




COMMUNICATION UPDATE

TO:	Mayor and Members City Council
DATE:	July 13, 2023
SUBJECT:	Encampment Response Team Update – June 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 in an unsheltered location. 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.

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Data and Evaluation Update:

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.

Changes to Reporting

Effective June 2023, the Housing Services Division has changed the approach to recording the total number of unique individuals/households who are unsheltered and/or regularly living in encampments throughout the city to ensure the highest level of validity and reliability in reporting data. As has been previous practice Housing Services Division will continue to prioritize utilizing the Homeless Individuals and Families Information System (HIFIS) to track and measure all homelessness-related indicators. This total will be conveyed in *'Number of unique individuals/households reached who are unsheltered and/or regularly living in encampments throughout the City (defined by connection to HFSO), who have provided consent to have their personal information stored in HIFIS.'*

However, given that we are aware that there is a sizable number of unsheltered individuals/households who are unwilling to provide consent to have their information recorded, reporting only the HIFIS data is insufficient. Often unsheltered individuals are reluctant to share their personal information until meaningful trust and rapport has been built with Housing Focused Street Outreach staff.

To reflect the early engagement that happens with unsheltered individuals, a separate indicator is being introduced to measures the *number of unique individuals/households reached who are unsheltered and/or regularly living in encampments throughout the City (defined by connection to HFSO), who have not yet provided consent to have their personal information stored in HIFIS.*

As such, these two indicators referenced will be reported separately, to clearly identify the total number of unique individuals/households who are unsheltered and/or regularly living in encampments throughout the city.

Analysis:

Additionally, data collected in June 2022, when the City's encampment response program was led by Municipal Law Enforcement, may not have natural comparators year over year with the City's current response, which is now lead by Housing Focused Street Outreach as and new processes have been developed to centralize the service request and complaint process within Housing Focused Street Outreach.

Volume of Complaints

In June 2023, Housing Focused Street Outreach received 455 service requests and complaints, sent 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) and forwarded to Housing Focused Street Outreach for first response. The 455 complaints and service requests received by Housing Focused Street Outreach in June 2023 represents a decline from 728 in May 2023. With no comparable data from 2022, additional data is required to understand the trends and develop a more informed baseline.

Total Unique Individuals Living in Encampments

When comparing this month's total number of unique individuals/households reached who are unsheltered and/or regularly living in encampments throughout the city who have provided consent to have their personal information stored in the Homeless Individuals and Families Information System (HIFIS) (165) to what was collected by Housing Focused Street Outreach last month (87), there has been a clear, significant increase. This is a result of significant efforts from HFSO and partners to work with individuals in encampments to receive consent to have their personal information entered into HIFIS. As a result, there were less individuals who declined to provide consent that outreach interacted with in June 2023 (34), when compared to last month (78).

In total, HFSO interacted with 143 unique individuals/households who are unsheltered and/or regularly living in encampments throughout the city. This is slightly less than the 165 unsheltered individuals interacted with in May 2023 and can be ascribed to natural flow patterns amongst people living outdoors, including movement to new locations within the city, outside the city to new jurisdictions, into available emergency shelter space, couch surfing, and into temporary or permanent housing. More data is required to identify a meaningful increase or decrease in unique individuals/households who are unsheltered and/or regularly living in encampments throughout the city.

Supports for Individuals Living in Encampments

Housing Focused Street Outreach was able to interact with 96 people to support their basic needs, and 164 people to support their housing needs. This is slightly lower than what was reported in June 2023, but significantly higher than the reported totals for June 2022, which showed 37 people were helped with their basic needs, and 25 with their housing needs.

Some of the discrepancy from 2022 to 2023 is likely a result of the differing approaches to engagement. Utilizing an enforcement-led approach in 2022 incentivized individuals to become less conspicuous to avoid having to move to a new location, which made it difficult for Housing Focused Street Outreach to find them and provide service and support.

Escalated Complaints

In general, June 2023 saw significantly fewer enforcement interactions than in May 2023, with significantly less Voluntary Compliance Notices being issued on public and private property. This higher rate of Voluntary Compliance Notices issued in May is predominantly due to the significant health and safety concerns at Whitehern that required ongoing attention from Municipal Law Enforcement. With fewer tents at this location in June, there was a significant reduction in Voluntary Compliance Notices issued.

Additionally, despite more unique individuals or households living unsheltered in encampments throughout the community, there has been a significant reduction from the number of Voluntary Compliance Notices issued in June 2023 when compared to June 2022, likely in response to a housing-led approach.

Cleaning and Maintenance

Parks Section staff cleaned and/or maintained 71 encampment sites in June 2023. This was much higher than the June 2022 total of 47, and higher than the May 2023 total of 58.

Data Tracking

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

Indicator	Category of Measurement	June 2023	Prev. Month	YTD Avg.	June 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	455	728	592	N/A
Number of unique individuals/households reached who are unsheltered and/or regularly living in encampments throughout the City (defined by connection to HFSO), who have provided consent to have their personal information stored in HIFIS.	Total unique individuals living in encampments	109	87	98	27
Number of unique individuals/households reached who are unsheltered and/or regularly living in encampments throughout the City (defined by connection to HFSO), who have not yet provided consent to have their personal information stored in HIFIS.	Total unique individuals living in encampments	34	78	56	N/A
Number of interactions where individuals received support (from HFSO) with their basic needs per month	Support basic needs of individuals living in encampments	96	120	108	37
Number of interactions where individuals received support (from HFSO) with their housing needs per month	Support housing-related needs of individuals living in encampments	164	172	168	25

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Indicator	Category of Measurement	June 2023	Prev. Month	YTD Avg.	June 2022
Escalated items actioned to Municipal Law Enforcement from HFSO (i.e., Municipal Law Enforcement Officers (MLEOs) were involved in response) on public property	Volume of Escalated complaints	5	15	10	N/A
Escalated items actioned to Municipal Law Enforcement from HFSO (i.e., Municipal Law Enforcement Officers (MLEOs) were involved in response) on private property	Volume of Escalated complaints	6	13	10	N/A
Total number of Voluntary Compliance Notices issued on public property	Response type to escalated complaint	6	36	21	67
Total number of Voluntary Compliance Notices issued on private property	Response type to escalated complaint	0	0	0	16
Number of instances where compliance was achieved immediately on public property, without issuing of Voluntary Compliance Notice	Response type to escalated complaint	1	5	3	N/A
Number of instances where compliance was achieved immediately on private property, without issuing of Voluntary Compliance Notice	Response type to escalated complaint	0	1	1	N/A
Number of encampment sites cleaned and/or maintained by Parks Section staff or a designated contractor	Park cleaning and maintenance	71	58	65	47

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

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