This comprehensive guide serves to help Tulsa business owners, executive leaders, human resources directors, staff supervisors and team members unite in a collective effort to end homelessness.
TULSA BUSINESSES UNITED TO END HOMELESSNESS

Helping people who are experiencing homelessness is not just about reducing the costs to our community, or protecting how Tulsa looks to visitors and prospective businesses. It is the right thing to do, and **IT’S SOMETHING WE CAN ACOMPLISH TOGETHER.**

It takes a collective effort to fight problems as complex and difficult as homelessness. Through our business community, nonprofit agencies, faith-based organizations, volunteer base, and many others, Tulsa is coming together to work on solutions that are effective, humane and life-changing for the many thousands of Oklahomans currently facing homelessness.

Produced by A Way Home for Tulsa, this guide is a collection of resources developed for business leaders to equip them with definitions, tools and strategies to respond to homelessness in Tulsa. If you have questions or comments related to this guide, please email the Community Service Council’s Housing & Homelessness team at Rritter@csctulsa.org.

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**INCREASING AWARENESS & UNDERSTANDING**

This guide and additional communication tools and templates are available for download at CSCTULSA.ORG/BUSINESS-RESOURCES. You may also schedule an in-person presentation on homelessness for your organization by clicking **REQUEST A PRESENTATION** on this web page.
REQUESTING ASSISTANCE

SEE SOMEONE WHO MAY NEED HELP? If you encounter a Tulsan who is experiencing homelessness, may have mental illness or a substance use issue, or who is asking you for money, the answer is not always to call 911 or the police non-emergency number. There are other options.

FOLLOWING IS A RESOURCE LIST FOR NON-THREATENING, NON-EMERGENCY SITUATIONS:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WHO TO CONTACT</th>
<th>Dial 2-1-1 (877.836.2111)</th>
<th>918.582.1200</th>
<th>918.585.1213</th>
<th>918.596.9100</th>
<th>918.744.4800</th>
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<tr>
<td>Community Service Council’s 211 Eastern Oklahoma</td>
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<td>A comprehensive helpline for community resources when you don’t know where to turn; Serving 37 counties in Eastern Oklahoma: 24-7</td>
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<td>Family &amp; Children’s Services Homeless Outreach Team</td>
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<td>Mental health care programs for homeless individuals: Outreach teams serve in a clinic co-located in the Salvation Army Office: 102 N. Denver Avenue; Monday-Friday, 8 am-5 pm</td>
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<td>Mental Health Association Oklahoma Assistance Center</td>
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<td>Free statewide helpline for mental health support; Monday-Friday, 8:30 am-5 pm</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mental Health Association Outreach &amp; Rapid Response Team</td>
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<tr>
<td>This form is for the public to send a request for this team to respond to someone experiencing homelessness. For public use: Select HOMELESS OUTREACH to submit your request. Outreach will occur within the next business day.</td>
<td>Visit csctulsa.org/business-resources for a link to this online request form</td>
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<tr>
<td>Downtown Public Safety Ambassadors</td>
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<tr>
<td>Four-member team dedicated to Downtown Tulsa that responds to requests for service, assistance or more info on safety in the downtown area. Always file a Tulsa Police Department police report for vandalism or criminal activity.</td>
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<tr>
<td>COPES (Crisis Situation Only)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Oklahoma’s 24-7 free mobile crisis program serving adults and children in psychiatric crisis; Prevent suicide by providing the least restrictive level of care.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

WHEN TO CALL 911
- Any emergency situation
- Criminal activity or behavior
- Abusive or violent language/actions
- Intimidating or combative conduct
- Aggressive begging/ aggressive panhandling
- Trespassing or vandalism
- To report any crime

HOUSING ASSISTANCE FORM
If someone is in a housing crisis in Tulsa County, the Community Service Council can help. Requests for assistance may be submitted at CSCTULSA.ORG/HOUSING-ASSISTANCE
UNDERSTANDING HOMELESSNESS

ON A SINGLE NIGHT IN 2019, 1,188 INDIVIDUALS INCLUDING CHILDREN WERE COUNTED AS HOMELESS IN TULSA.

Despite our city’s improved collaboration, data integration, and use of evidence-based and innovative practices, we have seen a 7% increase of Tulsans experiencing homelessness over the last 10 years. In the same way a heart attack is a symptom of diet, genetics, lifestyle, etc., the factors that contribute to people becoming homeless for the first time are a symptom of deeper systemic challenges, such as...

As a business owner or leader, you can help create a safe and compassionate environment by knowing how best to interact with someone experiencing homelessness and/or mental illness, and whom to call when you feel assistance is needed. Understanding homelessness, the laws pertaining to it, and the factors contributing to it, are the first steps to helping those who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless, whether they are an employee on your staff or present in your area of business. There is a correct and humane approach.

HOMELESSNESS

National agencies tend to define homelessness differently, but in general, people who lack a fixed, regular and adequate night-time residence - sheltered or unsheltered - are considered homeless. First-time homelessness is growing in Tulsa. Poverty is high, insurance coverage is low, and funding for mental health and other critical programs is far below standard. **Law/Ordinance:** It is not illegal to be homeless or to live or sleep on the street. If an individual is asked to leave a private property and refuses, it is considered trespassing.

PANHANDLING

Homelessness and panhandling are not one-in-the-same. A person can be homeless and not panhandle, and an individual can be panhandling but not homeless, or they can be both panhandling and homeless. **Law/Ordinance:** It is not illegal to make one, non-aggressive solicitation in Tulsa unless stepping or reaching into a roadway to do so. It is illegal to make a second request if denied the first time. It is also illegal to make a verbal or physical threat while soliciting.

MENTAL ILLNESS

Oklahoma is second in the nation in percent of the population with mental illness. It is important to note that individuals with mental illness do not bring it upon themselves. Mental illness and addiction are brain diseases – health issues just like any other, including diabetes or cancer. The solution to mental illness is not incarceration, yet many in Tulsa choose first to call the police when encountering someone who needs care. **Law/Ordinance:** If someone with a mental illness commits a crime, the law does apply.

DIVE INTO THE DATA TO LEARN MORE ABOUT THOSE EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS IN TULSA

The Community Service Council is committed to providing information about key social and demographic conditions and trends as a tool for identifying, addressing and responding to community needs. Our Housing & Homelessness Data Dashboard provides data from various local and national sources used by A Way Home for Tulsa’s collective impact work to illustrate the harsh reality of homelessness in Tulsa. [CSCTULSA.ORG/HOMELESSNESS-DATA](http://CSCTULSA.ORG/HOMELESSNESS-DATA)

LEARN MORE

Community Service Council’s Housing & Homelessness team is available to present information on homelessness in Tulsa, or to participate in discussion on the topic of homelessness and housing instability. To schedule a presentation, please visit [CSCTULSA.ORG/BUSINESS-RESOURCES](http://CSCTULSA.ORG/BUSINESS-RESOURCES) and click “REQUEST A PRESENTATION.” We will customize a presentation for you with the following:

- Best practices and policies for interacting with and supporting homeless visitors in your area of business;
- Ways to help individuals experiencing homelessness, or at-risk for homelessness;
- Ways to help local nonprofits working to prevent and end homelessness in Tulsa;
- Updates on work accomplished by the local collaborative A Way Home for Tulsa.

[LEARN MORE AT CSCTULSA.ORG/HOMELESSNESS-DATA](http://CSCTULSA.ORG/HOMELESSNESS-DATA)
RESPONDING TO PANHANDLERS

The question of “should I give money?” is a choice that each Tulsan needs to make for themselves. However, if you choose to give someone money, what that money gets spent on is no longer in your control. When you give a server a tip at a restaurant you don’t get to dictate that they should only buy food or pay for housing with it. The money is theirs and the spending choice is theirs.

However, there are other effective ways to help people experiencing homelessness other than giving cash to panhandlers:

- Donate the money to AWH4T or another organization working to help Tulsans experiencing homelessness. To donate to AWH4T: Text AWh4T to 898-211
- Donate to The City of Tulsa’s A Better Way initiative at CSCTULSA.ORG/A-BETTER-WAY
- Donate the money to a local food bank that feeds Tulsa’s hungry families.
- Purchase a small gift card, i.e. for a local gas station or fast food restaurant, to give instead of cash.

Giving food to panhandlers instead of money is another option that people consider, however, this also comes with some assumption on the part of the person giving the food item. The panhandler may be a picky eater or have allergies. They might have a hard time trusting that the food someone hands them on the street is safe, edible, and something they will like. Most of us like to have the ability to choose what we want to eat and when we want to eat it. Giving a panhandler a sandwich instead of cash may be your preference, but if it’s the fifth sandwich they’ve been handed in 20 minutes, they may well refuse it.

Additionally, A Way Home for Tulsa agencies suggest to those in our community who come in contact with panhandlers to look them in the eye and acknowledge them, particularly if you are giving them money. This sounds simple, but the fact is, many people who are panhandling are regularly ignored, sworn at, harassed, robbed and assaulted. Having someone look them in the eye and recognize them as a person can be very affirming.

THE CITY OF TULSA’S A BETTER WAY INITIATIVE

To address panhandling in our community, A Better Way is a collaborative employment program between the City of Tulsa, Tulsa Area United Way and Mental Health Association Oklahoma that gives people experiencing homelessness who panhandle an opportunity to earn some income, currently three days a week. The program pays participants a day’s wages to beautify our community during each service day while connecting them with life-changing services.

A NOTE ON TRESPASSING

In 2017, the City of Tulsa and the Tulsa Police Department (TPD) implemented an optional tool for business owners known as the No Trespassing Letter to authorize TPD to act as an agent for businesses in the event of trespassing, including citing/or arresting an unauthorized person trespassing on the property.

A Way Home for Tulsa understands that the safety of staff and property is of the utmost importance to business owners, yet we also want to inform businesses of the social services that are available to help those struggling with homelessness and/or mental illness in Tulsa. The purpose of this guide is to share resources with business owners in hopes that if they encounter a trespassing and/or homeless individual on their property, they may choose to share information on nearby shelters with the individuals on their property (see page 6), reach out to a social service agency for assistance (see page 3), or donate to AWH4T or one of the participating agencies working to constructively end homelessness in our community (CSCTULSA.ORG/DONATE).
RESPONDING TO HOMELESS VISITORS

What to do if someone comes to your business who appears to be homeless

Does your organization have a reliable screening process for visitors? You may have an existing HR policy about solicitors and non-employees entering restricted areas, but we encourage you to also think about how your front desk person and other employees handle encounters with individuals experiencing homelessness.

A Way Home for Tulsa staff have prepared several communications tools to help organizations formalize their policy on responding to homelessness. On the next page is just one example, but you will find more at CSCTULSA.ORG/BUSINESS-RESOURCES. We are also happy to help personalize these documents to your needs. Please email RRITTER@CSCTULSA.ORG for assistance.

SAMPLE VISITOR POLICY/INTERNAL COMMUNICATION TO EMPLOYEES
(MORE AT CSCTULSA.ORG/BUSINESS-RESOURCES)

"Non-threatening individuals who are experiencing homelessness may present themselves at our doors of business seeking assistance. Our desire is to treat them with respect while also being mindful of the safety of our employees. Determine if a visitor is authorized or expected in our workplace. Do not make assumptions. You have the right to ask for a name and purpose of the visit. If the visitor is unauthorized but does not pose a threat, please remain professional and ask him or her to leave. If you determine the visitor poses a physical or verbal threat, contact the HR department or call 9-1-1. We recommend the following guidelines in how we respond:

ASSESS THE SITUATION, THEN RESPOND

- Keep or move the individual in/to common spaces.
- Call a coworker to your area if it makes you feel more comfortable.
- Use your best judgment regarding offering a refreshment.
- Let the individual know you will make phone calls to get them non-police help.
- In the case of an emergency or life-threatening situation, immediately call 911.
- If the visitor appears to be experiencing homelessness or is seeking food, shelter, or financial assistance, please refer him or her to a local shelter. A list is below:
  - Tulsa Day Center (918) 583-5588 | 415 W. Archer St. Tulsa, OK 74103
  - Salvation Army (918) 582-7201 | 102 N. Denver Ave. Tulsa, OK 74103
  - Iron Gate (918) 879-1702 | 501 W. Archer Ave. Tulsa, OK 74103
  - John 3:16 Mission (918) 587-1186 | 506 N. Cheyenne Ave. Tulsa, OK 74103
- Call one of the non-police phone numbers to request assistance for the individual.
  [See Page 3 of this guide for a list of non-police phone numbers for placement here]"

HOMELESSNESS RESOURCES
AVAILABLE AT CSCTULSA.ORG/BUSINESS-RESOURCES

- Break room Posters
- Email Templates
- Social Media Graphics
- Best Practices in Housing and Homelessness Handout
- Homelessness: More than a Shelter Problem Handout
- 17+ Ways You Can Help End Homelessness in Tulsa Handout
- And more...

HELPING AT-RISK EMPLOYEES

Who is at risk?

Employers can help prevent homelessness by supporting employees who are at risk of becoming homeless, and that starts by identifying who is at risk. The following are risk factors associated with people becoming homeless:

- Low-income employees. Anyone living below (or near) the living wage for Tulsa is at risk of homelessness. An individual making less than $16.19/hour is at risk, and a single parent making less than $23.37/hour is at risk.*
- Employees experiencing a medical crisis.
- Employees who are victims of domestic violence.
- Isolated employees.

What can you do?

- OFFER EMPLOYEE EMERGENCY FUNDING
Employee Assistance Funding (EAF) programs provide employees and organizations with the opportunity to help
fellow employees in emergency situations creating unforeseen hardships. Donations can be made by individual employee contributions, employer donation-matching programs, or from fundraising events. Sources of funding can vary based on funding need, the type of relief being provided, and employee participation. Donations, large or small, can make a difference and are tax-deductible. **Sources of Employee Emergency Funding include:***

- Employee-direct donations (one-time option)
- Enroll in automatic payroll deductions through an ongoing giving campaign
- Company philanthropic funds (direct or matching)
- Host an annual fundraiser/campaign across your company

Funds may be granted directly to vendors/service providers on behalf of the employee applicant or directly to the employee applicant following the employer’s guidelines.

» OFFER AN EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (EAP)

Many Oklahoma employers have chosen to implement Employee Assistance Programs (EAP) to provide employees with a range of services to address issues that interfere with one’s professional and personal life. Service may include financial information and resources, legal support and resources, work-life solutions, clinical counseling and critical incident stress management.

» PROVIDE RESOURCES FOR AT-RISK EMPLOYEES

The majority of Americans are only one paycheck away from being homeless, but individuals that make an income lower than $16.19/hour are at an even higher risk. Knowing this, business owners and managers have an opportunity to share resources with employees during onboarding to ensure that anyone at risk (lower-wage workers) has housing resources available, should they need them. This type of support can also improve retention in the workplace.

A Way Home for Tulsa suggests including a document in companies’ onboarding kits listing resources for financial and housing support during the employment transition, or in a time of crisis. There are a variety of agencies that can provide help for employees who are at-risk of becoming homeless, or who are experiencing homelessness, including:

- Community Service Council’s 211 Eastern Oklahoma helpline: **211EOK.ORG** or **DIAL 2-1-1**
- Community Service Council Housing Assistance Request Form: **CSCTULSA.ORG/HOUSING-ASSISTANCE**
- Short Term Bill/Rent Payment Support through Restore Hope: **RESTOREHOPE.ORG/GET-HELP**
- Rapid Rehousing through Tulsa Day Center: **TULSADAYCENTER.ORG/GET-HELP**
- Mental Health Association of Oklahoma Housing Support: **MHAOK.ORG/DOYOU NEEDHOUSING**

» EMPLOY PEOPLE WHO ARE HOMELESS

One of the primary reasons individuals become homeless is that they do not have a steady income. Many individuals become financially stable (self-resolve) after getting a new job and depositing just a few paychecks. As a community, Tulsa businesses can work together to support people experiencing homelessness by engaging with AWH4T partner agencies for employment/recruitment opportunities. Our team can connect you with a variety of shelters that have strong candidates for your workforce. Please contact us to learn more: **RRITTER@CSCTULSA.ORG**.

**DONATE TO AWH4T**

You can donate in these ways:

- Specify Tulsa Area United Way donations for AWH4T
- Text AWH4T to 898-211
- Visit **CSCTULSA.ORG/DONATE** and designate A Better Way or A Way Home for Tulsa
- Contribute directly to an AWH4T agency (List at csctulsa.org/AWH4T)
- Develop an Employer Match Campaign for AWH4T which both educates employees about homelessness while raising funds for a critical mission in the Tulsa community.

**SERVING & MAKING A DIFFERENCE**

You can help provide real, long-term change for the thousands of Tulsans who are experiencing homelessness today by partnering with AWH4T agencies, donating to them, volunteering with them, and advocating for policy change.

**VOLUNTEER FOR SOCIAL SERVICE AGENCIES**: All AWH4T agencies accept volunteers. You may visit their websites for options, but a few ideas for your organization would be to serve dinner at the Tulsa Day Center, serve breakfast at Iron Gate, gather clothing for Youth Services of Tulsa, or gather housewarming gifts for the Mental Health Association of Oklahoma.

**ADVOCATE FOR POLICY CHANGE**: Homelessness is the result of a variety of complex issues, as outlined on Page 4 of this guide. Business partners can help advocate for any element that directly contributes to homelessness, such criminal justice reform, livable wage, education, affordable housing, access to mental health (especially for low-income families) and health care accessibility (Medicaid expansion). We especially welcome the support of our business partners during legislative sessions.
A collective impact of 30+ Tulsa agencies called A Way Home for Tulsa is successfully working to reduce homelessness in our community. Through the efforts of this collaborative, more than 1,200 individuals experiencing homelessness have found a safe and stable place to call home as of June 2019.

A Way Home for Tulsa is coordinated by the Community Service Council, a nonprofit agency that has been working to improve Oklahomans’ lives since 1941. CSCTULSA.ORG/AWH4T

A WAY HOME FOR TULSA PARTNER AGENCIES

12 & 12
City of Tulsa
City Lights Foundation
Counseling & Recovery Services
DaySpring Villa
Department of Veterans Affairs
Domestic Violence Intervention Services
Family & Children’s Services
Family Promise Tulsa County
INCOG
Iron Gate

John 3:16 Mission
Legal Aid Services of Oklahoma
Mental Health Association of Oklahoma
Morton Comprehensive Health Services
National Resource Center for Youth Services
Oklahoma Department of Human Services
Oklahoma Department of Mental Health & Substance Abuse Services
Participant Advisory Group
Restore Hope

Salvation Army Tulsa
Surayya Anne Foundation
Tulsa CARES
Tulsa County Social Services
Tulsa Day Center for the Homeless
Tulsa Housing Authority
Tulsa Police Department
Volunteers of America
Youth Action Board
Youth Services of Tulsa

VISIT CSCTULSA.ORG/HOMELESSNESS-DATA TO LEARN MORE ABOUT HOMELESSNESS IN TULSA