



**DOWNTOWNDC**

**how2**

## address homeless concerns

### OVERVIEW

Within the 138 blocks of the DowntownDC Business Improvement District (BID), about 150 homeless individuals make the streets their home. A lack of affordable and low-income housing coupled with unemployment and low wages, physical health problems, mental illness, substance abuse, co-occurring disorders and domestic violence can lead to an episode of homelessness or chronic homelessness.

The BID, through its partnership with Pathways to Housing DC, actively works to move homeless individuals into permanent, supportive housing and end the cycle of chronic homelessness. The BID also helps address some issues related to homelessness, including individuals blocking access to properties, addressing unattended belongings and more. Other issues call for involvement from the Metropolitan Police Department (MPD), the city shelter or other entities.

If a homeless individual is in need of assistance, the event is not a medical emergency and the individual poses no danger to him or herself or others, contact the BID Dispatch Office at 202-624-1550 to request immediate assistance or to report ongoing problems. If an individual is experiencing a medical emergency or is a danger to him or herself or others, call 911.

### WHAT PROPERTY MANAGERS CAN DO

Below is a list of some common occurrences and recommended responses:

**Blocking Doorways:** Staff should ask the person to move or call the BID Dispatch office. MPD should be contacted for further action or for threatening behavior.

**Encampment:** D.C. does not have an encampment law. They are handled on a case-by-case basis. Call Dispatch to begin the process of notice and removal.

**Extreme Weather:** If you are concerned about an individual, call the Shelter Hotline at 1-800-535-7252, or 911 for emergencies.

**Panhandling:** Panhandling, unless aggressive (see page 2), is legal in D.C. Call MPD if you encounter aggressive panhandling.

**Unattended Belongings:** If items are left on your property, please call our Dispatch office.

**Urinating or Defecating in Public:** We recommend you call 911 for MPD response and also call our Dispatch office to assess the individual's mental health.

### FOR MORE INFORMATION

Please visit our website at:  
[downtowndc.org/programs/homeless-services](http://downtowndc.org/programs/homeless-services)

Email us at [outreach@downtowndc.org](mailto:outreach@downtowndc.org) with questions or to submit information regarding ongoing problems.

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## BACKGROUND

According to the 2015 U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development Point in Time (PIT) count, there are 7,298 homeless individuals in Washington, D.C. Of those, according to this report, 544 are unsheltered and living on the streets and approximately 20% reside in the geographic region of the BID. The Downtown region is considered relatively safe for homeless individuals due to heavy foot traffic and ample lighting, which makes homeless individuals less likely to be assaulted. Approximately 55% of the 7,298 homeless individuals in D.C. suffer from mental illness, substance abuse, a co-occurring disorder or other chronic health/disability issues.

### Panhandling

One action Downtown stakeholders may encounter related to homelessness and have questions regarding is the issue of panhandling.

Panhandling, unless aggressive, is legal in D.C. Aggressive panhandling is defined as an act located within 10 feet of an ATM, on federal park land, on a bus or train, within 15 feet of a Metro station or bus stop or on private property without permission. Aggressive panhandling behaviors include continually asking for money despite receiving a “no” response, intentionally blocking an individual or vehicle from passing, touching someone while soliciting money, acting in a way that would cause a reasonable person to fear bodily harm or intimidating someone with physical harm or criminal activity.

Please contact MPD if you encounter aggressive panhandling.

## WHAT THE DOWNTOWNDC BID DOES

In partnership with Pathways to Housing DC, the BID employs the Downtown Homeless Services Team (DHST): a clinically-based outreach team that provides street-level intervention to move individuals beyond homelessness to independence. In addition, the BID’s Safety/Hospitality and Maintenance employees (SAMs) have specially-trained members, known as the Homeless Outreach Service Team (HOST), who work closely with the DHST and are trained to recognize and engage individuals with mental and addiction challenges. Together, in partnership with MPD and other local providers, our team works daily to successfully address the needs of homeless individuals within the BID as well as issues that arise related to homelessness.

### About the DowntownDC BID

The DowntownDC Business Improvement District (BID) is a private non-profit organization that provides capital improvements, resources and research to help diversify the economy and enhance the Downtown experience for all. This special district, where property owners have agreed to tax themselves to fund services, encompasses a 138-block area of approximately 520 buildings from Massachusetts Avenue on the north to Constitution Avenue on the south, and from Louisiana Avenue on the east to 16th Street on the west. As a catalyst, facilitator and thought leader, the DowntownDC BID promotes public/private partnerships to create a remarkable urban environment. For more information, visit [DowntownDC.org](http://DowntownDC.org) or follow us [@downtowndcbid](https://twitter.com/downtowndcbid).

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## RESOURCES

DowntownDC BID Dispatch Office 202-624-1550  
Email [outreach@downtowndc.org](mailto:outreach@downtowndc.org)  
Hypo/Hyperthermia/Shelter Hotline 1-800-535-7252

MPD 911; Park 202-619-7300; Transit 202-962-2121  
Behavior Health (DBH) Helpline 1-888-793-4357  
DBH Mobile Crisis 202-673-9000 (after 5 p.m.)