



## **City of Oakland/ Human Services Department – Hygiene Site Background, Review and Recommendations October 2020**

### **Background**

Health and hygiene interventions have been implemented and managed by the Human Services Department (portable restroom sites) since October 2016 with the Compassionate Communities pilot, and then Citywide beginning March 2017. By late 2018 the City was managing 15 encampment sites and by the spring of 2019 the number of sites had increased to 20. Starting in the spring of 2020, due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the number of encampment sites receiving hygiene interventions was increased to 40 at any one time. This is in addition to eight (8) program sites including Community Cabins and RV/Safe Parking sites. Recently, due to pandemic, servicing at most sites was increased from 3x per week to 4x per week.

As of this writing, 68 total unduplicated curbside Health and Hygiene intervention sites have operated since March 2017.

The typical configuration of a site includes two standard units, a two-faucet wash-station, and cleaning services four times per week (at most sites). Cleaning service for a portapottie is defined as: emptying the waste tank, providing toilet bowl liners, and small amount of toilet paper. Cleaning service for a sink is defined as: filling up the water tank, restocking soap and paper towel dispensers. The average cost is \$1,500 per month. Most sites also receive weekly debris/garbage removal by OPW Keep Oakland Clean and Beautiful (KOCB) crews (note that there are debris removal sites that do not have hygiene interventions and vice versa).

### **Janitorial Site Leadership**

Since the first installation of the health and hygiene interventions Community Housing Services (CHS) staff provided outreach specifically to support encampments in managing these sites with janitorial leadership development, stipends (in the form of \$25 Target gift cards), and cleaning supplies. A more codified program was developed in late 2018, and in early 2019 HSD created a full-time direct services position within Community Housing Services (CHS) to provide outreach specifically to support encampments in managing the hygiene interventions.

The janitorial leadership program was implemented in sites where regular outreach and engagement alone were not sufficient in addressing challenges such as portapotty units being damaged, foreign objects being thrown in tanks, and difficult relationships between the vendor and the site residents. The program, pre-covid, was implemented in approximately 75% of operating sites at any one time, not all sites require the additional support. The significant expansion of the Health and Hygiene program during covid, and the staff vacancy, has posed significant challenges in management of the janitorial program.

Providing full time staff to support the site janitorial leadership as well as stipends to individuals involved in maintaining and cleaning the portable restrooms, cleaning supplies, and addressing other encampment hazards such as blocking driveway/roadways, etc. is proven to be an effective intervention and successful maintenance of the portapotties.

The position dedicated to this work was vacated in Fall of 2019, a citywide recruitment for this classification was just completed and a new person is now scheduled to start October 2020. The intervention is currently managed by a PA III staff person within CHS who spends up to 25% of her time on this intervention alone.

### **Condition Assessment of Encampment Sites**

Between 10/2 and 10/6 a spot check was conducted by city staff and Operation Dignity at 15 of 40 curbside sites and observed the following

- 4 sites needed sinks to be fixed; soap dispensers broken, pumps not working.
- 5 sites were missing water and/or soap in the sinks.
- 4 sites had portapotties that needed service.
- 4 sites were observed to need entire exchanges for portapotties due to poor condition.

United is missing approximately 20% of its weekly service visits due to:

- debris in the units including clothing, garbage, and needles which prevent pumping
- difficulty accessing the units due to vehicles or other obstruction
- occasionally the units are moved or stolen
- unauthorized locks are put on the units by encampment residents
- residents unwilling to vacate the unit at time of service
- threats/violence towards the United Services technicians

In the past six months United has experienced increased challenges with staffing and continues to experience challenges with timely reporting of problems to HSD staff. To mitigate these issues the following steps have been taken by United:

- Permanent staff assigned to the City of Oakland routes so that relationships with staff and residents on sites can be developed to enhance positive outcomes.
- Immediate exchange of units that are unusable
- Working on the development of a weekly report to replace the previous system's reports

### **Process for correcting missed services**

United communicates daily with staff regarding missed service and strategizes with CHS staff to resolve the issues. United had been providing weekly written service logs but in July 2020 they changed their internal database system and these reports are no longer available. Staff are also made aware of issues through service providers, advocates, unsheltered residents, and public works staff. CHS staff refer all complaints to United, usually on the day received. Staff meet with United monthly to review service logs and on-going problem sites. The City does not pay for services that are missed.

### **Successes/ Value Added**

Despite its challenges, this intervention also has a number of successful components, not the least of which is providing a critical public health service to unsheltered residents of Oakland. Oakland is recognized by other cities as a model in providing increased health and dignity to its unsheltered residents. It is a common and regular occurrence that other providers and municipalities have sought technical assistance from HSD staff in the implementation of Health

and Hygiene programs as well as reaching out to learn more about the problem mitigation techniques the City is utilizing. These cities frequently report facing similar challenges in operating their encampment based hygiene program (units missing, damaged, clothing in tanks, etc)

Municipalities/providers that have reached out to the City of Oakland include but are not limited to Los Angeles, Hayward, Stockton, San Jose, Sacramento, and Contra Costa County. In addition, as a leader in this work, City of Oakland HSD staff have presented in various conferences about the Health and Hygiene interventions, both successes and challenges, including at the State of the San Francisco Estuary Conference October 2019, Friends of Sausal Creek - State of the Watershed Annual meeting in January 2020, and State Water Board Workshop - Access to Sanitation for Unsheltered Residents in April 2019.

### **Most Significant Successes**

- In 2017 with outbreaks of Hepatitis A among homeless in California cities, portapotty intervention in Oakland helped avoid an outbreak here. Now again in 2020 due to Covid, this intervention is a critical tool for preventing the spread of infection.
- Provides for people's basic needs which increases trust and engagement with unsheltered residents.
- Improves sanitation for neighboring sheltered residents.
- The development and support of site leadership has had a positive impact not just on the management of the portapotties but on relationships with encampment residents generally.

### **Recommendation**

HSD recommends that the city maintain the 40 sites. Even with challenges, this is an important intervention providing health benefits and dignity, especially during Covid.

### **Actions**

Staff are taking the following actions to address the concerns that are occurring with this intervention:

- Reduce the number of sites that United manages given their emerging capacity issues.
- New vendor has been identified to take on service portion of the existing sites, estimate late October and early November for service start. A second new vendor is being identified.
- A new City Outreach staff assigned to the encampment site leadership program has been hired and is starting on October 19, 2020. A second position is in the hiring process.

## Comprehensive List of Hygiene Interventions

CURBSIDE SITES THAT EXISTED MARCH 2020- PRE COVID (strike throughs are sites that are no longer operational due to lack of need and/or fires and/or irreparable/repeated issues since Covid)

Wood St. between 26th Street and 24<sup>th</sup> Street

1. 3598 Martin Luther King Jr. Way at 36th Street
2. 77th Ave. dead-end near Hawley (expanded for covid)
3. 3425 Telegraph between 34th and 35th underpass
4. ~~E. 8th Street & Alameda Ave.~~
5. 14th Ave. and MacArthur
6. Kirkham between 5th and 7th St. (three clusters in one area expanded for covid)
7. Santa Clara and MacArthur/Harrison
8. 1429 Bancroft Way between International and Bancroft Ave.
9. Russet and Moorpark St.
10. 1650 Ettie St. Oakland CA (28th St. and Ettie) & 1618 28th St. (2 clusters in one area)
11. 1350 16th St. (@ Mandela Parkway)
12. Martin Luther King Blvd. between Grand Ave. and 25th St.
13. ~~San Leandro and 85<sup>th</sup> Ave.~~
14. 2300 Brush St. (Collins Plaza)
15. 45th St. between MLK and Telegraph
16. ~~2200 Union St.~~
17. E 12th St. and Lake Merritt Blvd. (2nd Ave.)
18. ~~Union Point Park~~

COVID ADDED SITES WEEK OF 3/10/2020 AND ONWARD (strike throughs are sites that are no longer operational due to lack of need and/or fires and/or irreparable/repeated issues)

19. 42nd Ave. between E. 12th St. and E. 14th St.
20. E. 12th Median @ 18<sup>th</sup>/17<sup>th</sup> Ave.
21. Alameda Ave. @ Fruitvale (RV sites); in three clusters
22. 6th and Alice
23. 8th St. and Castro
24. 5th St. and Broadway
25. Harrison and Grand (VA Building along Harrison/Grand corner)
26. 83rd and Hillside behind Castlemont
27. Bancroft and High St.
28. Elm and 34th St.
29. Athol Plaza Tennis Court
30. ~~Peralta Park (10th St./12th St.)~~
31. 48th Ave. @ E.12th
32. 46th Ave. @ E. 12<sup>th</sup>
33. ~~Dennison and King~~
34. Hegenberger Loop
35. Frank Ogawa Plaza
36. 1310 Oak St. (Fire Alarm Building/Lake Merritt)
37. E. 12th @ 23rd Ave. bridge (2199 E. 12th St.)

38. 3701 MLK
39. 1066 47th Ave. (between E. 12<sup>th</sup> and San Leandro)
- ~~40. 4344 Jensen St.~~
- ~~41. 4401 Tidewater~~
42. 2001 Diesel St.
43. 5<sup>TH</sup> St. and Filbert
44. 692 Baldwin
45. 40<sup>th</sup> St. and Manila
46. Cypress Mandela Memorial Park

**SITES AT CITY OF OAKLAND FUNDED CRISIS RESPONSE PROGRAMS  
(COMMUNITY CABINS, SAFE PARKING, SAFE RV PARKING)**

1. 555 27th St. Northgate Community Cabins
2. #9 East 10th Street Lake Merritt Community Cabins
3. 1449 Miller Ave. Miller Community Cabins
4. 732 Willow Street Overnight Safe Parking
5. 3501 Mandela Parkway South - Community Cabins South
6. 3501 Mandela Parkway North - Community Cabins North
7. 3502 Beach Street - RV Safe Parking
8. 599 Oak Street - Oak Street Community Cabins

**COMMUNITY BASED (NON-CITY FUNDED) CURBSIDE PORTAPOTTIE SITES (note this  
is not a comprehensive list – Honey Bucket brand)**

1. E. 12<sup>th</sup> St. median at 16<sup>th</sup> Ave.
2. Fitzgerald Park
3. Driver Plaza; Genoa Street @ 61st St. and Stanford Ave, Oakland, CA 94608
4. E. 14<sup>th</sup> St. at 84<sup>th</sup> Ave.
5. E. 14<sup>th</sup> St. at 85<sup>th</sup> Ave.