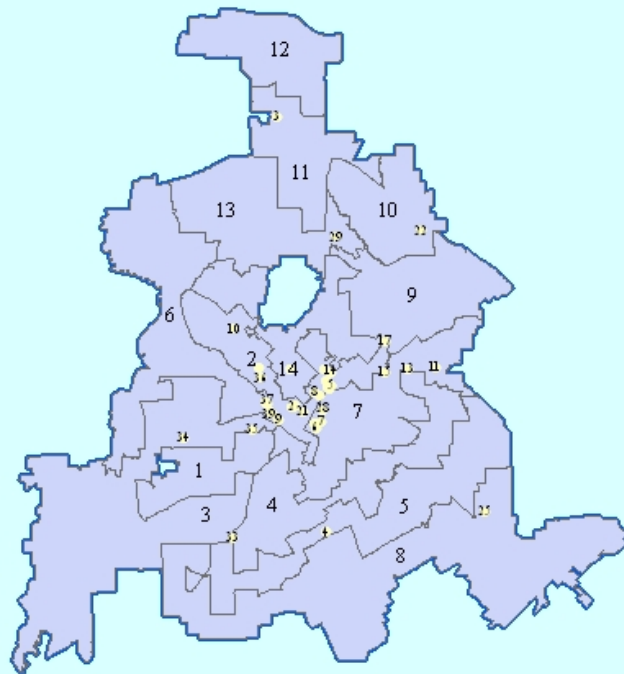
- Traditionally, the Dallas Police Department was responsible for the removal of homeless encampments by invoking the criminal justice system
- This approach included the incarceration of offenders regarding quality of life issues, such as sleeping/urinating in public and public intoxication
- The criminal justice approach to encampments creates the perception of criminalization of the homeless
- It has proven to be an ineffective method of identifying the needs of the homeless and reconnecting them back into society

Therapeutic Approach

- Consistent outreach and the introduction of services are key to engaging homeless people into treatment and case-management services
- Homeless outreach is the initial step to begin the process of reconnecting homeless people back into society

Profile of Encampments

- 80% of residents of encampments have diagnosable mental illnesses or suffer from acute addictive/co-occurring disorders
- A significant number of women living in encampments have been traumatized by physical and sexual assaults
- A majority of residents have been exposed to contagious/infectious diseases (HIV, STD, Tuberculosis, and Hepatitis)



Location	
1	2201 Allen St
2	1011 S Akard
3	6001 Alexis Dr
4	4836 Sunnyvale St
5	648 S Haskell Ave
6	1410 M L K Blvd
7	1901 M L K Blvd
8	1400 Chestnut
9	101 Cadiz
10	2500 Inwood Rd
11	3900 St Francis
12	552 Carroll
13	7701 Hunniout
14	4602 Reiger Rd
15	6801 Valley Glen
16	3001 Hickory
17	7808 Garland Rd
18	700 Exposition
19	106 Commerce St.
20	4001 Ash
21	1815 S. Envy
22	9701 Plano Rd
23	4008 Commerce St
24	1700 Oak Lawn Ave
25	353 S. St Augustine Dr.
26	1423 W. Griffin
27	1413 W. Griffin
28	2700 Clarence St.
29	7115 Greenville Ave.
30	101 N. Haskell Ave
31	2815 S. Envy St.
32	1500 R.L. Thornton
33	4148 Polk St
34	1050 N Westmoreland
35	1335 Stemmons
36	1501 Inspiration Dr
37	257 S Industrial
38	501 S Industrial
39	606 S Industrial

Homeless Encampments
 Council District

Homeless Encampment Areas By Council District June 2006

AmGIS 9 EHC Development Team
 Planning and Evaluation

Created in ArcGIS 9 using ArcMap
 June 8, 2006

Source: C:\a\gis\homeless\homeless_june_06.mxd
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May 18th Initiative

- At 7AM homeless outreach caseworkers from various mental health and substance abuse treatment agencies, lead by the Crisis Intervention Unit, addressed two large homeless encampments located under I-45 and Ferris and I-45 and Coombs Streets
- Caseworkers assessed and offered a wide range of services to homeless residents

After Action Report

- More than 100 homeless residents were found to be living in 35 structures (tarpaulin tents and reinforced cardboard and crates)
- 21 homeless residents were transported from the encampments after agreeing to receive treatment for various disabilities
- Referrals included Homeward Bound, DMS Safe Haven, Timberlawn and Green Oaks Psychiatric Hospitals, the VA, ABC Behavioral Health Program, and an area nursing home

Collaborating Agencies

- Environmental and Health Services (Lead)
- Dallas Community Court
- Dallas Police Department
- Dallas Code Compliance
- Dallas MetroCare Services
- Parkland Community Health Care Team
- ABC Behavioral Health Care Program
- Homeward Bound
- LifeNet Behavioral Health
- Texas Department of Transportation (TXDOT)

Dallas Morning News, The (TX) Published: May 19, 2006
Reaching The Reachable: A Saner Approach to Homeless Camps

Let's dispense with any romantic notion that all of those folks panhandling at DART stations and sleeping under highway bridges wish only for a hot meal, a job and a roof over their heads.

True for some. Not for all.

A recent "census" of Dallas' homeless reveals 5,704 people living on the streets - a number advocates dispute as I and not all are created equal. About one in eight are "chronic homeless," people on the streets for more than a year who have mental illness or addictions.

Under Interstate 45 near downtown, as cars rumble overhead toward Plano, Allen or Wilmer, about 180 people are squatters in two homeless camps. City officials estimate that 80 percent of them are mentally ill or addicts or both.

Not surprisingly, neighboring residents and business owners want the camps gone, blaming them for health hazards, human waste, open trash and criminal activity. Past city efforts focused on dawn sweeps with police and bulldozers. Anyone caught was arrested, his or her belongings trucked to a landfill.

Social workers from the city's **Crisis Intervention Unit** believe we can do better, and yesterday they set about proving it. Instead of another surprise police action, they swept the camps first, offering entry to drug and alcohol treatment or mental illness programs.

Most bridge people chose to pack what stuff they could carry and walked away. About 10 people accepted and headed off to recovery programs. Several others made appointments to visit caseworkers at the city's Day Resource Center.

A perfect solution? Far from it. Here's the alternative: Catch whomever you can and lock them up for as long as you can. That works about as long as it takes for that person to get back on the streets, find a fix and crawl under a new bridge.

And that, folks, is a classic cycle of hopelessness.

We recognize the depth of the problem for many chronic homeless. They may not want our help or have the mental capacity to ask for it. We have no answers for them.

Yet the city's new plan, if nothing else, is a more humane attempt at reaching those who still can be reached. Plus, it allows Dallas police and county jailers to focus on their real jobs.

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Questions?
