

Homelessness and Encampment Response Protocol



Encampments on Municipal Land

If you are concerned about the well-being of a person who is unhoused or if you discover a homelessness encampment notify YMCA Rural Housing & Homelessness Outreach 519-371-9222, housing@osgb.ymca.ca

- If emergency shelter is required afterhours, call 211
- If someone is in serious distress or in case of emergency, call 911

Goals

- Ensure a coordinated, compassionate, and safety focused response.
- Prioritize voluntary engagement and housing solutions over enforcement.
- Maintain strong inter-agency collaboration and communication throughout the process.

#1 Notification

- Gather required information and call or send an email to the contact indicated above.
- An email with the required information will be sent within one business day to the Outreach Team, which includes YMCA Housing Support Staff, Bruce County Community Paramedic, and Bruce County Community Support Coordinator.
- Notify Indigenous partners if cultural supports are deemed necessary.
- Notify police services via police communications centre. An occurrence number will be created and tracked.
- The OPP have a Provincial Liaison Team (PLT) to assist when necessary.
- Police Services may also activate the Mobile Crisis Response Team (MCRT) or Mobile Mental Health & Addiction Response Team (MMHART).
- Notify the municipality if the encampment is on municipal property.
- If appropriate, the Outreach Team will schedule a 30-minute meeting with all partners to discuss the situation, the risk involved and identify a lead.
- A STAR table referral may be considered during this meeting.

#2 Engagement

- The Outreach Team will visit within 1-3 business days.
- The Outreach Team will engage with individuals, build rapport and identify needs and goals.
- The Outreach Team will assist with obtaining consent to share information, if this is in the best interest of the client.

#3 Collaboration with Municipal By-Law (if required)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If necessary, the Outreach Team will meet with municipal by-law, and/or police, to discuss whether enforcement actions are being considered and to collaboratively develop a plan. • If the function of the public space is impacted by the encampment, immediate response will be necessary. • Partners will collaborate on a compassionate, safety-focused plan.
#4 Services and Supports	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Outreach Team will coordinate with service providers, including CMHA, and Brightshores, to support referrals, facilitate emergency shelter access, and develop individualized housing plans. • Focus remains on connecting individuals with health, social, and housing supports.
#5 Voluntary Site Transition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Outreach Team will engage individuals to support voluntary dismantling of the encampment. • The Outreach Team will assist individuals in securing safe housing options. • If possible, the Outreach Team will notify municipal staff of an anticipated date of transition, so they can prepare for site clean-up.
#6 Enforcement (if necessary)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Municipal staff will provide a letter, with a notice period based on their local by-laws and the risk of the encampment. • Response will be immediate if there is imminent risk or if the encampment impedes the intended use of the public space. • If necessary, enforcement and transition will take place collaboratively with the Outreach Team, municipal staff and/or police services. • The Outreach Team will continue to engage with individuals to develop housing plans during this time.
#7 Site Cleanup	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Outreach Team will notify municipal staff when the site is ready for clean-up. • Municipal staff will clean up and dispose of belongings if necessary. • Municipal staff will contact the Outreach Team to return personal items such as ID if necessary.
#8 Individuals Allowed to Remain	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In rare circumstances, it may be determined that individuals are allowed to remain at the encampment, the Outreach Team will continue to provide regular support and connection to housing and health services. • If the encampment is allowed to remain, the Outreach Team will continue to attend the site. The focus will remain on connecting individuals to housing and health supports. • The Outreach Team will report any site condition concerns to municipal staff.
#9 Continued Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Outreach Team will remain available to provide ongoing outreach and housing support to all residents experiencing homelessness.
#10 Post-Closure Debrief	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If appropriate, a leadership member of the Outreach Team will send an email to municipal staff and police services to provide an update. • The Bruce County Community Support Coordinator will schedule a post-closure debrief with partners within in 5 business days to review the process, and identify lessons learned.