

## What to do when you want to help a person

- Get to know the people living on the streets in your area and treat them like any neighbor.
- Encourage/help them call public services like **211** and the **CFTH Housing Hotline: 360-695-9677** (year round).
- Contact the **Council for the Homeless Coordinated Outreach** staff. Outreach staff build trust and help people to be safe and connect to services. [councilforthehomeless.org/contact-outreach-staff](https://councilforthehomeless.org/contact-outreach-staff).
- Share the **Council for the Homeless Resource Guide** [councilforthehomeless.org/clark-county-resource-guide](https://councilforthehomeless.org/clark-county-resource-guide)

## Keep in mind

- Clark County's homeless service providers know how to help our unhoused neighbors. It is what they are trained to do. The Coordinated Outreach Teams represent seven agencies working together.
- Many organizations directly help people experiencing homelessness and work to increase affordable housing. Find an organization that you want to support, and ask them what they need.
- Avoid perpetuating stereotypes and myths. People experiencing homelessness are not defined by their housing status. It's often temporary, and it is likely they sought housing and/or shelter and there was none available.
- Advocate within your circle of influence to help make things better for our unhoused neighbors.

## Learn more

**Attend** CFTH community education webinars on homelessness topics [councilforthehomeless.org/community-education](https://councilforthehomeless.org/community-education)

**Sign up** for the CFTH digital newsletter [councilforthehomeless.org/newsletter](https://councilforthehomeless.org/newsletter)

**Follow** CFTH on social media

 [facebook.com/CouncilfortheHomeless](https://facebook.com/CouncilfortheHomeless)

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 [instagram.com/council\\_for\\_the\\_homeless](https://instagram.com/council_for_the_homeless)

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CLARK COUNTY, WA

# Community Toolkit on Homelessness

## What's Inside:

✓ Do's and Don'ts

✓ Common Scenarios

✓ How to Help



[CouncilForTheHomeless.org](https://CouncilForTheHomeless.org)

# The Basics





## Do

- Make eye contact and speak kindly. Be respectful. Determine how you want to engage. Your capacity to engage will vary from person to person and based on the situation at-hand.
- Contact the **Council for the Homeless Coordinated Outreach** staff. Outreach staff build trust and help people to be safe and connect to services. [councilforthehomeless.org/contact-outreach-staff](http://councilforthehomeless.org/contact-outreach-staff).
- If someone is being disruptive, homeless or not, de-escalate the situation if you are comfortable doing so or remove yourself from the area if possible.
- If someone is threatening harm to self or others, acting recklessly or violently, or having delusions, call the **Clark County Crisis Line: 360-696-9560** (Available 24/7). You can also call 911.
- Let people know your boundaries on your property. If people are doing something illegal and won't leave, call 911.

## Do Not

- Assume anything about the person with whom you are engaging. They may or may not be tired, hungry, happy, sad, dealing with substance use disorder, facing a mental or physical crisis, or any number of scenarios.
- Enter into a situation you sense is out of your scope as a community member.
- Offer food, use of your phone, or money, unless you are equipped and willing to handle repeat requests.
- Permit anyone to camp on your property, unless you have developed a trusting relationship with them.
- Permit anyone to store personal belongings on your property.

## Quick Connect: Who to Call

-  **360-696-9650: Clark County Crisis Line** for people who are in mental health crisis and do not pose imminent threat to themselves or others. Available 24/7.
-  **360-695-9677: CFTH Housing Hotline** for anyone in need of services like emergency shelter serving Vancouver and Clark County.
-  **360-487-8626: City of Vancouver Homeless Assistance and Resources Team (HART)** serving Vancouver city limits.
-  **911:** For people who are in medical distress or in a mental health crisis and pose an imminent threat to themselves or others.

## Here's what to do if you own a business:

### Someone is sleeping/loitering at the front door:

- It is good to establish a cordial relationship. Introduce yourself. Ask the person their name.
- Politely ask them to leave using sincere empathetic language that deflects the request from yourself to a third party (e.g. the property owner asks them to leave, even if that person is you). This reduces the power-dynamic, and will help in future interactions.
- Let them know where they **can** be, as opposed to only where they **cannot** be.
- If they are not cooperative, refer to the **Quick Connect: Who to Call** and determine which number is best for the situation. Avoid confrontation and keep a safe distance if you feel threatened in any way.

### Someone exhibiting mental health symptoms has walked into your business:

- Exhibiting mental health symptoms does not necessarily lead to dangerous and disruptive behavior. If they purchase something, treat them like any other customer. This sets a great example for your employees and patrons. If they do not make a purchase, let them know the area is for customers, and politely ask them to leave.
- If they are symptomatic and disruptive: Ask them to leave clearly and politely. Your safety, and the safety of your patrons is your priority. If they remain in the facility call the **Clark County Crisis Line** or appropriate number from the **Quick Connect: Who to Call** list. Based on the situation, you may want to call 911 if the situation feels dangerous.



Be Kind



Advocate



Give Time



Donate