

TARPON SPRINGS POLICE DEPARTMENT



HOMELESS OUTREACH PROGRAM

OUR MISSION

The mission of the Tarpon Springs Police Department is to reduce crime and enhance the quality of life through a cooperative partnership with the community.

OUR MINDSET

- Being homeless is not a crime
- Some homeless individuals choose this lifestyle
- Identifying and utilizing resources outside of just incarceration
- General public perceptions and/or unrealistic expectations
- Addressing the issues that arise in a professional manner to improve the quality of life of the individuals and the other residents of the city.

OUR MINDSET

- Understanding that there are multiple reasons for the homeless situation, to include:
 - ❑ Lack of housing
 - ❑ Poverty
 - ❑ Addiction to alcohol/drugs
 - ❑ Mental illness
 - ❑ Domestic Violence
 - ❑ Chronic health issues/disabilities

- Understanding that there are multiple issues for the homeless situation, to include:
 - ❑ Mental Health
 - ❑ Physical health
 - ❑ Shelter
 - ❑ Food
 - ❑ Clothing
 - ❑ Employment
 - ❑ Identification

OUR MINDSET

- Knowing that there are a variety of reasons and issues, it is understood that there is not just one way to deal with things.
- The police department cannot simply “enforce” the problem away.
 - We will, however, arrest for criminal violations
 - Importance of public safety
 - Service to the community
- Requires interaction by various entities and approaches/resources to address the issues.

OUR MINDSET

- Issue with “chronic” homeless persons
 - ❑ For simple definition – those that choose to remain in condition
 - ❑ Have been offered resources and assistance but refuse to participate or gain assistance
 - ❑ May commit criminal activity or code violations within the city
 - ❑ Recurring issues and contact with police
 - ❑ May be small percentage of homeless population – but cause the majority of problems
 - ❑ Common violations
 - ❑ Trespassing (FSS 810.09)
 - ❑ Littering (FSS 403.413)
 - ❑ Panhandling (City Ord. 12-18)
 - ❑ Open Container of Alcoholic Beverage (City Ordinance 3-12)
 - ❑ Exposure / Disorderly Conduct (FSS 877.03)
 - ❑ Disorderly Intoxication (FSS 856.011)
 - ❑ Assault/ Battery (FSS 784)

OUR MINDSET

➤ Accountability vs. Assistance

- ❑ Requires a balance
- ❑ Personal responsibility
- ❑ Accountability for behavior in community
 - ❑ Programs should have “teeth” for those who refuse to cooperate and change behavior
- ❑ Continued assistance with no accountability results in misuse of resources and continued unacceptable behavior

OUR METHODS

- Currently there is one sworn law enforcement officer assigned as the Homeless Outreach Officer
- Specific duties include:
 - ❑ Contact homeless individuals
 - ❑ Explain services available through partnerships
 - ❑ Offer placement in services
 - ❑ Give contact information for resources
 - ❑ Work in conjunction with other officers (and partners) to address recurring issues with chronic homeless and plan/assist in details

OUR METHODS

- Approximately 70% officers have already been trained in Critical Intervention Team (CIT) training
 - Dealing with mental health issues
- Continue to send officers to training, with the goal to have every officer trained in CIT
- Completed RITE training for all officers, to include empathy training
- Patrol officers have highest rate of contact with homeless population and can connect them with our Homeless Outreach officer to assist.
- Address immediate needs of safety, provide crisis intervention, and connect people to basic services such as medical care, clothing, food and shelter.

OUR METHODS

- Partnerships – to provide essentials for basic living and resources for services
- Partners/Resources:
 - ❑ Directions for Living (social worker)
 - ❑ Safe Harbor
 - ❑ Pinellas Hope
 - ❑ Shepherd Center
 - ❑ Salvation Army
 - ❑ Churches involved in outreach
 - St. Nicholas Greek Orthodox Church
 - St. Timothy Lutheran Church
 - Mt. Moriah AME Church
 - ❑ Other locations – for services
 - ❑ Boys/Girls Club
 - ❑ Masonic Lodge

OUR METHODS

The 3 C's

- 1) Contact
- 2) Collaborate
- 3) Communicate

OUR METHODS

➤ Contact

- ❑ by TSPD officers or outreach organization
- ❑ put in contact with proper entity for service

➤ Collaborate

- ❑ work with the community and outreach organizations
- ❑ discuss strategies to address the problems or trends
- ❑ get input from all angles to see different perspectives
- ❑ work together

➤ Communicate

- ❑ with the homeless population in regard to services...but also in regard to accountability
- ❑ With organizations/entities involved to stay alert to issues that need to be addressed

OUR MOVEMENT

General:

- Attempt to contact and offer services to the homeless population through our Homeless Outreach Program
- Address criminal activity and violations of city ordinance through notices to appear and/or arrest
- Working with local business and property owners to address encampment or other issues (loitering, littering, etc.)
- Obtain trespass authorization forms for properties to address continued problems and issue Trespass Warnings
- Log checks of areas frequented by chronic homeless populations where quality of life or criminal/ordinance violations occur
- Signage for city property to quell issues

OUR MOVEMENT

Recent:

- Initial meeting with resource providers to get input and have them develop ideas to hold service receivers accountable for behavior.
- Upon drafting ideas, the police department will again meet with the resource providers to collaborate on working model
- Continue to work with local businesses and property owners to update trespass authorizations as they expire (yearly)
 - Currently, there are 121 forms on file
- Recently, assisted a property owner in locating encampments and trespassing on large property, resulting in:
 - 5 Trespass Warnings issued
 - 5 Arrests for Trespass after Warning
 - 1 Placement

OUR MOVEMENT

Future:

- Intending to have working model of accountability with services to address those that are not compliant with standards of society in city
- Continued communication with partners to address any concerns or new trends
- Look at possibility of incorporating technology (i.e. City camera system) in areas known for quality of life or criminal/ordinance violations, which would assist in preventing, responding to, and identifying violations/violators.

QUESTIONS?

