



## Kitsap County Department of Human Services Housing and Homelessness Division

<https://kcowa.us/housing>

# HEART Program 2022 Year End Review

The HEART (Homeless Encampment Action Response and Transitions) Program was launched in April 2022. The program is designed to ensure that the county government has a consistent, coordinated, and compassionate response to unauthorized homeless encampments on Kitsap County property. The HEART Program's goal is to lead with compassion, and to provide a person-centered approach by focusing on connecting individuals with resources while mitigating the impacts of unauthorized encampments on our community. This document is a summary of the program's work through the end of 2022.

### **Development of the HEART Program**

The HEART Program is governed by the Unauthorized Encampment Response Policy on County Property, which was approved by the Board of County Commissioners in November 2021. The policy provides clear, consistent, and uniform guidelines regarding responses to encampments on Kitsap County property. The policy outlines the role of a full-time position, the HEART Coordinator, to implement the policy and coordinate the county's response across departments and community partner organizations, working with a HEART Advisory Group. The HEART Coordinator was hired in April 2022. Since that time, the program has:

- Implemented the Unauthorized Encampments on County Property Policy
- Convened and facilitated the HEART Advisory Group, as called out in the Policy
  - HEART Advisory Group is made up of representatives of county departments and community partners that are affected by, or work with, encampments
  - HEART Advisory Group met twice monthly from April – December of 2022.
  - HEART Advisory Group advises on prioritization of encampment responses, development of Encampment Response Plans, and coordination of encampment response activities and services
- Developed notices and forms for encampment response, with the county Prosecuting Attorney's Office
- Met with county leadership to brief them and receive input on the first few encampment responses

### **HEART Outreach Team**

Kitsap County is also funding a dedicated encampment outreach team through a contract with Kitsap Community Resources' Housing Solutions Center program. The HEART Outreach Team is a two-person team, whose role is to connect those experiencing homelessness in encampments with services through the county's housing coordinated entry program, the Housing Solutions Center (HSC). The HSC provides intake, assessment, vulnerability scoring, and referrals to shelter and housing programs. During 2022, the HEART Outreach Team worked with the HEART Program Coordinator:

- 141 visits during May – December to 27 reported encampments on County property and rights-of-way
- 155 Housing Solutions Center Applications were completed by encampment campers
- 37 people were referred into the KCR Quality Inn Shelter with Case Management program
- Nine people enrolled into the Kitsap Rescue Mission Shelter program
- Three people enrolled into the Benedict House Shelter program
- 17 people enrolled in the Emergency Motel Program (EMP), and temporarily housed into other area hotels

- One person was referred into Pendleton Place
- Two people were referred into St. Vincent de Paul's Women's Shelter
- 16 people who were initially contacted in an encampment by the HEART Program transitioned from a shelter program to signed leases on their own homes
- Four 911 calls were made to assist people in encampments due to emergency situations
- Two people were taken to St. Michael Medical Center for emergent health services
- 16 people were connected with the R.E.A.L. team for mental health and substance use resources

### **Encampment Response Plans**

The HEART Program worked to monitor and respond to many encampments on county property:

- Responded to six of the most impactful encampments on county property or rights-of-way by developing Encampment Response Plans and working with community partners to close the encampments and contract for clean-up of the sites.
- Arranged and contracted for clean-up of four abandoned encampments on county property.
- Worked with the City of Port Orchard, Department of Natural Resources, the City of Poulsbo, Greater Peninsula Conservancy, Clear Creek Taskforce, Kitsap Realty Association, Washington State Department of Transportation, and Kitsap Housing Authority in efforts to clean up encampments.
- Facilitated over 22 tons of refuse being cleaned up from encampments, thorough partnership with Kitsap County Solid Waste Division.

### **State Services Referrals**

The HEART Coordinator and Outreach Team also works to connect people living in encampments with other state resources:

- 11 referrals to Adult Protective Services
- Three referrals to Developmental Disabilities Administration
- Seven referrals for state services for food assistance

### **SeeClickFix and Kitsap1 Community Complaints**

SeeClickFix is an online reporting tool for Kitsap County community members, which allows reports to be made to the HEART Program, tracking reporters' interactions, feedback, and progress.

- HEART Program began receiving reports via SeeClickFix in November 2022.
- Responded with emails and calls to citizens in response to 44 reports of encampment activities since its launch.
- Closed 17 SeeClickFix referrals

Kitsap County also uses an information clearinghouse, Kitsap1, to answer community questions and take complaints via telephone and email. Questions and complaints about encampments are also routed to the HEART Program for response.

- Responded to 54 inquires, questions, and complaints about encampments through Kitsap1 between April and December 2022.
- Developed a handout for the public on Reporting Encampments.

### **Community Engagement**

There is high community interest in encampments and the county's response to them. The HEART Program has worked to educate the community about the program.

- Developed a Kitsap County webpage about the HEART program: <https://kcowa.us/HEART>
- Participated in 11 community engagement events, speaking with community members and specific neighborhoods regarding encampments and the HEART Program



## Before and After photographs

Below are some examples of encampments that the HEART Team was able to address during 2022.

### Silverdale RV and Tent Encampment



### Veteran's Memorial Park Encampments



### Clear Creek Trail Sasquatch Encampment

