

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What can be done about homeless individuals who seem to have a mental illness?

If you believe an individual is an immediate threat to themselves or others, always call 911. When the matter is less urgent, you can call Lost Hills Sheriff's Station and request a Mental Evaluation Team (MET) to respond. During non-emergencies, visit la-hop.org (preferred) or send an email to LA Family Housing at referrals@lafh.org.

Why do I keep seeing the same homeless individual in my neighborhood even though I have called the police and homeless service providers many times?

It can take months for outreach workers to successfully transition a person experiencing homelessness into permanent housing. Also, if a Sheriff's deputy cites a homeless individual for breaking law, it is usually for small offenses which results in little or no jail time. Afterward, the individual usually returns to the area they consider their home. Remember, homelessness itself is not a crime; a little compassion may be required to arrive at the long-term goal of permanent housing.

Isn't panhandling illegal?

Ordinances pertaining to panhandling, formally known as solicitation, vary by municipality. Some cities have an outright ban on solicitation in the public right-of-way, while others have banned only certain type of solicitation in certain areas. You should contact your city to find out more information.

Isn't camping in a public park illegal?

If a homeless individual is sleeping on public property, law enforcement cannot cite the individual for violating a city's camping ordinance if there is no alternative shelter available to the individual (*Martin v. City of Boise*). Therefore, the best approach is to contact a homeless service provider.

The 2018 Homeless Count showed a decrease in homelessness across Los Angeles County, with the number of people experiencing homelessness at a little more than 52,000. In addition to this staggering figure, there are thousands more who are considered at-risk for losing their current housing. This toolkit was designed by the Las Virgenes-Malibu Council of Governments so everyone can learn what to do and how to make a difference when faced with the impacts of homelessness.

HOMELESSNESS IN YOUR COMMUNITY

It can be difficult to know what to say to someone who is experiencing homelessness. The most common advice from both formerly homeless individuals and experts on the issue is to treat all people with respect, no matter their circumstance. Many people who live on the streets often feel inadequate or nonexistent to the rest of the world, but thoughtfully acknowledging and connecting with them can go a long way. Also, if you are inclined to offer money, consider connecting the person with an outreach organization or other service provider instead. These groups provide housing and mental health services, as well as material goods, to those in need. Contact information for these organizations can be found in the "Resources" section of this brochure.

Keep in mind that homelessness itself is not a crime. We are all allowed to be peacefully present on public property, barring certain conditions such as blocking the public right-of-way. Government, law enforcement, services providers, and advocates for the homeless are working together to find practical and compassionate solutions. Everyone has a role to play in addressing homelessness.

This information is brought to you by the member cities of the Las Virgenes-Malibu Council of Governments:



AGOURA HILLS



CALABASAS



HIDDEN HILLS



MALIBU



WESTLAKE VILLAGE

ADDRESSING HOMELESSNESS

A PRACTICAL TOOLKIT FOR COMMUNITY MEMBERS



RESOURCES

For People Experiencing Homelessness

Community members in the cities of **Agoura Hills, Calabasas, Hidden Hills and Westlake** can contact the following resources to assist homeless individuals in the community:

Los Angeles Homeless Outreach Portal

la-hop.org

Web portal that directly assists people impacted by homelessness in Los Angeles County by connecting them with services. Individuals in need of services should use this portal first, if possible.

LA Family Housing

For individuals and families

referrals@lafh.org

LAFH connects participants with a combination of housing placement and supportive services to help people transition out of homelessness and retain long-term housing stability.

Village Family Services

For youth aged 14-24

(818) 755-8786

Provides “wraparound” homeless services including: housing, health care, therapy, vocational training, employment services, educational support and more.

Drop-in Center for Homeless Youth

6801 Coldwater Canyon Avenue, Ste #1E

North Hollywood, CA 91605

Provides homeless youth immediate access to a full range of support services including food, hygiene items, information resources, case management, medication support, as well as referrals for housing, employment, and education.



TRESPASSING

Trespassing on private property should be reported to the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department. If the trespasser is reported by someone who is not the property owner, deputies will collaborate with government officials to identify the property owner and remove trespassers if appropriate.

If your property is vacant or you do not live on your property full-time, you should file a Letter of Agency with the Sheriff's Department. This letter empowers Deputies to remove trespassers when they are reported by someone else and Deputies are unable to contact you. Call the Lost Hills Sheriff's Station Watch Commander at 310-456-6652 or 818-878-1808 for more information.

MENTAL HEALTH AND HOMELESSNESS

Mental health issues are common among those experiencing chronic homelessness and serve as a barrier to securing permanent housing. There are resources available to assist those struggling with mental health:

The Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department has established Mental Evaluation Teams which consist of a deputy and a Department of Mental Health clinician. These teams provide field response to situations involving mentally ill or high-risk individuals. To access this service, call the Lost Hills Sheriff's Station at 310-456-6652 or 818-878-1808.

Additionally, many homeless outreach teams work with a psychiatrist on a regular basis to make sure those in need are receiving ongoing treatment and medication. For example, the Malibu Homeless Outreach Team conducts outreach once a week with a staff psychiatrist to give homeless individuals access to these services.

ENCAMPMENTS

Camping in the brush poses a wildfire threat to our community. If you see a campfire in the brush, always call 911 immediately.

Private Property

Encampments on private property should be reported to the Lost Hills Sheriff's Station at 818-878-1808. If you're reporting an encampment on someone else's property, the Sheriff's Department can identify the property owner, check for a Letter of Agency on file, and/or contact the property owner to see if they want them removed.

Public Property

Encampments on public property can also be removed. However, specific protocols must be followed by both the City and law enforcement, and sometimes this process can take up to two months. Before clearing any encampment, campers must be given access to outreach services, and clear warnings must be posted noting the scheduled clean-up day. The Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department Homeless Outreach Services Team helps oversee this extensive process.

These procedures help ensure two things. First, it helps people experiencing homelessness connect with services and housing rather than just relocate to a new campsite. Second, it protects the City and law enforcement from liability, decreasing costs to the community resulting from litigation. If you are concerned about an encampment, your local City staff can provide information about any ongoing encampment clean-up operations.

City contacts:

Agoura Hills: 818-597-7300

Calabasas: 818-224-1600

Hidden Hills:

Westlake Village:

Malibu : 310-456-2489 ext. 313