



## INTERACTIONS WITH OUR HOMELESS COMMUNITY MEMBERS

SDPD Crime Prevention

September 29, 2017

### CONTENTS

[REPORTING ILLEGAL CONDUCT](#)

[MAKING A CITIZEN'S ARREST](#)

[HOW YOU CAN HELP](#)

Homelessness is an extremely complex social problem that impacts the quality of life in our City. There are no easy solutions. The SDPD and elected officials in the County and City recognize that there is a fine line between homelessness as a social issue and a criminal issue.

Many homeless are on the street because of substance abuse, mental illness, or both. Often the disorder issues associated with homelessness are criminal in nature but difficult to enforce. To assist the City and County provide better service to our at-risk population, the SDPD has created the Homeless Outreach Team (HOT). The team consists of police officers, County Health and Human Services specialists, and psychiatric clinicians from the Psychiatric Emergency Response Team (PERT), a private non-profit organization.

### **REPORTING ILLEGAL CONDUCT**

While being homeless is not a crime, many kinds of public conduct are illegal and should be reported. These include being intoxicated, prowling, fighting, trespassing, aggressive panhandling, urinating and defecating, consuming alcoholic beverages in certain public places, obstructing sidewalks, disturbing the peace by loud and unreasonable noises, behaving in a threatening manner, etc.

Persons observing these crimes should report them and provide details to the dispatcher. Call **911** if it is an emergency, i.e., if the crime is in progress or about to happen, and involves serious personal injury, property damage, or property loss. For non-emergencies call **(619) 531-2000** or **(858) 484-3154**. Links to papers with details about reporting and providing information about crimes, suspicious activities and people, other problems and incidents, etc. are on the Community Resources and Responsibilities page of the SDPD's website at [\*\*www.sandiego.gov/police/services/prevention/community\*\*](http://www.sandiego.gov/police/services/prevention/community).

### **MAKING A CITIZEN'S ARREST**

Because many of these crimes are misdemeanors, a police officer can only arrest a person if the offense is committed in his/her presence. However, if you witness the offense you can make a

citizen's arrest by calling the SDPD to report the crime. And when an officer arrives to take physical custody of the suspect, you must sign the arrest form stating that the offense was committed in your presence and the officer is lawfully making the arrest on your behalf. You must also be willing to appear and testify in court. Note that you do not have to physically take the suspect into custody. For your safety, such action is discouraged by the SDPD.

## **HOW YOU CAN HELP**

People who desire to help our homeless community should contribute to local charities, missions, food banks, or social service organizations that assist the needy.

Property owners and managers can help with public safety by doing the following.

- Not permit anyone to camp or loiter, or leave shopping carts, bedding, or other personal belongings on their property.
- Restrict access to sidewalk overhangs, alcoves, or other areas protected from inclement weather.
- Lock or remove handles from water spigots.
- Use trash and recyclables dumpsters that have lockable lids with openings through which material can be put in but not taken out. This will prevent scavenging. Put NO SCAVENGING signs on them saying that unauthorized collection of refuse or recyclable material is prohibited per San Diego Municipal Code (SDMC) Sec. 66.0402.
- Secure outside storage sheds or containers.
- Lock or turn off exterior power outlets.
- Keep gates locked.
- Install bright lights on sidewalks and motion-activated lighting in other exterior areas.
- Trim landscaping to eliminate hiding places. Canopies of mature trees should be maintained at least 8 feet above the ground. Bushes should be trimmed to less than 3 feet except where privacy or environmental noise mitigation is a primary concern, or where higher plants would not block any views, lighting, or camera coverage. Plant bushes with thorns in places where people might go to sleep, urinate, or defecate.
- Keep property free of trash, litter, junk, graffiti, etc.
- Eliminate planter boxes that people can sit on. Have plants at sidewalk level.
- Post signs prohibiting loitering, illegal lodging, drinking alcoholic beverages, drug activities, etc.
- Have a security patrol drive by their property at random times and ask trespassers to leave. They should call the SDPD if the trespassers refuse to do so.
- Install cameras to cover the areas where the homeless might be. They can record continually, at specific times, when motion is detected, or when an alarm or alert condition occurs. Analog Closed-Circuit Television (CCTV) or digital Internet Protocol (IP) cameras can be used in most cases. Their imagery can be stored and monitored on site or accessed remotely over a secure, password-protected Internet link. A programmable IP camera that uses video-analytics software, a so-called "smart" camera, is needed to record on the latter. Alert conditions include line crossing, loitering, illegal parking, motion in and out of an area, an unattended object, irregular motion, objects that have moved or are missing, overcrowding, color matching, behavior such as casing or tailgating, etc. The person with the monitor would be alerted to look at the imagery and call to report any illegal conduct. Any system that is installed should be able to provide high-quality, digital imagery of suspicious persons and activities for use by the SDPD in investigating crimes.

- When cameras are not monitored all the time, signs regarding them should use phrases such as RECORDED VIDEO SURVEILLANCE IN USE or ALL ACTIVITIES ARE RECORDED TO AID IN THE PROSECUTION OF CRIMES COMMITTED ON THE PREMISES. Don't use words like SECURITY, PROTECTION, or MONITORING because they can give people a false expectation of an immediate security response when an incident occurs or that they and their property are somehow being protected by the cameras.
- In some places a self-contained camera could be used. It would turn on when motion is detected, take a flash picture, and warn the trespasser that the SDPD will be called if he or she does not leave the property immediately.
- Talk to the Community Relations Officer (CRO) in the SDPD Division in your area about filing a Letter of Agency if you are having problems with homeless people. Division addresses and phone numbers are in a table in the next page. The Letter will authorize the SDPD to act as your agent and enter your property for purposes of enforcing laws against any person(s) found on the property without your consent or without lawful purpose. The form for this Letter must be filled out on the SDPD website at [www.sandiego.gov/sites/default/files/legacy/police/pdf/letterofagency.pdf](http://www.sandiego.gov/sites/default/files/legacy/police/pdf/letterofagency.pdf).
- Also post the property with NO TRESPASSING signs stating that a Letter of Agency has been filed. The signs must have the address of the property, the name and phone number of the property owner or manager, and the non-emergency SDPD phone number to report suspicious activities. That number is **(619) 531-2000** or **(858) 484-3154**. The signs should be at least 18 by 24 inches in size, have a font visible from the nearest public street, not be accessible to vandals, and be posted on the entrances and spaced evenly on the boundaries of the property. A sample sign is on the SDPD website at [www.sandiego.gov/sites/default/files/legacy/police/pdf/loasign.pdf](http://www.sandiego.gov/sites/default/files/legacy/police/pdf/loasign.pdf).
- In addition to filing a Letter of Agency, a property owner facing continuing crime problems on his or her property can submit a Citizen Request Form by going on the SDPD website at [www.sandiego.gov/police/forms/citizen-request](http://www.sandiego.gov/police/forms/citizen-request). You can use this Form to request additional patrol and/or to report criminal activity at a specific address. The form will be sent to the responsible Division for review and response as appropriate.

### SDPD DIVISIONS

Central	2501 Imperial Ave. SD 92102	(619) 744-9500
Eastern	9225 Aero Dr. SD 92123	(858) 495-7900
Mid-City	4310 Landis St. SD 92105	(619) 516-3000
Northeastern	13396 Salmon River Rd. SD 92129	(858) 538-8000
Northern	4275 Eastgate Mall SD 92037	(858) 552-1700
Northwestern	12592 El Camino Real SD 92130	(858) 523-7000
Southeastern	7222 Skyline Dr. SD 92114	(619) 527-3500
Southern	1120 27th St. SD 92154	(619) 424-0400
Western	5215 Gaines St., SD 92110	(619) 692-4800