

What should I do if I see an individual or a group of individuals who appear to be living unsheltered? (also known as “experiencing street homelessness”)

For the most immediate response, New Yorkers who see individuals they believe to be experiencing unsheltered homelessness and in need should request outreach assistance via 3-1-1. If an individual appears to be in danger or pose an immediate risk to themselves or others or if there is criminal activity, New Yorkers should call 9-1-1.

What happens when I call 311 to report an unsheltered New Yorker in need of assistance?

- Individual calls 311 and a Service Request (SR) is created
- SR for “outreach assistance” is assigned to a social service provider or a partner Agency, as needed
- Once assigned to a provider, an outreach team is dispatched
- Service provider outreach teams attempt to locate that individual and if found directly engage the individual, assess for safety and encourage them to accept services and transition off the streets

How do outreach teams engage unsheltered individuals who need assistance?

Experienced outreach teams from not-for-profit service providers canvass the five boroughs 24/7/365 as part of our citywide effort to identify and engage individuals experiencing unsheltered homelessness, encourage them to accept services, and ultimately help them transition off the streets. Additionally, DHS performs joint outreach operations with community stakeholders and Agency partners, including the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, the Parks Department, and the Department of Transportation as appropriate, to utilize each Agency’s expertise, engage more New Yorkers, and offer more supports. Since the start of HOME-STAT, through these efforts and new investments, outreach teams have helped nearly 2,900 unsheltered New Yorkers come off the streets and subways citywide and into transitional and permanent housing.

What services does DHS provide to unsheltered individuals?

In addition to redoubling and enhancing proactive round-the-clock street outreach efforts, DHS operates specialized facilities dedicated to serving New Yorkers who have lived unsheltered—and continues to open more. For example, Drop-In Centers (DICs) and Safe Havens are low-barrier programs specifically targeted toward unsheltered individuals who may be resistant to accepting other services, including traditional shelters. Both Drop-In Centers and Safe Havens are equipped with on-site services and staff who work closely with the clients to build trust, stabilize lives, and encourage further transition off the streets and ultimately into permanent housing. These facilities are often the first step towards helping unsheltered New Yorkers back on the path to stability.

- Drop-In Centers provide baseline services with the goal of meeting immediate needs for unsheltered New Yorkers, such as showers and meals. DICs also have on-site case management services and staff, providing an immediate option for individuals who want to transition off the streets
- Safe Havens are transitional housing options designed to help unsheltered New Yorkers get back on their feet, by providing specialized overnight beds and physical and program characteristics specifically meant to address these individuals’ unique needs, including, for example, smaller physical settings, as well as more hands-on and intimate case management, coupled with lower-barrier program requirements. Safe Havens coordinate closely with outreach teams, who refer unsheltered individuals directly for placement. As of this year, this Administration has more-than quadrupled the total number of such specialized beds citywide, increasing from 600 in 2014 to more than 2,400 today – with more coming online.

What happens if someone declines help from the outreach team?

Accepting outreach efforts, including services that will help unsheltered New Yorkers transition indoors from the streets or subways, is voluntary, and it can take months of persistent and compassionate engagement to successfully connect unsheltered person with services. We remain undeterred in our efforts to engage them, proactively offering assistance and support, until we make the connection that will help them transition off the streets. Our teams continue to reach out to these New Yorkers to offer services and help them come indoors.

What is the difference between an encampment, pop-up, and a hotspot?

- **Encampment:** An outdoor location with a fixed, visible structure where two or more individuals gather, often under bridges or in remote areas where groups can isolate. In our City, we don't allow obstructions or encampments.
- **Pop-Up:** A pop-up location appears quickly and is usually temporary. It includes some level of debris such as carts, cardboard.
- **Hotspot:** An location where two or more homeless individuals are gathered without a structure.

How does the City address physical conditions on the streets?

Coordinating across Agencies, including DSNY, Parks, and DOT, as appropriate, the City addresses physical conditions quickly whenever they are encountered. During these efforts, when Agency partners like DSNY, DOT, or Parks address a condition at a given location, outreach teams are on hand to ensure we're engaging any individuals who may be living unsheltered there, providing notice, offering them services and supports, and protecting any valuable belongings. Throughout the process, outreach teams are engaging the individuals directly, with persistence and compassion, focused on continuing to build on the unique relationship and progress they have developed with each individual, encouraging them to accept services.

These efforts occur on a case-by-case basis, responsive to dynamic circumstances on the ground, including as relates to the unsheltered individuals known to be residing in the area. Ahead of time, all partner agencies work to carefully assess the details of a given condition or situation, including the physical location as well as the number and type of possessions. In cases where an unsheltered individual known to outreach teams may be mobile and move their belongings with them, a careful assessment must be performed each time a client moves, as conditions may have changed, potentially altering the approach.

Should I give money to panhandlers?

New Yorkers can most effectively take action to support New Yorkers experiencing homelessness by donating to the not-for-profit service providers that coordinate our persistent and compassionate outreach efforts across the five boroughs. DHS outreach teams are working to responsibly and compassionately develop more effective interventions for persons encountered in the streets, including connecting these individuals, many of whom are not experiencing homelessness, to appropriate City services.

How does the City know who is unsheltered and how to help?

Central to the HOME-STAT effort, these outreach teams continue to build the City's first-ever by-name list of individuals known to be experiencing unsheltered homeless on the streets and subways, more effectively enabling the teams to directly and repeatedly engage New Yorkers in need where they are, continually offering supports and case management resources while developing the trust and relationships that will ultimately encourage these individuals to accept services and transition off of the streets. Outreach teams also actively engage individuals encountered on the streets to evaluate their living situations and determine whether they are homeless as well as what specific supports they may need.