

## CITY OF SARNIA ENCAMPMENT RESPONSE PROTOCOL

Addressing homelessness, which includes Encampments, is a very complex issue involving all levels of government, community organizations, and other partners to provide support and address the impacts of homelessness.

To report an Encampment, please contact City of Sarnia By-law Enforcement at 519-332-0330 ext. 3301 or e-mail [bylawenforcement@sarnia.ca](mailto:bylawenforcement@sarnia.ca).

### Definitions:

**By-Name List** - The BNL is a real-time, up to date list of known and consenting people experiencing homelessness in Lambton County.

**The Homeless Individuals and Families Information System (HIFIS)** – a federally developed, locally implemented information system that is dedicated to supporting the day-to-day operational activities of social service agencies supporting households that are experiencing homelessness.

**Community Outreach Workers** – Specialized Social Service workers that work closely with unsheltered households experiencing homelessness, with the focus of progressing them directly into more permanent housing through trauma-informed care and client-centered housing case management.

Definitions are only for the purposes of this Encampment Response.

### Addressing Homelessness — Roles and Responsibilities

The province has designated the County of Lambton to lead programs aimed at preventing / reducing homelessness in Sarnia and Lambton County. For more information visit <https://www.lambtononline.ca/en/resident-services/addressing-homelessness.aspx>

Everyone, however, can play a role in helping to address homelessness.

Individuals can help by volunteering for local / community organizations, making donations, or advocating to all levels of government for better resources to address the root causes of homelessness, not just the symptoms.

### Defining an Encampment

An Encampment refers to an outdoor area where an individual, or group of people experiencing homelessness gather to shelter and or live together. It can involve the erection of tents or others forms of shelter and/or temporary structures.

In recent years communities across Canada have seen an increase in individuals experiencing homelessness. This concerning trend is the result of both localized and widespread challenges including the impacts of mental illnesses and addictions; increasing housing costs; and availability of housing. These widespread challenges are directly contributing to an increase in individuals experiencing homelessness, and Encampments on public property, in Sarnia and across Canada. Many community members experiencing homelessness have limited other options to find shelter, or face barriers in accessing alternative housing arrangements.

## **Encampment Response Process**

When a new Encampment is reported the City will initiate a Coordinated Encampment Response.

### **COORDINATED ENCAMPMENT RESPONSE**

When a new Encampment is reported, City By-Law Officers and County of Lambton outreach workers will work with the individual(s) residing at the Encampment to find alternate housing and connect them with available resources.

To report an Encampment, please call Sarnia By-Law.

### *ENCAMPMENTS IN PROHIBITED AREAS*

Where the Encampment is located on or in a prohibited area:

1. By-Law Officers will issue a 48-hour notice of trespass. Serious health, safety, or criminal activity circumstances may warrant lesser time or immediate removal. This 48-hour timeframe could also change based on the capacity and availability of other services.
2. By-Law follows up at site to enforce order of trespass once alternative service options have been provided to individuals. Additional enforcement, such as police services, may be required depending on the situation.
3. By-Law will provide a 2-hour notice to individuals returning to that public property within 24 hours following a relocation which would have been based on an initial 48 hour notice.
4. Once public spaces have been vacated, By-Law and Parks and Recreation will determine the cleanup requirements in order to ensure that the space can be safely accessed and utilized by the public.

Prohibited areas include:

- Within 100 metres of play equipment and pools on municipal property; schools;

- Within 1000 metres of residential property, group homes, education facilities including childcare centres, and long-term care homes – as determined by the property line;
- Within 10 metres of all other private property – as determined by the property line;
- Within 1000 metres of public trails and paths;
- Within 5 metres of transit stops, highways, construction zones, and sidewalks/roadways;
- Within cemeteries, off-leash dog areas, community gardens, sidewalks/roadways, paths, under bridges, blocking fire hydrants, blocking accessibility entrances/ramps, and entrances/exits/doorways;
- Within 50 metres of sports fields, multi use courts, bleachers, lakes, beaches, ponds, watercourses, and docks;
- The following specific municipally-owned properties:
  - Canatara Park
  - Centennial Park
  - Germain Park
  - All waterfront and beaches
  - Howard Watson Nature Trail
  - Mike Weir Park
  - Sarnia Business & Research Park/Development Area 2
  - 402 Business Park
  - Smaller portions of any larger municipally-owned parcel of land

### *ENCAMPMENT RULES*

Where an established Encampment exists:

- Temporary shelters must be free standing, and set up in a row (no clustering) – they cannot be placed against, under, or be attached or tied to any building or structure.
- Temporary shelters must be spaced at minimum 10 feet apart, and rows must be spaced far enough apart to allow for the passage of emergency vehicles.
- No more than 1 tent per person or group of 2 and no more than 2 persons per temporary shelter.
- Wooden shelters or structures are not permitted.
- Fences or other structures surrounding the temporary shelter are not permitted.
- No excess garbage or debris.
- Trailers are not permitted.

- All personal items shall be contained within the temporary shelter, save and except for 2 methods of transportation (e.g. bicycle).
- Ladders are not permitted.
- Hanging any personal items, including laundry, on fences or other structures is not permitted.
- No food deliveries from individuals not possessing a Safe Food Handler's Certificate, or where not prepared in a certified kitchen inspected by Public Health

### *ENCAMPMENT SAFETY*

Where an established Encampment exists:

- Human Trafficking or any illegal associated activity will not be tolerated. Any evidence of human trafficking observed within the encampment will be reported.
- Intimidation, physical violence, or threats of physical violence towards neighbouring shelters, community residents, or staff providing services will not be tolerated.
- Brandishing weapons or firearms towards other neighbouring shelters, community residents, or staff providing services will not be tolerated.
- All pets must be leashed when outside a shelter; a muzzle is required if the pet is known to be violent; all dogs must be licensed.
- No open fires, barbeques, or combustibles are permitted in encampments.
- No used, uncapped needles in or around the site; sharps must be properly disposed of.
- No minors (under 16) are to be permitted to reside in the encampment. If minors are observed residing in the encampment, they are to be reported to CAS.

No new persons will be permitted to join an existing encampment in a prohibited area. Furthermore, once a person has vacated an encampment area, that person shall not be permitted to return. Where a new person joins an existing encampment or returns to an encampment location they have previously vacated, said person shall be subject to rapid removal, as outlined above.

### *COORDINATED RESPONSE TEAM*

The coordinated Encampment response team includes representatives from:

- City of Sarnia By-law; Fire Prevention; and Parks and Recreation Departments
- Lambton County Public Health

- Lambton County Social Services
- Lambton EMS CHIC
- Sarnia Police Services including the Integrated Mobile Police and Crisis Team (IMPACT) and Mental Health Engagement and Response Team (MHEART)

#### City of Sarnia By-Law Officers

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City By-law Officers respond to reports about Encampments on public land with a human rights approach that's aimed at helping people connect to the support they need. Our focus is not on the removal of people from Encampments, but rather on making sure those living in them are safe and helping them find a more long-term housing solution. Those residing in Encampments cannot be forcibly removed by By-Law Officers.

City By-law takes immediate action by attending the Encampment location to check for potential health and safety concerns. By-law officers will connect with the Sarnia Police where necessary, and County of Lambton Social Services which provides supports/resources to people living in Encampments.

#### County of Lambton Social Services

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In its role as the Service System Manager of Housing and Homelessness, through the Homelessness Prevention team, the County of Lambton provides housing and homelessness supports and services including system level planning, guidance and funding to community partners and organizations supporting people at risk of or experiencing homelessness. The supports that may be offered through Social Services when addressing an Encampment, include, but are not limited to, outreach services, emergency shelter services and supportive housing.

Local By-law Officers may notify the County of Lambton Social Services Division ("Social Services") through the dedicated outreach email ([outreach@county-lambton.on.ca](mailto:outreach@county-lambton.on.ca)) when identifying a new Encampment. Essential details including the location, size of the Encampment, potential site hazards, and residents (if known) can be shared through these notifications.

Upon a local By-law officer providing notification of an Encampment, Social Services will deliver on-site supports. During these visits Social Service Community Outreach Workers develop rapport with those individuals sleeping rough, offering voluntary resources and safety planning, while working on a housing plan and identifying alternative accommodations, which may include emergency housing.

Social Service Community Outreach Workers will attend the Encampment site within two (2) business days of receiving notification of the Encampment and conduct an individualized assessment, and undertake any of the following services and/or programs:

- Offer client-centered, strength-based, trauma-informed, housing-focused assertive community outreach within the context of Lambton County's Homelessness Coordinated Access System ("Coordinated Access").
- Community Outreach Workers may offer on-site crisis intervention.
- If not already known, households may be supported with a HIFIS (Homeless Individuals and Families Information System) intake, to enable referrals and matching via the community By-Name List (BNL).
- If not already completed, households may be supported with the completion of a standardized common vulnerability assessment, to determine eligibility and prioritization for programming through Coordinated Access.
- Community Outreach Workers will promote connection to shelter and housing through the collaborative development of housing and service plans.
- Community Outreach Workers will assist households with completing necessary documents required to obtain housing, including identification and completion of rent supplement and subsidized housing applications.
- Community Outreach Workers may support individuals sleeping rough in directly accessing permanent private market housing, or identifying alternative temporary accommodation, directly from an experience of unsheltered homelessness.
- Community Outreach Workers may collaborate and coordinate services with appropriate health agencies.
- Community Outreach Workers may offer harm reduction supplies.
- Direct referrals may be made to local health teams including Lambton Public Health, the North Lambton Community Health Centre, and the Lambton EMS Community Health Integrated Care (CHIC) team.
- Facilitate offers to emergency housing (shelter) via direct referral with the Inn of the Good Shepherd, River City Vineyard, or the Women's Interval Home.
- Individuals seeking showers may be referred to the Good Shepherd's Lodge, regardless of whether they are currently using emergency housing.
- Households may be supported with transportation services through bus tickets, direct trips supported through Red Cross, or ad-hoc taxi service, as applicable.

- Households may be supported to access the Housing and Homelessness Resource Centre – a low-barrier, multidisciplinary day-program offered specifically for households experiencing homelessness.
- Households may be supported to access existing fixed-site food security programs, such as the Inn of the Good Shepherd, or directly offered food security supplies.

Community Outreach Workers will continue to engage with the individuals in the Encampment, provided there are no safety concerns, with the goal of progressing them into more permanent housing.

#### Lambton Public Health

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In addition to Social Services, City By-Law Officers may contact Lambton Public Health (LPH) to request a public health assessment/inspection of an Encampment site and will share the essential details with LPH including, but not limited to location, size and potential site hazards. If there is an urgent health hazard assessed by LPH, the hazard will be reported to the municipality that owns the land to rectify the hazard.

#### Lambton EMS CHIC

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The Lambton EMS CHIC Team conducts assertive outreach in emergency shelters and encampment locations across Lambton County. City By-law officers may notify the CHIC Team through the dedicated outreach email ([CHICparamedic@county-lambton.on.ca](mailto:CHICparamedic@county-lambton.on.ca)) when identifying a new Encampment. Essential details including the location, size of the Encampment, potential site hazards, residents (if known) can be shared through these notifications.

Upon a local By-law Officer providing notification of an Encampment, the CHIC Team will provide on-site supports that align with their scope of practice<sup>1</sup>. During these visits, the CHIC Team will conduct assertive outreach and wellness checks with individuals experiencing homelessness, using a health-focused lens.

With a goal to improve better health outcomes for vulnerable populations in our community, the CHIC Team will continue to engage with the individuals in the Encampment, provided there are no safety concerns.

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<sup>1</sup> On-site supports will be delivered by County of Lambton Social Services to encampments on municipal land, upon receiving notification from a local By-law Officer as noted herein. On-site supports may be provided to encampments on non-municipal land (i.e. privately owned land), only upon receiving notification of such encampment and only upon receiving the appropriate authorization to enter upon non-municipal land to provide such support(s).

The Lambton EMS CHIC Team pairs a Lambton EMS paramedic with a substance use navigator from Bluewater Health who has expertise in addictions counselling and harm reduction outreach. Working 12 hours per day (10 a.m. to 10 p.m.), seven days per week, the main goals and objectives of the CHIC team include:

1. Diversion of clients experiencing issues that are manageable with lower intensity interventions away from jail and hospital emergency departments into community-based acute mental health supports, withdrawal management services, primary care, and/or ongoing mental health and addictions programs.
2. Prevention of serious health threats and overdoses through early street-level treatment and education on wound care, heating/cooling strategies, harm reduction, and available community-based resources leading to improved health outcomes.
3. Development of enhanced interagency coordination to help identify and expedite delivery of supports for vulnerable populations.
4. Reductions in 911 calls for overdoses, mental health crises, and people experiencing homelessness.

The Lambton EMS CHIC Team works in close collaboration with the Social Services Community Outreach Workers, Lambton Public Health, Bluewater Health, the Mobile Care Bus and the Sarnia Police MHEART and Impact teams.

All emergency health care concerns identified in a community Encampment should be directed to 911 for immediate response.

The City of Sarnia, Sarnia Police and Lambton County commit to share with one another the information they obtain regarding location of Encampments, the individuals residing in same, and any general safety concerns, subject to applicable privacy laws.

#### *ENCAMPMENT CLEAN UPS*

Clean-up coordination only begins once individuals are no longer residing at the location.

After multiple attendances, By-law Officers will remove abandoned Encampments with the assistance of Parks and Recreations staff and a third party contractor where necessary.

## **Accessing Help**

How to get help:

- Call 911 if there's a medical emergency or to report someone in distress.



- For information on the County of Lambton's response to homelessness, call 519-344-2062
- Lambton Public Health 519-383-8331