



# **Training for Parks and Recreational Department On**

**People Experiencing  
Homelessness Accessing  
City Buildings**

# Homelessness

A person who does not have permanent housing.



# Person First Language

Person first language recognizes the individuality, equality and dignity of each person. Remembering that above all else, people are people. Putting a person before their housing status, diagnosis, appearance, etc. is vital in remembering that everyone you encounter is a person first.

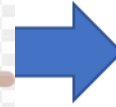
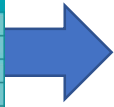
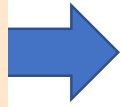
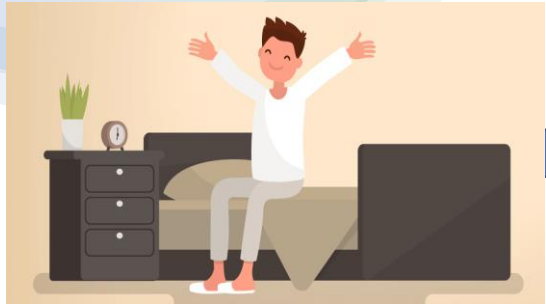
## Switching Outdated Terms to Refer to People:

- Homeless Man
- Handicapped Lady
- Wheelchair Bound Person
- Blind Lady
- Mentally Challenged Man

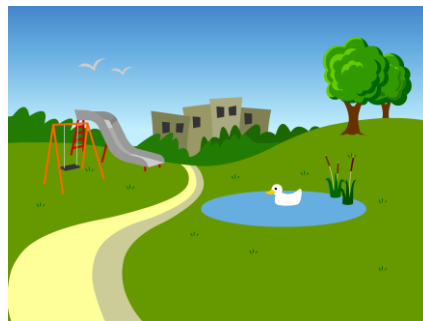
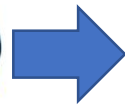
## To Terms Putting the Person First:

- Man experiencing homelessness
- Lady living with a disability
- They use a wheelchair
- Lady who is visually impaired
- Man with a development or intellectual delay

# A Day in A Life



# A Day in A Life




# Debunking Myths

**“It’s a choice. People choose to be homeless.”**

## Top 5 Reason’s in Denton County:

- Unable to pay rent/mortgage - **13.1%** of people in our community reported this
- Unemployment - **12.7%** of people in our community reported this
- Physical/mental disabilities - **7.9%** of people in our community reported this
- Lack of assistance or resources - **11.4%** of people in our community reported this
- Family/Friend/Roommate problems - **13.8%** of people in our community reported this



A dark blue, irregularly shaped graphic with a splatter effect, containing white text. The graphic is centered on a white background and has a rough, hand-painted appearance with some lighter blue and white splatters around its edges.

What Being Service  
Resistant Can Really  
Mean?

# Switching the Narrative

## Homelessness is:

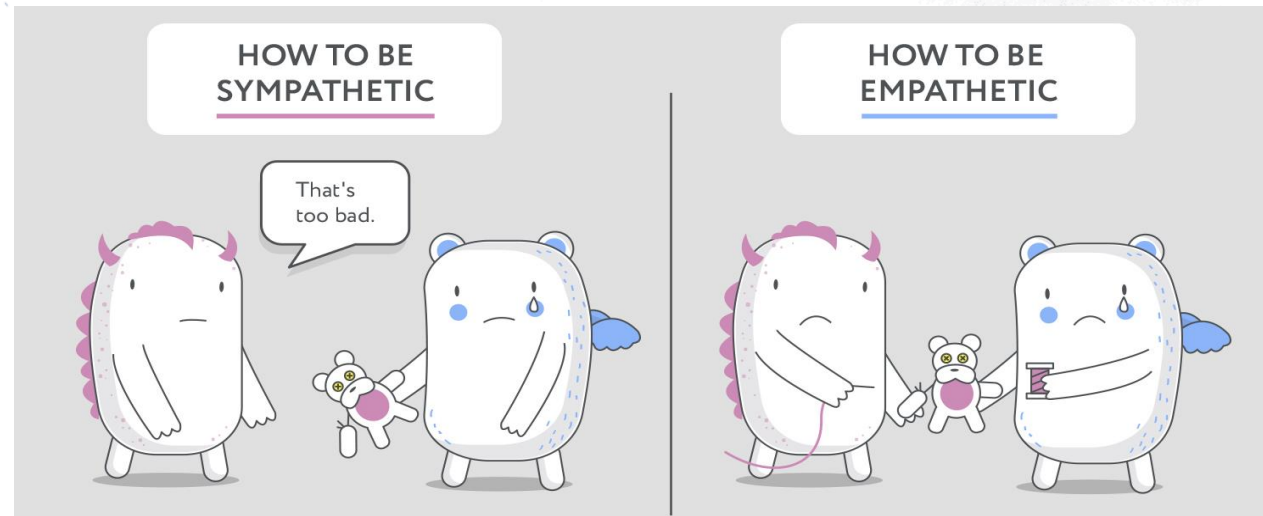
- Complex
- Traumatic
- Stressful

## Understanding can be:

- Eye Opening
- Helpful
- Hard



# Sympathy VS. Empathy



Feeling compassion, sadness, pity, etc. for someone else's misfortune. It can easily be explained by saying you feel bad for someone, but you don't understand what it's like to be in their shoes.

The ability to imagine yourself in the situation of the person while having the capacity to experience their emotions, ideas, opinions, etc. in that situation.

# Setting Up Healthy Boundaries

Empathizing with a person does allow you to have a more rich, human interaction with them. Though boundaries should always play an important role when helping people living in crisis.

## **Do's for maintaining healthy boundaries:**

- Recognize your own personal boundaries.
- Avoid getting into situations that could be misunderstood.
- Check and confirm before you say “Yes” or elude to someone being accepted into an agency, program, etc.

## **Don'ts for maintaining health boundaries:**

- Give out your personal contact information such as home address, phone number, etc.
- Become emotionally over-involved.
- Accept any form of harassment/violence from the other person.
- Lend money/material goods or ever borrow from the other person.
- Make promises you may not be able to keep

# Debunking Myths

**“If they don’t want to be homeless, why don’t they just get a job and pull them selves up?”**

## **5 Common Reasons Why:**

- Experiencing homelessness can cause you to distance yourself from your previous support systems
- Getting a job can be difficult if you do not have:
  - 1 to 2 forms of ID
  - Good contact method
  - Reliable transportation
  - A consistent sleep schedule, because your sleeping in a shelter or encampment
  - Method of washing clothes so you have a fresh set daily
  - Ability to buy work uniform or items needed for work
- Applying for any sort of assistance or job requires an ID and many times during the crisis of homelessness, your possessions are misplaced or taken.
- Criminal history allows for people to not have a good chance of having a fresh start.
- Taking on reshaping your life can seem daunting when you feel like your starting from square 1



# Common Behaviors

## **Loud voices / not using an “inside voice”:**

- This person could be hearing impaired or stay with someone who is hearing impaired.
- This person could also be staying in an encampment near a roadway and their volume of talking has slowly been adjusted because of their regular surroundings.

## **Agitation:**

- This person might be trying to make their voice heard because society often intentionally ignores people experiencing homelessness, and people often feel lost in the system
- This person also could have a mental health condition that makes them not realize their volume and/or frustration level

## **Substance Use:**

- Substance use can be a coping mechanism for homelessness, homelessness may not have been the result of substance use
- Stressors of homelessness can cause substance use to be an easy day to day solution

# How to De-escalate Situations

Many times people can become escalated because the constant stressors of homelessness as well as the environmental stressors of heat and humidity.

## Good steps towards De-escalation include:

1. Remain calm
2. Respect personal space
3. Practice active listening
4. Be empathetic and nonjudgmental
5. Identify wants, needs, feelings and boundaries



# Trauma Informed Care

Trauma is a deeply distressing experience from someone's past that can cause adverse reactions in situations.

SAMHSA statistics show that, "61 percent of men and 51 percent of women report exposure to at least one lifetime traumatic event, and 90 percent of clients in public behavioral health care settings have experienced trauma"

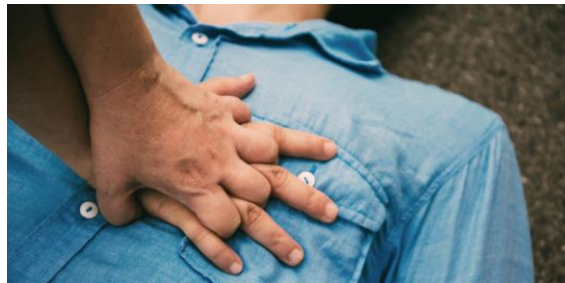
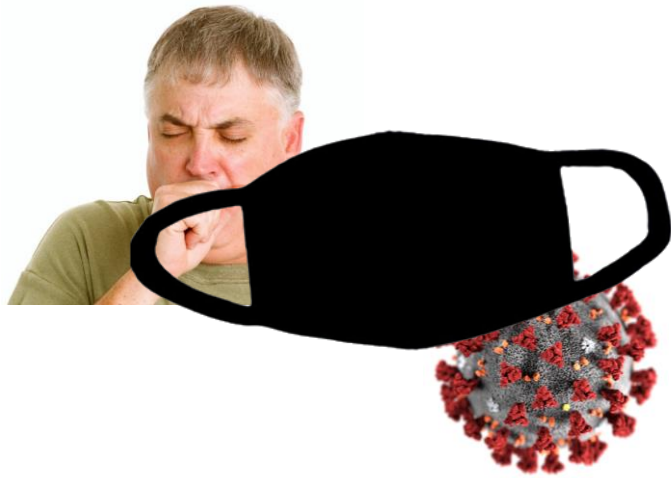
Being trauma informed is the open mindedness and compassion that everyone deserves because everyone may have a history of trauma.



# What Does Being Trauma Informed Mean?

- Understand trauma
- Create an environment of safety
- Active listening and avoid re-traumatization
  - Avoid reacting with anger or judgment to anything you do not understand and instead ask yourself what this individual may have gone through or what could have triggered such a reaction.
  - Avoid asking questions that are sensitive in nature such as “How did you become homeless?” or “What happened to you?”
- Compassion and understanding to lead to empowerment and safety plans

# Potential Hazards



# Practice Scenario : Community Center

There are two people charging their phones at the same outlet while they cool down. One person is attempting to watch a movie with no headphones while they relax, and the other person is talking on the phone with their significant other. An argument starts over the volume that both are at while using their phone and it has now turned into a screaming match in the corner of the room.

**What would you do?**

# Practice Scenario : Public/Private Doorway

You are driving to your next stop for work and as you stop at the red light you look over and notice someone is sleeping in front of a doorway to a closed business. They are just laying there with one small blanket over them, no bags or anything so it doesn't look like they've been there long, but they appear to have their eyes closed like they are asleep.

**What would you do?**

# Practice Scenarios : Senior Center

An older gentleman walks in. He's usually kind of cranky so you don't interact much with him most of the time. Today one of the rooms you usually have open is closed because the lights are being replaced, he usually goes to that room everyday. so you try stopping him as he walks in. "Excuse me sir, the room on the left is..." and he walks right past you like he does not care to hear you.

He gets to the room and loudly exclaims his frustration with the room being closed. Someone else has walked up to your desk to ask a question, right as he does this, so you don't go over immediately. He's frustrated and pulls the caution tape down and goes to his spot in the closed room. So much happens you forget he came in for a minute. About 15 minutes later another staff member says he's in the room and shouldn't be. By this time, he has laid out his stuff and is just about to relax.

You walk in and explain to him that you told him the room was closed and he should not be in here for safety reasons and that he needs to move his stuff to a different part of the center. He's furious and begins to scream at you about how incompetent you are and is refusing to move.

**What would you do?**

# Practice Scenarios : Cooling Station

Someone has come into the cooling station very upset about their items being stolen last night, including their phone they had just bought. Walking the 2 miles to the cooling station from their tent with no water and waiting outside for it to open has now caused their frustrations to increase. By the time they are in they are on the verge of tears and do not want to hear anything you have to say.

**What would you do?**



# Practice Scenarios : COVID-19

A woman has come into the building not wearing a mask. You advise her that masks are required to access the building and attempt to hand a disposable mask. She becomes escalated and begins loudly exclaiming her moral and religious beliefs on why she will not be wearing a mask and her belief on the reality of COVID. While you explain the importance of masks, she begins to push past you with her belongings.

**What would you do?**

# Homelessness in the Heat of a Texas Summer

- Sleep deprivation from intolerable sleeping conditions when sleeping outside
- Dehydration and exhaustion from continually walking all day to get to places or in order to not be loitering or trespassing
- Food/Drink related concerns:
  - Easy access to food outside of scheduled mealtimes can be difficult
  - Access to the ability to keep food cool in extreme heat can increase the chance of food related illnesses
  - Coffee and alcohol are diuretics which can increase dehydration
- Hot temperatures can cause some people to take risks they wouldn't usually take:
  - Beat the heat by swimming in dangerous and/or polluted waters
  - Trespassing/loitering to access cool areas
  - Drinking alcohol more heavily than normal to quench thirst if/when water is not easily accessed
  - Using drugs to escape the misery of the heat

# City of Denton Community Resources

## Emergency Shelters

- Monsignor King Outreach Center
  - 300 South Woodrow Ln
  - Doors open at 6:30 pm nightly
- Salvation Army of Denton
  - 1508 E McKinney St
  - Doors open at 5 pm nightly
- Denton County Friends of the Family
  - For victims of domestic violence and/or sexual assault
  - Call for openings and location - 940-382-7273
- Grace Like Rain
  - For women with children
  - Call for openings and location - 940-535-5557

# City of Denton Community Resources

- **Meals:**
  - Our Daily Bread at 300 W Oak St
    - Breakfast Mon-Sat from 9 am to 10 am
    - Lunch Mon-Sat from 11 am to 12:45 pm
  - Salvation Army of Denton
    - Dinner everyday at 6:30 pm
- **Mental Health:** Denton County MHMR - Crisis Line Phone Number is 800-762-0157
- **Physical Health:** Health Services of North Texas at Serve Denton – 306 N Loop 288 Suite 200 Denton TX 76209
  - Mon – Fri 8 am to 6 pm (5 pm on Wed and Fri)
  - Call for appointment at 940-381-1501
- **Veteran’s Services:** Denton County Veteran’s Center at 400 S Carroll Blvd
  - Mon – Fri 8:30 am to 4:30 pm
- **Clothing:** Vision Ministries at 626 Wainwright St
  - Mon – Thurs 12:30 pm to 4 pm

# What are we doing about homelessness?

## Denton County's Community Response



### Barriers Fund

- Fund of last resort to help people gain or maintain housing

### Case Conferencing

- Bi-weekly community wide meetings where next steps and plans are discussed for clients

### Housing Programs

- Case management and assistance from short term (1-3 months) to long term (multiple years) to bring stability to households

### Community

- Municipalities and agencies coming together to help people in need

### Basic Needs

- Providing space and resources for showers, food, shelter, etc.