



# Responding to Homelessness at your Business

**What do you 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.

## **SAMPLE VISITOR POLICY/INTERNAL COMMUNICATION TO EMPLOYEES**

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 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
  - Housing Solutions Outreach Team: (918) 956-0534 | [outreach@housingstolutionstulsa.org](mailto:outreach@housingstolutionstulsa.org)
- Call one of the non-police phone numbers to request assistance for the individual.

## HELPING AT-RISK EMPLOYEES

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. 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

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. Services may include financial information and resources, legal support and resources, work-life solutions, clinical counseling and critical incident stress management.

### ✓ Provide Resources

The majority of Americans are only one paycheck away from being homeless, but individuals that make an income lower than \$16/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 everyone has housing resources available should they need them. This type of support can also improve retention rates in the work place.

We suggest including a document in your onboarding kit listing resources for financial and housing support. There are a number of agencies that can provide help for employees who are at-risk of becoming homeless.

### ✓ Employ People Who Are Homeless

One of the primary reasons individuals become homeless is that they do not have steady income. Many individuals become financially stable after getting a new job and depositing just a few paychecks. Tulsa businesses can work together to support people experiencing homelessness by partnering with AWH4T agencies.

