

Outreach Guide



Friendship Place is a 501c3 Non-Profit organization serving individuals, families, youth, veterans, and all individuals experiencing homelessness in Washington DC and part of the Washington DC Metropolitan Region.

Since 1991, Friendship Place has been a cornerstone of Upper NW and the Wisconsin Ave corridor in working to find solutions for those experiencing homelessness. Through person-centered, trauma-informed street outreach services, we work to build relationships, assess for housing, health, and other basic needs, and start building plans for stable solutions.

Street Outreach services throughout the Georgetown BID involves ongoing rounds throughout the community to engage with individuals in need, touchpoints with local businesses, and in following up on new concerns within the community. Street Outreach services is not an emergency response team, and has no authority to move or remove individuals from locations. We can engage with and encourage individuals to relocate or to clean-up their belongings, and to begin building bridges to services or reconnect those services for the individual.

Do's and Don'ts when Engaging with Individuals

Here are some Do's and Don'ts when trying to engage with individuals experiencing homelessness.

Do:

- Introduce yourself. First Name is always good.
- Ask the individual their name.
- Acknowledge that you've seen them for sometime in that spot (or particular places in the neighborhoods)
- Ask if there's any type of assistance/services that they may need.
- If they are receptive to services, ask if them if it would be ok to help connect them to Street Outreach Services
- In all interactions, endeavor to maintain a neutral and non-threatening tone and posture
- If the individual is blocking a walkway, door, or impeding traffic, gently ask if they can relocate to the side or another open area.

Don't:

- Provide personal information (Full Name, Address, etc)
- Pressure the individual to provide too much information
- Yell or shout at an individual (They may perceive it as threatening)
- Touch or Stand Over an individual (unless they provide consent)
- Threaten the individual

Contacting Friendship Place

In the event that you see someone experiencing homelessness or need within the community, please contact Friendship Place via email or by calling the Outreach Contact Line at 202-364-8907:

Antwan Gillis, Project Coordinator-Street Outreach Services (agillis@friendshipplace.org)
Dana Long, CAHP Systems Outreach Specialist (dlong@friendshipplace.org)
Liza Poris, CAHP Systems Outreach Specialist (eporis@friendshipplace.org)

When contacting Street Outreach services, the following information is important for us to provide prompt engagement:



- Your Name (and business, if applicable)
- Your Contact Info (for follow-up)
- Date/Time of Contact
- Identifying Information of Individual(s) Needing Outreach
 - Name(s), if available
 - Location of individual(s)
 - Description of individual(s): This would include items such as Male/Female, Race, Body Features (Hair color, facial hair, height, other unique markings), clothing, belongings.
 - Any consistent time frames the individual(s) are present
 - Any other important information or concerns

Safety Sensitive Situations

For all situations/events that are considered “unsafe,” please call 911.

These are instances where an individual may be at risk of harm to themselves, to individuals in the community, engaging in unsafe behavior in public, the presence of a weapon, harassment, aggressive behavior, and any other behavior that is considered unsafe.

If the individual has been experiencing homelessness or suspect they may be experiencing homelessness, please contact Street Outreach Services for follow-up assistance.

Behavioral Health Concerns

Many individuals who are experiencing homelessness may have experienced varying levels of trauma both prior to and during their experiences of homelessness. For some individuals, the emergence of mental health and/or substance use conditions may be present.

In the event that you feel that an individual is experiencing a mental health emergency, assistance can be provided through contacting one of these groups:

- DC Metropolitan Police Department (911)
- DC Department of Behavioral Health - Mobile Crisis ((202) 673-9319)
- DC Dept. of Behavioral Health Access Helpline- (1-888-793-4357)

If DC Metropolitan Police are in response, a Critical Incident Officer (CIO) may be able to conduct a behavioral health evaluation to determine whether or not the individual may require support/assistance through involuntary hospitalization (FD-12).

Shelter Services & Extreme Weather Information

Washington DC is one of three jurisdictions in the United States with a “Right to Shelter” law. There are a number of shelters available throughout Washington DC that individuals have the right to access to come in from the outdoors and certain extreme weather conditions.

Individuals can access the DC Shelter Hotline by calling 202-399-7093 or by dialing 311. Community members can also call this number on behalf of individuals. In many cases, transportation may be offered to assist individuals in getting to shelter locations.

A Heat Emergency is activated when the temperature of heat index reaches 95-degrees (F).

A Cold Weather Emergency is activated when the forecasted temperature (including wind chill) is 32-degrees (F) or below. It will also be activated for overnight services is 40-degrees (F) or below with a 50% or greater chance of precipitation.

During the Summer and Winter Seasons, the District of Columbia develops two emergency plans that increases services to help support DC residents with low-income, experiencing homelessness, or other emergency needs. These plans include an increase to seasonal shelter options/services, cooling/warming centers, and other pertinent services established to ease the impact of extreme weather on vulnerable populations.

Information on each plan can be found below.

Heat Emergency Plan: <https://hsema.dc.gov/page/heat-emergency-information>

Cold Weather Emergency Plan: <https://ich.dc.gov/page/winter-plan>

Encampments

The Office of the Deputy Mayor for Health and Human Services is in charge of working to address the presence of encampments of individuals/groups experiencing homelessness across the District of Columbia.

An encampment is defined as a set-up of an abode or place of residence of one or more persons on public property or an accumulation of personal belongings that is present even when the individual may not be.

Street Outreach services work with individuals within encampments to inform them of their rights and responsibilities as residents of the District of Columbia. If you notice the presence of an encampment and/or the accumulation of personal belongings within the Georgetown BID, please contact FP Street Outreach Services for check-in and follow-up.

For more information about Encampment Protocols, please visit the DMHHS website at: <https://dmhhs.dc.gov/page/encampments>

Panhandling

The presence of panhandling around businesses and public grounds is a common sight in most cities and Urban centers. In many cases, individuals experiencing homelessness and/or poverty engage in panhandling activities in ways to help address basic needs or to supplement extremely low income. Although it may be necessary for many individuals to survive, panhandling can be pervasive and concentrated enough to disturb visitors, businesses/employees, and residents.

Panhandling, most identified through the solicitation of money, can also include the exchange of other items of value such as food/water, medication, and other basic needs requests. The act of panhandling is not considered to be illegal unless it is conducted in an aggressive manner or at/near certain locations. These include:





- Asking, begging, or soliciting alms within 10 feet of an ATM
- On Buses, Metro Rails, Transportation Stations (Rail, Bus), and all Stops
- Asking, begging, or soliciting alms from an individual operating or occupying a motor vehicle in traffic on a public street
- On either private or residential property without permission from the owner or occupant.

Aggressive panhandling on public space is illegal. Aggressive panhandling is considered present by one or more of the following acts:

- Approaching, speaking to or following a person in a way that would cause a reasonable person to fear bodily harm or the commission of a crime;
- Touching a person in the course of soliciting without that person's consent;
- Continuously soliciting from or following a person after the person has made a negative response;
- Intentionally blocking or interfering with the safe passage of a person or a vehicle; and
- Acting with the intent of intimidating another person into giving money or another thing of value.

If you experience or observe the presence of aggressive panhandling, please contact the DC Metropolitan Police Department by dialing 911.

If you believe a person is in need of supportive services, please contact Street Outreach Services for engagement or by providing them with a resource card to local services and supports.

For information on the DC Code related to panhandling, please see the following website:
<https://code.dccouncil.us/dc/council/code/titles/22/chapters/23/>

Crowding Obstructing, and Incommoding

Under the DC Code, individuals or groups of individuals may not crowd, obstruct, or incommode any street, alley, sidewalk, building entrance, park, passageways of buildings, and other public conveyance. Law enforcement may ask the individual(s) to move from the area in order to ensure safe passage and traffic flow. Repeated concerns can result in penalties and/or misdemeanor charges.

Street Outreach Services work to ensure that individuals are aware of these rules in order to mitigate the need for law enforcement involvement and potential charges that could create future barriers in accessing housing/employment.

More information on this DC Code can be found at:
<https://code.dccouncil.us/dc/council/code/sections/22-1307.html>