

**RESIDENT
POLICIES & PROCEDURES**
FOR
UNITY VILLAGE
A Tiny Home Community



HomesNOW
1441 St. Paul St.
Bellingham, WA 98229

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Purpose

This Policies and Procedures handbook is intended to be a written set of guidelines for the safe and effective functioning of Unity Village, a tiny home community for homeless individuals in Bellingham and Whatcom County.

Unity Village is a drug and alcohol-free community. Unity Village is intended to provide a safe and stable place for homeless individuals to live while they actively seek permanent housing. Unity Village residents consist of people of various backgrounds, skills and circumstances who are actively seeking permanent housing. Unity Village residents are selected based on their ability to succeed in a **community living** setting.

This Handbook includes 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 changed as necessary based on input from the residents and the general public.

1.2. About HomesNOW

HomesNOW is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization that has no paid staff and is made up 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 people immediately.** The goal is for each person to have a sense of home, community and overall progress.

In June and July of 2017, HomesNOW worked with **Lummi Stepping Stones** to build two tiny homes. Since that time, the three tiny homes have temporarily housed 8 people transitioning to permanent housing. On average, occupancy has been 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, and assistance for people entering detox programs.

In January 2019, HomesNOW began managing Winter Haven, Bellingham's first temporary tent encampment located behind City Hall. In February 2019, during extreme winter weather conditions, HomesNOW coordinated with a diverse group of volunteers and groups to manage an emergency shelter providing basic shelter for up to 40 people.

Winter Haven lasted for 90-days, ending on April 6, 2019. At that time, HomesNOW began managing our second temporary tent encampment, Safe Haven, located in the 9-1-1 Call Center parking lot. Since August of 2019, HomesNOW has been operating Unity Village. A tiny home community for helping homeless individuals into permanent housing.

2. GENERAL POLICIES

2.1. Single or Double Occupancy

Residents are assigned a single or double occupancy tiny home 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.

2.2. 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 tiny home/tent site and not encroach on the neighboring site. Hoarding of excess property is not tolerated.

Theft of any kind is not tolerated. **Proof of theft is grounds for removal from Unity Village.**

2.3. Parking

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

2.4. Utility Fees

Utility fees at Unity Village are 10% of the resident's income or \$150 per month, whichever is lower. Utility fees are based on the residents' ability to pay. Utility fees must be paid by cash, credit/debit card or check.

Utility fee payments offset costs of operating the site and allows the community to be self-sustaining and self-funded through operations and maintenance on a continuous basis without relying solely on donations.

1. Payments are used to pay all bills for site operations and upkeep such as electrical, sewage disposal, garbage, and internet, as well as supplies for the site such as toilet paper, soap, community food, and other household products.
2. This payment model helps residents to transition to regular housing with greater ease by developing a familiarity with expectations of traditional rent and housing requirements.

2.5. Bicycles

One bike is allowed per resident.

2.6. 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 is **grounds for removal** from Unity Village.
6. Residents must clean-up after their pet both inside and outside of the site (chewed up or shredded items, spilled food, poo, 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. Pet must be spayed or neutered.
10. Only 1 pet is allowed per person.
11. Pet waste must be managed and disposed of appropriately.
12. 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

- 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 follow public leash laws at all times.
- Dogs must be supervised at all times.

Pet mismanagement may be *grounds for removal from Unity Village*.

2.7. Inspections

If HomesNOW receives verbal or written complaints regarding a resident, HomesNOW may enter the premises to inspect the tiny home/tent as directed by the Board. If the complaint is credible and serious (i.e. fire hazard, unsanitary conditions, theft, or possession or distribution of drugs, alcohol, or weapons), an inspection may be conducted immediately. If evidence is found during the inspection (i.e. candles, stolen items, drugs, alcohol, or weapons), ***this is grounds for removal from the site***.

2.8. Fire Safety

Cooking is only permitted in designated cooking or kitchen spaces. Grills, toasters, and microwaves must not be left unattended when in use. The only type of heating devices authorized inside tiny homes are portable oil-filled heaters or infrared radiant heaters that will be supplied with the unit.

Fireworks and candles are not allowed on site. **Smoking is not allowed inside tiny homes** or structures; smoking is only allowed in the designated smoking area. 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.

2.9. Emergencies

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

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 removal of a resident, if necessary.

2.10. Violence/Abuse/Discrimination

Violence, physical abuse, verbal abuse, threats, intimidation, and intentional damage to others' property are not tolerated, and **are grounds for immediate removal from Unity Village.**

Prejudiced, racist, sexist, degrading, or discriminatory remarks are not tolerated. Harassment of any kind is not tolerated. Bullying is not tolerated. Residents spreading rumors about other residents is not tolerated. These are all grounds for removal from Unity Village.

Depending on the severity of the incident and at HomesNOW's discretion, we may ask the resident to leave immediately or implement appropriate consequences. **Any concerns of misconduct or any illegal activity must be reported to HomesNOW immediately.**

2.11. Weapons

Knives longer than 3.5-inches and all firearms are strictly prohibited from the site; possession of these items at Unity Village is **grounds for immediate removal from Unity Village.**

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 **will result immediate removal** and intervention by law enforcement for removal.

2.12. Quiet Hours

Quiet hours on the site are from 9:00pm to 7:00am, every day. **During quiet hours, residents are expected to minimize noise so that it cannot be heard outside of their tiny home/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. Residents are expected to behave respectfully and cooperatively and **consider the impact of their behavior on the rest of the community.**

2.13. Guest Policies

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

Visitors must consent to a background check upon the request of HomesNOW. **Refusal will result in the guest being asked to leave Unity Village.**

2.14. Cleanliness & Sanitation

Residents must maintain cleanliness (inside and outside their unit) and clean up their own waste and mess **in 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 sensitive 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.

2.15. Substance Use

Unity Village is a drug and alcohol-free community. Residents are not allowed to possess or consume alcohol on the site. Illegal drugs are not permitted on or offsite. 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 are permitted. All smoking must be done in the smoking tent or designated smoking areas.

No smoking is allowed in tiny homes, tents, or other structures. Smoking is allowed in designated smoking areas only. **If evidence of smoke contamination of the structure is found, that resident must restore the tiny home to its uncontaminated condition, either through cleaning or replacement of contaminated parts.**

Residents will be tested for drugs and alcohol when they initially move into Unity Village. 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 immediate removal. Behaviors that may warrant a drug/alcohol test may include:*** erratic behavior, mood swings, increase in mental instability, anger management issues, etc. If the resident takes the drug/breathalyzer test and fails, ***appropriate consequences will be implemented depending on the situation. This may be grounds for removal from Unity Village.***

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 Unity Village. Unresolved and reoccurring concerns will be evaluated by HomesNOW and appropriate actions will be taken. Residents in rehabilitation are required to work closely with their case worker.

2.16. Resident Remaining On-Site

Unless given proper notification, each resident may only leave site for 24 hours before returning. If residents need to leave Unity Village for longer than 24 hours (EX: family reunion, wedding, employment, etc.). They need to provide contact information for who they will be staying with, and for how long. ***This may be grounds for removal from Unity Village if these terms are not honored.***

3. Services

3.1. 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.

3.2. 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.

3.3. Transportation

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

3.4. Support Services

Unity Village 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 Unity Village. DSHS may host mobile community services at Unity Village 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.

3.5. Security Services

The site is monitored by 24/7 video surveillance. 1080P 60HZ 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 tiny homes or bathrooms; this measure is to preserve the privacy and rights of the site residents.

3.6. 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.

3.7. Repairs and Maintenance

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

4. 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 procedures are explained to all new residents.
3. HomesNOW has new residents sign the City of Bellingham's Liability Release Form and the Unity Village 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 tiny home and shown to their tiny home.
7. HomesNOW or existing residents provide the new resident with any supplies needed for the initial move-in. A unit number is located on each unit for ease of identification. A list of assigned tiny homes/tents and residents is maintained by HomesNOW.
8. 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
- Unity Village 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

5. ACCEPTANCE OF THE RULES

By signing this handbook you are agreeing to abide by these rules and standards. If you can't follow these rules, and basic consequences are not achievable, you agree to self-evict.

NAME:

DATE (MM/DD/YYYY):

SIGNATURE
