

5-09/065.10 - Personal Property Belonging to a Homeless Person

The personal property of homeless individuals shall be treated with the same consideration and respect as any other individual's personal property. Reasonable care shall be used when handling, collecting, and retaining the personal property of homeless individuals. Sensitivity should be given to the special needs such as medication, important papers, medical appliances, pets, and/or other circumstances surrounding each contact. Department personnel should recognize that homeless individuals suffering from mental illness often become emotionally attached to personal belongings, regardless of their apparent intrinsic value.

Department personnel who encounter homeless encampments should not collect tents, sleeping bags, bedding, or other property reasonably believed to be contaminated by human waste, vermin, or other hazardous materials. Department personnel shall photograph the contaminated property and document facts in the incident report or appropriate Department record, establishing why the contaminated property was not safe to retain. If the homeless individual is unable or unwilling to remove the property, Department personnel should contact Community Partnerships Bureau, Homeless Outreach Services Team (HOST) to coordinate with the Department of Public Works, and/or the appropriate local public sanitation agency, to safely dispose of hazardous materials, contaminated, or abandoned property.

When a homeless individual is arrested or otherwise removed from a public place, Department personnel shall make reasonable accommodations to permit the individual to lawfully secure his/her personal property.

Department personnel shall ensure an arrestee's medication, important paperwork, and other property are placed inside his/her property bag when booked at any patrol station or custody facility. Additional items and personal belongings not fitting in a property bag should be booked as bulk property. If the arrestee has more personal property than can reasonably be collected and transported as bulk property, a supervisor shall be consulted. Excess property should be photographed and reasonably secured in its place.

For detailed procedures regarding the handling and safekeeping of personal property, refer to Property and Evidence Procedures as outlined in MPP Volume 5, Chapter 4. If the property includes a pet, Department personnel shall account for the safety of the animal and document such action pursuant to MPP section 3-01/050.42, Safety of Stranded Animals, for further information.

The Sheriff's Community Partnerships Bureau, Homeless Outreach Services Team (HOST), is available to assist Department personnel with homeless issues that extend beyond the capabilities of station personnel and/or any questions relating to homelessness.
