

Homeless Outreach and Engagement in Rural Areas

Wednesday April 12th, 2023





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Real World Solutions for Systems Change

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Objectives

As a result of participating in today's session, participants will be able to:

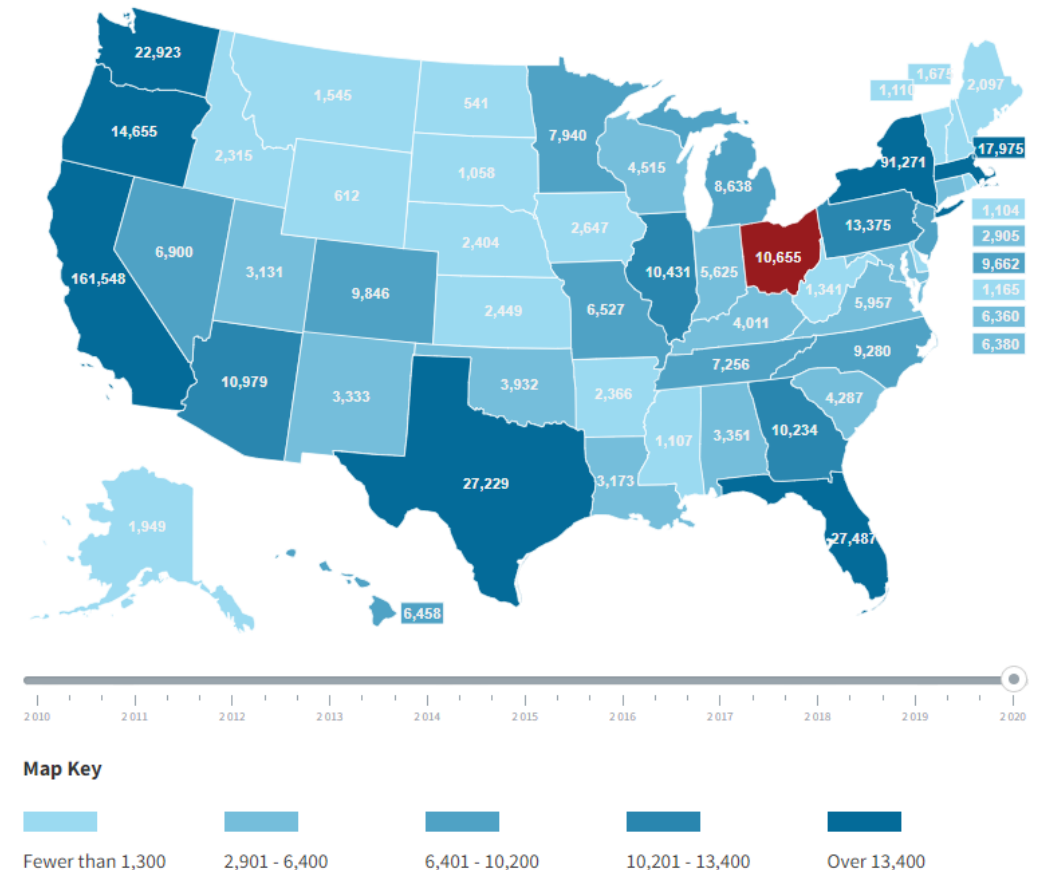
- Name at least three contributors to rural homelessness
- Identify at least three factors that make it difficult to identify and address rural homelessness
- Discuss strategies for outreach
- Identify the difference between outreach and engagement



Who Experiences Homelessness in Ohio?

“As of January 2022, Ohio had an estimated 10,654 [people] experiencing homelessness on any given day, as reported by Continuums of Care to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD).”

Total People Experiencing Homelessness



Populations Monitored in Annual Point in Time Count: 2022

People Experiencing Chronic Homelessness: 1,023

Individuals: 7,440

People in Families: 3,214

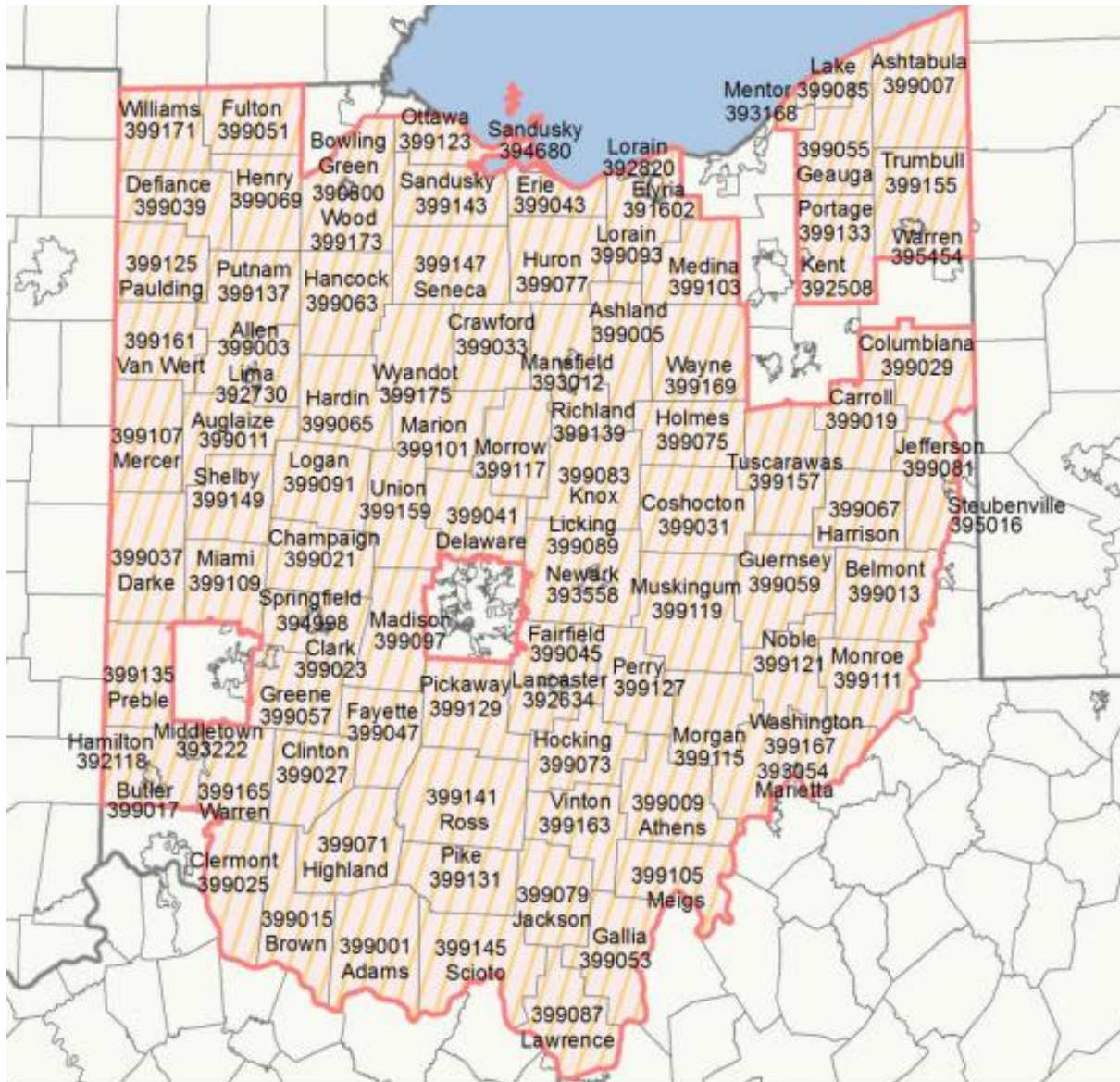
Unaccompanied Youth: 706

People Experiencing Unsheltered Homelessness: 1,948

Veterans: 633

Assessing homelessness in rural and frontier areas is extremely difficult, because many of these areas do not receive the funding from the US Department of Housing and Urban Development. Since HUD is the agency that mandates annual point-in-time counts, rural and frontier communities are often left out.

Balance of State Continuum of Care (CoC) Ohio



Data Point	Number
Homeless Households	2,952
Homeless People	4,075
Emergency Shelter	2,239
Transitional Housing	530
Unsheltered	1,306
Severely Mentally Ill	797
Chronic Substance Abuse	424
Victims of Domestic Violence	366
Unaccompanied Youth	253

[CoC PopSub CoC OH-507-2022 OH 2022.pdf \(hudexchange.info\)](#)

Sheltered and Unsheltered Homelessness

Sheltered

An individual or family in emergency shelters, safe havens, and transitional housing projects.

Unsheltered

An individual or family who lacks a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence, meaning sleeping in a place not designed for or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation, including a car, park, abandoned building, bus or train station, airport, camping ground, or other place not meant for human habitation.

Unsheltered Homelessness

People live in unsheltered areas, often rural, in situations with minimal access to potable drinking water, waste disposal, burning standards, safe electrical systems or structures.



Key Drivers of Homelessness

Lack of
affordable
housing

Poverty

Racial
disparities

Violence

Rural Homelessness

- Emergency shelters are small or absent
- People are doubled or tripled up
- “Camping” year round
- Dwellings might be unfit for human habitation
- Few rentals and high home ownership rates



What is Outreach?

OUTREACH is the practice of seeking out individuals in unsheltered locations or locations that are frequented by individuals experiencing homelessness, in order to engage them in services and connect them to housing opportunities.



Identify: Strategies



Know Where to Look



Rural

- Forests, creeks
- RVs/Campgrounds
- Underpasses
- Encampments

Gas stations

Libraries

Ask law enforcement

Approach for the First Time



**Start with
your name**



**Be
respectful
and natural**



**Be non-
threatening**

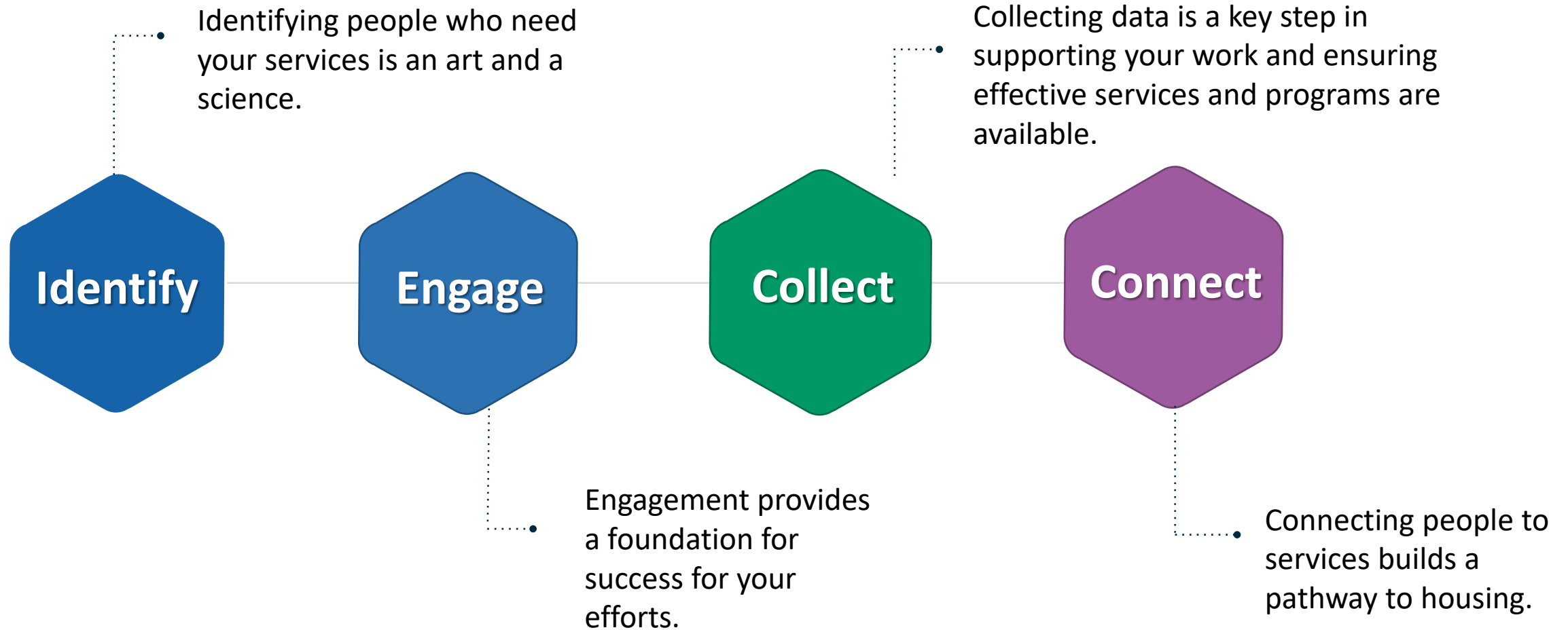


**Offer
something
tangible**



**Explain how
you can help**

The Outreach Process: Overview



Identifying and Approaching People Who Are Unhoused



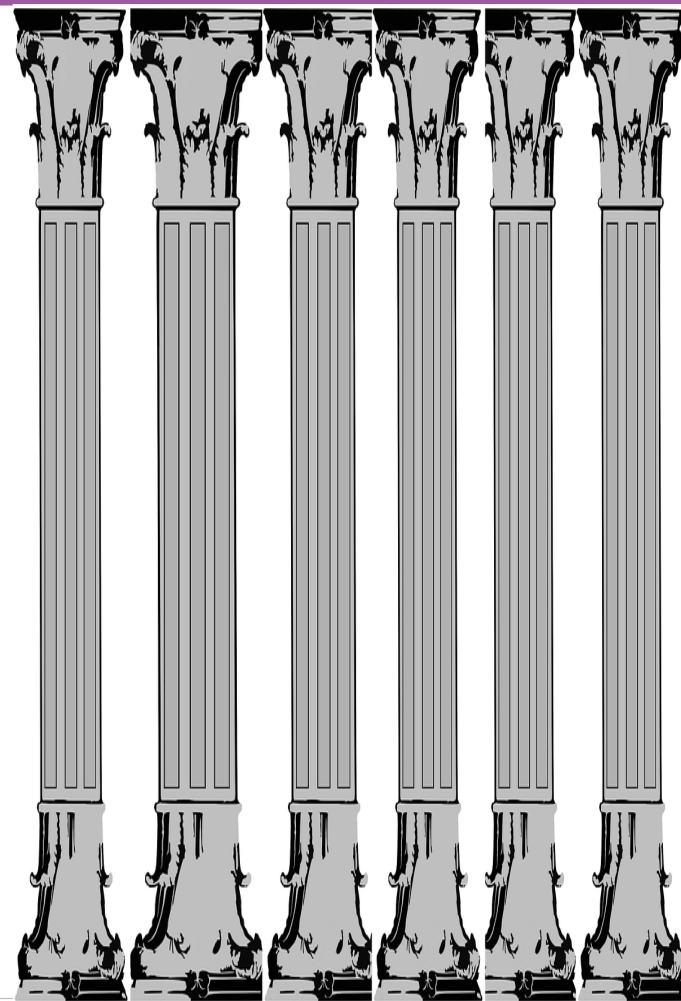
Waiting for people to come to us doesn't work...





The Six Pillars of Engagement

1. Show up ready
2. Learn the environment (people, places things)
3. Be present with intent (listen for the stories; develop a reputation)
4. Always offer something (food, water, sunscreen, Naloxone, blankets...)
5. Keep coming back
6. Meet people where they are



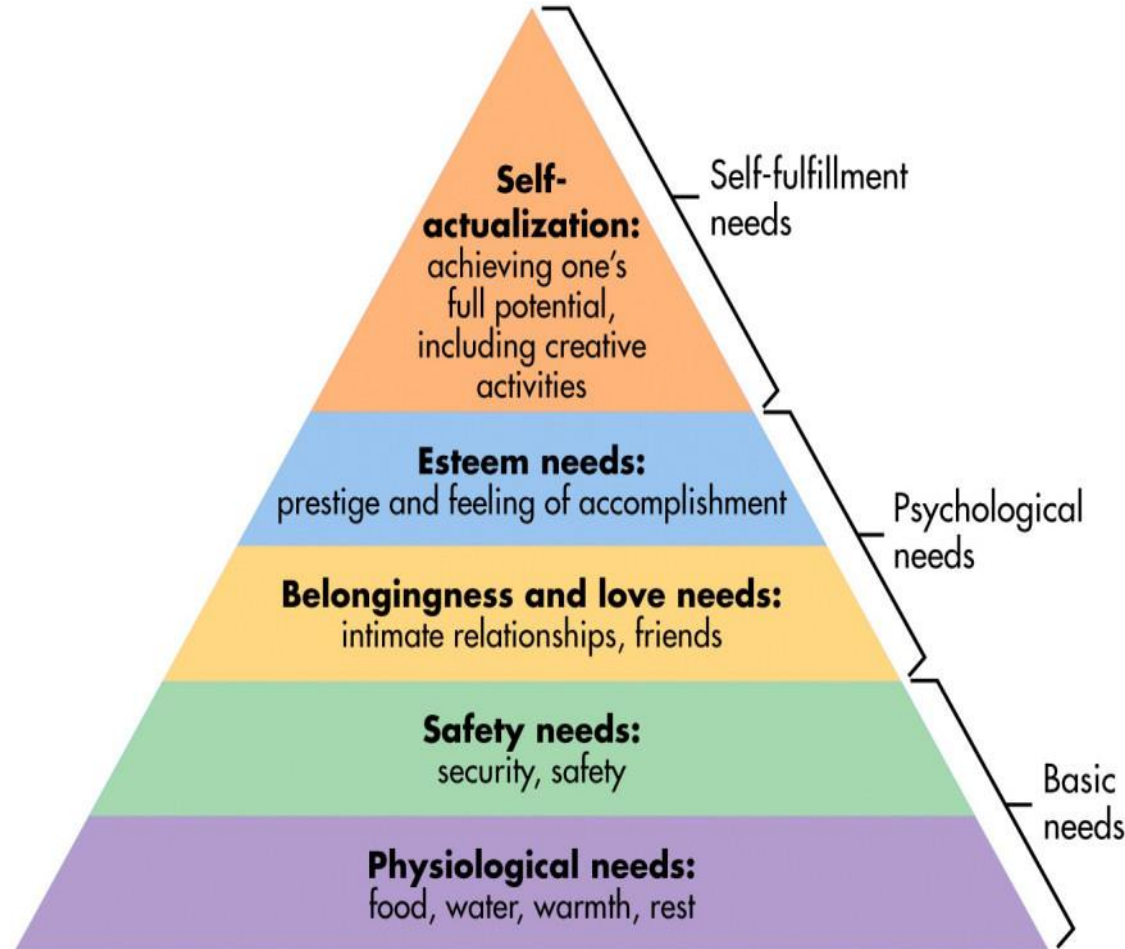


Guiding Principles

- Services are:
 - Client-centered
 - Trauma-informed
 - Strength-based



Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs



Needs lower down in the hierarchy must be satisfied before people can address needs on higher levels.

Physiological Needs

Food, water, warmth, rest



Safety Needs

Security, safety



Belonging and Love

Friends, intimate relationships



Determine Housing Status



What is your living situation right now?

Are you staying with friends? At a motel? In a vehicle?

Where did you spend last night?

Assess and Address Immediate Needs

Assess

Ask questions and visually check to see how the person is doing.

Is the person
physically well?

Is the person
mentally well?

Are there any
emergency needs?



Address

Offer items and suggestions to support safety and well-being.

- Food
- Socks, gloves, and hand warmers
- Hygiene items

- Offer options for counseling or other treatment if appropriate

- De-escalate
- Contact appropriate services

Engagement Strategies



Engagement: Strategies

Engagement is the development of a collaborative relationship with a person that supports their needs and preferences.

Build rapport

**Meet people
where they are**

**Stay in touch and
keep your
promises**



Building Rapport

Rapport is a feeling of harmony and confidence that exists between two people.

Be Thoughtful in Your Approach

- Be warm, positive, and friendly in demeanor, tone, and words.
- Match vocal tone or energy level.

Build Cooperation and Trust

- Show interest in well-being.
- Voice gratitude for taking the time to talk.
- Listen and respond with intention.
- Validate their experiences.

Offer Ongoing Support

- Express sensitivity and offer to connect to help.
- Recognize their level of interest in change.
- Stay in touch.
- Follow through on commitments.

Determine Needs and Preferences & Offer Options



Professional Ingredients: *Engagement*



Tips for Staying Safe

- Always let your supervisor know your location
- Go in pairs
- Seek a trusted insider who can serve as your guide
- Enter encampments slowly and cautiously, and if possible, with an invitation.
- Don't interrupt illegal activity



More safety tips

- Dress for the environment
- Wear closed shoes and socks
- Be aware of where you put your hands and do NOT touch your face until you've washed
- Take hand sanitizers
- Come with gifts (hygiene packs, water, food, blankets...)
- Never sneak up on someone
- Respect the individual's home
- Clearly identify yourself and your agency
- Listen
- Be aware of body language

The 3 Homes Theory

1. Personal space
2. Physical space (where they live)
3. Community in which they live

Respect all three homes as you would if you visited your neighbor or your friend



Know the Encampments

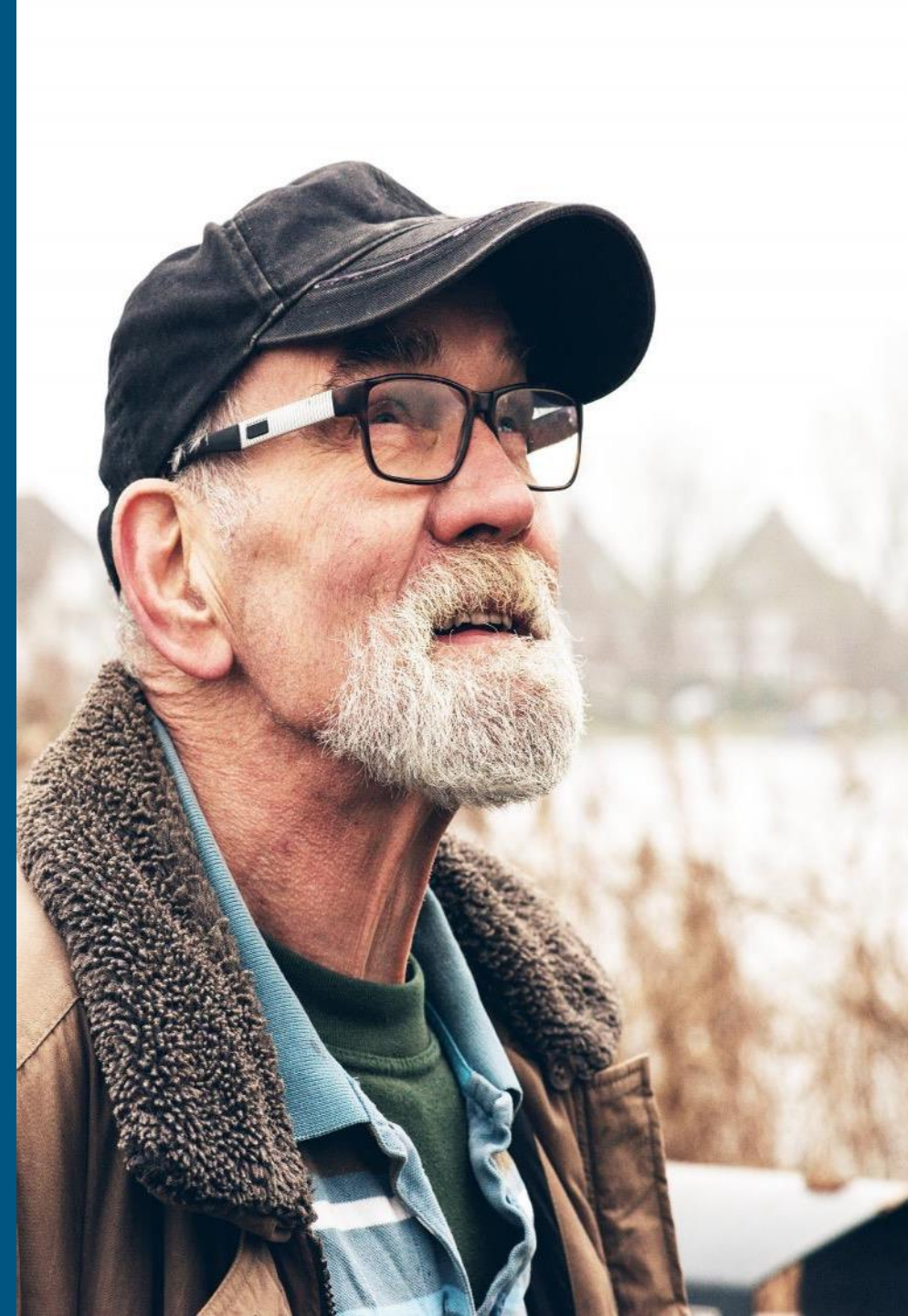


- Learn the needs of each encampment prior to engagement
- Spend time learning the culture of each encampment
- If possible, do initial outreach with people known to the camp for a warm handoff
- Focus initial efforts on identifying and establishing rapport with the encampment leader
- Tailor outreach based on encampment needs

Listening and Hearing

“When a person realizes he has been deeply heard, his eyes moisten. I think in some real sense he is weeping for joy. It is as though he were saying, ‘Thank God, somebody heard me. Someone know what it’s like to be me.’”

-- Carl Rogers







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