

Homelessness FAQ

How does the Municipality receive and handle reports of illegal camping?

Over the past two years, the Municipality of Anchorage (MOA) has developed a web-based mapping portal to report illegal camps. You can find the website portal [here](#).

This method of reporting and mapping sites has been a helpful tool for the community to provide input on illegal camp locations. In addition, this tool has increased the ability of the Anchorage Police Department (APD) and social service coordinators to locate these areas to provide referrals for services and housing. Through the use of the GIS mapping function, we've been able to put forward a new process for linking people in camps with resources and housing more quickly.

What happens after a report is submitted?

When a report is submitted and received by APD, the Community Action Policing (CAP) Team posts a notice to vacate the camp. Campers have 10 days to gather their belongings and vacate the premises. Concurrently, CAP notifies the Parks and Recreation Department of the posted camp. Parks and Recreation works with Community Work Service to schedule a clean-up following the 10-day notice.

Can I clean up a site myself?

Volunteer groups may participate in clean up efforts to collect garbage, litter, and waste when public lands are open and accessible. Volunteers may assist in Municipal-led efforts after submitting a waiver to the MOA. The Municipality does not allow community groups to assist in the abatement or cleaning of camps that are still inhabited by people. The MOA has a duty to adhere to strict legal processes required to remove people and their belongings from occupied camps.

Who provides outreach to people camping?

The MOA's Mobile Intervention Team is the lead for connecting outreach and social service providers with those who are camping within the MOA.

What happens during camp outreach?

The Mobile Intervention Team assesses what needs each individual has and refers them to the agency that can best meet their needs within the community. The team also identifies people who are not on the housing list within Anchorage and refers them to coordinated entry through the Anchorage Coalition to End Homelessness.

Is there enough housing for those experiencing homelessness?

The MOA does not have enough housing or shelter to meet demand. There are several initiatives to increase housing, but we currently have limited places for people to stay while they wait for apartments and vouchers to become available.

How do people obtain housing?

The Anchorage Coalition to End Homelessness oversees the coordinated entry list, and the most vulnerable individuals receive housing first. Once an individual has reached the top of the list, the Coalition assesses whether or not they meet the requirements of a specific housing unit. In addition, each housing voucher comes with its own set of criteria. Depending on the voucher, a homelessness history of between 1 to 3 years needs to be established. Many people do not have an ID, benefits, or other basic paperwork that is required for the application process. It can take anywhere from 30 to 60 days to gather the necessary documentation in order to complete the application and verify if the individual meets the criteria for the open voucher.

Who is homeless in Anchorage? What are the demographics?

The majority of people in Anchorage who are experiencing homelessness are middle-aged males. However, homelessness affects everyone—children, families, women, men, youth, and adults are all homeless. Currently, 25% of the shelter population in Anchorage is over the age of 55, and people in their 70s and 80s are also experiencing homelessness.

Do people pay rent once they're housed?

Most of the vouchers that we have in Anchorage require that an individual pay 30% of their income toward rent. If individuals do not have an income, they do not pay rent. Other vouchers require a \$25 rent payment each month.

Why are people homeless? Is it a choice?

Some people choose to be homeless, but others are homeless due to unemployment or other life factors. Many homeless individuals have mental illnesses that impact their ability to live independently, or they struggle with drug or alcohol addiction.

What should I do when I see someone panhandling?

Encourage individuals to seek services—this is how so they get connected to benefits, housing, case management, and other social support systems. By encouraging them to seek services, you are empowering them to be more independent and less dependent on the community to continually meet an immediate need.