



HOMELESS OUTREACH TEAM (HOT) FAQ

1. *What is the contact info for the HOT team?*

HOT contact information – 616-456-4240, grhot@grcity.us

2. *Who can contact HOT? When is it appropriate to contact HOT?*

Any resident, business, neighborhood association, or other entity in the City of Grand Rapids can contact the HOT team directly. HOT should only be contacted with issues regarding street homelessness. If the team cannot address the issue, they will direct you to the appropriate department or agency.

3. *What are the daily operations for HOT?*

The HOT team provides a “boots on the ground” presence on a daily basis. The team canvasses the community to interact with unsheltered persons, engage with businesses and residents to resolve issues, and address specific calls for service. The team works to build personal relationships with individuals to better assist them in obtaining services and housing solutions. The HOT team can be reached at (616)456-4240 and via email at grhot@grcity.us.

4. *How is HOT structured?*

Currently, there are four members on the HOT team – two police officers and two fire personnel – who work in shifts from 6:00 a.m. - 6:00 p.m. The City has partnered with Network180 to add two social workers and two addiction and recovery specialists to the team for behavioral health and recovery coaching services.

5. *When should HOT be contacted and when should 2-1-1 be contacted?*

The HOT team does not respond to general issues outside of street homelessness. The community has a response system in place for this purpose. Any individual or family who is experiencing housing instability (homeless or soon to be homeless) should call 2-1-1. This is essential to ensure persons get connected quickly to agencies in the community with housing and shelter funds to assist them. This is also important because the recovery funds and other federal resources available in our community for prevention, re-housing and temporary shelter require a “coordinated entry” approach to accessing these resources.

6. *What would HOT do if a person is experiencing homelessness and does not seek shelter services?*

Unsheltered persons will always be encouraged to seek shelter as the streets are not a safe or healthy place to sleep and/or live. The HOT team is working with the Coalition to End Homelessness and local housing providers to connect individuals with re-housing services. The HOT team members can make referrals, but persons seeking shelter can call 2-1-1 to access community services and resources.

7. *Is the staff BILINGUAL?*

One member of the HOT team is bilingual.

8. *How did HOT start? What purpose do they provide in the community?*

In April 2020, the City of Grand Rapids developed the Homeless Outreach Team (HOT) to respond to emergency needs including isolation, health and safety issues, and COVID mitigation within the homeless community. The team has transitioned to an ongoing, active homeless outreach unit in the City. Its mission is “to preserve health and safety and improve outcomes for homeless persons and our community.” The team canvasses the community Monday through Saturday to interact with unsheltered persons and engage with businesses and residents to resolve issues. It also works to build relationships with individuals experiencing homelessness to better assist them in obtaining services and connecting to housing solutions. The City, including HOT, is part of a community-wide system to address homelessness with the Continuum of Care.

9. *How does the City of Grand Rapids and HOT address equity in homelessness?*

The City is committed to equity and embedding equity into its services. The GRPD acknowledges that historically, segments of the community, including people of color, low income residents and others, have been disproportionately impacted by policing practices and the criminal justice system. They are committed to providing fair and just services for all individuals. The GRPD strategic plan proposes several ways to execute on this commitment including creating equity centered training and staff development for community engagement and using data regarding community sentiment gathered through community surveys to constantly evaluate and improve police services while ensuring equity. Additionally, the HOT team will be obtaining a variety of trainings to best serve the community in respect to vulnerable homeless populations. Racial inequity exists among persons experiencing homelessness. To best address complex and systemic inequities, commitment to equity is cross-departmental within the City of Grand Rapids including the GRPD, GRFD, and Community Development Department.