

**Joint Statement from the New Hampshire Department of Health and Human Services and  
the New Hampshire Attorney General's Office Updating Manchester Homeless  
Encampment at County Courthouse**

“Since the spring, the New Hampshire Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) and the Attorney General’s Office have been working with State contracted providers to assist individuals who are currently residing on the lawn of the Hillsborough County North Courthouse and in other encampments in the city. In the beginning, the providers were making site visits multiple times a week.

Over the course of the past two months, they have been visiting the site daily, including weekends. DHHS coordinates and collaborates with multiple agencies within the community and the Manchester Continuum of Care, which is responsible for administering and coordinating federal HUD funding to homeless service providers in Manchester, to meet the needs of individuals experiencing homelessness. DHHS also has contracts with outreach teams statewide, including a contracted outreach partner in the Mental Health Center of Greater Manchester.

There are a number of other funding streams supporting outreach in the City of Manchester, including Families In Transition/New Horizons, the Mental Health Center of Greater Manchester, Healthcare for the Homeless, Waypoint, VAMC, Easter Seals, Harbor Care, the Manchester Fire Department and Network4Health. These providers are all working together to maximize resources to meet people’s needs. The outreach teams go out 7 days per week, at various times throughout the day in an attempt to contact the individuals living in the encampment at the courthouse and others in the City and have been doing this since the summer. These providers and outreach workers should be commended for doing an incredible job trying to meet people where they are to address their immediate individualized needs.

New Horizons has averaged about 6-8 open beds per night. These beds are offered to individuals in the encampment. DHHS also works with local shelters and other providers to identify open shelter beds daily. The total number of available beds at any given time could not accommodate all individuals in the camp, but they are available on a rolling basis, which increases the options available to each individual in the encampment. When new beds open up, they are offered to individuals in hopes that they will accept the housing. The goal with all outreach is to address immediate housing needs and outreach teams continue to work with each individual in an effort to match them with what their needs are. They offer shelter beds, SUD and mental health treatment, and other services. If there are no shelter beds available in Manchester, outreach teams connect the individuals to the statewide system of housing coordination through 2-1-1. That system can assist individuals who may want to relocate to a different community, who are willing to travel to a different community for housing opportunities, or who are looking for the closest available housing opportunity.

The teams have also offered hotel accommodations as an alternative to other housing arrangements or as a temporary arrangement if there is a wait for a shelter bed. All of the available housing information has been provided to individuals at the courthouse encampment, New Hampshire ACLU, and New Hampshire Legal Assistance, and it details how to access housing opportunities and where there is room in other encampments if individuals decide to not move into housing at this time.

Over the course of the summer and fall, the City of Manchester asked the State to remove the individuals from this camp. As such, the State informed each individual that they must vacate the courthouse by November 16 and, as explained in detail above, provided resources and options to meet each individual's needs so they may safely leave the location. The outreach workers made repeated follow ups with each individual, continued to provide them with housing options and other services, and reminded them of the upcoming date. Neither the State nor services providers can force people to accept services, shelter beds, or housing. The State provides both State and federal funding for these services, including funding to the City of Manchester for Safe Stations and the homeless encampments that were established with CARES funds.

As of yesterday, a provider agency went to the courthouse encampment with five beds available and offered those beds to the individuals there. Only one individual accepted a bed. There were news reports at the end of the day yesterday that the New Horizons' Shelter turned away 7 individuals for beds, which was unrelated to the situation at the courthouse. While the news reports were accurate, the seven individuals who were turned away from New Horizons were not from the courthouse encampment.

No individual from the courthouse encampment who wanted a bed over the past several months has been denied a bed. Individuals who are experiencing homelessness have every right to reject services, including housing. All of the individuals remaining at the courthouse encampment have refused housing opportunities multiple times.

Every day, beds at the shelters across the State turn over as individuals move to different housing arrangements. While there may not be 50 beds available in any one night, the purpose of working with the individuals at the encampments over time is to move them into the beds as they become available. That is why there has been such a focused effort on assisting individuals at the courthouse encampment over the past several months.

Over the course of the past 48 hours, individuals have come to the site to protest. While they have a right to free speech and may do so, some of the protesters have interfered with the work of the outreach teams. Providers have told us that the situation has made them feel uncomfortable and have asked State Police to provide protection to allow members of the outreach team to work with individuals to provide services. While we share the desire of these individuals to end homelessness, they are harming or interfering with our ability to find accommodations for these individuals. Interfering with this process is unacceptable behavior. Cities and towns are responsible under New Hampshire law, specifically RSA 165, to provide welfare to residents who need assistance. At this time, the City of Manchester is not offering any welfare services to the individuals at the courthouse encampment.

Despite this, the State has been in constant contact with city leaders regarding this homeless camp and the homelessness issue more broadly. Any claim that the State has not communicated to city officials regarding this encampment is patently false.

The State will continue to take steps to find an accommodation for every individual in the encampment seeking shelter and housing but the State will follow through on its commitment to the City of Manchester to clear the Hillsborough County North Courthouse property.”