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To: Mayor Ted Wheeler
Commissioner JoAnn Hardesty
Commissioner Chloe Eudaly
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Cc: Multnomah County Chair Deborah Kafoury
Marc Jolin, Joint office of Homeless Services
Dr. Jennifer Vines, MCHD
Kim Toevs, MCHD

From: Lucas Hillier, HUCIRP Manager

Re: Homelessness and Urban Camping Impact Reduction Program COVID-19 Phase 1 Protocol

Since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, the City of Portland has followed CDC and local public health guidance to mitigate the spread of COVID-19 among the City's unsheltered population. To support their ability to maintain recommended physical distance, we have encouraged people in encampments to remain in place. The Homelessness and Urban Camping Impact Reduction Program (HUCIRP) has not moved encampments, has continued to offer trash services, and has maintained 42 hygiene stations located in proximity to encampments throughout Portland community. Through the Joint Office of Homeless Services, the City has worked with dozens of outreach organizations to provide COVID-19 safety health information and safety supplies to those who are unsheltered to help make it safe for them to remain in place.

Over time, a significant number of unsheltered community members have relocated themselves and are now highly concentrated in numbers in specific areas around the community. Since March 12, the number of large-congregate campsites – defined as campsites with more than 10 structures present – has grown from 3 to 40.

While their decision to congregate is understandable, these areas have created significant public health and public safety challenges, including an inability for the unsheltered individuals and other people using these public spaces to comply with public health physical distancing guidelines.



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In many cases, these tents and structures are set up in ways that don't adhere to physical distancing guidelines intended to reduce the spread of COVID-19. They are not allowing for the CDC-prescribed 12 x 12 feet of space per individual, providing six feet of separation between tents, limiting gatherings to 10 or fewer people, and they do not allow the public to use sidewalks and access businesses, housing units, bus stops, and other amenities without violating the expectation that people maintain six feet of distance from each other. In short, these large congregate encampments increase the risk of viral transmission to community members who are required to navigate these public spaces. As the community moves toward re-opening, these circumstances will only create greater risks – risks that are balanced against the risks associated with moving a group of unsheltered people who are concentrated in a certain area.

These large campsites can also be a hub for victimization and trafficking. Moreover, they create additional public safety challenges: specifically, the presence of large amounts of human waste, large quantities of improperly discarded drug paraphernalia, and scattered debris.

To manage the risks created by these large congregate encampments under current protocol and guidance, the City currently dispatches first responders and clean-up crews multiple times a week, and daily in most cases. Ultimately, this increases the risk of viral transmission to our first responders and vendors.

For these reasons, HUCIRP has developed a plan for a limited resumption of posting, cleaning, and personal property removal to address situations where the public health and safety risks associated with individuals moving some distance from their current location are outweighed by the risks and impacts created by the encampment remaining in its current state.

Under this plan, in the areas with the highest concentrations of unsanctioned tent camping, the resumption of formal posting processes will be preceded by at least seven days of coordinated social services outreach conducted in partnership with the Joint Office of Homeless Services and community-based service organizations.

Outreach workers will provide information on the timing of the resumption of formal notice posting, the modified criteria for notice posting (see below), and the availability of shelter and other social service resources. The goal is to minimize the necessity for formal postings and any subsequent law enforcement involvement by working with the unsheltered populations in these high-impact areas to connect with services (to the extent available), and to reduce the health and safety impact of their camping by relocating as needed.

HUCIRP will use a modified version of its impact matrix tool to determine which encampments can be posted and which sites will be prioritized for posting and cleaning. The modifications to the tool would set as a minimum threshold for posting a site that:

- Has eight or more occupied structures; or
- Is blocking someone's ability to use public sidewalks, paths, transit stations, public restrooms, or building entrances as intended without violating the guidance to maintain six feet of distance from other persons at all times; or
- Scores 65 or higher on HUCIRP's Risk Assessment, primarily focusing on the "impact on neighborhood livability" and "conspicuous drug use" scores; or

- Has received credible reports of criminal behavior (other than camping) related to an inhabitant of the campsite as verified by the Portland Police Bureau or the Multnomah County Sheriff's Office.

Sites meeting these minimum thresholds would be prioritized for posting using the normal matrix criteria to determine which are having the highest impact and thus require the most immediate intervention. In addition to leading with a coordinated outreach strategy in the most heavily impacted areas, and using a modified matrix assessment that balances the risks of moving an encampment with the risks of leaving it, HUCIRP will also use a modified posting procedure to provide additional advance written notice prior to any posting.

When a campsite meets the above thresholds, City staff and/or campsite cleanup vendors will do the following:

- Provide a written warning notice that the campsite has been identified as presenting a health and safety hazard to occupants and the general public.
- Share information with campers about how to make adjustments to their spaces and provide campers with time to do so. Campsite cleanup vendors will provide locations where the City has placed hygiene units.
- After 24 hours, if the campsite still violates the above thresholds, the campsite will be posted to be cleaned and cleared.

The posting warning and notice will include the following information:

To mitigate the spread of COVID-19:

1. *Please keep tents 12 feet apart from individuals not in your immediate household.*
2. *Limit campsites to fewer than 8 structures.*
3. *Ensure that the public can reasonably maintain six feet of distance from you and your property at all times.*
4. *Leave 10 ft. of space from any doorway, transit stop, public restroom or other amenity that has a higher number of people coming and going from the location.*
5. *Refrain from sharing cigarettes, phones, utensils and other commonly shared items.*
6. *Wash hands as much as possible for at least 20 seconds with soap and water (will be advised of the locations the City has placed hygiene units).*
7. *Use hand sanitizer when possible, rubbing it through fingers – do not wipe it off.*
8. *Refrain from touching nose, mouth, or eyes.*
9. *Maintain the area around your campsite free of improperly disposed of soiled items, bio-hazards, and refuse that can be a source of disease transmission.*

When cleaning a campsite, cleanup vendors will make best efforts to clean the site once campers have left the area to limit close interaction. If this is not possible, cleanup crews will request that items that are not claimed as property be placed six feet away so that vendors can safely dispose of them.

All campsite cleanup vendors received COVID-19 specific outreach training in March through the Joint Office of Homeless Services. If individuals at any location present COVID-19 symptoms, they will notify HUCIRP, so that the Multnomah County Health Department can respond based on their protocols.

Thank you for your partnership in prioritizing public safety for our community as we navigate this crisis. Please reach out with any questions.

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