Understanding Encampments of People Experiencing Homelessness and Community Responses

Emerging Evidence as of Late 2018

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Understanding Encampments of People Experiencing Homelessness and Community Responses:

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Introduction

Cities, suburban communities, and rural areas across the United States have seen in recent years the rise of groups of people experiencing unsheltered homelessness together. The term *encampment* is widely used by journalists and researchers to describe these groups, but other terms include *tent cities, homeless settlements,* and *homeless camps.* Although their existence is not unprecedented, media reports suggest that the number of encampments has increased sharply in recent years (National Law Center on Homelessness and Poverty, 2017).

People experiencing unsheltered homelessness may perceive staying in an encampment as a safer option than staying on their own in an unsheltered location or in an emergency shelter; however, encampments can create both real and perceived challenges for the people who stay in them as well as for neighbors and the broader community. As community leaders seek to develop and deploy a response, they often are called on to balance multiple, sometimes competing priorities and demands from a diverse group of stakeholders, including community residents, business owners, public health and safety officials, and advocates for disadvantaged populations—as well as the people living in the encampments.

This paper documents what is known about homeless encampments as of late 2018, based on a review of the limited literature produced thus far by academic and research institutions and public agencies, supplemented by interviews with key informants. This paper is part of a larger research study sponsored by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation, and the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, Office of Policy Development and Research. This study's goal is to contribute to our understanding of homelessness, including the characteristics of homeless encampments and the people who stay in them, as well as local ideas about how to address encampments and their associated costs.

What Are Encampments, and What Do We Need to Know About Them?

The term *encampment* has connotations of both impermanence and continuity. People are staying in temporary structures or enclosed places that are not intended for long-term continuous occupancy on an ongoing basis. Inhabitants may be a core group of people who are known to one another and who move together to different locations when necessary, or they may be a changing group of people who cycle in and out of a single location. The physical structures that make up encampments can take many forms, including tents on pallets and shanties, or lean-to shacks built with scavenged materials. Structures may be simple or complex multiroom compounds. People experiencing homelessness in encampments may also stay in groups of cars or vans or in manmade tunnels and naturally occurring caves.

Community reactions to encampments have taken a variety of forms. Some communities send police to quickly clear ("sweep") encampments, with no attempt to provide services or referrals to help people at the encampment find another place to stay. At the other end of the spectrum, some communities permit ("sanction") encampments formally. Local government or community organizations provide running water and places to prepare food and dispose of waste, as well as healthcare and other services.

The research questions that guided this review are shown in Exhibit 1. In the larger research study, we will attempt to provide information about encampments and the people who are staying in them and to answer these research questions. We sought preliminary information for these questions through a formal examination of the peer-reviewed literature; we also identified and examined non-peer-reviewed reports by academic institutions, public agencies, and other organizations (sometimes called *gray literature*). In addition to conducting literature reviews, we interviewed several key informants who are subject matter experts on encampments. We selected them because they are conducting research on encampments and related topics or they are helping communities devise and implement best practices for dealing with encampments.

Exhibit 1. Research Questions for the Study of Encampments

Understanding Encampments

1. What factors are driving the increase in people living in encampments?
2. What infrastructure or state or local ordinances or other policies impede or promote the establishment of encampments?
3. Who lives in encampments? Are there some subpopulations of people experiencing homelessness who are more likely to form or attach themselves to homeless encampments? Do people staying in the same encampment share certain characteristics? Are there any differences between the unsheltered population living in encampments and those who are unsheltered in other locations?
4. How large are encampments? Do their characteristics vary by size?
5. What types of social structures characterize encampments?
6. Why do people choose to live in encampments? What are the "pull" and "push" factors?

Community Efforts to Address Encampments

7. What steps are communities taking to prevent the establishment of encampments?
8. How are communities responding to encampments? What are the major activities, and which stakeholders are engaged?
9. Can approaches to encampments be categorized—for example, as sanctioning, clearing, or relocating?
10. How do responses to encampments relate to the broader homelessness services system?
11. How do responses to encampments differ across different types of communities?
12. In what ways do these efforts differ from efforts to serve the unsheltered population not living in encampments?

Costs Associated with Encampments

13. What are the direct costs incurred by communities in their efforts to address encampments?
14. How do costs differ depending on different community approaches?
15. How do the costs of managing or addressing encampments compare with the cost of emergency shelter and the cost of permanent supportive housing?
16. What health and safety issues have communities encountered with people staying in encampments?
17. What are the broader societal costs associated with encampments?

We summarize the nascent evidence on encampments in the following two sections. *Understanding Encampments* reviews what we know about why encampments form and what they look like. *Community Responses to Encampments* describes the factors that lead communities to adopt various approaches and what we know so far about their effectiveness. Then we describe the *Limitations of the Current Evidence on Encampments,* including some suggestions for additional research beyond the scope of this study. Finally, Appendix A describes how we conducted the literature review and key informant interviews, Appendix B provides additional details on selected studies that were particularly informative as we completed our review, and Appendix C summarizes selected practitioner resources to assist with addressing encampments.

Understanding Encampments

This section describes what we know as of late 2018 about encampments: why there has been a sudden increase in encampment homelessness in the past few years and how encampments vary in resident characteristics, in social structure, and regionally. As discussed herein, conditions can be harsh, volatile, and unhealthy. Still, people may live in encampments (rather than shelters or in other, unsheltered locations) for a variety of reasons, including factors that lead them to reject other types of shelter and factors that attract them to encampments. Section 3 will cover what we know about emerging community responses to encampments.

Explanations for the Increase in Encampments

Researchers generally agree that increases in homelessness are first and foremost the result of severe shortages of affordable housing, combined with a lack of political will to dedicate sufficient resources to address this problem (Shinn and Khadduri, forthcoming). According to a key informant who is helping communities understand how to deal with encampments, when people are in crisis, their decisions about where to stay represent pragmatic choices among the best available alternatives, based on individual circumstances at a particular moment in time. Encampments form in response to the absence of other, desirable options for shelter.

Within this underlying context, several related factors seem to influence whether people experiencing homelessness form or go to encampments rather than stay in shelters or on their own in unsheltered locations. Primary among those factors are (1) shortcomings in the shelter system, (2) a sense of safety and community within encampments, and (3) a desire for autonomy and privacy. Only one peer-reviewed article (Herring, 2014) mentions the potential for greater access to food and services or other material comforts as reasons that people congregate in encampments rather than stay on their own in unsheltered locations. Key informants and other peer-reviewed articles did not identify this as a primary factor influencing the decisions of people experiencing homelessness.

The Shelter System Falls Short

Shortcomings in the shelter system are consistently identified as a primary factor that "pushes" people to congregate in encampments. Many communities have literal shortages in the capacity of the shelter system to provide beds for everyone experiencing homelessness (Herring and Lutz, 2015; National Coalition for the Homeless, 2016; National Law Center on Homelessness and Poverty, 2014; Speer 2018a). In other communities, shelter beds are available but go unused because of regulations or conditions that are incompatible with potential clients' expectations or needs. Exhibit 2 lists some of the reasons cited in the literature and in key informant interviews why people experiencing homelessness may eschew shelters in favor of encampments. The availability and type of shelter available seem to be key drivers of encampments, as people weigh the disadvantages of staying in a shelter against their tolerance for the difficulties of staying in an unsheltered location (City of San Francisco, 2015; Herring and Lutz, 2015; National Law Center on Homelessness and Poverty, 2014).

Exhibit 2. Shortcomings in the Shelter System

Specific shortcomings in the shelter system that may contribute to increased numbers of people congregating in encampments:

- A supply of shelter beds insufficient to meet the demand; this problem may be exacerbated by limited funding for emergency shelters and by community opposition to creating new or expanded shelter and bridge housing facilities or permanent supportive housing.
- Restrictions in shelters that would result in separation from a partner, family member, or pet.
- Shelter entry/exit times and locations that are inconvenient or incompatible with people's daily routines, including work schedules.
- Concerns about the security of personal belongings; restrictions on the ability to store belongings and difficulty moving belongings in and out of shelters on a daily basis.
- Concerns about personal safety and exposure to germs and disease within shelters.
- Specific barriers to entry, including sobriety requirements and entry fees.
- General perceptions of shelters as "inhospitable," "alienating," "demeaning," and offering little or no support or case management to find permanent housing.

Sense of Safety and Community

People who stay in encampments may see them as offering greater safety and protection from police harassment and aggression (Burness and Brown, 2016), and from assaults or the theft of belongings (Donley and Wright, 2012; Speer, 2017), than if they were unsheltered on their own. This sense of "safety in numbers" may be particularly prevalent in long-standing and highly organized encampments, in which residents have established around-the-clock security patrols and mutually enforced norms and standards for behavior (Lutz, 2015; National Law Center on Homelessness and Poverty, 2014; Sparks, 2017a). In high-cost cities in particular, individuals' decision to congregate in an encampment may be influenced by the behavior of their peers, according to a key informant who is conducting research on encampments. Once a critical mass of people has determined that encampments are a way of dealing with their housing crisis, others may feel emboldened to follow suit. Some cities respond to the presence of an established encampment by providing bathroom facilities and other basic services, making encampments seem to be a reasonable alternative to constant moving, threats of eviction, or shelters.

Desire for Autonomy and Privacy

In contrast to the rules that govern many aspects of shelter stays, staying in an encampment means that people can generally come and go as they please. The ability to exercise autonomy and freedom of movement appears to be a powerful factor that draws some people to encampments (Lutz, 2015; National Law Center on Homelessness and Poverty, 2014; Sparks, 2017a). This independence is sometimes eroded in communities that "normalize" encampments, introducing regulations that restrict residents' activities in the process. When that happens, encampments may in effect become an extension of the same shelter system that people reject in favor of encampments (Herring, 2014; Speer, 2018a).

Access to Illegal Substances

Residents of encampments may or may not be using illegal substances. Nothing in the literature suggests that most or even many encampments are where people congregate primarily to support their drug addiction. That said, in at least one high-profile example, the location of an open-air drug market directly influenced the formation and continued existence of an encampment, according to a key informant studying encampments. In that instance, the availability of a dependable supply of heroin close-by led addicts to stay in encampments in the Kensington area of Philadelphia even though the city had available shelter space.

Variation in Encampments

Researchers and other experts have not yet developed a single, standard set of criteria defining a group of people experiencing unsheltered homelessness as an "encampment." In this review, the definition we used encompasses a wide variety of scenarios—from established settlements that have a well-defined set of mutually agreed-on and enforced rules to loose congregations that have little to no organization or cohesion. In this section, we describe what our literature search and key informant interviews revealed about the variation among encampments in resident characteristics and social structure; we then summarize how encampments may vary in different parts of the United States.

Resident Characteristics, Social Structure, and Motivations of Residents

The literature has little to say about characteristics that distinguish people experiencing unsheltered homelessness in encampments from those who experience unsheltered homelessness on their own. The U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness is leading an effort to analyze data records for people experiencing homelessness, along with partner organizations including U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, the National Alliance to End Homelessness, California Policy Lab (a nonprofit partnership between the Universities of California Los Angeles and Berkeley), and the consulting firm OrgCode. That effort will provide insights into the characteristics and experiences of people experiencing homelessness in unsheltered locations, including whether they are distinctly different from people who experience sheltered homelessness; however, the data will not make it possible to distinguish people in encampments from people in unsheltered locations generally.

Some studies describe variations in the racial and ethnic composition of encampments. For example, one study conducted outside Orlando, Florida, engaged 39 people staying in encampments in focus groups. Nearly three-fourths of participants were men, and most were White—a demographic composition characterized by the local outreach team as generally representative of people experiencing unsheltered homelessness in the area. In contrast, downtown shelters in Orlando had a much larger population of African Americans (Donley and Wright, 2012). Seattle's evaluation of its sanctioned encampments also found fewer people of color in encampments relative to emergency shelters (City of Seattle, 2017). The demographic makeup of people staying in encampments in Oakland, California, seems to include a larger share of people of color, but individual encampments are segregated along racial and ethnic lines (Jones et al., 2015).

The internal organization and motivations of residents significantly vary among encampments. Some encampments have a strong social structure and organization, sometimes with oversight or assistance from local charitable or faith-based organizations. Residents may be required to assume responsibility

for day-to-day operations, including security patrols and other duties (City of Seattle, 2017; Lutz, 2015). Residents may vote in governance decisions, and they may be expected to attend weekly resident meetings in accordance with an encampment-wide code of conduct (Sparks, 2017a). A key informant conducting research on encampments described the social structure established by a group of mothers staying with their children in a recently cleared encampment in Oakland, California. Residents of the encampment prohibited drug use and shared responsibility for childcare. These expectations promote a sense of community and have been credited with helping encampment residents "feel human" and believe that they have something to contribute (Sparks, 2017b).

Other encampments have less cohesion and more informal rules and structure, which may on occasion result in friction and conflict among residents (Sparks, 2017a). Larger encampment "communities" may be less cohesive than smaller groups composed of family members and friends (City of San Francisco, 2015). In addition, the potential for exploitation exists in encampments, according to key informants conducting research on encampments. For example, younger people may offer to provide protection to older residents but then expect some form of compensation in exchange. Encampments formed around access to opioids in Philadelphia seem to have no leadership structure at all; however, according to a key informant conducting research on encampments, rarely do people living in an encampment have a complete lack of interaction with each other. People staying together in encampments tend to look out for one another and have some sense of solidarity.

Motivations of encampment residents may differ, as well. According to key informants who are helping communities develop responses to encampments, some residents of encampments are eager to access services and permanent housing. Others clear out in advance of a sweep, even if the sweep may provide them with access to services. Such variation might occur within one encampment if it is large enough. For example, when more than 700 people were cleared from the Santa Ana River encampment in Orange County, California, some people accepted help and were able to find housing or went to drug treatment centers, whereas others simply left for another encampment. When encampments have formed in areas that provide dependable access to illegal drugs in general and opioids in particular, referrals to housing and services are likely to be met with a mixed reaction, depending on the timing of individual residents' addiction trajectories and the characteristics of the shelters that are an alternative to staying in the encampment.

Regional Differences in Encampments

Cities in the Northeast, where winters can be harsh, are more likely than cities in other parts of the country to have relatively large shelter systems. According to a key informant who is conducting research on homelessness, this difference in the homelessness services system is reflected in the characteristics of people experiencing unsheltered homelessness, including those who stay in encampments. According to her observations, in cities with large numbers of shelter beds, the unsheltered population tends to have high rates of disability and mental health issues, which may create challenges to entering shelters. In contrast, in West Coast cities with limited shelter availability (or where barriers to shelter use are higher), the unsheltered population represents a greater mix of people, including those who do not have behavioral health disabilities but are unable to access shelter for other reasons. They may be recently homeless and unfamiliar with the shelter system, or they could be unwilling or unable to comply with the requirements of relatively high-barrier shelters on the

West Coast, or they may simply be unable to find an available shelter bed. As on the East Coast, many people in West Coast encampments are not able to tolerate or navigate the shelter system because of mental health or substance abuse disorders; however, West Coast encampments are also likely to include people who do not face those challenges.

According to researchers in the San Francisco Bay Area, those who stay in encampments may even have support from family members who visit regularly and bring food and medication or who invite them in to shower and do laundry (Jones et al., 2015). According to key informants who are researching encampments in the West, people who are now staying in encampments in western states could maintain stable housing without supportive services if they had rental assistance or other income support. For those individuals, the lack of access to affordable housing and shortages of shelter beds are the primary factors driving them to experience homelessness in encampments.

The physical nature of encampments often reflects regional differences in the geographic setting, including the natural features and available land. For example, an encampment in Southern California's Coachella Valley consists of a variety of structures detached and spread out across a contiguous area. In Columbus, Ohio, encampments are composed of tightly clustered tents and lean-tos. In San Francisco, people form encampments along the edges of highways and train tracks and under elevated freeways. In Las Vegas, encampments can be found in an underground tunnel system. The location of encampments balances two factors: maximizing convenience (that is, ease of access to the resources people use to address their daily needs) and minimizing visibility (that is, avoiding complaints to the city that could result in the encampment being cleared) (City of San Francisco, 2015).

Regional variation in encampments may also reflect the different ways that cities respond to encampments. Section 3 presents a typology of community responses to encampments and discusses the evidence—at this point, scant—on the effectiveness of those various approaches.

Community Responses to Encampments

Local responses to encampments are evolving in many communities, as stakeholders seek to identify the best strategies to address this growing phenomenon. Approaches vary along many dimensions but can be broken into four basic categories, as described in Exhibit 3. Specific activities range from sending police to quickly clear ("sweep") the encampment—providing little or no support to help people find another place to stay—to formally sanctioning encampments and providing onsite services.

Communities commonly use more than one response at a time to manage encampments, depending on resource availability, the location of encampments, and the characteristics of people congregating in encampments. For example, Las Vegas has created the Courtyard, a one-stop resource center that includes secure space to sleep outside, but it also deploys outreach teams that include law enforcement officers to clear encampments. Jurisdictions within the same region may adopt different strategies to address encampments. According to key informants helping communities to develop responses to encampments, communities may need to use a variety of approaches at the same time to serve populations that have different needs. When those efforts are not well coordinated across departments or neighboring jurisdictions, however, they may act at cross-purposes. For example, a jurisdiction that clears encampments, with little notice and no support, may undermine efforts to build relationships and trust in a neighboring jurisdiction that tacitly approves encampments.

Exhibit 3. Typology of Responses to Encampments

Category	Characteristics
Clearance With Little or No Support	• Notice of pending sweeps provided only a few days in advance, if at all • Belongings stored for a short period of time, if at all • Few or no shelter or service referrals provided • Regulatory or physical barriers to secure the site of the former encampment and keep it from being reoccupied
Clearance With Support	• Notice of pending sweeps provided weeks in advance, often by trained outreach workers who have experience working with people experiencing unsheltered homelessness • Longer term storage of belongings available • Referrals to shelter or services provided by outreach workers, who also accompany the first responders and sanitation crews who clear encampments

Category	Characteristics
Tacit Acceptance	• Encampments allowed to persist regardless of whether laws or ordinances explicitly authorize or prohibit their existence • Longer term storage of belongings available • Basic services or infrastructure provided, in particular to address public health and sanitation concerns (for example, portable toilets, showers, and potable water) • Outreach workers may visit the encampment to provide referrals to permanent housing, shelter, and services
Formal Sanctioning	• Encampments permitted by law or ordinance on public and or privately owned property, usually only in designated locations • May have established rules that govern the size, location, or duration of encampments • May have a public agency or nonprofit organization manage encampments • Infrastructure and public services—which may include laundry and potable water, common spaces for eating and meeting, lockers for storing belongings (including on a longer term basis), meal services and food donations, job training programs, access to mail and voice mail services—provided by the municipality and private or faith-based organizations and volunteers • May provide case management, including assistance applying for transitional or permanent housing and other benefits, appealing denials, and managing funds

Cities also use strategies to prevent encampments from forming. Some communities enact laws prohibiting activities associated with encampments, such as lying down or erecting structures on public space. More than one-third of U.S. cities have adopted camping bans, citing health and safety concerns (National Coalition for the Homeless, 2016). Researchers at the University of Denver identified more than 350 antihomelessness ordinances in Colorado's largest cities (Adcock et al., 2016). Other approaches include physical modifications to the built or natural environment, such as securing vacant lots and buildings to restrict access, clear-cutting brush that could provide cover for encampments, and installing sprinklers in areas where encampments might form (Chamard, 2010; National Law Center on Homelessness and Poverty, 2014). When an encampment is cleared, with or without support, the community may also impose new regulatory or physical barriers to keep the encampment from reemerging in the same location or in other parts of the community.

Factors that Drive Local Responses

Cities respond to encampments for a variety of reasons, and the goals of the interventions may vary—from cleaning up a business area, to helping people access shelter, to helping people obtain permanent housing. Even within the same jurisdiction, different stakeholders may have different definitions of success in dealing with encampments. For example, the transit authority may have a goal of breaking up encampments adjacent to a railroad bed, the department of public health may want to prevent the

spread of disease, the housing department may be working to end homelessness, and community homeless advocates may be focused on avoiding adverse consequences for the encampment population. Those differing views will also influence the strategy, or set of strategies, used by the city to address encampments (Burness and Brown, 2016; Jones et al., 2015) and can make comparing interventions across communities difficult. The factors that were most commonly cited in the literature as influencing cities' approaches to encampments are (1) community and political pressure, (2) resource availability, and (3) fear of litigation.

Community and Political Pressure

According to researchers and key informants who are helping communities devise strategies to address encampments, the "nuisance" factor is the key policy driver. Outreach teams or police usually are deployed only when community residents or other stakeholders complain about an encampment. At that point, interventions need to be visible and quick to demonstrate responsiveness to community concerns and to relieve political pressure (National Law Center on Homelessness and Poverty, 2014). In the absence of sufficient resources to move everyone into permanent housing, communities often employ a clearance strategy, with or without support, that moves people out of sight or farther from central business districts, where their presence can affect economic growth (Speer, 2018b).

Cities typically prioritize efforts in neighborhoods where political pressure is greatest. Not surprising, those neighborhoods often are not the locations with the highest levels of unsheltered homelessness and encampments, according to key informants who are helping communities devise strategies to address encampments. In areas with low visibility, with little or no community pressure, cities may pursue a policy of tacit acceptance—even if encampments exist in violation of a no-camping ordinance (Herring, 2014).

Resource Availability

Concern for community and resident well-being would, ideally, be the primary factor shaping cities' encampment response strategies; however, resource limitations may require city leadership to make trade-offs and choose an approach that works within existing constraints (Herring and Lutz, 2015; Loftus-Farren, 2011; National Law Center on Homelessness and Poverty, 2014). In Philadelphia, for example, according to a key informant conducting research on encampments, recent efforts that could be characterized as clearance with a high level of support were limited to two of four known opioid encampments because the city lacked funding to provide services and shelter for people congregating in all four. Without the ability to provide rent assistance or needed services, the city adopted a policy of tacit acceptance at the remaining two encampments. Cities may also create sanctioned encampments in lieu of providing permanent rent subsidies, or cities may pursue clearance with little or no support if they lack the resources to provide any additional assistance.

Fear of Litigation

Fear of legal challenges influences how cities approach closing encampments. Local jurisdictions want to avoid being taken to court over due process and cruel and unusual punishment challenges, according to a key informant engaged in research on encampments. This concern is likely to grow following the September 2018 ruling of the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals in *Martin v. City of*

Boise.[1] Courts have found that depriving homeless people of the rights to perform survival activities in public spaces when no alternatives are available violates the 1st, 4th, 5th, 8th, and 14th Amendments to the Constitution (Kieschnick, 2018; National Law Center on Homelessness and Poverty, 2014). In *Martin v. City of Boise*, the court held that "as long as there is no option of sleeping indoors, the government cannot criminalize indigent, homeless people for sleeping outdoors, on public property."

Some legal challenges have resulted in settlements, which generally call for minimum notice before clearance of encampments, requirements for storage of personal belongings, and compensation for people who are swept from encampments and for their attorneys (National Law Center on Homelessness and Poverty, 2017). In January 2018, advocates brought a lawsuit against officials in Orange County, California, following the clearance of a massive encampment along the Santa Ana riverbed. As of October 2018, elements of a preliminary settlement agreement were more expansive and included a commitment to provide proactive outreach and engagement, as well as referrals to services, before evicting people from encampments; development of "standards of care" by the county for homelessness services programs; drawdown of funds already available to support "programs, services, and activities" for people experiencing homelessness; adoption of due process protections; establishment of a method for formally addressing requests for accommodations under the Americans with Disabilities Act; and referrals to collaborative courts[2] to handle citations.[3]

Effectiveness of Various Responses

The effectiveness of responses to encampments may be thought of as creating positive outcomes for the people who stay in encampments, creating positive outcomes for the broader community, or both. At this point, research that attempts to measure any such outcomes in a rigorous way is limited. Findings from anecdotal reports in individual cities are not broadly generalizable or transferable. To begin to address gaps in existing knowledge, the National Alliance to End Homelessness, U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness, and U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development are working with state and local partners to develop and test strategies for addressing unsheltered homelessness, including encampments. The Arnold Foundation (2018) is exploring the effectiveness of interventions that first responders can use to address unsheltered homelessness. Those projects are still in the early stages and are complicated, according to a key informant, by the absence of baseline data from which to evaluate the effectiveness of the responses. According to a researcher currently working on encampments, intensive outreach work will be needed to establish study samples, and a

[1] The Ninth Circuit has jurisdiction over nine states in the western United States, including Alaska and Hawaii, as well as the District of Guam and the District of the Northern Mariana Islands.

2 Collaborative courts are an alternative justice model that focuses on treatment and behavior change (rather than sentencing) to help defendants improve their lives. Homeless courts are one type of collaborative court. According to the California Association of Collaborative Courts, these are "special court sessions held in a local shelter or other community site designed for homeless citizens to resolve outstanding misdemeanor criminal warrants." https://www.ca2c.org/types-of-collaborative-justice-courts/

[3] Orange County Catholic Worker et al. v. County of Orange et al., Joint Statement of Settlement Progress (Central District of California, 2018) https://scng-dash.digitalfirstmedia.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/oc-homeless-plaintiffs-lawsuit-settlement.pdf.

high level of resources will be required to track people's experiences over time and to measure outcomes, but those efforts will be necessary to develop appropriate policy responses.

Without the availability of strong evidence, cities adopt approaches that seem to be best practices. Local responses also depend on the community's goals and priorities, which may include reducing crime, eliminating health hazards, or improving a business district—and may or may not include housing people experiencing homelessness. In the following sections, we provide descriptive and inferential information on the factors that may determine the effectiveness of responses, including the approach selected, the characteristics of encampment populations, and available resources. We summarize the current state of knowledge for various types of approaches.

Clearance with Little or No Support

Cities that adopt a policy of clearance with little or no support may justify this approach as "tough love" that encourages people in encampments to enter city-operated shelters (Lutz, 2015; National Coalition for the Homeless, 2016). The literature and key informants, however, agree that sweeps of encampments do little to increase shelter usage or otherwise resolve the problem of encampments (National Law Center on Homelessness and Poverty, 2014). Especially in communities with many low-visibility places, people are likely to simply pack up and move on to another location (Junejo, Skinner, and Rankin, 2016) or reestablish the encampment at the former site once the city has cleaned the area.

Clearance with little or no support may actually *reduce* the likelihood that people will seek shelter because it erodes trust and creates an adversarial relationship between people experiencing homelessness and law enforcement or outreach workers. In a survey of encampment residents in Honolulu, 21 percent of respondents said that they were less able or likely to enter shelters after sweeps, and 68 percent said that the sweeps had no effect on whether or not they went to shelters, although those responses seem mostly to be the result of undesirable shelter conditions (Dunson-Strane and Soakai, 2015). Another study conducted in Seattle finds that only one-third of encampment residents "accepted offers of alternative shelter after a sweep" (Junejo, Skinner, and Rankin, 2016: 16). Analyzing interviews with both outreach staff and encampment residents in Oakland, California, Jones and his colleagues hypothesized that continuous sweeps cause people experiencing unsheltered homelessness to "focus on short-term needs and immediate coping strategies," disrupting the level of stability necessary for encampment residents to engage in long-term planning (2015: 82). People forced to relocate during a sweep may have difficulty reconnecting with outreach workers who have been working with them, and any progress made toward moving into housing or accessing services could be lost. Experiences in Honolulu, Seattle, and Oakland suggest that sweeps are disruptive to people who are attempting to stabilize their lives and find a pathway to housing, and they may have lasting traumatic psychological and emotional impacts (Jones et al., 2015; Junejo, Skinner, and Rankin, 2016).

Clearance with Support

The support provided in responses that can be characterized as clearance with support may include extensive outreach in advance of clearance and referrals to existing shelters or housing programs. Communities may also make changes to policies on eligibility and rules for supportive housing or

drug treatment programs. They may create entirely new programs to facilitate entry by people formerly staying in encampments. For example, San Francisco created a new type of shelter, Navigation Centers, to provide shelter-averse people with room and board and access to case management and other services provided by public, nonprofit, and faith-based partners. The low-barrier model waives many of the policies commonly cited as obstacles to shelter: Navigation Centers do not have sobriety requirements, and people may come with their pets and partners, bring their belongings, and stay all day—there are no required entry or exit times. Space in the Navigation Centers is limited, however, and drop-ins are not accepted; instead, access is determined by the city's Homeless Outreach Team (SF HOT) case by case as space becomes available, with a focus on serving the most vulnerable people in San Francisco's encampments. Considerations by the outreach team include the length of time someone has been experiencing homelessness, shelter usage over a 6-month period, and motivation to move to permanent housing (San Francisco Health Network, 2018). Some evidence suggests that people strategically make themselves visible on the street in areas where the SF HOT will be making referrals so that they can gain access to the Navigation Centers, but no evidence indicates that people leave shelters in pursuit of a referral to a Navigation Center (City of San Francisco, 2015).

An evaluation of efforts to clear two encampments in Philadelphia's Kensington neighborhood provides a comprehensive look at another approach to clearance with support. After intensive and continuous outreach to and engagement of people staying in the Kensington encampments, outreach workers offered their clients emergency shelter in low-barrier "respite" and "navigation" centers, with access to case management and drug treatment services. The city also relaxed shelter admission requirements and rules and expectations for residents (Metraux et al., 2019). According to key informants developing policies to address such "drug encampments," enrolling people who are addicted to opioids and other substances into rehabilitation services may be difficult. Efforts to streamline access to drug treatment, however—including waiving requirements for identification and preauthorization and helping people get their documents in order—may ensure that treatment is available to them when they are ready to accept it.

Several key informants reported that communities are beginning to add social workers or community mental health workers to outreach teams. Law enforcement officials often are the only people on call to handle complaints around the clock, and community members may be more likely to call the police than to call a homeless hotline. When outreach teams include trained members, they can offer referrals to services and can begin to establish trust and build relationships with people experiencing homelessness in encampments. Without adequate funding for affordable, bridge, or permanent supportive housing, however, clients may end up back in encampments despite a robust outreach effort.

As of this review, policymakers and practitioners are developing promising practices to support residents of cleared encampments, and researchers are developing descriptive data and hypotheses for testing that approach.

Tacit Acceptance

Some cities tacitly accept encampments, not through sanctioning by law but by a lack of enforcement or by selective enforcement. Cities may tacitly accept homeless encampments to reduce the costs of

enforcing anti-camping ordinances or ordinances that prohibit lying down or sitting down in public places. Homeless people are permitted to congregate in areas that do not generate complaints from local businesses and residents (Herring, 2014). In Fresno, California, for example, police have carried out a more active clearance approach in the higher rent, downtown business districts, but they take a hands-off approach within an abandoned industrial zone (Herring, 2014; Speer, 2018b). In some cases, cities may provide basic services, such as potable water and security, without formally sanctioning the encampment (Loftus-Farren, 2011), and outreach workers charged with helping people resolve unsheltered homelessness may focus on people staying in the tacitly accepted encampments. In addition to having political reservations to sanctioning encampments, city officials may refuse to formally sanction encampments "on the grounds of increased liability, expenditures, and conflicts with health and zoning codes" (Herring, 2014: 298).

The literature we reviewed did not provide any indication of the effectiveness of tacit acceptance of encampments either in helping people resolve the circumstances that made them homeless or in limiting the negative consequences of encampments for the community.

Formal Sanctioning

Some cities formally sanction encampments through a variety of mechanisms: issuing temporary use permits; changing land use and zoning ordinances to permit encampments (which may place limits on the duration and number of people at each site); and creating designated campgrounds that have standards for operations and services to be provided on site. Some sanctioned encampments are managed publicly; others are self-governed but have public and private assistance and oversight.

- ***Publicly managed encampments.*** In some cases, sanctioned encampments are created and operated by the city, sometimes with nongovernmental community partners. Establishment of those encampments often is motivated by a desire to contain people who are unsheltered in a specified area where service delivery can be concentrated and public health risks controlled. For example, in 2017, the City of Las Vegas established the Courtyard Homeless Resource Center, where people can sleep in a secure, open-air, and sheltered courtyard with access to an array of amenities. The Courtyard is funded with public dollars and is currently operated by the city, with medical, employment, and other services provided on site through a variety of partners (City of Las Vegas, 2018).

- ***Safe parking programs*** provide similar structure and access to services for people who are experiencing homelessness and using a car, van, or RV as their primary place of shelter. People staying in their vehicles apply for a permit to safely and legally park overnight in designated lots that typically have some form of security and access to restrooms and other sanitation facilities. These programs are intended to offer transitional assistance for people who are interested in securing permanent housing and, as such, the programs provide access to extensive case management and other social services. Most programs use background checks to screen out sex offenders and recent violent felons, and program participants are required to have their own car insurance and comply with program rules and regulations. Safe parking programs are most common in West Coast cities. Program data from local jurisdictions in California indicate that participants have successfully accessed housing,

although rates of placement vary widely, from 5 percent in Santa Barbara to 65 percent in San Diego (Homelessness Policy Research Institute, 2018).

- ***Self-governed encampments with public and private assistance and oversight.*** Rather than establishing new areas for unsheltered people to congregate, some cities sanction existing encampments. This process typically involves establishing a legal framework for their continued existence and organizing services but allowing the encampment to continue as a self-governed enterprise. In 2011, the Seattle City Council adopted an ordinance to permit transitional encampments as an "accessory use" on land owned or controlled by a religious organization and established health and safety standards for those encampments. A similar ordinance passed in 2015 extended those standards to city-owned or private, nonreligious property. Seattle's Human Services Department selected several nonprofit organizations with experience supporting unsheltered homeless people to provide service-enriched case management, including referrals to diversion programs and shelters, access to legal services and rapid rehousing programs, and employment training and educational referrals at three newly established, permitted encampments (City of Seattle, 2017).

  In a city-sponsored evaluation (City of Seattle, 2017) that attempted to assess the effectiveness of formal sanctioning, Seattle documented a positive response from communities around the new encampments. Data and information about crime levels collected by the Seattle Police Department suggest that crime has significantly increased in the areas surrounding the encampments since they were established. Authors of the evaluation view the self-managed governance structure positively, as an opportunity for residents to build confidence and leadership skills. Between September 2015 and May 2017, 759 people stayed in Seattle's six permitted encampments, and 16 percent (121 people) transitioned to permanent housing. It is unclear how generalizable these findings are to other communities.

Sanctioned encampments are best understood as an interim solution to address the immediate conditions of people experiencing unsheltered homelessness. Such encampments are not themselves a solution to homelessness, and cities will need to invest in permanent solutions, such as housing that is affordable to extremely low-income people, permanent supportive housing, mental health services, affordable healthcare, and perhaps also supervised drug consumption sites and low-barrier employment opportunities (Junejo, Skinner, and Rankin, 2016; Loftus-Farren, 2011; Parr, 2018). Currently, limited evidence suggests that sanctioned encampments help to reduce homelessness; we also do not know whether certain types of sanctioned encampments are more effective than others.

Limitations of the Current Evidence on Encampments

In this section, we describe limitations in the rigor and scope of the literature considered in preparing this review, as well as challenges to collecting data on the encampment population. We conclude with some recommendations for additional research found in the published literature or made by key informants interviewed as part of this scan of current evidence on encampments.

Scope and Rigor of the Current Literature on Encampments

Research on the nature and causes of homeless encampments is still in the nascent stages, as is evaluation of community responses to encampments. In many ways this is parallel to the state of research on homelessness during the 1980s, when modern homelessness, sheltered and unsheltered, first became apparent and was the focus of news reports and efforts to document and understand the phenomenon. As of late 2018, the research literature on encampments is primarily descriptive, relying on reviews of articles in the news media, along with some ethnographic research and fieldwork that includes interviews with encampment residents, service providers, city staff, and community members. Administrative data are used in only a few cases (Metraux et al., 2019; Speer, 2017). In general, sample sizes are small, with analysis limited to interviews with a small number of community stakeholders or encampment residents.[4] Researchers almost exclusively use convenience samples rather than representative samples of encampment populations. Evaluators have not yet begun to use methods that compare the results of a response to encampments with what would have happened in the absence of the policy or practice.

So far the literature focuses heavily on West Coast cities, especially Fresno and San Francisco, California; Portland, Oregon; and Seattle, Washington. An exception is a descriptive study by the National Law Center on Homelessness and Poverty (2014) that deliberately focuses on East Coast and Southern cities.[5] The ethnographic research reviewed for this paper focuses on people in encampments that are sanctioned, either formally or tacitly. This type of research, which relies on observation of people and conditions within encampments, would be more difficult to carry out in communities that have an encampment clearance policy.

Our scan of the literature identified only one study that begins to develop standards for evaluating the effectiveness of various responses to encampments. Jones and his colleagues (2015) provided standards for three criteria—effectiveness, equity, and implementation feasibility—and use them in connection with resident, service provider, and stakeholder interviews to assess whether alternative approaches would be more effective than a current policy of clearing encampments in Oakland, California (see Appendix B for a description of the study). Some local jurisdictions have started to track housing placements among people who formerly stayed in publicly sanctioned encampments

[4] Research methods and rigor differ little between the peer-reviewed literature and the reports of public agencies and other organizations. Both types of literature rely heavily on media reports and on qualitative interviews.

[5] The cities are Lakewood, New Jersey; New Orleans, Louisiana; Providence, Rhode Island; and St. Petersburg, Florida.

(City of Seattle, 2017; Hunter et al., 2016), but assessing how rigorous and successful those tracking efforts will be is difficult.

Little information is available on the direct and indirect community costs associated with encampments. Some reports provide partial accounts of the costs of various activities associated with local responses to encampments. None attempt a rigorous analysis of the costs of a response type or a comparison with the costs of other interventions for people experiencing homelessness. Adcock and her colleagues (2016) provided a thoughtful methodology for calculating the cost of enforcing ordinances that criminalize homelessness in Denver and the state of Colorado, but that analysis pertains to unsheltered homelessness in general; it is not limited to encampments. Some case studies report expenditures associated with various activities related to encampments (City of Seattle, 2017; Jones et al., 2015). Complicating the documentation of costs, encampment-related expenditures often are spread across multiple agencies and contracts (for example, department of public works for refuse disposal, department of human services for case management), sometimes without a budget category or line item specific to encampments (Junejo, Skinner, and Rankin, 2016).

Challenges to Collecting Data on People in Encampments

Some local jurisdictions have started to collect and report data on the characteristics of people who stay in encampments. The types of information collected include these:

- Basic demographic data, such as gender, age, race, veteran status and discharge type, and first language (City of Seattle, 2017; Metraux et al., 2019)
- Earned income or benefits receipt (City of Seattle, 2017)
- History of domestic violence (City of Seattle, 2017)
- Physical and mental health conditions (City of Seattle, 2017)
- Duration of homelessness (City of Seattle, 2017; Hunter et al., 2016; Metraux et al., 2019)
- Current living conditions (Metraux et al., 2019)
- Where they were staying before the encampment (City of Seattle, 2017; Hunter et al., 2016)
- Potential barriers to entering shelter, such as pets, partners, or a significant number of belongings (Hunter et al., 2016)

That type of data may be collected during the intake process at sanctioned encampments, through outreach to people staying in tacitly accepted encampments, or during the process of encampment clearance. One of the key challenges of any data collection effort associated with encampments is capturing a representative sample of people. As described by a key informant who is conducting research on encampments, people who stay in unsanctioned encampments often strive to keep off the public radar, and they may differ in important ways from the subset of people who are visible for data collection efforts. According to this key informant, outreach workers are generally better received when they make low demands, offer something that people in encampments might want or need, and share demographic characteristics or lived experiences with those in encampments. People who stay

in encampments may be wary of authority figures and are more likely to welcome outreach workers who do not act or present as such. These same considerations may also apply to sanctioned encampments.

Data collection efforts are also hampered by the transient nature of people experiencing unsheltered homelessness and the limited capacity of outreach teams to comprehensively canvas the less visible and less accessible geographies within their communities. Intensive and time-consuming outreach and follow-up efforts are required to collect information about encampment residents over time. Mental illness and substance use can also complicate data collection because the responses of affected individuals to questions may be unreliable.

Suggestions for Additional Research

As part of this review of the current evidence base on encampments, we gathered suggestions from the key informants we interviewed—people who are conducting research on encampments or advising communities on strategies for addressing encampments—for additional research that could advance the field in a variety of ways. Some of the published literature we reviewed also included suggestions for additional research that would support deeper understanding of the nature of encampments and would inform program design going forward. These ideas for additional research include the following:

- ***Understanding the characteristics of people who are living in encampments.*** What are the characteristics of people in encampments, including their immediate past experience? Are they different in meaningful ways from other people experiencing unsheltered homelessness? Are there significant differences in the characteristics of people who live in different types of encampments—for example, in groups of cars or other vehicles compared with encampments of tents or other structures? How long have they lacked stable housing? Where were they living before their stay in the encampment? What were their circumstances that contributed to them staying in an encampment? How often are families with children living in encampments, and how are their characteristics, needs, and vulnerabilities different from those of individual adults? This type of information could help to improve the targeting of efforts to prevent homelessness and stays in encampments.

- ***Understanding the experience of people experiencing unsheltered homelessness in encampments***. How do they spend their days? How long do people stay in encampments, and where do they go when they leave encampments (how often do people continue to experience unsheltered homelessness, how often do they find housing, and how often do they go to shelters or other settings, including treatment programs)? What are their service utilization patterns and the costs of their service use? With a better understanding of the behaviors and needs of people who are living in encampments, practitioners and policymakers can design and implement more effective interventions that meet those needs. Research projects can draw on integrated data systems, real-time surveys, and interviews with people with lived experience. Some of the best early opportunities may be in states and local jurisdictions that already link data systems.

- ***Understanding the relative effect of interventions currently in use.*** Do people who receive extensive outreach and referrals in advance of an encampment clearance fare better than those who stay in formally sanctioned encampments? Do outcomes vary depending on who conducts the outreach? Do sanctioned encampments achieve higher rates of exits from homelessness than do other approaches to ending homelessness for unsheltered people? Do the outcomes of people who formerly stayed in encampments differ over time, depending on the type of assistance they receive?

- ***Exploring racial/ethnic disparities in access to the homeless services system.*** Studies in Oakland, Orlando, and Seattle point to the possibility of racial segregation, and perhaps self-segregation, of encampment populations—and, by inference, of populations using shelters. Research could explore the reasons for these patterns, including possible barriers to entry into shelters or to programs providing permanent housing that affect particular racial/ethnic groups.

- ***Understanding community responses to the presence of encampments.*** What are community members' expectations regarding responses to unsanctioned encampments in their neighborhoods and approaches to resolving them? How are community members' responses shaped by stigma or bias related to race, homelessness, poverty, mental health needs, and substance use? How do community members respond to sanctioned encampments, and are factors present that determine whether sanctioned encampments experience more or less acceptance? What strategies can public and private agencies use to keep community members informed of their approaches to assist people living in encampments?

Conclusion

In recent years, encampments of people experiencing homelessness have become pervasive in communities across the United States. They can be found in busy neighborhoods in large cities, isolated rural areas, and everywhere in between. Encampments may be as small as a cluster of 8 to 10 households next to a highway entrance ramp, or they may encompass multiple structures scattered across several acres of parkland or industrial areas. The encampments that are visible to outside observers take many forms, including tents, lean-to shacks and shanties, and groups of cars or vans; other encampments that are not so visible are hidden in manmade infrastructure or natural features. The motivations and circumstances of people staying in encampments are as varied as their size, shape, and location.

Despite this diversity, at the root of all encampments is a need for greater investment of resources to address severe shortages of affordable housing. Absent this commitment, people experiencing homelessness are forced to find other places to stay, and encampments may be the best alternative among a limited set of options. Articles in the peer-reviewed and gray literature document a consistent set of factors that contribute to people's decisions to stay in encampments rather than in shelters or in other, unsheltered locations. Shortages in the availability of shelter beds, policies that create barriers to entry, and undesirable conditions inside shelters all influence people to seek an alternative place to stay. When shelters cannot fulfill their needs for safety, sense of community, and the freedom to come and go at will, people experiencing homelessness may decide to stay in encampments.

Local jurisdictions are pursuing a variety of strategies to address encampments and the challenges they pose to health, safety, and well-being. The most rudimentary of those approaches is to "sweep" encampments, the primary goal of which is clearing out the people staying in them. Preliminary evidence suggests that this response of clearance without support results in disruption and trauma for inhabitants of the encampments but does little to resolve the problem. Encampments are quickly reestablished in a new location or even back on the recently cleared site. We know little about the effects of other responses that provide support to people in encampments, including responses that allow encampments to persist—through either tacit acceptance or formal sanctioning—and clearance efforts that are accompanied by outreach and referrals to housing and services.

Communities are experimenting with new service approaches to assisting people living in encampments. The Navigation Centers that were first established in San Francisco now are being replicated elsewhere but, so far, not based on strong evidence of their effectiveness. The logic is that removing many of the barriers that cause people to seek alternatives to emergency shelters and including intensive case management to help clients secure permanent housing will prevent encampments from forming and provide a transition to permanent housing for people moved out of encampments. Other cities are relaxing admission requirements for drug treatment programs to expedite entry by people in encampments. Still others are pairing first responders with trained outreach workers who can help make connections to appropriate services. More research will be needed to assess the results of these and other initiatives.

We do not know enough about the characteristics and experiences of people who stay in encampments. Collecting even baseline information can be difficult when many people actively try to escape public notice. Data collection challenges also complicate efforts to understand the costs and effectiveness of public responses to encampments. Practical and political barriers will have to be overcome to arrive at meaningful findings that can inform policymaking and practice.

This review of what we know as of late 2018 about encampments is part of a larger study sponsored by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation, and the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, Office of Policy Development and Research that will help increase the body of knowledge. We will use interviews with stakeholders in nine communities and site visits to four communities to collect information on the causes and characteristics of encampments and on community responses to encampments. The site visits to four communities also will attempt to document the public costs of various strategies for addressing encampments.

Appendix A. Methods Used to Conduct the Literature Review and Interviews with Key Informants

Scan of Peer-Reviewed Literature

To identify relevant peer-reviewed literature, we searched EBSCO Discovery Service, which provides a comprehensive search of academic journals and databases, and Google Scholar. Specific search strings and limiters used are listed in Exhibit 4.

Exhibit 4. Search Strings and Limiters

Search string used:

- "homeless encampment" OR "tent city" OR "homeless settlement" OR "homeless camp"

Limiters used:

- Peer-reviewed journals
- Published on or after January 1, 2011
- Published in English

We compiled references and abstracts from all database returns using Zotero software. We then reviewed all abstracts, identifying 43 articles for retrieval and further review. We excluded articles if they focused on encampments serving a non-homeless population, such as refugees or protesters. We also excluded research on homeless encampments in an international context because experiences with encampments and unsheltered homelessness in other countries diverge in important ways from the experience in the United States.

We identified 16 articles from more than 500 returned results that addressed the research questions shown in Exhibit 1 in the introduction. Those 16 articles include several written by the same primary author that draw on a single dataset. Under other circumstances, we might exclude a portion of the similar articles from review; however, given the small body of research on encampments, we opted to consider them all.

Scan of Gray Literature

We searched websites of government agencies, nongovernmental organizations, and academic institutions to supplement the peer-reviewed literature and identify relevant unpublished literature, white papers, presentations, and research briefs. When a website included a search function, we used the search string identified in Exhibit 4 to identify relevant resources. We also scanned relevant website sections for pertinent materials.

We found reports, publications, and conference proceedings on the official websites of the following agencies and organizations: U.S. Department of Justice, National Alliance to End Homelessness, National Coalition for the Homeless, National Law Center on Homelessness and Poverty, Seattle University School of Law, University of Denver Sturm College of Law, and San Francisco Office of

the Controller. We identified 41 documents through this process, 17 of which were determined to be relevant to this project.

We identified additional resources during interviews with key informants and by following references in the peer-reviewed and gray literature.

Interviews with Key Informants

We conducted interviews with key informants to augment information collected during the literature reviews. We identified an initial list of interviewees based on recommendations from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation, and the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, Office of Policy Development and Research staff and from project team members with expertise in homelessness, substance use disorder, and criminal justice. We identified additional individuals by asking at the conclusion of each interview for suggestions of other academics or practitioners who may be studying encampments.

Exhibit 5 lists the key informants we interviewed.

During the interviews, we asked about ongoing research projects focused on the recent growth in unsheltered homelessness and encampments; the characteristics of people in encampments and the factors that lead them to congregate there; and communities' responses, including their costs and effectiveness. We also asked key informants targeted questions about specific research projects or programs, based on our background research.

Exhibit 5. Key Informants

Name	Title	Affiliation	Date Interviewed
Sharon Chamard, PhD	Associate Professor	University of Alaska, Anchorage	November 8, 2018
Dennis Culhane, PhD	Dana and Andrew Stone Professor of Social Policy; Co-Principal Investigator, Actionable Intelligence for Social Policy	University of Pennsylvania	October 16, 2018
Margot Kushel, MD	Professor; Director of the Center for Vulnerable Populations	University of California, San Francisco	October 25, 2018 December 27, 2018
Stephen Metraux, PhD	Associate Professor; Director of the Center for Community Research & Service	University of Delaware	October 26, 2018
Colleen Murphy	Manager, Coordinated Entry System Access	Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority	November 16, 2018
Barbara Poppe	Founder and Principal	Barbara Poppe & Associates LLC	November 2, 2018
Kelly Robson	Chief Social Services Officer	HELP of Southern Nevada	October 29, 2018
Nan Roman	President and CEO	National Alliance to End Homelessness	November 1, 2018

Appendix B. Summaries of Selected Studies

In this appendix, we provide details on the approach, methodology, limitations, and key findings from selected studies in the peer-reviewed and gray literature. These studies were particularly informative as we completed our review.

City of Seattle, Human Services Department. (2017). *Seattle Permitted Encampment Evaluation.* Seattle, WA: City of Seattle.

This internal evaluation assesses the performance of three temporary, permitted encampments in the City of Seattle in 2016: Ballard, Interbay, and Othello. The encampments were created by the city on public land. They are operated by nonprofit partners with oversight from the city's Human Services Department. The authors used HUD's Annual Performance Report, Seattle Police Department data, and stakeholder interviews to inform their analysis, which focuses on (a) determining whether temporary, permitted encampments are an effective homelessness response strategy, and (b) identifying areas where the model works well or could be improved. Data collection challenges include people departing from the encampment before they interact with a case manager, case manager staff turnover, and missing responses (client doesn't know/client refused, data not collected).

The Human Services Department found that several features contributed to the success of the encampments:

- Inhabitants of encampments benefited from being able to stay in one location for a longer period, as they could make progress toward stability goals and build relationships with the community.
- The self-management model used at all three encampments empowered inhabitants and enabled them to build confidence, camaraderie, and leadership skills.
- The provision of structured case management services, including referrals to local shelters and rapid rehousing when appropriate, referrals to employee training and education, domestic violence services, and access to a mobile medical van.

The evaluation concludes that Seattle's sanctioned encampment model is successfully serving people who have been living outside in greenbelts, on the streets, in cars, and in otherwise hazardous situations. The neighboring communities have responded positively, and crime did not increase significantly when a permitted encampment was established.

Donley, A., and J. Wright. 2012. "Safer Outside: A Qualitative Exploration of Homeless People's Resistance to Homeless Shelters," *Journal of Forensic Psychology Practice* 12 (4): 288–306. doi:10.1080/15228932.2012.695645.

This study examines why people experiencing homelessness in Orange County, Florida, stay in encampments instead of available rooms in local shelters. The authors conducted a series of five focus groups with 39 people who lived in the East Orange encampments. All participants were

recruited for the study by the Orlando Homeless outreach team. Each focus group averaged 2 hours in duration and included, on average, eight people from two or three camp sites. The study is limited by the small and localized sample size; in addition, although the study was published in 2012, the focus groups were conducted in February of 2007. The authors do not discuss local preventive or punitive ordinances with regard to encampments in Orange County.

Participants "described their experiences with downtown [Orlando] homeless services and downtown itself in negative terms and said they would not venture back downtown for any conceivable reason, no matter how many services might be available there." Although participants gave many reasons for this decision, the most prevalent themes centered on the undesirable location of shelter facilities, prior negative experiences with shelters, and the sense of companionship, freedom, and safety associated with encampments.

Herring, C., and M. Lutz. 2015. "The Roots and Implications of the USA's Homeless Tent Cities," ***City*** **19 (5): 689–701. doi:10.1080/13604813.2015.1071114.**

Herring and Lutz explain the resurgence of homeless encampments in the United States through comparative case studies of encampments in Fresno, California, and Seattle, Washington. They draw from interviews and field notes completed by both authors between 2009 and 2011, along with the preexisting peer-reviewed and gray literature on encampments. The authors chose to focus on Fresno and Seattle because those cities contain large, persistent camps—including some that are legally recognized and others that are illegal and tacitly accepted.

Herring and Lutz argue that homeless encampments were not rooted in the 2008 recession, nor can they be explained by a general expansion in the homeless population. Using their case studies as supplementary evidence, they conclude that the "crisis of welfare provision in the form of perpetual shelter shortages and repulsive shelter arrangements led homeless people to prefer large encampments and led advocates and city officials to recognize large encampments as legitimate shelter alternatives."

Jones, P., K. Parish, P. Radu, T. Smiley, and J. van der Heyde. 2015. ***Alternatives to Unsanctioned Homeless Encampments.*** **Berkeley, CA: Goldman School of Public Policy, University of California, Berkeley.**

The authors of this report interviewed Oakland, California, encampment residents, service providers, and city stakeholders to understand their needs and concerns. The needs assessment and interviews with Oakland stakeholders revealed that people living in encampments "face serious barriers to both housing and shelter use that makes unsanctioned camps their only viable alternative." Jones and his colleagues then studied best practice examples of two alternatives to Oakland's current approach of clearing encampments: (1) establishing city-sanctioned campgrounds and (2) adopting a Housing First approach. They examined those alternatives in four cities: Nashville, Tennessee; Ontario, California; Portland, Oregon; and Seattle, Washington.

Analyzing the data obtained from interviews in Oakland and the best practices from other cities, the authors assigned a score to each of these approaches (clearance, sanctioned encampments, and Housing First) with respect to three criteria:

- *Effectiveness*, defined as the "degree to which the policy in question addresses the immediate problems associated with homeless encampments, comprehensively and across both the short- and long-term."
- *Equity*, as a measure of the "differential consequences of the policy for different stakeholders or constituents" and that looks at the degree to which an intervention is likely to have disproportionate effects for any particular group.
- *Implementation feasibility*, or a city's capacity to implement each policy according to its original design.

The authors weighted the criteria to reflect stakeholders' stated preferences about the relative importance of each criterion. Effectiveness accounted for 50 percent of the score, equity for 30 percent, and implementation feasibility for 20 percent. Higher scores indicate more preferable alternatives for Oakland.

Jones and his colleagues conclude that Oakland officials could expect a city-sanctioned campground to perform best as measured by effectiveness, equity, and implementation feasibility, followed closely by a Housing First approach. Although the authors found clearing encampments to be the most easily implemented, it scored lowest on effectiveness and equity. Despite efforts to coordinate with outreach services and give sufficient notice to camp residents, the process of clearing camps "prevents residents from complying with important housing or health appointments." In short, the status quo in Oakland as of 2015 "serves as a cyclical disruption for camp residents and creates an additional barrier on their pathway to housing."

Metraux, S., M. Cusack, F. Graham, D. Metzger, and D. Culhane. 2019. *An Evaluation of the City of Philadelphia's Kensington Encampment Resolution Pilot.* Philadelphia, PA: City of Philadelphia.

This report is an independent process evaluation of the City of Philadelphia's Encampment Resolution Pilot (ERP). The ERP is a cross-departmental city initiative that was established to close down two outdoor homeless encampments in May 2018. The ERP process included extensive outreach to and engagement of people staying in the encampments and the establishment of Navigation Centers to provide them with access to housing and drug treatment assistance and intensive case management. The city also took steps to prevent the encampments from re-forming through police monitoring, continued outreach and community involvement efforts, and physical changes to the site.

To evaluate the ERP, Metraux and his colleagues draw on an array of data sources that include city documents and interviews with key stakeholders and persons directly involved with implementing the pilot. In addition, the authors had direct access to planning and operational activities, and they conducted ethnographic observations at the encampments and in the surrounding community. They

used a semi-structured interview guide with a sample of residents at the two encampments targeted by the ERP to elicit open-ended responses in four topic areas: living situation, typical day, background and service use, and perspectives on the encampment closure.

The report uses this information to assess the planning, implementation, and initial outcomes of the ERP and to determine strengths and limitations of the pilot.

National Law Center on Homelessness and Poverty. 2014. *Welcome Home: The Rise of Tent Cities in the United States.* Washington, DC: National Law Center on Homelessness and Poverty.

This report documents the rise of homeless encampments and tent cities across the United States and the legal and policy responses to that growth. The authors reviewed media reports on tent cities published between 2008 and April 2012 as well as existing literature on the subject. They also conducted telephone interviews with experts and service providers. Based on this preliminary research, the authors identified four sites for in-depth case studies: Lakewood, New Jersey; New Orleans, Louisiana; Providence, Rhode Island; and St. Petersburg, Florida. The sites were chosen on the basis of their locations, the size and prominence of the former or current encampments they hosted, and their perceived usefulness for gaining a broader understanding of the causes of and responses to homeless encampments. The authors chose to focus on the East Coast because a report documenting tent cities on the Pacific Coast already existed.

Their media survey found documentation of more than 100 tent communities in 46 states and the District of Columbia. While maintaining that the existence of tent cities itself reflects a severe lack of affordable housing, the report finds that **"**when adequate housing or shelter is not available, forced evictions of tent communities may violate human rights, and may also violate principles of domestic law." The authors argue that tent cities are a result of the absence of other reasonable options. Where alternative housing facilities are insufficient, municipalities should work together with people staying in encampments "in a manner that prioritizes the autonomy and dignity of homeless individuals and allows them to have a voice in the process."

Sparks, T. 2017a. "Citizens Without Property: Informality and Political Agency in a Seattle, Washington Homeless Encampment," *Environment and Planning A: Economy and Space* 49 (1): 86–103. doi:10.1177/0308518X16665360

Sparks, T. 2017b. Neutralizing Homelessness, 2015: Tent Cities and Ten Year Plans. *Urban Geography* 38 (3): 348–356. doi:10.1080/02723638.2016.1247600.

Sparks bases these two articles on his 2006 ethnographic fieldwork, including 6 months living and participating as a resident in Seattle's Tent City 3. In addition to participant observation, during his time in Tent City 3, he conducted 50 in-depth interviews with people staying there.

In "Citizens Without Property," Sparks documents the history of Seattle's encampments and offers an explanation for why people experiencing homelessness often do not to take advantage of social services and shelters, even when they are available. That is, within encampments, people

experiencing homelessness have a venue to "respond, resist, and remake the political landscapes of homelessness" and to "challenge their marginalization and create more habitable and emancipatory spaces." Sparks centers his theory around the social and political structures in Tent City 3, which allow residents to feel responsible, be independent, and participate in camp activities—in contrast to the demeaning treatment received at shelters.

In "Neutralizing Homelessness," Sparks claims that the "medicalization and personalization of homelessness" serves to "stabilize and maintain homelessness in seeming perpetuity"—that is, because of this flawed view of homelessness, people experiencing homelessness are blamed for their situation rather than systems, structures, or societal conditions being blamed. Well-intended service providers accept the narrative of "homeless as pathology" and create an environment that dehumanizes people who might otherwise seek assistance, leading them to stay in encampments, where they can be seen as "normal" people.

Speer, J. 2017. "'It's Not Like your Home': Homeless Encampments, Housing Projects, and the Struggle over Domestic Space" ***Antipode*** **49 (2): 517–35. doi:10.1111/anti.12275.**

Speer, J. 2018a. "The Rise of the Tent Ward: Homeless Camps in the Era of Mass Incarceration," ***Political Geography*** **62: 160–169. doi:10.1016/j.polgeo.2017.11.005.**

Speer, J. 2018b. "Urban Makeovers, Homeless Encampments, and the Aesthetics of Displacement," ***Social & Cultural Geography*** **1–21. doi:10.1080/14649365.2018.1509115.**

In these three articles, Speer builds on interviews and ethnographic fieldwork conducted in Fresno, California, in 2013. Of the 24 people Speer interviewed, 9 were officials involved in homeless management, 8 were homeless, and 7 were local activists. She selected homeless participants from multiple racial/ethnic backgrounds, genders, and ages. The author returned to Fresno in 2016 to volunteer at an activist-led encampment and follow up with former research participants. To supplement fieldwork, Speer also relied on two local media sources and reviewed policy reports, legal documents, and online videos and radio programs depicting homeless activism and evictions. Speer believes Fresno to be an ideal city through which to examine the politics of home in relation to homelessness because of its large-scale encampments and intensive housing subsidy program.

"'It's Not Like Your Home'" focuses on how people staying in encampments define *home*. Participants appreciate the sense of community within encampments and the opportunities to exercise autonomy. Speer demonstrates that, by staying in encampments, "homeless Fresnans were creating a new kind of home in which individuals and families were part of a larger collective tied to each other through relations of mutual care."

"Urban Makeovers" probes the motivations behind Fresno's varying responses to homeless encampments. Drawing on personal interviews, media articles, and statements made by city officials and politicians, Speer claims that in the Fresno political discourse, homeless encampments are framed as "unpleasant objects that must be removed to make way for economic opportunities." Thus, "efforts to reinforce a 'live play work' aesthetic resulted in a politics of displacement and criminalization" as city officials worked to move those in encampments to the margins of town, sanction those marginalized encampments, and make them visually uniform and uncluttered.

"The Rise of the Tent Ward" goes beyond Fresno to look at city-sanctioned and -controlled encampments in King County, Washington; Ontario, California; Portland, Oregon; Reno, Nevada; and St. Petersburg, Florida. Speer terms these encampments as *tent wards* to reflect "how incarceration becomes enmeshed with the provision of care and shelter." She argues that these encampments "are not simply a cost effective form of shelter: they are a new node in a wider network of quasi-carceral spaces that govern homeless mobility" that "undermine structural efforts to address poverty and housing inequality."

Appendix C: Selected Practitioner Resources

In the course of conducting this literature review, the study team identified a number of resources that did not meet our criteria for inclusion in the review but may be informative for local leaders and practitioners who are seeking practical guidance on how to address encampments in their communities. We provide links to these resources below.

United States Interagency Council on Homelessness (USICH)

Following conversations with advocates, housing and services providers, and government officials, USICH prepared a suite of resources intended to help local communities develop an action plan to connect people experiencing homelessness in encampments with permanent housing. Those resources include a paper that discusses the key components of an action plan, a quick guide that provides an introduction to the concepts covered in the paper, and a planning checklist with action steps for each of the key components. Those resources were published in 2015 and are available for download at www.usich.gov/tools-for-action/ending-homelessness-for-people-in-encampments/.

USICH has also prepared a series of case studies of communities that are implementing strategies to address the housing and services needs of people experiencing homelessness in encampments. Published in 2017, the case studies describe lessons learned from the local experience in six communities: Charleston, South Carolina; San Francisco, California; Seattle, Washington; Chicago, Illinois; Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; and Dallas, Texas. Topics covered include the evolution of the city's approach to addressing encampments, key stakeholders and tips for engaging them, and challenges or surprises encountered in the implementation process.

In May 2018, USICH published a brief titled Caution is Needed When Considering "Sanctioned Encampments" or "Safe Zones". The brief urges communities to proceed with caution when considering the establishment of sanctioned encampments and lists key points to consider for those who decide to proceed. The brief concludes with a list of links to additional USICH resources.

Corporation for Supportive Housing (CSH)

CSH has made available for download an extensive set of templates, provider tools, and draft policies for addressing unsheltered homelessness. Although not specific to encampments, many of these resources may be helpful in working with people experiencing unsheltered homelessness in encampments. All resources are available for download at www.csh.org/communityresponse/.

National Alliance to End Homelessness

The National Alliance to End Homelessness publishes presentation notes and slide decks from sessions at its national conferences. Several sessions at recent conferences address encampments, including the following:

- Resolving Encampments: Evaluating Different Approaches (July 2018)
- Sanctioned Encampments: Questions You Should Ask (July 2018)
- Understanding Unsheltered Homelessness: What We Know So Far (July 2018)
- A Growing Unsheltered Population: Addressing Encampments (August 2016)

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