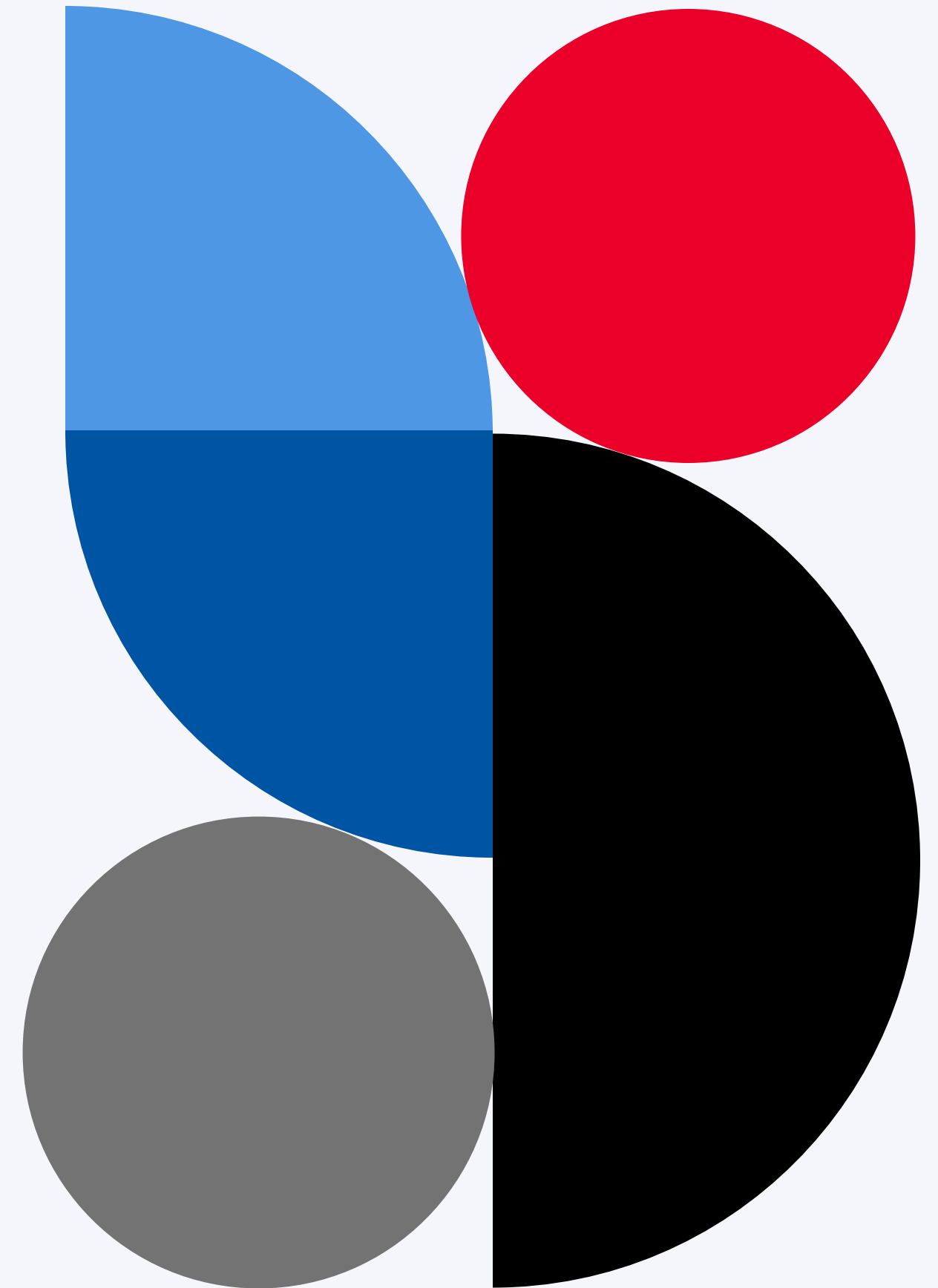
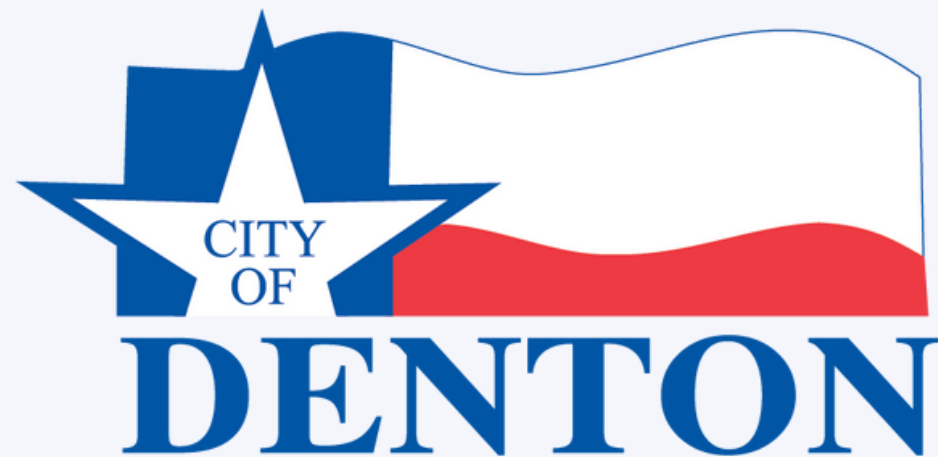


Denton Police Department's Homeless Outreach Team

A case study of person-centered, collaborative homeless outreach between local government, law enforcement and nonprofits.





Courtney Douangdara,
Deputy Director of
Community Services



Sgt. Elisa Howell,
Mental Health Division
Denton Police Department

Agenda

What we'll discuss today

- Timeline of Denton's Homelessness Response Initiatives
- Homeless Outreach Team (HOT) Development & Approach
- Partnerships & Collaboration
- Navigating Tension
- Questions

City of Denton Homelessness Initiatives



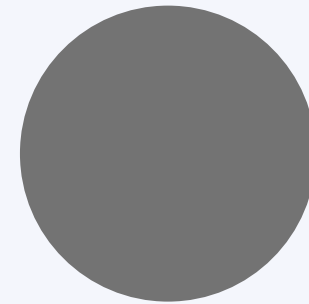
2015

HOUSING THE
HOMELESS TASK
FORCE



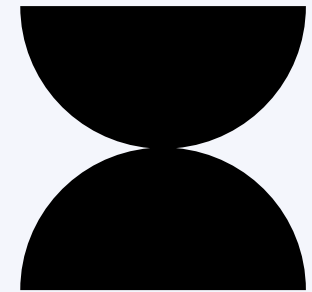
2016

BUILD A COUNTY-
WIDE SYSTEM
THROUGH PUBLIC-
PRIVATE
PARTNERSHIP



2017

STRENGTHEN
COORDINATED
ENTRY, HOUSING
PRIORITY LIST, AND
OTHER SYSTEM
TOOLS



2018

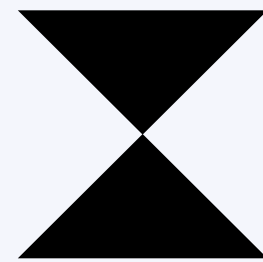
STRENGTHEN DATA
INFORMED
DECISION MAKING.

City of Denton Homelessness Initiatives



2019

ASSESSING AND
STRENGTHENING
SHELTER
SERVICES; HOT
TEAM FORMED.



2020

STRENGTHEN
CAPACITY AND
RESOURCES
INCLUDING
EMERGENCY COVID
RESPONSE



2021

HOT TEAM EXPANDS;
CRISIS INTERVENTION
RESPONSE TEAM
(CIRT) ESTABLISHED;
CITY HIRES
HOMELESS
PROGRAMS
COORDINATOR

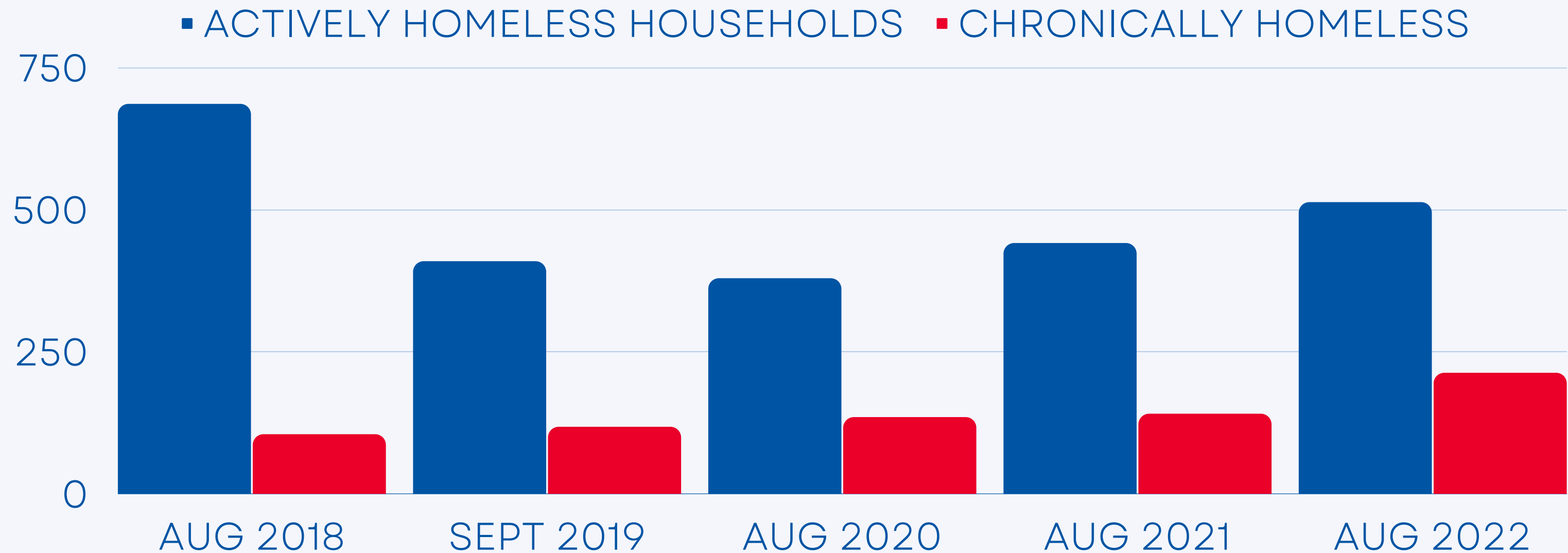


2022

CITY INCREASES
FUNDS FOR
NONPROFIT
OUTREACH;
ESTIMATED
COMPLETION OF 24/7
SHELTER IN
DECEMBER

Homelessness in Denton County

Chronic homelessness increased by 103% in Denton County from August 2018 to August 2022



HOT Development Timeline



<2018

- 3 Denton PD officers conducting homeless outreach unofficially



2019

- Chief created Special Projects Sgt. to oversee Emergency Mgmt & HOT
- Vision for HOT - plain clothes, unmarked vehicles, collab with nonprofits
- Sgt. and HOT positions official in Dec. 2019



2020

- DPD HOT visited Houston PD
- Pandemic stopped/slowed site visits; MH division only ones regularly in PD
- Connected with IACP CRI-TAC for TA; Met every 2 weeks for mentoring/coaching
- DPD Mental Health Division initiated and incorporated HOT



2021/2022

- ARP funding allocated for HOT expansion: paramedic & clinician/Stability Case Worker added
- New team members joined early 2022
- Site visit to Wichita Kansas

Homeless Outreach Team



Alex Peebles

HOT Officer

Dr. Crystal Clark

Stability Case
Worker

Jeremy Punches

Paramedic

OG HOT Officers



Officer Webb

HOT Officer

Officer Butler

HOT Officer

HOT Approach

Outreach Driven

DPD's HOT Program prioritizes outreach and engagement over enforcement.

Collaborative


HOT Officers work closely with nonprofit outreach partners, mental health providers and housing partners to connect people living unsheltered to resources.

Housing Focused

The HOT Stability Caseworker has HMIS license to view CE and tracks services, provides mental health support and follows up with individuals throughout their journey from homeless to housed.



Stability Case Worker

- 
- Provides ongoing support to individuals as long as they need/want
 - Represents HOT in community case conferencing meetings
 - Coordinated Lunch and Learns for Officers (HOT Overview, PTSD, Human Trafficking, etc.)
 - Provides Group Therapy for unsheltered folks



HOT Program Data

Since March of 2022, the HOT Stability Case Workers has enrolled 34 Clients and provided 145 Services including:

- Apartment Search
- Application for SSI/SSDI
- Applications for Housing
- Case Management
- Hotel Voucher
- ID Assistance
- Outreach/Follow Up
- Transportation
- Referrals to Other Services

Mr. W

SUCCESS STORIES

Mr. W* is a Veteran who had been experiencing sheltered and unsheltered homelessness since December 2021. Dr. Clark connected with Mr. W and reached out to a Veteran shelter provider to confirm his eligibility for the program. Staff visited Mr. Weller to prepare him for the transition and administer a Covid-19 test (required for entry to the shelter). Mr. W was very grateful for the help.



Pictured: Dr. Crystal Clark (Stability Case Worker) and Mr. W.

*Shared with Client consent



Alice*

SUCCESS STORIES

Alice was in the Foster Care system and had been newly homeless in Denton. Alice had been taken advantage of by another individual for the purpose of gaining resources. HOT assisted Alice with a temporary hotel stay and identified a permanent housing solution for her in Austin.

Alice is now in school and doing well.

*Name changed for confidentiality

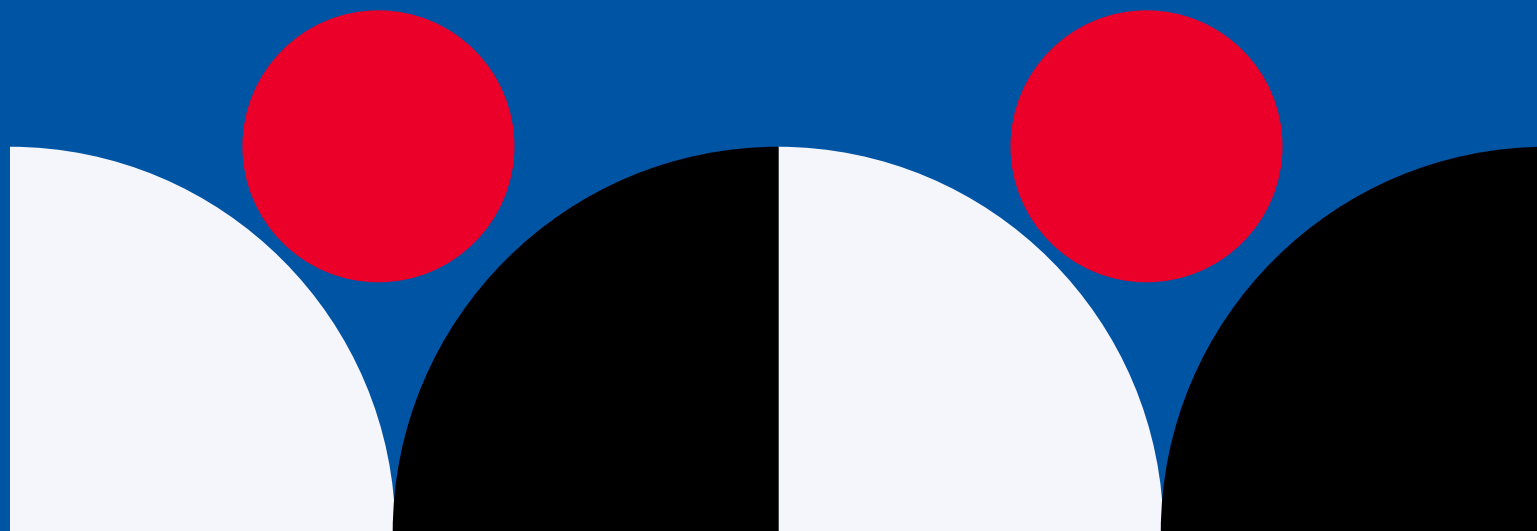
ID Program

After a site visit to Houston, HOT implemented an ID Program.



HOT provides Face Sheets accepted by the Department of Public Safety to help people experiencing homelessness obtain State Issued IDs

HOT has provided 51 Face Sheets.



Homeless Response Partners

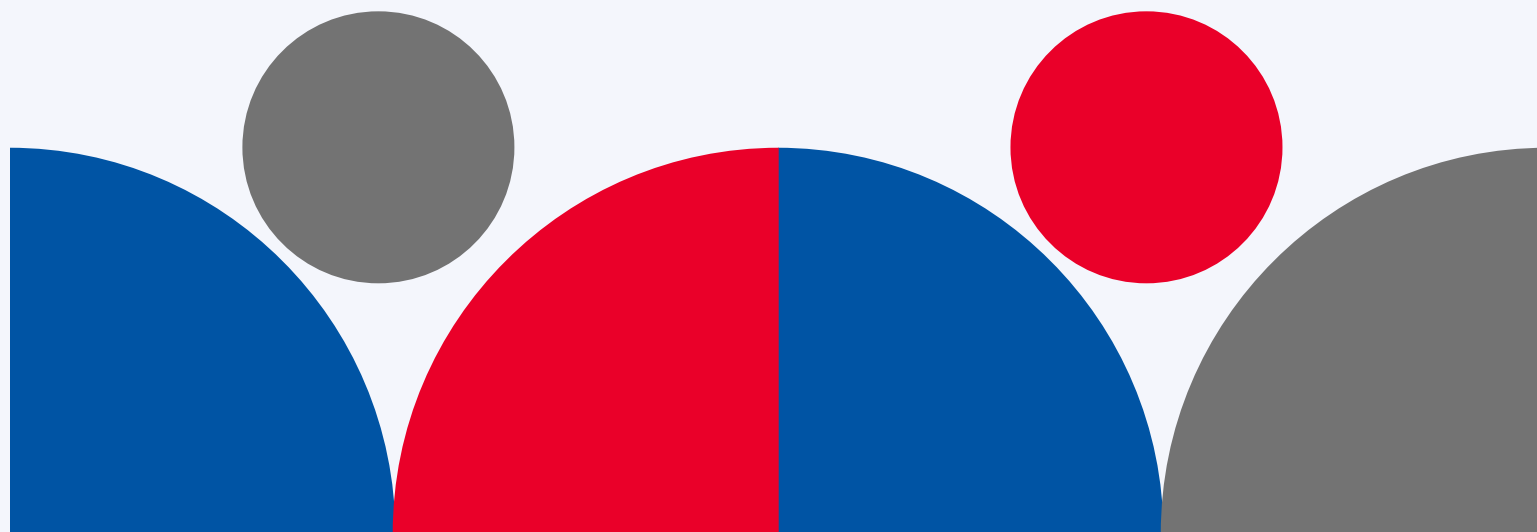


Collaborative Opportunities

HOT collaborates with community partners on an ongoing basis to provide pet food, veterinary care and other support to pet owners and animals in encampments.



HOT collaborated with the City's Animal Services Department and our local nonprofit street outreach partner to provide free vaccines for animals in encampments. During an animal services outreach excursion in March 2022 8 dogs and 5 puppies received vaccines.



Encampment Response

Unsheltered Encampments on City Property



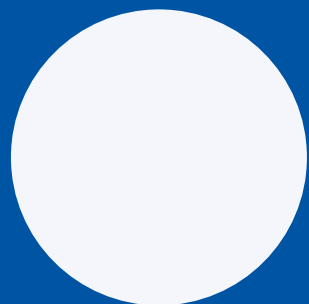
IDENTIFY & ASSESS

Encampments are identified by HOT, nonprofit Street Outreach or by City departments and/or community members. HOT collaborates with City departments to determine if encampments are active or inactive, and encampment conditions are assessed for health and safety.



OUTREACH

HOT collaborates with partners to conduct outreach at encampments to connect people to housing and other resources. At least three visits are made within a 2-week time frame to conduct Coordinated Entry assessments and provide housing-focused referrals and support.



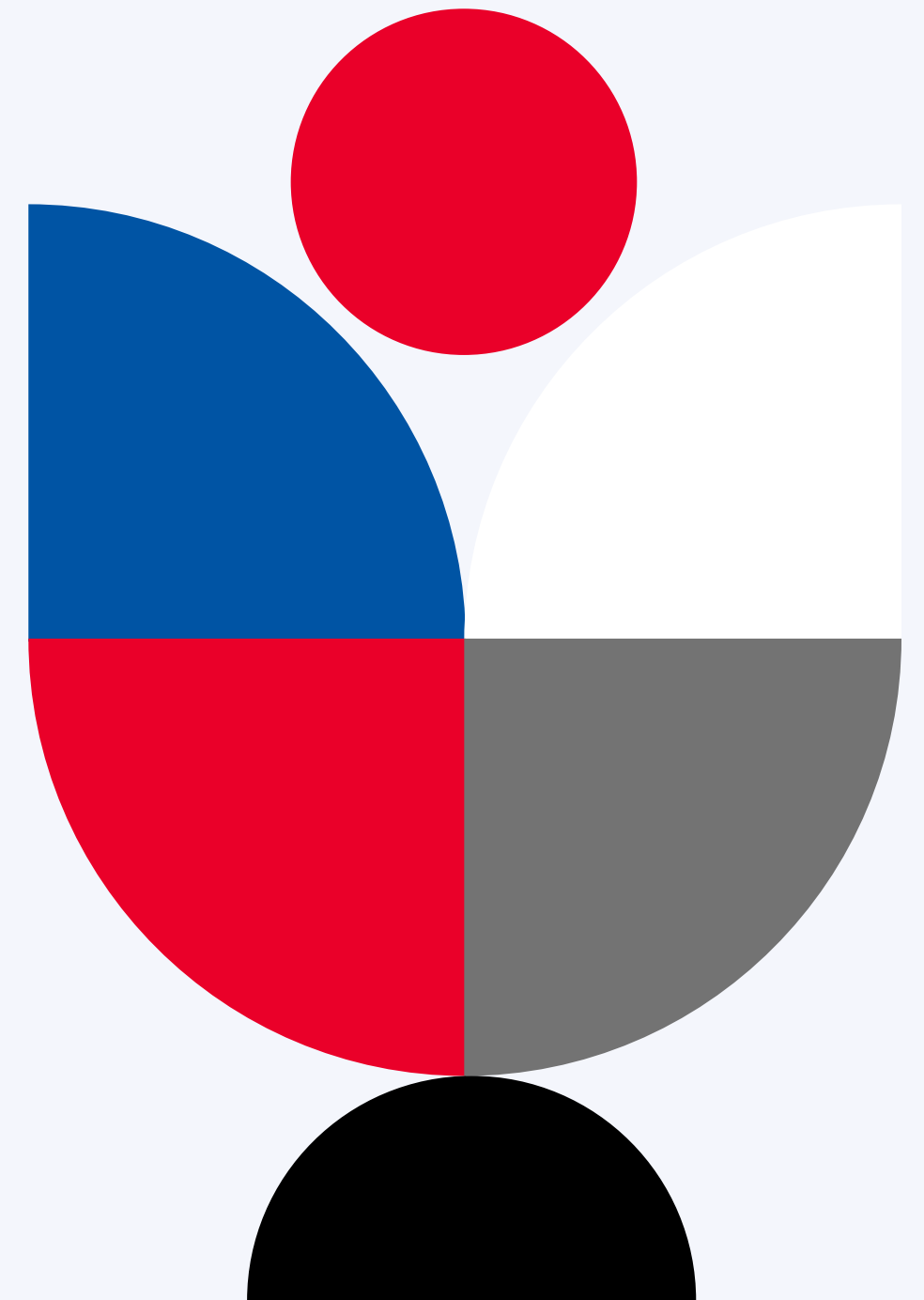
CLEANUP

Signs are posted notifying inhabitants that encampments are scheduled to be cleared (between 72-hours and 15 days). Notification is provided in advance to relevant community partners to ensure inhabitants are able to retrieve their belongings.

Law enforcement is not equipped to address the underlying causes of homelessness.

"Police must balance the lack of tools and resources to respond in a meaningful way with pressure from the community and business leaders to "do something" about [unsheltered] homelessness, while also respecting the legal rights afforded to [people experiencing homelessness]. Collaborative efforts among law enforcement, other government agencies, social services providers, and community leaders are key to ensuring that individuals are connected with appropriate services."

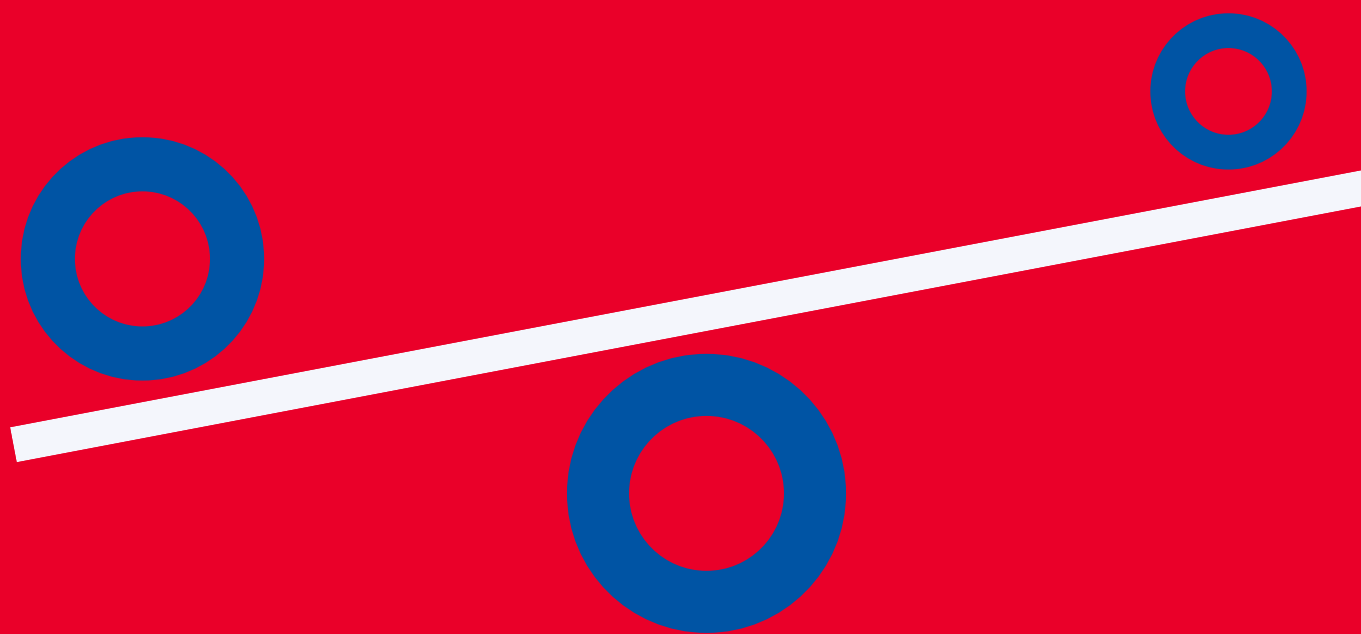
SOURCE: [The Law Enforcement Response to Homelessness](#)

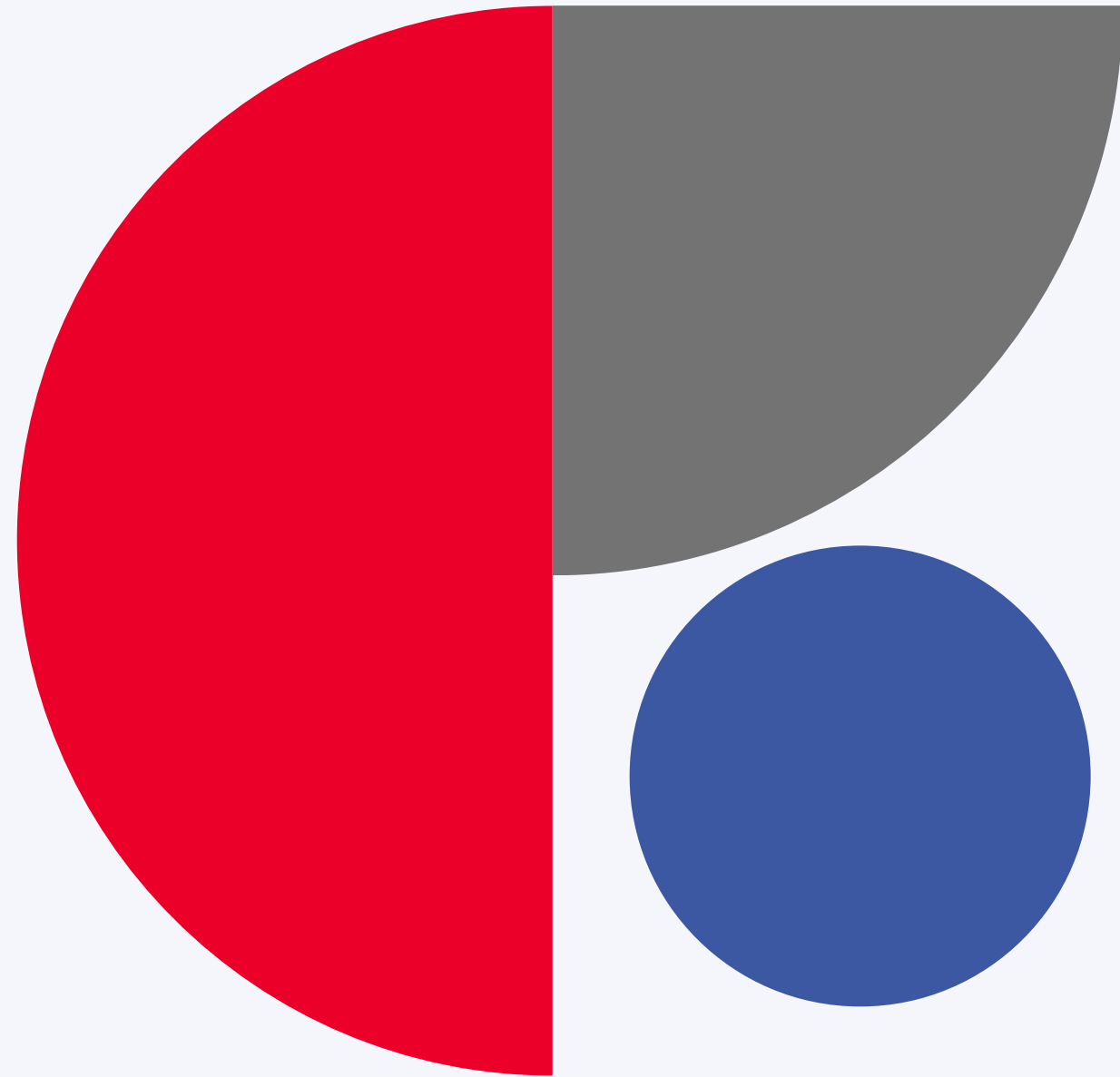


Navigating Tension

Difficult Questions &
Tough Realities

- WORKING WITHIN OUR REALITY: Responsibility of local government to maintain health and safety.
- OPPOSITION FROM BOTH SIDES: Law enforcement involvement in homeless response.
- CONFLICTING IDEOLOGIES: Effective collaboration despite differing philosophies.





Questions

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