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# Homelessness, Camping and Outside Habitation

## 461.1 PURPOSE AND SCOPE

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that personnel understand the needs and rights of the homeless and to establish procedures to guide officers during all contacts with the unsheltered and homeless community, whether consensual or for enforcement purposes.

The Vancouver Police Department recognizes that members of the homeless community are often in need of special protection and services. The Vancouver Police Department will address these needs in balance with the overall missions of this Department.

### 461.1.1 POLICY

It is the policy of the Vancouver Police Department to provide appropriate law enforcement services to all members of the community including those who are unsheltered or experiencing homelessness.

The Department recognizes procedures for interacting with people who are unsheltered or experiencing homelessness may change over time due to many factors. Responsibility is placed on the HART Officer and District 1 Lieutenant to maintain a current Homelessness & Outside Habitation Procedure Manual for use by Department personnel. The procedures in this Manual should be followed by employees with any exceptions based on articulable reasons and supervisory approval, if feasible.

## 461.2 FIELD CONTACTS AND PATROL RESPONSE

Officers will respond to complaints and crimes from or about people experiencing homelessness and take appropriate police action. Depending on the information, the Hart Team or the District NPO should be notified for additional follow-up when appropriate.

## 461.3 HOMELESS ASSISTANCE & RESOURCES TEAM (HART) OFFICER

HART is a City resource, managed by the City of Vancouver Homeless Response Manager, with a VPD officer assigned to the team. The responsibilities of the HART Officer include the following, but not limited to:

- (a) Maintain and make available to all Department employees a list of assistance programs and other resources that are available to people experiencing homelessness.
- (b) Coordinate with Social Services and representatives of other organizations that provide assistance and support to people experiencing homelessness.
- (c) Provide regular outreach and engagement services to encampments and people experiencing unsheltered homelessness and connect individuals with needed stabilizing/supportive services through outside service providers and nonprofits.
- (d) Remain knowledgeable of current laws and City policies regarding outdoor habitation and dealing with the removal and/or destruction of the personal property of people experiencing homelessness.

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- (e) Provide notice to people living in encampments of planned encampment clean-up and/or removal operations
- (f) In conjunction with other HART members, coordinate, and be present during, any encampment clean-up or removal operation.
- (g) Monitor, and respond to, HART related communications.

### **461.4 NEIGHBORHOOD POLICE OFFICERS (NPO)**

The Chief of Police will designate each district Neighborhood Police Officer (NPO) to act as the Homeless Liaison Officer for that district. NPOs coordinate with HART on homelessness issues within their districts. The responsibilities of the Homeless Liaison Officer include the following:

- (a) Meet with HART, Social Services and representatives of other organizations that provide assistance to people experiencing homelessness.
- (b) Be aware of those areas within their district that are used as frequent homeless encampments, and coordinate outreach to those areas with HART as feasible.
- (c) Remain knowledgeable of current laws and City policies regarding outdoor habitation, and dealing with the removal and/or destruction of the personal property of people experiencing homelessness.

### **461.5 TRAINING**

Officers will receive annual training on applicable current laws, City policies and Department Procedures regarding outdoor habitation, and how to appropriately handle the removal and/or destruction of the personal property of people experiencing homelessness.