



City of Tacoma
W A S H I N G T O N

City of Tacoma Declares State of Public Health Emergency

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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City of Tacoma Declares State of Public Health Emergency

The Tacoma City Council passed Ordinance 28430, which declared a state of public health emergency relating to the conditions of homeless encampments and took effect immediately.

The declaration was made in response to growing health concerns resulting from higher concentrations of people living in the more than 50 encampments in Tacoma.

Encampments pose safety and health concerns for people living in them and around them as they create concerns about human waste, garbage, exposure to communicable diseases, exposure to violence and other human health concerns.

A state of public health emergency would allow the City to exercise its local authority to suspend certain regulations to execute the Emergency Temporary Aid and Shelter Program Plan, which the City Council directed Interim City Manager Elizabeth Pauli to draft at the May 2 council meeting.

The Emergency Temporary Aid and Shelter Program will be a three-phase approach that includes:

- Mitigation to reduce the impacts of homelessness on citizens, businesses and the homeless population.
- Temporary Transitional Centers to provide connections to social and health services to better assist in facilitating the transition to permanent housing during the public health emergency.
- Short-Term Transitional Housing Options to implement new approaches to short-term transitional housing that would establish housing options throughout Pierce County to ensure that people experiencing homelessness can find resources in the community they live in.

Data will be collected during the first two phases to help inform the third phase.

The City has allocated \$9 million this biennium for homelessness services, which is a 48 percent increase over its 2015-2016 investment. The City will continue to invest in mental health services, substance use treatment, stable housing, sanitation services and safety. In addition to service provision for people experiencing homelessness, the City will continue to implement encampment cleanup approaches and work with property owners to ensure that sites are clean and safe.