

City of Signal Hill

Frequently Asked Questions: Homelessness

1	Is homelessness a crime?	<p>Homelessness is not a crime. <i>Martin v. Boise</i> is a landmark case from the US Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals which states that cities cannot prosecute people criminally for sleeping outside on public property if they do not have a home or shelter. Therefore, it is important for local jurisdictions to create housing options that provide services to those who wish to be housed and enable the enforcement of local camping ordinances.</p>
2	How does the City access and coordinate regional homeless services and resources?	<p>The City of Signal Hill is a member of the Gateway Cities Council of Governments (GCCOG) along with 26 other cities in the Southeast Los Angeles County, as well as additional unincorporated communities, and the Port of Long Beach. The GCCOG provides sub-regional leadership and coordination on the issues of transportation, air quality, <i>housing and homelessness</i>, and other community-enhancing activities on behalf of its member cities.</p> <p>In 2008, GCCOG began a partnership with a non-profit agency (PATH – People Assisting the Homeless) to launch a <i>region-wide effort</i> to address homelessness among the 27 cities and the County unincorporated parts of its region. The focus of the partnership is to provide 1) temporary housing/motels, 2) move in assistance/housing navigation, and 3) community engagement. PATH is the GCCOG lead agency and provides the support that homeless individuals and families need in order to successfully transition from living on the street, or in shelters, to thriving in a home of their own. This coordination is essential as the GCCOG is leading the coordination of its member cities in addressing homelessness.</p> <p>The GCCOG developed a five-year regional homeless plan, “Road Toward Ending Homelessness,” in partnership with its member cities. The Plan creates a realistic roadmap towards ending homelessness in the region.</p> <p>View the “Roadmap Toward Ending Homelessness Plan” and PATH’s Los Angeles Face Sheet.</p>

3	Are there nearby cities that work with Signal Hill to address homelessness?	<p>Yes, the City of Signal Hill is part of the County's Service Planning Area (SPA) 7, which includes the cities of Artesia, Bell, Bell Gardens, Bellflower, Cerritos, City Terrace, Commerce, Cudahy, Downey, East Los Angeles, Hawaiian Gardens, Huntington Park, La Habra Heights, La Mirada, Lakewood, Maywood, Montebello, Norwalk, Pico Rivera, Santa Fe Springs, South Gate, Whittier, Vernon, Walnut Park, and Unincorporated Whittier. SPA 7 cities work closely to identify and utilize services available to all SPA 7 cities.</p> <p>To strategically serve the subregion, the GCCOG developed sub-groups, called Local Planning Areas (LPA) in 2008 to reflect a more locally-focused community engagement process. These LPAs transitioned in Local Coordination Alliances (LCA) in 2011. Local Coordinating Alliances were formed based on the homeless count so that each area is working with equitable numbers. The City of Signal Hill is part of LCA 4, which includes the cities of Lakewood and Hawaiian Gardens. The City of Signal Hill accesses services and resources available to SPA 7 and LCA 4 cities.</p> <p>The City of Long Beach is part of SPA 8, however, the City of Signal Hill works closely with the City of Long Beach to provide resources to individuals who go back-and-forth between the two cities.</p>
4	How many beds are available in the shelters within LCA region?	<p>The cities in LCA 4 do not have a dedicated homeless shelter. However, the Salvation Army Bell Shelter located within SPA 7 offers crisis beds to unsheltered individuals living in Signal Hill who are interested. These beds are available on a first-come, first-serve basis and requires an intake assessment. In addition, outreach workers are often able to connect unsheltered individuals to alternative temporary housing via motel vouchers and augmented winter shelters.</p>
5	Can any individual experiencing homelessness camp anywhere?	<p>No, the Court limited its ruling in several important ways. For example, the Court made clear that its ruling would not apply to individuals who can pay for temporary shelter and choose not to, or to individuals who have realistic access to free shelter and choose not to use it. The Court also noted that a jurisdiction may, in certain circumstances, criminalize the act of sleeping outside, and at particular times or in particular locations such as when parks are closed.</p>

6	What is the City doing to prevent and address homelessness?	In addition to working with the nonprofit agencies, which connect individuals with affordable housing, the City updates its Housing Element Plan in accordance with State law. Every eight years, cities and counties update their Housing Elements to address housing needs at various income levels, including below market-rate housing.
7	How many hours does the Homeless Services Liaison work for Signal Hill?	The Homeless Services Liaison works an average of 30 hours a week and is contracted through the City of Lakewood to serve the three cities in LCA 4 (Signal Hill, Lakewood, and Hawaiian Gardens). The GCCOG provides funding for this position. Working hours are allocated on each city's needs, which include outreach services, advocacy, and collaboration with the mission of providing essential services to those in need in each city. The daily and weekly schedule of the Homeless Services Liaison varies for each city.
8	Does the City have a Homeless Liaison Officer?	The Police Department's Homeless Liaison Officer (HLO) supports efforts related to addressing homelessness. The Homeless Liaison Officer schedule is Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday & every other Sunday 5:30 AM - 6:00 PM. The HLO's hours vary depending on staffing and needs in the Signal Hill Police Department.
9	The City contracts with a private security company for after-hours park patrols; what are the hours the private security company works, and which parks do they cover?	Allied Security provides service each night between the hours of 10:00 p.m. and 4:00 a.m. (56 hours each week) to multiple City parks. The guards conduct patrol checks at Hilltop Park, Sunset View Park, Calbrisas Park, Discovery Well Park, Hillbrook Park, Raymond Park, Reservoir Park, and report suspicious activity to the Police Department for follow up.
10	Does the Police Department enforce trespassing laws at shopping centers?	Yes, private property owners/managers must post signs citing the City's municipal code and provide a point of contact so that the Police Department may enforce laws on private property.
11	Can the Signal Hill Police Department arrest the homeless when they commit crimes?	Any individual, regardless of housing status, can be arrested if they commit a crime. The Federal Court has limited enforcement or struck down city ordinances and laws that criminalize someone for being homeless, stating that it is unreasonable to penalize an individual for their situation when there is no reasonable alternative for that person at that time.

12	Should I provide food, clothing, or money to a homeless person I see on the street?	<p>In 2017, voters in Los Angeles County voted for an increase in sales tax, known as Measure H, to support additional funding allocated to homelessness. Many of our nonprofit partners receive funds from Measure H. These nonprofit partners work closely with government agencies, faith-based organizations, and nonprofit organizations to meet the essential needs of those experiencing homelessness or hardships.</p> <p>We encourage our residents to refer or connect those in need to our nonprofit partners to obtain resources and develop a long-term recovery plan.</p>
13	Who can I contact with questions regarding homelessness or to report a crime?	<p>Report unusual or suspicious activity to the Police Department.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Emergency - 911 ▪ Non-emergency number: (562) 989-7200 – option #1 <p>Utilize the city's iWorq portal to submit requests for maintenance at:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ https://signalhillrequest.portal.iworq.net/portalhome/signalhillrequest <p>Report a homeless person in need via LA-HOP. LA-HOP is designed to assist the homeless in LA County with outreach services. LAHSA will dispatch a homeless services outreach team to the area.</p> <p>LA-HOP: https://www.lahsa.org/portal/apps/la-hop/</p>