



# City of Seattle

Mayor Edward B. Murray

## State of the City: Homelessness Response Consolidated Action Plan Frequently Asked Questions

Mayor Ed Murray will be temporarily activating the Emergency Operations Center (EOC) to accelerate and coordinate our response to the homelessness crisis in Seattle.

Led by Director of City Operations Fred Podesta, activating the EOC will utilize a successful model to manage coordination of both internal departments and external partners to more urgently provide services and lower barriers to housing for people living on our streets. While work at the EOC will be centered around accelerating the work of Pathways Home and getting individualized services to people living outside, the collaborative model will also foster innovative ideas to address this crisis. Work at the EOC will include:

1. Accelerating the implementation of Pathways Home, the City's plan to address homelessness and the guiding principles of getting individualized services to people living unsheltered and getting them inside quickly.
2. Launching the Navigation Team, a specially trained group of outreach workers and Seattle Police officers. Navigation Team members will go into unauthorized encampments throughout the city to help identify and implement individual solutions that break down barriers preventing unsheltered people from moving indoors.
3. Addressing trash and associated public health hazards to provide a safer environment for both people living unsheltered and the community at-large. People living in unauthorized encampments are more vulnerable to crime and abuse, making this work critical to their safety.

The Seattle EOC's established mission is to minimize the impact of emergencies and disasters on the community through coordinated planning, information-sharing and resource management between all City departments, partnering agencies and the public. In this case, the City is using the coordination, communications and tracking tools of the EOC, and applying it to the work we are doing to address the critical needs of people living outside. This model provides a daily check-in on issues and solutions, engaging all of the participants in focused tactics and nimble response.

### **Why is the City doing this?**

Homelessness is a humanitarian crisis with many causes. Those living on our streets face tremendous challenges, from the loss of a job or home to severe mental health or substance abuse disorders, that the City is working to help address.

The impact this crisis has on the individuals experiencing homelessness as well as the broader community is a growing challenge. Originally, the State of Emergency on Homelessness was intended to invoke greater help from our state and federal partners, but over a year later, we are still waiting for that needed support.

The City has already implemented many initiatives and new resources in the last three years, led by Pathways Home, the plan to create a more integrated homelessness services system based on individualized services and measurable goals. This plan has the core mission of breaking down barriers to moving people inside. As part of the effort to tailor services, the City launched the Navigation Team, will be opening a new Navigation Center, and is implementing the Bridging the Gap plan to address the immediate needs of 3,000 people living on our streets. More than \$100 million has been budgeted for this work over two years.

**How is this different from what the City is already doing around homelessness?**

We are capitalizing on the EOC's successful, proven unified structure that brings all players into the same room to coordinate efforts and ensure an efficient operation. This structure also has many resources in place that facilitate quick and clear coordination, communication and execution of duties. Using the EOC model, the City will tap into all of its resources to align our efforts around the current principles of Pathways Home, and to foster more innovative solutions to the homelessness crisis.

**How is this different from a typical EOC activation (e.g., related to severe weather or other acts of nature, massive public events, etc.)?**

While employing the EOC for the homelessness crisis is unconventional, aiding those living on our streets requires the kind of coordinated, citywide effort the EOC is designed to facilitate. This activation will be open-ended, as the City works to address this crisis from many angles, and will include daily check-ins with all representatives, followed by on the ground work to help people living on our streets.

**Who is involved?**

Like other events where the EOC is engaged, all City departments will have some role, whether leading specific programs or simply providing resources to the effort. City departments already partner both internally and externally with stakeholder agencies and organizations, and social service, shelter and housing providers to help people living on our streets move inside. The EOC has been a successful model to coordinate with internal and external partners such as King County, Public Health, WSDOT, Washington State Patrol, the United Way of King County and other service providers.

**What are the goals of this effort?**

The City's strategy, Pathways Home, is guiding all the work we do to move people into housing, which is our ultimate goal. With this in mind, the goals of the EOC activation include helping those living outdoors move into shelter as quickly as possible by developing an individual pathway to housing based on their needs. The activation will support the Navigation Team, which focuses on solutions for individuals, helping people living unsheltered move to safer alternatives and connect them with services to ensure their stability.

Additionally, the City will continue to focus on collecting trash on public property to reduce the associated public health hazards in unauthorized encampments and in the community. This work will be done based on the principles laid out in Bridging the Gap, which detailed that new protocols for encampment cleanups must ensure the civil rights of residents are respected.

**Is the City still using the Pathways Home plan?**

Yes. The City is focused on making the support system more efficient and effective to move people into housing as quickly as possible and offer individualized services. This plan is called Pathways Home and it includes six strategies that revamp the entire service delivery system. We are working with shelters to

increase emergency shelter capacity and expanding access to those services. See [www.seattle.gov/pathwayshome](http://www.seattle.gov/pathwayshome) for more.

**How long will the City be using the EOC?**

The City is committed to helping people move indoors as quickly as possible. We will use the EOC as long as it is needed.

**What is the cost?**

City departments will utilize existing resources for this effort. It is not anticipated that new funds will be required for this coordination. However, Mayor Murray announced an effort to double the funding to address homelessness during his State of the City speech, to significantly accelerate and expand the City's work under Pathways Home.