




COMMUNICATION UPDATE

TO:	Mayor and Members City Council
DATE:	June 12, 2023
SUBJECT:	Encampment Response Team Update – May 2023
WARD(S) AFFECTED:	City Wide
SUBMITTED BY:	Angela Burden General Manager Healthy and Safe Communities Department
SIGNATURE:	

Operational Update:

The Coordinated Response Team, led by Housing Focused Street Outreach (HFSO), continue to collaborate to manage encampment response throughout the city. Housing Focused Street Outreach receive complaints and service requests from community members, Councillors, and other internal City divisions and will visit and attempt to contact any individual(s) staying onsite. When visiting, Housing Focused Street Outreach workers will provide goods to address basic and harm reduction needs, make an offer of emergency shelter when available, and identify and assist with connecting people to housing supports and other supports and services that meet the needs of individuals living in encampments.

Whenever a clear set of health and safety concerns have been established at a particular encampment and mitigation strategies have not worked, Housing Focused Street Outreach will engage the broader Coordinated Response Team that includes Municipal Law Enforcement, Parks Section, and Hamilton Police Services Encampment Engagement and Social Navigator teams to strategize around potential solutions to be implemented at a particular site with the intent of reducing negative impacts on people living in encampments, and to the broader public.

Data and Evaluation Update:

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City staff utilized feedback from community stakeholders related to the goals and values associated with encampment response via consultations completed in July 2022 and March 2023, in conjunction with feedback from City staff from Housing Services Division, Municipal Licensing and Bylaw, and Parks Section to develop a first iteration of success indicators to be used to evaluate encampment response.

Each indicator in the following chart represents a necessary component of encampment response efforts led by the City and is a means to assessing the success of the program. Other indicators were considered, but each indicator needed to meet the criteria of being valid and reliable.

Measuring Success

One of the primary goals of the City's housing outreach-led encampment response program, is to limit the movement of individuals living in encampments from their current location whenever possible, to provide Housing Focused Street Outreach and other community partners the ability to build rapport and develop personalized housing plans. At the same time the City must also respond to the needs of the broader community by ensuring that parks are cleaned and maintained, and the health and safety of all members of the community is preserved.

Reporting Comparisons and Trends:

Although this will be the first report on encampment-related data in 2023, staff have worked to update and refine indicators being used to assess the success of the City's encampment response program to ensure greater accuracy and validity, and to reflect changes to the program. Given the change toward a housing-led approach, some of the data does not have a natural 2022 comparison. Additionally, with efforts to improve quality and accuracy of the data reported and to better reflect the work being completed by staff, some indicators have changed from 2022, and for other indicators, comparisons to previous years are no longer valid. As such, month-to-month comparisons will only be available for some indicators, until a meaningful year-before value is available. Whenever possible, comparisons to previous timeframes will be made available, including an average from the previous month, a year-to-date average, and a comparison to the same month in the previous year, when applicable (i.e., June 2023 to June 2022) to help provide a baseline for comparison, and a foundation for assessing trends and impacts of continuous improvements introduced.

Analysis:

In May 2022, the City's encampment response program was led by Municipal Law Enforcement, who were responsible for first response to all complaints and service requests in the city. Currently, Housing Focused Street Outreach is leading the

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response, and to reflect this change, new processes have been developed to centralize the service request and complaint process within Housing Focused Street Outreach. In May 2023, Housing Focused Street Outreach received 728 service requests and complaints, directly from the community and external stakeholders, as well as those initially sent to internal Coordinated Response Team partners (i.e., Parks, Municipal Law Enforcement) but forwarded to Housing Focused Street Outreach for first response. While there is no equivalent indicator to compare to in 2022 due to the changes in the data collection process, anecdotally amongst Coordinated Response Team partners, the community need is much greater in 2023.

When comparing this month's total number of unique individuals/households reached who are unsheltered and/or regularly living in encampments throughout the city (165) to what was collected by Housing Focused Street Outreach in May 2022 (30), there has been a clear, significant increase. This is also supported by the increased total number of interactions that Housing Focused Street Outreach staff have made with individuals regularly living in encampments regarding basic need and housing supports.

From an enforcement perspective, several of the indicators did not have adequate comparisons in 2022 due to a change in approach to encampment response. Notably though, in May 2023 there were 36 Voluntary Compliance Notices issued on public property, down from 51 in May 2022, and none issued on private property, down from 8 in May 2022. This reflects a change toward a housing-led approach, as while there are over five times more individuals living in encampments, there were still less Voluntary Compliance Notices issued.

The number of encampment sites cleaned and/or maintained by Parks Section staff was not available for May 2022, but the overall 2022 average was 57, which is very similar to the 58 reported for May 2023. Year-over-year monthly comparisons will begin in next month's report.

The following indicators have been established to assess the success of the program on an interim basis and will provide accountability to the public and people with lived experience, and transparency regarding the City's approach to encampment response.

Indicator	Category of Measurement	May 2023	May 2022
Total complaints and/or requests for service requiring response or follow-up by Housing Focused Street Outreach (HFSO)	Volume of complaints and/or requests for service	728	N/A

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Indicator	Category of Measurement	May 2023	May 2022
Number of unique individuals/households reached who are unsheltered and/or regularly living in encampments throughout the city	Total unique individuals living in encampments	165	30
Number of interactions where individuals received support (from HFSSO) with their basic needs per month	Support basic needs of individuals living in encampments	120	65
Number of interactions where individuals received support (from HFSSO) with their housing needs per month	Support housing-related needs of individuals living in encampments	172	65
Escalated items actioned to Municipal Law Enforcement from HFSSO (i.e., Municipal Law Enforcement Officers (MLEOs) were involved in response) on public property	Volume of Escalated complaints	15	N/A
Escalated items actioned to MLE from HFSSO (i.e., MLEOs were involved in response) on private property	Volume of Escalated complaints	13	N/A
Total number of Voluntary Compliance Notices issued on public property	Response type to escalated complaint	36	51
Total number of Voluntary Compliance Notices issued on private property	Response type to escalated complaint	0	8
Number of instances where compliance was achieved immediately on public property, without issuing of Voluntary Compliance Notice	Response type to escalated complaint	5	N/A

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Indicator	Category of Measurement	May 2023	May 2022
Number of instances where compliance was achieved immediately on private property, without issuing of Voluntary Compliance Notice	Response type to escalated complaint	1	N/A
Number of encampment sites cleaned and/or maintained by Parks Section staff or a designated contractor	Park cleaning and maintenance	58	N/A

All indicators meet the criteria of being valid and reliable and can be replicated by City staff and reported monthly.

Indicator Notes:

1. Total Complaints and/or requests for service requiring response or follow-up by HFSO

The current housing-led process requires that all service requests or complaints related to encampments are forwarded to the unsheltered@hamilton.ca inbox, which is monitored by Housing Focused Street Outreach. Each instance that a service request or complaint is forwarded will be tracked by Housing Focused Street Outreach and reflected in the chart. This includes complaints and service requests forwarded from Parks Section, Roads, Councillor's offices, Mayor's office, and may be related to encampments on public property, private property, abandoned encampments, staff seeking their clients, garbage and debris potentially related to encampments, and all follow-up requests.

2. Number of Unique individuals/households reached who are unsheltered and/or regularly living in encampments throughout the city

This indicator includes all individuals who have provided permission to have their personal information stored in HIFIS, as well as individuals who have not provided permission to Housing Focused Street Outreach to have their personal information recorded and are in the earlier stages of rapport-building which may include a range of interactions from provision of basic goods such as water, snacks, and harm reduction materials, to simply sharing a greeting.

3. Number of interactions where individuals received support (from Housing Focused Street Outreach) with their basic needs/housing support per month

This indicator illustrates the quantity of services provided by the Housing-Focused Street Outreach team. It counts the number of client interactions (service provided and or client connection made) within the time period. The result counts all interactions including those to known clients and those who declined to provide Coordinated Access consent for data sharing within the Homeless Individuals and Families Information System who are captured as anonymous interactions. The types of interaction are subsequently categorized as for basic needs or housing supports based on the documented interaction types. The results represent a snapshot in time when the data was extracted, and it may vary from other sources based on the definitions and sources used. All data are subject to change.

4. Escalated items actioned to MLE from HFSO on public/private property

All complaints and service requests are immediately forwarded to Housing Focused Street Outreach to conduct an initial visit to the encampment or site of the complaint or service request. At that time, if there are health and safety concerns that are acute, or the individual(s) are encamped on private property, the file is immediately sent to Municipal Law Enforcement, who will develop an operational plan for remediation and/or enforcement. Note, items sent directly to MLE are counted via the total complaints, and these categories only represent items escalated to Municipal Law Enforcement by Housing Focused Street Outreach.

Please direct any inquiries to Danielle Blake, Manager, Housing Focused Street Outreach, at (905) 546-2424 ext. 3731, or by email at Danielle.Blake@hamilton.ca