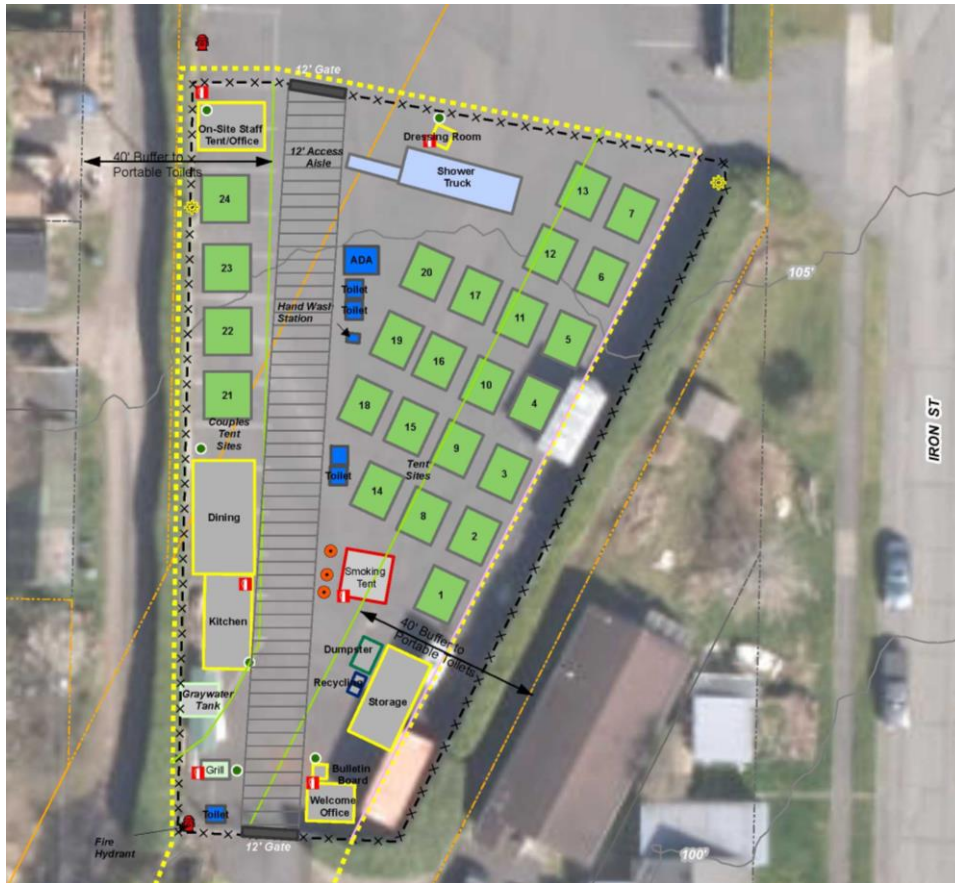


# HANDBOOK & CODE OF CONDUCT FOR SAFE HAVEN

*A Temporary Safe Camping Community*



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Figure 1: Safe Haven Site Layout

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# 1. BACKGROUND

## 1.1. Purpose

This Handbook and Code of Conduct (“Handbook”) is intended to be a written set of policies and guidelines for the safe and effective functioning of Safe Haven, a temporary safe camping site for the homeless community in Bellingham and Whatcom County.

**Safe Haven is a drug and alcohol-free community.** Safe Haven is intended to provide a safe and stable place for homeless individuals to live while they actively seek permanent housing. Safe Haven residents consist of people who are either working or disabled and who have a source of income. Safe Haven residents are selected based on their ability to succeed in a community living setting.

This Handbook includes a detailed set of general policies for residents, a code of conduct, and a description of services that HomesNOW provides to residents. The policies and guidelines in this Handbook are reviewed regularly by HomesNOW and are amended as necessary based on input from the residents and the public.

## 1.2. About HomesNOW

HomesNOW is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization made entirely of volunteers working together to offer affordable housing options for the homeless in Bellingham and Whatcom County. HomesNOW supports the Housing First model to house homeless people immediately. The goal is for each person to have a sense of home and community.

Starting in January 2019, HomesNOW began managing Winter Haven, Bellingham’s first temporary tent encampment located behind City Hall. Winter Haven will last for 90-days, ending on April 3, 2019. Winter Haven consists of 19 tents with an average of about 23 residents. As of the date of this submittal, HomesNOW has found housing for 1 resident and helped place 1 resident in a detox facility. HomesNOW has also worked with the Opportunity Council to place a family with children into more appropriate housing. Thus far, Winter Haven has been successful at helping people find stability and connecting them to needed services.

In February 2019, during extreme winter weather conditions, HomesNOW coordinated with a local church to manage an emergency shelter providing for up to 40 people.

HomesNOW previously worked with Lummi Nation to build two tiny homes in June and July 2017. Since that time, the two tiny homes have temporarily housed 8 people transitioning to permanent housing. On average, occupancy is 2 to 3 months before moving into permanent housing.

In 2017, HomesNOW assisted 25 people into housing by eliminating barriers. HomesNOW provided: telephone access, avenues for reconnecting family members, assistance with rental

applications for those having difficulty reading and/or writing, direction for people entering detox programs, and the stability of an organized permitted camp site at City Hall for 18 days.

### **1.3. Project Incentive**

As of 2018, there are over 800 homeless people in Whatcom County. Approximately half of the homeless people in Whatcom County are unsheltered on a given night. Many homeless people are forced to illegally camp on public or private property or sleep in their cars.

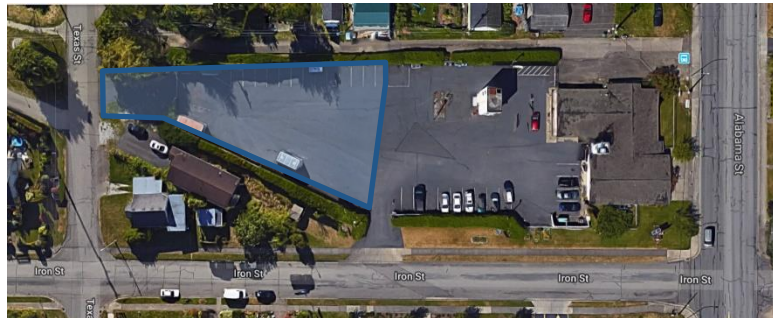
Because many homeless people have to camp illegally, they are often forced to move, resulting in instability and loss of personal belongings. Homeless people also lack access to basic human necessities, including bathrooms, showers, drinking water, cooking facilities, garbage services, etc. Many homeless people are forced to carry all of their belongings with them at all times, which often prevents them from being able to seek employment.

Safe Haven provides a safe legal place for our homeless neighbors to live. Safe Haven gives access to basic human necessities, such as bathroom and kitchen facilities, garbage/recycling service, as well as a sense of safety and community. Safe Haven also serves as a central location for service providers to meet with residents to determine their individual needs.

## 2. SAFE HAVEN

### 2.1. Site Location

Safe Haven is located in the What-Comm Law Enforcement Dispatch Center parking lot located at 620 Alabama Street, Bellingham, WA 98225. The property is owned by the City of Bellingham. The site is accessible from gate entrances on Iron Street and Texas Street.



The site is surrounded by single-family residential properties to the north, multi-family residential properties to the west and south, and both multi-family residential and commercial properties to the east. The site is located in the Sunnyland neighborhood and has convenient access to nearby amenities.

### 2.2. Project Description

**Safe Haven consists of 24 tent sites.** The tents are either single or double occupancy. Assuming 4 to 8 of the tents will be double occupancy, there will be an expected maximum of 28 to 32 people living in tents. Safe Haven provides residents with a secure, stable location to live and store their belongings.

The designated camping area will be approximately 14,100 square feet (0.32-acres) and will occupy the southern half of the parking lot. The site will be surrounded by a 6-foot tall chain link fence consisting of the existing fence and a temporary fence along the northern boundary.

A community kitchen and dining tent will be located on-site and will be used by the residents for food storage, food preparation, and dining, as well as a place to gather and socialize. Other facilities will include an on-site staff tent/office, a welcome office tent, a storage container for storing donated supplies, dumpsters and recycling bins, portable toilets, and a hand washing station.



**Site Layout**



## 3. GENERAL POLICIES

### 3.1. Participation and Self-Management

HomesNOW is the managing agency of Safe Haven. HomesNOW determines the policies and code of conduct for the site, and only HomesNOW can authorize changes to the policies and code of conduct. HomesNOW also determines who will live at the site and has authority to remove or evict individuals from the site. Safe Haven residents do not have that authority.

HomesNOW Board members, HomesNOW volunteers, or residents cannot exclude the Bellingham Police Department, emergency personnel, case managers, or social workers from the site. If residents have an issue with a specific individual entering the site, then the Resident Assistant (RA) should notify HomesNOW so that we can resolve the issue.

**Residents are required to participate in operating and managing Safe Haven for the benefit of all residents and the overall community.** The site operates as a co-op where all residents have a mutually vested interest in the success of the community. *Residents are required to participate in bi-weekly elections of a Resident Assistant (aka “Mayor”) and Deputy Resident Assistant and participate in weekly meetings as described in the Operations Plan.* Residents are also required to participate in regular shifts as the welcome desk lead, security lead, donations lead, kitchen lead, grounds/garbage lead, and shower truck lead.

**Residents are required to stay overnight at least 6 nights per week.** This requirement is intended to prevent individuals from using Safe Haven solely as a place to store their belongings. If a resident works overnight shifts, they must sleep at the site at least 6 days per week. If a resident has a medical condition that requires them to be away for more than 1 night, they must have prior approval from HomesNOW (except in the case of a medical emergency).

Residents are encouraged to communicate feedback, suggestions, and complaints to the Resident Assistant or to HomesNOW.

### 3.2. Identifying Eligible Residents

Initial residents will include residents relocating from the Winter Haven tent encampment. Any additional residents will be chosen by HomesNOW based on direct knowledge of individuals and their ability to succeed in a community living setting. HomesNOW coordinates with the Opportunity Council and the Homeless Outreach Team (HOT) to get recommendations on suitable applicants.

**Safe Haven is a drug and alcohol-free community.** Safe Haven is intended for homeless individuals who are actively working to improve their situation and need a safe temporary place to live while seeking permanent housing. Safe Haven residents consist of people who are either working or disabled and who have a source of income. Safe Haven residents are also selected based on their ability to succeed in a community living setting. Individuals with a known history of violence or unsafe behavior are not eligible.



If a resident moves out or finds other accommodations, HomesNOW will choose future residents from our list of applicants. The resident application form is on the HomesNOW website and is included in Appendix A.

### 3.3. Application Process

Individuals who would like to apply to be a resident of Safe Haven must apply on the HomesNOW website (<https://homesnow.org/are-you-homeless/>). If the individual does not have access to the internet, they can obtain a paper copy of the application from our office or at our monthly events.

Once an application is submitted, HomesNOW will interview the prospective resident. Government issued valid photo ID is required and is scanned and kept on file. If no ID is available at the time of the interview, when the applicant becomes a resident, they will be signed-up for an ID.

If the applicant is approved, HomesNOW will submit the applicant's name and date of birth to the Bellingham Police Department to run an active warrant check and sex offender status check. If the applicant passes those checks, they will be accepted into Safe Haven if a tent space is available or put on a wait list until a tent space becomes available.

### 3.4. Rental Costs

No rent is charged for residents living at Safe Haven. Ongoing monthly costs for operations are funded through private donations from the community.

### 3.5. Pet Policy

Pets are permitted under the following conditions:

1. Preliminary Screening by a Humane Society Technician for disease control is required.
2. If necessary, a temporary on-site quarantine is provided by technician for a minimal time needed to confirm pet health and hygiene.
3. Proof of vaccinations must be provided within 30 days and updated as needed.
4. Pets must be clean, well fed, and not have fleas or other parasites such as tapeworm.
5. No animal abuse is tolerated. Any act of violence towards an animal from a person or another animal or from an animal to human will result in *grounds for termination of stay* from Safe Haven.
6. Residents must clean-up after their pet both inside and outside of the site (chewed up or shredded items, spilled food, water, food dishes, etc.)
7. Pet noise must be kept to a minimum at all times.
8. Denial of medical care for animals is not tolerated.
9. Pets are not allowed in the kitchen or showers. Violation of this rule will be *grounds for termination of stay* at Safe Haven.
10. Pet must be spayed or neutered.
11. Only 1 pet is allowed per person.

12. Pet waste must be managed appropriately.
13. Residents need to provide an alternate contact number of a person who can care for their pet. In cases of abandonment, pets are placed in the care of a no-kill city shelter.

### **CATS**

- Cats must be leashed when outdoors.
- Not cleaning litter box is a form of abuse and is not tolerated.
- Cats should be checked on at least once a day while residing indoors in absence of pet owner.

### **DOGS**

- Dogs are required to be on leashes on the site and must follow public leash laws at all times.
- Dogs must be supervised at all times.

### **3.6. Parking**

Residents that require a parking space must notify HomesNOW prior to move-in so that arrangements can be made for parking. If an existing resident requires a parking space, they must notify a HomesNOW representative to determine if there are any spaces available.

Vehicle maintenance is not allowed on the property.

### **3.7. Bicycles**

One bike is allowed per resident.

### **3.8. Personal Property**

Residents are responsible for securing their personal property. If personal property is stolen or damaged, HomesNOW must be notified promptly to access and review security camera footage to account for the incident.

Residents must keep their personal property within the boundary of their designated tent site and not encroach on the neighboring site. Hoarding of excess property is not tolerated.

If residents have belongings that do not fit within their tent, at its discretion, HomesNOW may allow residents to store some belongings in a storage bin inside the on-site storage container. However, any belongings that the resident needs access to 24/7 must be stored within their tent (since the storage container may not be accessible 24/7).

### **3.9. Single or Double Occupancy**

Residents are assigned a single or double occupancy tent upon move-in. Double occupancy units have a maximum of two individuals. If a resident wishes to change from single occupancy to double occupancy, they must gain approval from a Board member. A new application form must be filed to update records. If a resident wishes to change from double occupancy to single occupancy, they may do so upon notifying HomesNOW who will update the record.

If a problem arises between residents living in the same unit where they cannot remain as a double-occupancy home, residents must mutually agree upon who will stay and who will move out. If an agreement cannot be made, HomesNOW will intervene to assist with peaceful resolution.

### **3.10. Move-out Policy**

**Residents are allowed and encouraged to move out at any time upon finding housing.**

Residents should notify the HomesNOW as soon as possible of moving plans so arrangements can be made to identify the next new resident and to fill in for any scheduled shifts for the resident who is moving out. Residents are required to remove all their personal belongings upon move-out and return their tent site to its original condition.

### **3.11. Damages**

Any significant damage done by residents, guests, or pets to the tents or other structures must be paid for by that resident. Residents are not held responsible for ordinary wear and tear of tents or structures.

### **3.12. Inspection of Tents**

#### Serious Complaints

If HomesNOW receives verbal or written complaints regarding a resident, HomesNOW may enter the premises to inspect the tent as directed by the Board. If the complaint is credible and serious (i.e. fire hazard, unsanitary conditions, theft, or possession of drugs, alcohol, or weapons), an inspection may be conducted immediately whether the resident is present on site or not.

If evidence is found during the inspection (i.e. candles, human waste, stolen items, drugs, alcohol, or weapons), this is grounds for termination of stay. **The resident will be asked to leave and must remove all of their belongings within 24-hours.**

#### Less Serious Complaints

If the complaint is less serious (i.e. improper food storage, etc.), the resident will be notified of the complaint and an inspection time will be scheduled within 24 hours of the complaint. After the first legitimate complaint, residents are given a written warning. If there is a second legitimate complaint for the same problem, the resident may be asked to leave (at the discretion of HomesNOW).

### **3.13. No Guarantee of Alternate Housing**

Safe Haven is operated on the property by HomesNOW as permitted under the ordinance and Bellingham Municipal Code. In accordance with the ordinance, tent encampments may be approved for a period of 90 days with a possible 30 day extension. The approved project end date will be posted at the site and all residents will be notified of that date prior to move-in.

Once the approved period is over (or if the permit for the project is revoked), the tents will be removed from the site and existing residents will be required to move elsewhere. **HomesNOW cannot guarantee availability of alternate housing for residents.**

### **3.14. Fire Prevention**

**Cooking is only permitted in designated cooking or kitchen spaces.** Grills, toasters, and microwaves must not be left unattended when in use.

Patio heaters will be located throughout the site to provide warmth. The patio heaters will be provided by HomesNOW and will be UL listed. No other powered heating devices will be allowed on-site.

Fireworks and candles are not allowed on site. Smoking is not allowed inside tents or structures; smoking is only allowed in designated smoking areas.

Fire extinguishers are placed throughout the site in accordance with state law. In the event of a fire, residents must call 911 immediately and evacuate to a safe location.

### **3.15. Emergencies**

**In the event of an emergency (police, fire, ambulance required), residents must call 911.** The Resident Assistant must notify HomesNOW as soon as realistically and safely possible. Any emergencies must be documented as incident reports and filed with the Resident Assistant.

After any incident requiring police, fire, or EMT dispatch, the HomesNOW Board will meet to evaluate the cause of the incident and determine if further action is necessary to ensure the safety of all residents. This may include updating policies, updating resident medical information, issuing warnings, and/or termination of stay for a resident, if appropriate.

## 4. CODE OF CONDUCT

### 4.1. Violence/Abuse/Discrimination

Violence is not tolerated. Prejudiced, racist, sexist, degrading, or discriminatory remarks are not tolerated. Verbal abuse, threats, and intimidation are not tolerated. Intentional damage to others' property is not tolerated. Rights of fellow citizens must be respected.

Any concerns of misconduct must be reported to the Resident Assistant and/or HomesNOW immediately. Any illegal activity must be reported to law enforcement.

### 4.2. Weapons Policy

**Firearms and knives longer than 3.5-inches are strictly prohibited from the site;** possession of a firearm or knives longer than 3.5-inches at Safe Haven is *grounds for immediate termination of stay* and intervention by law enforcement for removal.

Items deemed as weapons (other than those that are prohibited) will be stored in a safe location. Use of any item as a weapon to injure, threaten, or harass others is not tolerated and is *grounds for immediate termination of stay* and intervention by law enforcement for removal.

### 4.3. Quiet Hours & Guest Policies

Residents are expected to behave respectfully and cooperatively and consider the impact of their behavior on the rest of the community.

**Quiet hours** on the site are from 9:00pm to 7:00am Sunday through Thursday and 10:00pm to 8:00am Friday and Saturday. During quiet hours, residents are expected to minimize noise so that it cannot be heard outside of their tent and does not disturb their neighbors. Any time a resident reasonably requests another resident to lower their volume, the neighboring resident is expected to respectfully do so. Residents are asked to bring any recurring complaints to discussion at meetings to find peaceful conflict resolution.

**Visitors/guests** must be checked in and out by the resident. **The resident must be present on-site at all times while visitors/guests are present.** The resident is responsible for the behavior of their visitors/guests. Visitors/guests are not permitted to stay overnight.

### 4.4. Cleanliness

Residents must maintain cleanliness of their living space (inside and outside their tent). As well as common areas. Residents are expected to minimize offensive odors and scents that may disturb their neighbors. Any time a resident reasonably requests another resident to address offensive odors, the neighboring resident is expected to respectfully do so. Residents are asked to bring any recurring complaints to discussion at meetings to find peaceful conflict resolution.

#### 4.5. Substance Use

**Safe Haven is a drug and alcohol-free community.** Residents are not allowed to possess or consume alcohol or illegal drugs on the site. Furthermore, residents are not allowed to be present on site while under the influence of drugs or alcohol. However, prescription medications including cannabis with the presence of medical marijuana card is permitted. All smoking must be done in the smoking tent.

Additionally, a case worker may determine that a legal substance is harmful and limit use for that resident. WA state law must be abided by for any substances used. No smoking is allowed in tents or other structures. Smoking is allowed in designated smoking areas only.

If a resident appears to be under the influence of drugs or alcohol while on-site (based on their behavior, smell of alcohol, etc.), they will be asked to take either a drug test or breathalyzer test (as appropriate). If the resident refuses to take the test, this is grounds for termination of stay.

**The resident will be asked to leave and must remove all of their belongings within 24-hours.**

If the resident takes the drug/breathalyzer test and fails, they will be placed on probation for a 4-week period, which will include a 10:00pm curfew. If a second incident occurs within the probationary period, this is grounds for termination of stay. **The resident will be asked to leave and must remove all of their belongings within 24-hours.**

Behaviors that may warrant a drug/alcohol test may include: erratic behavior, mood swings, increase in mental instability, anger management issues, etc. A resident's intake health record may be used to determine reported health conditions that may account for unusual behavior unrelated to substance abuse.

HomesNOW and professional outreach team(s) coordinate to direct residents to services related to any health needs that become apparent while residing at Safe Haven. Unresolved and reoccurring concerns will be evaluated by HomesNOW. Residents in rehabilitation are required to work closely with their case worker.

## 5. SERVICES

### 5.1. Food

The community kitchen is open 24 hours per day, 7 days per week for the convenience of the residents. Residents will prepare their own food and will be responsible for properly storing and disposing of their food and maintaining a clean kitchen and dining area. Residents who wish to prepare meals for themselves and other residents are welcome to do so.

Residents must label all food with their name. Residents must put the date on any leftovers or other food that has been taken out of its package. Any food that is left in the fridge after 3 days past that date will be thrown away.

HomesNOW will coordinate with the Bellingham Food Bank to provide food for the residents. The Sikh community may provide a community meal once per week. If other volunteers or businesses would like to provide food donations, all public health regulations on food handling and storage will be followed. Any volunteer that prepares food will be required to have a WA State Food Workers card.

### 5.2. Supplies

Supplies such as hygiene products, blankets, furniture, and other donated items are available and distributed by HomesNOW, the Resident Assistant, or the Donations Lead. The Donations Lead will notify HomesNOW of any inventory needs.

### 5.3. Transportation

Bus passes are available as needed. Other modes of public transportation may be available to residents based on specific personal need.

### 5.4. Support Services

Safe Haven will serve as a central location for service providers to meet with residents to determine their individual needs. HomesNOW will coordinate with other service providers and providers of shelters for homeless persons within the County and will inquire about the availability of existing resources with these providers.

It is recommended that any chronic health and/or mental health conditions be assessed as a prerequisite for residency. Case worker(s) will identify which support services are needed (if any) based on a preliminary evaluation. Examples of support services may include:

- Eligibility for residency
- Job training accessibility
- Mental health assessment
- Counseling for drug/alcohol recovery
- DSHS follow-ups and reviews



Washington State Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) may provide additional services to the residents of Safe Haven. DSHS may host mobile community services at Safe Haven once per month. DSHS may assist residents with determining eligibility for cash and food assistance programs, child care benefits, Medicare, and Medicaid. Applications for aid are available at the on-site office.

Any mild health conditions that progress negatively must be addressed immediately. Residency at the site is subject to re-evaluation. Sobriety and stable mental health are mandatory for communal living at Safe Haven to ensure safe conditions for all residents.

### **5.5. Security Services**

The site is monitored by 24/7 video surveillance. 720P HD security cameras are placed around the perimeter of the property to monitor all activity occurring on and surrounding the perimeter of the site.

- Camera use on the site is necessary to protect rights of all residents as well as neighbors in the area from any potential problems or unlawful activity.
- Site location is monitored remotely by HomesNOW through an application on the phone and/or PC to ensure stability at the site.
- Security cameras are **not** installed inside tents or bathrooms; this measure is to preserve the privacy and rights of the site residents.

### **5.6. Waste Management**

Residents are expected to adhere to all state laws and county health regulations. Every resident must practice responsible self-care and proper waste disposal to avoid cross contamination, illness, and/or disease.

A dumpster, recycling bin, food waste bin, and trash cans are provided on the site for use by residents. Residents are responsible for disposal of their trash and/or recycling and maintaining a clean and orderly environment on the premises and surrounding areas. Every resident is responsible for trash detail, recycling, and waste management.

Portable toilets are located throughout the site and are equipped with hand sanitizer. A handwashing station is located near the cluster of portable toilets. A sink with running water is available in the kitchen for hand washing.

A graywater tank is located outside of the kitchen tent. All graywater from the sink is collected in 5-gallon buckets and dumped into the graywater tank.

### **5.7. Repairs and Maintenance**

Repairs and maintenance are handled by HomesNOW. Residents must notify either the Resident Assistant or HomesNOW of any needed repairs or maintenance promptly. If an emergency repair is required, residents must contact HomesNOW as soon as possible.

## 6. NEW RESIDENT MOVE-IN PROCEDURES

The following describes the move-in process for new residents:

1. New residents are greeted with a warm welcome and treated with respect.
2. General policies and code of conduct are explained to all new residents.
3. HomesNOW has new residents sign the City's Liability Release Form and the Safe Haven Resident Agreement.
4. Within 48 hours, HomesNOW will have the resident complete the Confidential Intake Form, which contains emergency contact information, documents physical and mental health status, health insurance, medications, allergies, etc.).
5. An existing resident or HomesNOW volunteer will give the new resident a tour of the site.
6. New residents are assigned their designated tent and shown to their tent. HomesNOW or existing residents provide the new resident with any supplies needed for initial move-in. A tent number is located on each tent platform for ease of identification. A list of assigned tents and residents is maintained by HomesNOW.
7. HomesNOW provides the City with a weekly update of new residents, residents that have left, etc.

HomesNOW will maintain the following forms and documents for each resident:

- City's Liability Release Form
- Safe Haven Resident Agreement
- Confidential Intake Form
- Copy of issued identification card – or – Form for ID is filled out and signed
- Social worker documents
- Pet health records

## 7. GROUNDS FOR TERMINATION OF STAY

**Theft** of any kind is not tolerated. Proof of theft is *grounds for termination of stay*.

**Violence, threats, or harassment** of any kind is not tolerated and are *grounds for termination of stay*.

**Prejudiced, racist, sexist, degrading, or discriminatory remarks are not tolerated** and are *grounds for termination of stay*.

**Pet mismanagement** may lead to *grounds for termination of stay* as described in the pet policy.

**Physical evidence of suspected substance abuse** results in immediate probation, requires a drug test or breathalyzer test. If the resident fails the test, they will be placed on immediate probation. Refusal to take the test upon request is *grounds for termination of stay*.

**Possession or consumption of illegal drugs or alcohol on the site** results in immediate eviction from the site. No exception.

**Firearms on the premises** is cause for immediate intervention of law enforcement and removal from the site. No exception.

Any activity resembling the above that adversely affects the site and/or residents results in immediate review and potential *grounds for termination of stay*. Conditions resulting in removal from the site may involve a police or medical escort if necessary.

Respectful behavior and interaction with residents and neighboring residents are expected at all times.

Residents are encouraged to report any concerns to HomesNOW or the Resident Assistant, or in writing to HomesNOW so that appropriate action can be taken to reach a resolution.

HomesNOW will consider the policies outlined in this handbook along with input from the residents to determine whether eviction is appropriate or necessary.

**Appendix A**  
**Resident Application Form**

**Appendix B**  
**Safe Haven Resident Agreement**

**Appendix C**  
**Confidential Intake Form**

**Appendix D  
Site Logs**



**Appendix E**  
**License Agreement**