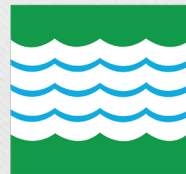


# Discussion On Service Hesitancy and Refusal of Services

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## Breaking Through the Barriers



**SOUTH BAY CITIES**  
COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS

## Who are affected by service resistance?

**SERVICE PROVIDERS** - Expressed frustration among case workers of multi-year engagement with service hesitant individuals. The lack of progress on these cases is impeding their case flow.

**CONSTITUENTS, CITY STAFF, ELECTED OFFICIALS** - Service-hesitant individuals are fostering frustration with the local community.

Neighbors do not understand why someone is allowed to monopolize public spaces without impunity; sidewalks, parks, bus benches, public transit, etc.

Business owners are frustrated with continued disturbances, safety, and sanitation issues affecting their businesses, employees, and customers.

**UNHOUSED NEIGHBORS** - "People experiencing homelessness are frustrated too"

-> This can lead to bad policy decisions - Measure H not renewed = reduced funding

## What are people theoretically resistant to?

We believe service resistance is exhibited by a visible minority of the street homeless population.

Reasons for service resistance include (Trauma Informed):

- Fear of living in a group setting - feeling closed-in as beds/cots might be arranged closely
- Lack of trust due to past experiences (let down by system)
- Triggers symptoms of mental illness/trauma (afraid to be around a lot of people)
- Bad experiences, have been kicked-out as staff untrained to deal with complex needs
- Mental health and substance abuse issues
- Concerns about safety and theft – feeling unsafe among strangers
- Not in the persons identified community where they know resources, and feel safe
- Fearful of catching illness/disease or bugs (COVID, lice/scabies, bed bugs)
- Fearful of being assaulted (men and women have been physical and sexually assaulted in shelters)
- Enforced sobriety and curfew rules
- Domestic violence history
- Pets may not be welcome (many shelters do now allow pets with emotional support paperwork)
- Multiple pets - can only bring one pet, size of pet limited (pets kept in carrier)
- Can only bring a limited amount of belongings
- May be undocumented

## Resistance to accepting Interim and Permanent Housing

- Housing offered is too far from their current community near doctors, jobs, schools, family, etc.
  - Housing is not close to public transportation, which is necessary to get to jobs, doctors, school
  - Housing is located close to bad influences - trying to avoid such as near drug dealers, prostitution, and/or gangs.
  - Housing is too close to domestic violence perpetrators
  - Pets not allowed and unwilling to leave their pet
  - Unable to understand how rent works or can't even read - too afraid to admit so decline support.
  - Not disability friendly – Upstairs with no elevator, doorway too narrow to accommodate wheelchairs, etc.
  - Unable to live with significant, may be a lease violation so could be evicted for having excessive overnight guests.
  - Afraid due to undocumented status.
  - Case Manager turnover
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- Prejudice against living with or near people of color, religions, sexual orientation, etc.
  - Only willing to live in a high economic area
  - Only willing to live near the beach
  - Unwillingness to pay any rent amounts, even if subsidized



## **When people initially decline services, this is “hesitancy” rather than outright resistance or refusal.**

Outreach workers are trained to approach with steps designed to start a dialogue towards building trust. Visits/attempts are spread over a longer period of time, at the level that the person appears to be able to tolerate or disengage for a period of time and then re-attempt.

### **Addressing Hesitancy Steps**

1. Introduce yourself by name
2. Start with low barrier services - Food, water, blankets, etc.
3. Identify personal goals with individual instead of for individuals (if not, pushed away)
4. **ONLY** offer services that are immediately available - make sure you never promise anything
5. Give multiple avenues to address needs (alcohol dependency: group, peer specialist, detox, rehab)
6. Make individual aware of incoming/new laws for public spaces

# DISCUSSION

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## Playbook of Strategies

## Success Stories

**Umbrella Lady**

**Others?**

**Open Discussion**

## **Strategies –**

### **From Least Aggressive to Most Aggressive:**

**Strategy 1: Submission by Engagement:** Idea is to have a coordinated series of outreach by different members of the community. Outreach workers, Mental Health professionals, Law Enforcement, and others take turns to engage with individual on a daily basis for a period of time.

**Strategy 2: Shock and Awe:** Idea is to gather the team and go in one big group.

**Strategy 3: Carrot and Stick or Good Cop/Bad Cop:** Idea is to convey the ramifications of non-compliance and to consider it with benefits of potential solution.

**Strategy 4: Actual citation or warrant:** This would need to be paired with the Homeless Court or the County Public Defender's Criminal Record Cleaning Project. The idea is to follow through with the threat, but offer remedies if client accept services.