12-003 Homeless Encampments

Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department

FIELD OPERATIONS DIRECTIVE

Field Operations Support Services

HOMELESS ENCAMPMENTS

PURPOSE

The purpose of this Field Operations Directive is to provide guidelines and procedures to field personnel or Department members who respond to or become aware of a location where homeless persons are residing.

DEFINITIONS

Chief Executive Office (CEO) - This office is responsible for making recommendations to the Board of Supervisors that will result in cost-effective programs to better serve the public, the Board, and County departments.

Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority (LAHSA) - LAHSA is the lead agency in the Los Angeles continuum of care. Through the use of federal, state, county, and city funds, LAHSA coordinates the placement of homeless persons into programs that provide sustenance, shelter, housing, and medical/mental health services.

Significant Encampment - A significant encampment is a location involving five or more homeless persons where one or more of the following conditions exist:

- Homeless individuals routinely gather.
- Homeless individuals have established residency.
- Homeless individuals have constructed temporary or other forms of shelter and/or dwellings.
- Homeless individuals are collecting, storing, or have abandoned personal and/or other types of property.

Homeless Encampment Information Form - This is a joint-agency form used by the COPS Bureau's Homeless Services Team (HST), the CEO, and LAHSA. This form is used to document specific information regarding homeless encampments including location, description, and observations. It is also used to track HST, CEO, and LAHSA efforts to provide services to the homeless and address encampment issues.

BACKGROUND

During the past few years, the number of homeless individuals and encampments in Los Angeles County has grown steadily. More and more frequently, law enforcement is being called upon to deal with the many concerns that often arise from these homeless individuals and their encampments. Addressing these

issues can be time-consuming and labor intensive, placing a significant burden on field personnel.

Quite often, homeless individuals suffer from mental health problems, physical disabilities, medical illness, substance abuse issues, or the psychological and emotional scars brought on by financial loss or traumatic experiences. Compounding these already-difficult challenges are the oftentimes dilapidated and unhealthy conditions that exist at many of these encampments.

On February 24, 2011, the CEO and LAHSA signed a Memorandum of Understanding establishing the Los Angeles County Homeless Encampment Protocol. This protocol outlines the process for providing a coordinated effort to address significant homeless encampments located in unincorporated Los Angeles County as well as any of the Sheriff's Department's contract cities.

PROCEDURES

If Department members respond to or become aware of a significant homeless encampment, please contact COPS Bureau's HST by calling [REDACTED TEXT] Please be prepared to provide the location of the encampment, approximate number of homeless individuals observed, and any information regarding the physical conditions of the site.

When COPS Bureau has been notified of a significant homeless encampment, COPS Bureau will complete the Information form. HST and LAHSA members will be dispatched to the encampment within 72 hours to conduct an initial assessment of the site. Together, HST, LAHSA, and the CEO's office will develop a collaborative response that will address the concerns of the community and the needs of the homeless as well as provide for a long-term solution.

If the encampment is within a County Park, the HST team will forward the information to the Parks Bureau, who will assume responsibility for the provisions of the protocol.