CHICAGO PARK DISTRICT

# Homeless Encampments on Park District Property: Policy & Protocol

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# I. Overview

## A. Purpose

The Chicago Park District's ("Park District") mission is to give people of all ages, identities, and abilities access to quality recreation, wellness opportunities, and sustainable green spaces in every neighborhood.

This *Homeless Encampments on Park District Property: Policy and Protocol* ("Policy and Protocol") aligns with the Park District's mission and serves to clearly define the Park District's roles in responding to Encampments on Park District property by:

1. Committing that the Chicago Park District supports the rights of persons experiencing homelessness and is committed to the City of Chicago's compassionate, trauma-informed housing-first approach to responding to and preventing homelessness;
2. Clearly outlining the relevant components of the Chicago Park District Code related to Encampments and identifying how Encampments are prioritized for enforcement;
3. Providing clear guidance on the Park District's policies and protocols related to cleanings and closures of Encampments on Park District property;
4. Outlining the collaborative efforts of the Park District and City of Chicago's lead partners related to the offering of social services and the cleaning of Encampments;
5. Clearly stating that the Chicago Police Department enforces the Chicago Park District Code and the City of Chicago's Municipal Code, which includes enforcement of overnight camping and Encampment Closures; and,
6. Providing guidance to Park District employees who identify a person who may be experiencing homelessness on Park District property.

## B. Scope

This Policy and Protocol apply to individuals who are residing in an Encampment or have erected structures on Park District property for any reason.

The Park District will revisit and revise, as necessary, this Policy and Protocol within two (2) years of its release.

## C. Definitions

**Affordable Requirement Ordinance (ARO):** A City of Chicago Ordinance (Chicago Municipal Code § 2-44-085 2021) that is intended to expand access to housing for low-income and moderate-income households in all areas of the City and to preserve the long-term affordability of such housing. The City's ARO, which mirrors local governments' across the country, applies inclusionary zoning to harness the power of private

investments to create affordable rental and ownership opportunities in communities receiving development that is usually targeted at the upper end of the market.

**City:** The City of Chicago

**Coordinated Encampment Cleaning:** A coordinated event between Department of Family and Support Services (DFSS), the Department of Streets and Sanitation (DSS), the Chicago Police Department (CPD) as needed, and the Park District. During a Coordinated Encampment Cleaning, items not allowed in an Encampment are removed. A Coordinated Encampment Cleaning is not an Encampment Closure.

**Department of Family and Support Services (DFSS):** The lead City of Chicago Department addressing homelessness in Chicago.

**Emergency Encampment Cleaning:** A coordinated event between DFSS, DSS, CPD as needed, and the Park District that is based on a reasonable belief or suspicion of an immediate or imminent threat or hazard to public safety or public health. An Emergency Encampment Cleaning is not an Encampment Closure.

**Encampment:** An area on Park District property that contains one or more tents or other structures and personal belongings with one or more individuals engaging in overnight camping or using the space as temporary housing.

**Encampment Closure:** The removal of an Encampment, including removal of all tents, structures, and personal belongings.

**Enforcement Priority Area:** An area on Park District property with one or more Encampments that interfere with use of the space, pose a public health or public safety threat, are nearby private residences or businesses, or have otherwise been prioritized for removal as set forth in Section IV of this Policy.

**Housing Event:** A Housing Event is a strategy to expedite the connection of individuals to housing by completing multiple steps to the housing process at once. Housing Events may include opportunities to obtain a housing referral, complete housing program applications, obtain necessary identification and personal documentation, and connect to other services to facilitate a move into housing. An accelerated moving event is a type of Housing Event.

**Park District:** The Chicago Park District.

**Personal Portable Property (PPP):** PPP are items that can be easily relocated by an individual experiencing homelessness and are allowed in an Encampment. PPP does not include larger items such as chairs, couches, and grills, which are not allowed and may be removed during Coordinated Encampment Cleanings and Emergency Encampment Cleanings. Specifically, as defined by the City of Chicago, personal possessions protected include “a sleeping bag or bedroll, not more than two coats, not more than two pairs of shoes or boots, not more than five blankets, and not more than three bags or suitcases, and such contents as may be contained in said bags or suitcases.” Also protected are

"personal documents (such as personal identification, birth certificates, legal documents, personal or family photographs, and bills), personal medication, eyeglasses, money, and jewelry."[1]

**Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH):** According to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), Permanent Supportive Housing is permanent housing in which housing assistance (e.g., long-term leasing or rental assistance) and supportive services are provided to assist households with at least one member (adult or child) with a disability in achieving housing stability. See the HUD Continuum of Care Program's Leasing and Rental Assistance Requirements Binder for more information.

**Rapid Re-Housing:** An intervention designed to help individuals and families that do not need intensive and ongoing supports to quickly exit homelessness and return to permanent housing.

**Sweep:** An Encampment Closure that does not adhere to a housing-first approach. Sweeps may displace individuals experiencing homelessness without prior notification, separating them from existing support services and increasing the likelihood that the individual will continue to experience homelessness elsewhere. During a Sweep, a connection to housing and shelter may not be offered to impacted individuals. The Park District does not engage in Sweeps.

# II. Introduction

The Park District remains committed to ensuring that parks remain clean, safe, open, and accessible to all park users. The Park District is aligned with the City of Chicago's housing-first approach to responding to individuals experiencing homelessness.

Just as it has done over the past century, the Park District will continue to serve as one of the key partners of the City's social safety net – providing safe spaces where community members can relax, exercise, enjoy nature, engage in programming, take respite in extreme weather events, access public facilities, and be connected to other resources.

[1] Audit of DFSS Outreach to Encampments of People Experiencing Homelessness, City of Chicago Office of Inspector General, August 23, 2023

## A. Background on the Housing Crisis

**Over the past decade, homelessness in the United States has escalated to unprecedented levels.**[2] This is driven by a combination of systemic housing shortages, economic instability, pressures after COVID, migration and displacement, increasing urbanization, and previous policy decisions that were rooted in racism and discriminatory practices.

**Chicago is no exception to this crisis.** At the City's annual Point-In-Time (PIT) Count for 2025, there were 7,452 estimated people experiencing homelessness with 6,136 people in sheltered locations and 1,316 individuals in unsheltered locations.[3]

**Homelessness in Chicago reflects the inequities across our support systems.**

- Many individuals experiencing sheltered homelessness are youth, while the majority experiencing unsheltered homelessness are middle aged. Among the sheltered population at the time of the 2025 PIT, about 32% (1,943) were under the age of 18. Among the unsheltered population, roughly half were within the age range of 45-64.
- The majority of people experiencing homelessness in Chicago are extremely low-income, meaning they earn less than 30% of Area Median Income (AMI).[4]
- Homelessness impacts People of Color more: 53% of Chicagoans experiencing homelessness identified as Black or African American; 35% identified as Hispanic or Latino.

**Chicago's limited funding and inadequate supply of affordable housing presents a barrier to ending homelessness.** The solution to end homelessness is permanent stable housing.

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[2] The 2024 Annual Homeless Assessment Report (AHAR) to Congress, U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, December 2024. Available at: https://www.huduser.gov/portal/sites/default/files/pdf/2024-AHAR-Part-1.pdf

> *The number of people experiencing homelessness on a single night in 2024 was the highest ever recorded. A total of 771,480 people – or about 23 of every 10,000 people in the United States – experienced homelessness in an emergency shelter, safe haven, transitional housing program, or in unsheltered locations across the country. Several factors likely contributed to this historically high number. Our worsening national affordable housing crisis, rising inflation, stagnating wages among middle- and lower-income households, and the persisting effects of systemic racism have stretched homelessness services systems to their limits. Additional public health crises, natural disasters that displaced people from their homes, rising numbers of people immigrating to the U.S., and the end to homelessness prevention programs put in place during the COVID-19 pandemic, including the end of the expanded child tax credit, have exacerbated this already stressed system.*

[3] DFSS Point in Time Count, City of Chicago, January 3, 2025. Available at: https://www.chicago.gov/city/en/depts/fss/provdrs/emerg/svcs/PITcount.html

[4] Department of Housing. City of Chicago, Area Median Income Limits 2025 Chart: https://www.chicago.gov/city/en/depts/doh/provdrs/renters/svcs/ami_chart.html

According to the National Low Income Housing Coalition, Chicago is experiencing the largest gap in affordable housing in over a decade with an estimated 126,000 needed units, further limiting the pathways for individuals experiencing homelessness into stable and permanent housing.

While the City employs various pathways to permanent housing, including the Department of Housing's Affordable Requirement Ordinance (ARO) and the Department of Family and Support Services' Rapid Re-Housing Program, these programs are unable to meet the current demand.

Each year, between 1,500 and just over 2,500 people are connected to permanent housing subsidies such as Permanent Supportive Housing and Rapid Re-Housing funded through Chicago's Continuum of Care[5] managed by All Chicago. However, the number of people who experience new episodes of homelessness each year far exceeds the number of people housed each year through Continuum of Care housing subsidies alone. As a result, the demand for housing within the Continuum of Care far exceeds the available level of housing resources.

**This crisis is exacerbated by the high demand for emergency shelter and the City's limited capacity of shelter beds.** In 2024, the City received over 40,000 311 requests for emergency shelter, and Cook County received over 5,100 211 requests for emergency shelter.[6] While the City was successful in adding 3,800 beds to the existing 3,000 beds in the shelter system at the end of 2024, there remains a gap in the amount of shelter beds needed, including in community areas across the city with no shelters or limited availability.

**This ongoing gap between demand and supply heavily impacts our communities and City services**, including Park District employees who must navigate sensitive situations with individuals experiencing economic, social, physical, and mental health hardships who are using Park District facilities or residing on Park District property.

## B. Legal and Policy Context

The Park District adheres to state and local laws, along with City policy, when addressing homelessness in parks. This includes:

1. **Bill of Rights for the Homeless Act** (775 ILCS 45). Effective in 2013, this state law affirms that individuals experiencing homelessness have the same rights as any other citizen, including the right to move freely in public spaces, to receive equal treatment by state and municipal agencies, and to be free from discrimination due to housing status.
2. **City of Chicago's Housing-First Approach:** The City of Chicago has adopted a housing-first strategy: connecting individuals to permanent, stable housing without preconditions such as employment, sobriety, or treatment compliance. Services are layered to sustain

[5] All Chicago – Making Homelessness History, Continuum of Care Background: https://allchicago.org/continuum-of-care/

[6] 211 Metro Chicago, Available at: https://211metrochicago.211counts.org/

stability. This nationally recognized best practice contrasts with Sweeps, which displace people without resolving underlying housing needs. Though in circumstances for safety, some Encampment Closures are in the best interest of Encampment residents and the general public; Sweeps are never the solution, and Encampment Closures alone are not a long-term solution to homelessness. In addition, the Park District adheres to the City's protocol originally set forth in the 2015 Bryant Agreement. Though now expired, DFSS continues to follow such protocol provided in the agreement regarding Personal, Portable Possessions (PPP) and determining what can be discarded during cleanings. Under these guidelines, PPP items (e.g., clothing, bedding, personal documents) will not be discarded. Oversized structures and hazardous items, such as propane tanks and wood-burning stoves, are subject to removal.[7]

3. **Law Enforcement Authority**: By state law (70 ILCS 1545/2), enforcement of criminal code and municipal code violations on Park District property rests with the Chicago Police Department – not the Park District. Under Chicago Municipal Code (10-36-185), the Chicago Police have authority to enforce and issue fines relating to violations of provisions of the Park District Code relating to use of parks and park rules.

4. **Illinois Law Regarding Sex Offenders**: Under Illinois Law, (720 ILCS 5/11-9.4-1), it is unlawful for a sexual predator or a child sex offender to knowingly be present in any public park building or on real property comprising any public park, or to knowingly loiter on a public way within 500 feet of a public park building or real property comprising any public park. Upon becoming aware of a violation of this law, the Park District will contact the Chicago Police Department for enforcement.

5. **Prioritization for Enforcement:** State law authorizes the Park District to establish rules and regulations for the government and protection of parks and to impose and enforce penalties for violations (70 ILCS 1505/7.02; 70 ILCS 1505/10). This authority includes enforcement discretion – the ability to determine how, when, and where to enforce rules and regulations in a manner consistent with public safety, park stewardship, and responsible use of limited resources. Because the Park District cannot address every violation at once, this Policy outlines how the Park District will prioritize Encampments for enforcement based on objective factors such as public safety risks, interference with park access and programming, environmental sensitivity, and prior closure history. Exercising enforcement discretion in this structured manner ensures that the Park District fulfills its duty to protect parks and park users while advancing a compassionate, housing-first approach to assisting individuals experiencing homelessness.

[7] More information about the Bryant Agreement can be found in City's Office of Inspector General Report from August 2023, available at: https://igchicago.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/Audit-of-DFSS-Outreach-to-Encampments-of-People-Experiencing-Homelessness.pdf

## C. Citywide Collaboration

The City of Chicago has taken a compassionate, trauma-informed approach to responding to and preventing homelessness, and the Park District serves as a strong partner in support of these efforts. The City's three-pronged approach to address homelessness includes:

1) Preventing homelessness from occurring;
2) Implementing an effective crisis response system; and,
3) Supporting long-term housing solutions.

This housing-first approach recognizes that Sweeps do not solve the underlying problem driving homelessness – available and accessible affordable housing while addressing underlying concerns through supportive services does. Sweeps or criminalizing homelessness by arresting individuals experiencing homelessness simply forces individuals experiencing homelessness to a new location; disrupting community relationships and dismantling critical connections to support services.

As a strong partner, the Park District will adhere to the City of Chicago's Five-Year Blueprint on Homelessness [available here], which serves as a citywide roadmap to prevent and ultimately end homelessness. Led by the Mayor's Office of Homelessness, it reflects a shared commitment across government, service providers, philanthropy, and communities, including those with lived expertise, to advance proven and lasting solutions. The Five-Year Blueprint on Homelessness focuses on seven key strategies that bridge short-term interventions with sustainable, systemic change: Emergency Services, Housing, Health, Education, Employment, Systems Alignment and Community Cohesion.

The Park District also participates in the Chicago Homelessness Interagency Collaborative (CHI Collaborative), a cross-departmental initiative dedicated to aligning City departments and sister agencies in the efforts to prevent and end homelessness. The CHI Collaborative is the governing body that will implement the Five-Year Blueprint to End and Prevent Homelessness.

## D. Housing Events

The Park District will collaborate with the City of Chicago's lead partners in executing Housing Events to match Encampment residents with secure housing. Housing Events may be located on Park District properties.

## E. Lead Partners

The Park District collaborates with numerous governmental agencies that are leading efforts to address and alleviate homelessness in Chicago, including:

- The Mayor's Office, which leads in directing City policy and procedures;
- The Department of Family and Support Services (DFSS), which is the lead City agency in addressing homelessness, including providing front-line service providers;

- The Department of Streets and Sanitation (DSS), which supports the Park District in Encampment Cleanings and Encampment Closures;
- The Chicago Police Department (CPD), which leads enforcement for the City of Chicago and the Park District; and.
- The Chicago Department of Public Health (CDPH), which provides behavioral and physical health services and resources to individuals experiencing homelessness.

# III. Guiding Principles

## A. Rights of Individuals Experiencing Homelessness

Persons experiencing homelessness have the same rights as any other persons to use public park property during normal operating hours following established Park District rules including access to interior and exterior facilities.

The rights of individuals experiencing homelessness to use the parks during operating hours in a lawful way is not to be disrupted or limited.

## B. Adherence to Park District Policies

All individuals residing in Encampments, along with every person on Park District property, are expected to adhere to the Park District's Facility Users Code of Conduct, which states that all persons are expected exhibit appropriate behavior while participating in or attending any program or activity sponsored by the Park District or while on Park District property, including adhering to all local, state and federal laws or regulations and all rules set forth in Chapter VII of the Chicago Park District Code.

## C. Guiding Principles for Addressing Encampments

1. The Park District will maintain a strong partnership with DFSS, the City, and other government entities to ensure that interactions with individuals experiencing homelessness promote reducing recidivism and are respectful and productive.
2. The Park District will maintain strong partnerships with the lead non-governmental organizations that address homelessness.
3. The Park District will provide de-escalation, mental health first aid, or similar trainings to its employees and prioritize training employees who frequently interact with individuals experiencing homelessness on Park District property.
4. The Park District will not engage in Sweeps.
5. The Park District will ensure that interactions with persons experiencing homelessness including Coordinated Encampment Cleanings, Emergency Encampment Cleanings, Encampment Closures, and Housing Events are performed with dignity and compassion.

6. Except in emergency situations, the Park District will provide ample notice for any Coordinated Encampment Cleanings and Encampment Closures including posted signage and verbal notification. Notices and signage will be clear, adequate, and timely, and offered in additional languages as necessary. The Park District will remove any notices posted in Encampments that are not from partner City agencies or the Park District itself.
7. The Park District will explore seeking additional resources to strengthen its internal response and capacity to partner with City and non-governmental partners to address homelessness in parks.
8. The Park District will continue to train its employees regarding this Policy and Protocol.

# IV. Enforcement of Code and Encampment Closures

## A. Enforcement of Chicago Park District Code

1. Chapter VII of the Chicago Park District Code outlines the rules related to the use of parks. In recognition of the critical services the City and its partners provide to Encampment residents and the limited resources available to the Park District for enforcement, the Park District may exercise discretion in enforcing the following sections of its Code to support DFSS and other service providers in establishing relationships with individuals at Encampments to connect them with services and a pathway to housing:
    a. Chapter VII(B)(2): No person shall be in a park space between the hours of 11:00 PM and 6:00 AM the following day.
    b. Chapter VII(C)(3)(a)(7): No person shall without a permit erect any tent, canopy or other structure.
    c. Chapter VII(B)(13)(a): No person shall bring into or leave behind material of any kind in the park unless it is removed or deposited in receptacles provided for such purpose.
2. However, while the Park District may exercise discretion in its enforcement efforts to support providers in establishing relationships and connecting Encampment residents with services, **the Park District shall prioritize enforcing the rules set forth in the Park District Code when any of the following occurs:**
    a. There are threats to public safety for the surrounding community or the Encampment inhabitants. Public safety threats include, but are not limited to, incidents of violence, persistent fires, or incidents of drug use, drug production, or drug sales.
    b. Encampments are in Enforcement Priority Areas, which include areas that impede Park District programming, permitted events, or planned construction activity.

c. Structures that are not tents are erected, including dwellings constructed of wood, metal or other materials that cannot be quickly and easily disassembled and relocated.

d. The Encampment contains known gas-powered equipment or propane tanks, or other hazardous or disruptive materials.

e. An individual who was previously experiencing homelessness but has since been connected to housing cannot set up a tent or other structure in a park if they remain connected to housing, regardless of whether the tent or structure is used as a primary shelter or for storage of personal belongings.

3. Hazardous or Dangerous Materials or Items: Individuals residing in Encampments that are not prioritized for enforcement must follow the General Rules set forth in Section V, Paragraph B, below and may not store hazardous or dangerous materials or items that pose a threat to public safety, including propane tanks and weapons.

    a. Upon becoming aware of hazardous or dangerous materials or items in an Encampment that may pose a threat to public safety; DFSS, Park District Public Safety, and the Chicago Police Department may inspect impacted tents and structures to conduct well-being checks and remove such hazardous or dangerous materials or items.

    b. DFSS, Park District Public Safety, and the Chicago Police Department must be granted access to tents or structures to address a threat to public safety, which includes the removal of hazardous or dangerous materials or items.

    c. If access is not granted by an individual residing in a tent that may have a hazardous or dangerous material or item that poses a reasonable threat to public safety, or if the impacted tent is locked or access is otherwise prohibited; the tent, structure, or hazardous or dangerous materials or items may be removed, and the Chicago Police Department may pursue enforcement.

## B. Collaboration with Park District Public Safety and Chicago Police Department

1. **Non-life-threatening situations:** The Park District shall make all efforts to address and de-escalate situations within or around Encampments prior to notifying the Chicago Police Department. In non-life-threatening situations that do not threaten the immediate health and safety of Encampment residents, Park District employees, outreach workers, or the general public, the Park District shall:

    a. First contact Park District Public Safety Officers, who shall support de-escalating situations and re-directing behaviors, and shall inform individuals of the rules set forth in this Policy and Protocol and the Park District Facility Users Code of Conduct.

b. If Park District Public Safety is unsuccessful in addressing a situation, Park District Public Safety shall contact the Chicago Police Department for additional support. Park District Public Safety shall request a Chicago Police Affinity Officer respond to the incident.

c. If, either after the Affinity Officer is unsuccessful in addressing a situation or if the Affinity Officer is unavailable to respond to a situation, the Chicago Police Department shall then send other appropriate enforcement support.

2. **Life-threatening situations or dangerous, illegal activity:** In situations that pose an immediate and serious danger to the health and safety of individuals residing in Encampments, Park District employees, outreach workers, or the general public; or if individuals are engaging in dangerous, illegal activity; the Chicago Police Department and/or Chicago Fire Department shall be contacted immediately.

# V. Encampments: Overnight Tent Camping

## A. Enforcement Priority Areas

While the Park District Code prohibits individuals from remaining overnight in parks and from erecting tents or other structures as set forth in Section IV, Paragraph A (1) above, the Park District has limited resources to enforce every violation of the aforementioned sections of its Code. Given that, the Park District shall prioritize areas for enforcement ("Enforcement Priority Areas") that are:

- Impacting Park District programs;
- Nearby, within, or adjacent to a children's playground or play structure, including water play features;
- Nearby, within, or adjacent a sports field or sports court, such as a basketball, tennis, or pickleball court;
- Nearby or adjacent to an entrance or exit to a field house, comfort station, beach house, landscape yard, or other park facility;
- Within or nearby a sensitive landscape such as a Park District Natural Area,[8] floral garden, or community garden;

[8] The Park District designates specific areas that are critical habitats for local and migratory wildlife as "Natural Areas." The Park District's over 2,000 acres of Natural Areas encompass a rich diversity of ecosystem types, ranging from prairies and savannas to woodlands, wetlands, rivers, lakes, and dunes. More information about Natural Areas can be found here: https://www.chicagoparkdistrict.com/facilities/natural-areas.

- Within the footprint of Park District-approved permitted events, such as a concert, run/walk fundraiser, family reunion, or picnic;
- Within the footprint of Park District-approved concessionaires;
- Designated areas for Park District construction activities, such as parking lot resurfacing or development of new natural areas;
- Within one hundred (100) feet of private residences or businesses;
- Not readily accessible to public safety agencies, such as along riverbanks;
- On Park District walking, jogging, or cycling paths where an encampment physically obstructs the safe passage of pedestrians, cyclists, maintenance vehicles, or emergency vehicles;
- Experiencing higher documented rates of criminal activity;
- Being used for illegal drug use or the selling or purchasing of illegal drugs;
- Deemed a public health emergency or public health threat by the City; or,
- Have previously experienced an Encampment Closure.

This list of criteria for Enforcement Priority Areas is not comprehensive. It may be amended at any time by the Park District.

The Park District will evaluate Enforcement Priority Areas based on the cumulative impact, severity, and persistence of the conditions identified above.

## B. General Rules for Encampments

Individuals experiencing temporary homelessness residing in Encampments that are outside of an Enforcement Priority Area shall adhere to the following rules:

1. **Allowable structures:** In alignment with City policy, only tents are allowed for use by individuals experiencing homelessness on Park District property in areas that are not designated as Enforcement Priority Areas. The Park District may remove any tents that do not meet the following requirements:
    a. Tents must be no larger 110 x 85 inches (roughly 9 x 7 feet), and no taller than 85 inches.
    b. Individuals may have one tent. Multiple tents per individual are not allowed.
    c. Only tents designed for camping are allowed. Event or party tents are prohibited.
    d. Tents shall not be used solely to store belongings.
2. **Allowable items:** Only Personal Portable Property (PPP) is allowed in Encampments.
3. **Prohibited items and structures include**:

a. **Semi-permanent or permanent structures that are not tents.** Housing structures that are not tents, but otherwise meet the guidelines set forth in this section, are not allowed. This includes, but is not limited to, temporary structures, built structures, and structures that include flooring.

b. **Furniture:** Furniture, including couches, sofa chairs, and tables are not allowed in Encampments.

c. **Gas/Propane**: Gas, propane, or other flammable substances are not allowed in Encampments.

4. **Adherence to Park District and City laws and rules**: Individuals experiencing temporary homelessness who are engaging in overnight tent camping must follow the guidance set forth in this Policy and Protocol; the Personal Portable Property (PPP) guidance, the rules set forth in the Park District Code, including those for park safety and cleanliness; the Chicago Municipal Code, and the Park District Facility Users Code of Conduct, which states that all persons are expected to exhibit appropriate behavior while participating in or attending any program or activity sponsored by the Park District or while on Park District property, including adhering to all local, state and federal laws or regulations and all rules set forth in Chapter VII of the Chicago Park District Code. **Collectively, these laws and rules prohibit, among other items:**

   a. Open fires, unless in an approved grilling area designated by the Park District;

   b. Gas, propane, or other flammable materials;

   c. Defecating or urinating in public;

   d. Public nudity;

   e. Weapons including replica weapons or toy weapons;

   f. Unleashed animals or pets;

   g. Destruction of park property; and,

   h. Selling or use of alcoholic beverages or drugs.

## C. Coordinated Encampment Cleanings

The Park District maintains the public park property and, in partnership with the City of Chicago, is responsible for maintaining the safety of its employees and park patrons. From time to time, the Park District and its partners may conduct Coordinated Encampment Cleanings to maintain public areas in a clean and sanitary condition, protect public health and safety, and ensure the accessibility of public areas to all. **Coordinated Encampment Cleanings are *not* Encampment Closures.**

1. **Collaboration:** Coordinated Encampment Cleanings are an effort between the Park District, DFSS, the Department of Streets and Sanitation (DSS) and the Chicago Police Department as necessary.

2. **Notice:** Coordinated Encampment Cleanings typically require notification signage at the Encampment to be posted seven (7) days in advance, in which case, the City or the Park District shall post the notice.
3. **Cleaning:** During Coordinated Encampment Cleanings, DFSS will identify non-PPP for removal. The Park District and DSS, as needed, shall remove items identified by DFSS including any general debris in the area.
4. **Equipment**: Coordinated Encampment Cleanings typically require the use of heavy machinery to support the removal of non-PPP and safeguard against potential health or safety hazards during removal. Heavy machinery may include, but is not limited to, grapple trucks, garbage trucks, forklifts, and bobcats. Park District employees may install temporary caution tape to protect other employees, partners, and the public. Park District employees may use rakes and shovels for smaller items.
    a. Before cleaning activities begin, any heavy equipment shall remain at a safe distance from any occupied tent or tent that is being cleaned or moved.
    b. Park District, DFSS, DSS or CPD staff shall inform any pedestrians in the area of the need to move away from the area of heavy equipment before cleanings begin.
    c. All individuals not directly supporting cleaning efforts must maintain a safe distance from all heavy equipment.
    d. Heavy equipment shall never be used to intentionally threaten or intimidate Encampment residents.
    e. Heavy equipment operators must abide by all OSHA regulations and industry standards.
5. **Services:** DFSS and delegate agencies, if available, will offer services to Encampment residents leading up to and during a cleaning event including access to shelter.
6. **Park District Public Safety:** Park District Public Safety and the Chicago Police Department support day-of Coordinated Encampment Cleaning activities as needed. Chicago Police Department Affinity Officers will be requested to support on site.

## D. Emergency Encampment Cleanings

1. Emergency Encampment Cleanings are based on a reasonable belief or suspicion of an immediate or imminent threat or hazard to public safety or health. This includes, but is not limited to:
    a. The presence of an item suspected to contain an explosive device or toxic substance;
    b. The presence of an item blocking evidence of a crime;
    c. The presence of an item preventing access to an emergency; or,

d. An area that is flooded or has become unsafe.

2. In such instances of emergency, the Park District and the City shall follow cleaning protocols set forth in this Policy and Protocol as much as is reasonably possible, including providing notice, but advance notification may not be possible in all cases.
3. During Emergency Encampment Cleanings, any items not immediately removed by the individual experiencing homelessness may be removed or discarded by the City or the Park District if the City or the Park District deems the items to be necessary to abate or remediate the immediate or imminent threat or hazard to public safety or public health.

## E. General Cleaning and Maintenance of Encampments

To ensure parks remain clean, safe, and accessible to all, the Park District conducts regular cleaning and landscape activities in parks including in and around Encampments. These activities occur up to daily and include services such as debris removal, grass cutting, tree trimming and snow removal. General cleaning and maintenance activities do not need coordination with DFSS or other City partners and do not require any posting of signage.

1. **Debris Removal:** Park District staff may discard trash or debris of no apparent value, such as food and beverage containers, food remains, plastic and paper bags, paper refuse, and items that constitute a potential threat to public health.
2. **Collapsed Tents and Abandoned Property:** Collapsed tents and abandoned property may be discarded if it is reasonably clear the items are no longer being used by a person experiencing homelessness. If there is any question as to if the property is abandoned, the Park District shall coordinate with DFSS for confirmation and/or the property shall be stickered with notification of the day/time for property removal.
3. **Items Not to be Discarded:** Park District Staff shall make reasonable efforts not to discard any of the following items if visible: personal identification, driver's licenses, birth certificates, cellular phones, jewelry, money, photographs, medication, eyeglasses, assistive devices, and financial or legal documents. Park District employees are not required to sort through the possessions of Encampment residents for reasons of sanitation, safety, and impracticability. If there is uncertainty about whether an unattended item is trash or debris of no apparent value, it should be treated as PPP and not be discarded.
4. **Landscape Activities:** General landscape maintenance activities may require the use of equipment including lawn mowers, weed whackers, grapple trucks, tower trucks, chippers, ATVs, and snowplows. The Park District will take reasonable precautions so as not to touch or damage any Encampment during regular park maintenance activities. If required to safely maintain a park space, the Park District may ask an Encampment resident to temporarily relocate for park maintenance activities to occur and return after maintenance is completed.

## F. Encampment Closures

The Park District shall determine when to permanently close an Encampment and shall prioritize the closure of Encampments within Enforcement Priority Areas. The Park District shall work closely with its lead partners to conduct Encampment Closures. An Encampment Closure may result in Encampment residents relocating to a different area within Park District property that is not identified as an Enforcement Priority Area.

1. **Collaboration:** Encampment Closures are an effort between the Mayor's Office, Park District, DFSS, DSS, CDPH and the Chicago Police Department as necessary.
2. **Notice:** Unless emergency circumstances exist, Encampment Closures require significant notification, **often thirty (30) days in advance**. Notification shall be provided to Encampment residents through signage and verbal notice. Notification shall be provided in English, Spanish. and other languages if needed and as possible.
3. **Services:** DFSS and other City departments and agencies shall offer services to Encampment residents leading up to and during an Encampment Closure, including access to shelter and other available housing.
4. **Removal:** During an Encampment Closure, Encampment residents must remove all of their belongings. DFSS supports Encampment residents to remove belongings and relocate. Encampment residents are encouraged to accept shelter or housing and relocate ahead of the posted closure date. On the closure date, when Encampment residents and their belongings have been removed, the Park District, and DSS as needed, shall remove any items remaining at the Encampment.
5. **Equipment:** Encampment Closures typically require the use of heavy machinery to support the work of and safeguard against potential health or safety hazards during removal of non-PPP. Park District Employees shall follow the same protocols as provided in Paragraph C of this Section IV.
6. **Closure:** Following the Encampment Closure, overnight camping by individuals experiencing homelessness shall no longer be allowed at the Enforcement Priority Area.
7. **Security:** Park District Public Safety and the Chicago Police Department shall support Encampment Closures as needed.

## G. Protocol for Emergency Enforcement of Encampment Closures

For situations that may require enforcement as set forth in Section IV, Paragraph A (2) of this Policy and Protocol, the Park District shall adhere to the following protocol:

1. The individual who observes the violation shall call the 24/7 Park District Public Safety Desk at 312-747-2193. If there is a risk to public safety, 911 should be called immediately.

2. Park District Public Safety shall be dispatched to the individual to inform them of the park rules and work with the individual to cease the violation. This may include removal of items or a relocation of tents and belongings. Park District Public Safety shall ask if the individual needs services and, if so, will connect the individual to DFSS and/or 311.
3. If the individual refuses to cease the violation, Park District Public Safety shall apply a Park District enforcement sticker on the tent notifying the individual the start day and time the tent and any belongings will be removed from the park. Park District Public Safety shall document the incident via an incident report and take a photo of the sticker placement, if possible.
4. If the violation is an immediate threat to public safety, the Chicago Police Department or the Chicago Fire Department may apply more immediate enforcement actions.

# VI. Guidance for Employees Responding to Homeless-Related Matters

## A. Responding with Dignity and Respect

Employees shall treat individuals experiencing homelessness with the same dignity, respect, and professionalism expected when interacting with any park patron. Employees shall not interfere with an individual's lawful use of public park property during normal operating hours, consistent with established Park District rules and this Policy, including access to facilities and participation in park spaces and programs. All interactions should be grounded in compassion, clear communication, and a trauma-informed approach.

## B. Reporting New Tents on Park District Property

1. If a Park District employee observes a person on Park District property who is **setting up a tent**, and is not engaging in life-threatening activities, the employee shall:
    a. Email their Region Park District Public Safety Manager *or* call the 24/7 Park District Public Safety Desk at 312-747-2193; *and,*
    b. Report the incident on Chicago's 311 system by calling 311. Chicago's 311 system will share this information with the assigned third-party delegate, which will follow up with the individual to offer services and provide information about shelter options.
2. Park District Public Safety Officers will attempt to communicate with the individual to inform them of the park rules, including that they cannot be in the park after hours. Park District Public Safety will offer the individual information on shelters.
3. If the individual does not relocate, and the tent is not in an Enforcement Priority Area and does not pose an immediate or imminent threat or hazard to public safety or

health, the tent may not be immediately prioritized for enforcement to allow DFSS to offer services to the individual.

4. The Park District shall notify DFSS of the location of the individual. DFSS will continue to offer services to the individual. Coordinated Cleaning Events may be scheduled as necessary.
5. Per Section V, Paragraph A above, the Encampment may be prioritized by the Park District for an Encampment Closure.

## C. Responding to New Housing Structures that are not Tents

1. If a Park District employee observes a person on Park District property who is **setting up a housing structure that is not a tent** and is not engaging in life-threatening activities, the employee shall:
    a. Call the 24/7 Park District Public Safety Desk at 312-747-2193; ***and,***
    b. Report the incident on Chicago's 311 system by calling 311. Chicago's 311 system will share this information with the assigned third-party delegate, which will follow up with the individual to offer services and provide information about shelter options.
2. Park District Public Safety Officers will attempt to communicate with the individual to inform them of the park rules, including that structures are not allowed. If the individual refuses to remove the structure, Park District Public Safety shall apply an enforcement sticker and an Encampment Closure may be coordinated. Park District Public Safety shall document the incident via an incident report and take a photo of the sticker placement, if possible.

## D. Responding to Dangerous or Illegal Activity

If a Park District employee encounters a person on Park District property who is engaging in **dangerous or illegal activity,** the employee shall:

1. **Call 911** to report the incident; and,
2. Call the 24/7 Park District Public Safety Desk at 312-747-2193.

## E. Addressing Interference of Encampments with Park Usage

1. In cases where the Encampment is located in an Enforcement Priority Area, contact Park District Public Safety at 312-747-2193.
2. Park District Public Safety will request that the persons experiencing homelessness relocate their belongings to a public area that does not directly impact park programs/permitted activities.

## F. Park District Public Safety Support During Regular Job Duties

Employees who regularly interact with individuals in Encampments during the course of their duties, such as landscaping or dedicated fieldhouse shower services, are encouraged to coordinate with Park District Public Safety in advance of interactions with individuals residing in Encampments. Park District Public Safety will make all reasonable efforts to support such employees by being present, clearly communicating Park District activities to individuals in the Encampment, de-escalating situations as necessary, and interacting with individuals who have inquiries about the Park District's roles and responsibilities related to property maintenance.

## G. Responding to Public Inquiries

If a member of the public asks what they can do to support Encampment residents, please **direct them to call 311.** Chicago 311 shares information regarding homelessness to the assigned third-party delegate, which follows up with the individual to offer services and provide information about shelters.

Other inquiries for the Park District may be directed to Homeless.Inquiries@ChicagoParkDistrict.com.