



City Manager's Office

INFORMATION CALENDAR

October 13, 2026

To: Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council
 From: Paul Buddenhagen, City Manager
 Submitted by: Peter Radu, Assistant to the City Manager, Neighborhood Services
 Subject: Homeless Response Team Audit Status Report

INTRODUCTION

This report provides the first status update regarding implementation of recommendations contained in the July 16, 2025, City Auditor report, [*Homeless Response Team: Opportunities Exist to Strengthen Procedures and Better Track Outcomes*](#)¹. Since issuance of the audit, the City Manager's Office and the Homeless Response Team (HRT) have continued implementing operational and reporting improvements intended to strengthen coordination, improve data integration, and enhance public reporting related to encampment response efforts.

CURRENT SITUATION AND ITS EFFECTS

The audit included six recommendations. As of the writing of this report, five of those recommendations have been implemented and one has been partially implemented.

In September 2025, the City adopted the Homeless Response Team: Encampment Coordination and Data Policy (Attachment 2), which formalizes the structure, membership, and procedures of the weekly Berkeley Encampment Case Conference and establishes written procedures for collecting, reviewing, and validating encampment and outreach data. The policy designates the HMIS Outreach module as the primary system of record for encampment-related outreach and sets documentation timelines for outreach contacts, shelter offers, and encampment activities. The HRT now also conducts Coordinated Entry assessments directly as a mobile access point within Alameda County's Coordinated Entry system, rather than routing participants through another provider. In addition, the HRT standardized its public performance reporting and has released biannual data reports to Council in May 2025, November 2025, and June 2026, published on the City's [*Reporting Safety Concerns at an Encampment*](#)² webpage.

The recommendation tracked as partially implemented relates to full transition to the HMIS Outreach module. While interim steps have been completed, full integration depends on incorporating Outreach module participation into City-funded outreach contracts that will occur

¹ https://berkeleyca.gov/sites/default/files/documents/Homeless_Response_Team_-_Opportunities_Exist_to_Strengthen_Procedures_and_Better_Track_Outcomes.pdf

² <https://berkeleyca.gov/safety-health/homeless-services/reporting-safety-concerns-encampment>

with the FY 28 – FY 31 Community Agency Funding cycle consistent with the corrective action plan accepted by the City Auditor.

The Homeless Response Team continues to operate within a complex regional shelter and housing system characterized by limited interim and permanent housing resources, a challenging legal landscape, and significant fiscal constraints affecting homelessness services throughout Alameda County and the Bay Area. Sustaining the improvements described above depends on direct outreach capacity as well as administrative capacity, because outreach workers are the primary source of the client-level data underlying the expanded reporting. The FY2026 Mid-Biennial Budget added a third Social Services Specialist position to the HRT, which was subsequently frozen under the citywide hiring freeze and eliminated in the adopted FY 27- FY 28 Biennial Budget as part of the budget balancing strategy. HRT data collection capacity will therefore remain at current levels, capping the pace at which reporting and Outreach module integration can expand.

Please see Attachment 1 for a detailed table of audit report recommendations, corrective action plans, and implementation progress. The next status report to Council is expected to be presented in Fall 2027.

This work advances the City's Strategic Plan goal to create affordable housing and housing support services for our most vulnerable community members.

BACKGROUND

The Berkeley City Council established the Homeless Response Team in June 2021, and the City Manager's Office launched the team in September 2021, to respond to homeless encampments by conducting sustained outreach to move people indoors while reducing health and safety threats without citation or arrest. The audit examined Homeless Response Team operations during fiscal years 2022 through 2024.

The Homeless Response Team is coordinated by the Neighborhood Services Division in the City Manager's Office and works in partnership with the Health, Housing and Community Services Department; Public Works Department; Parks, Recreation and Waterfront Department; Fire Department; and Police Department; and the City Attorney's Office, among others, to address encampments and connect unsheltered residents to services and shelter resources. The HRT has limited authority over most shelter and housing placements, which are managed through the Alameda County Continuum of Care, and its work is further shaped by legal constraints including recent litigation, federal court rulings on encampment actions, City administrative regulations, and the City's September 2024 Encampment Policy Resolution.

ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY AND CLIMATE IMPACTS

There are no identifiable environmental sustainability or climate impacts associated with this informational report.

POSSIBLE FUTURE ACTION

The Neighborhood Services Division in the City Manager's Office will continue refining operational coordination, data integration, and public reporting practices related to encampment response efforts, and will incorporate HMIS Outreach module participation requirements into the next Community Agency Funding cycle.

FISCAL IMPACTS OF POSSIBLE FUTURE ACTION

The improvements described in this report have been implemented within existing staffing and operational resources. Ongoing fiscal pressures at the State, County, and local levels, coupled with reductions to the homelessness budget in the FY 27-FY 28 adopted budget, may further affect HRT outreach activities, which depend on referrals to existing interim housing programs and support services to be effective. In addition, court orders and other legal requirements related to encampment response may require the City to dedicate limited resources to specific activities, including disability accommodations and the provision of survival-related supplies, further constraining the flexibility of existing unhoused funding.

CONTACT PERSON

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Attachments:

1. HRT Audit Status Recommendation Table FY26
2. Homeless Response Team (HRT) Encampment Coordination & Data Policy

Audit Title: Homeless Response Team: Opportunities Exist to Strengthen Procedures and Better Track Outcomes

Issue Date: July 16, 2025

Table: Audit Recommendation Statuses

Finding	Recommendation	Department	Previous Status Update	Current Status Update
The HRT paused some coordination meetings and had limited access to shared information systems.	2.1 Document the coordination structure for encampment-related meetings. Continue to meet regularly with key participants as identified by the City for all encampment outreach and interventions.	City Manager	Not Started	Implemented. In September 2025, City adopted the Homeless Response Team: Encampment Coordination policy, which formalizes the structure and procedures for the weekly Berkeley Encampment Case Conference. The policy identifies required and optional participants and provides that Case Conference meetings will occur weekly, staffing permitting. The HRT continues to convene these meetings regularly and uses them to coordinate services for vulnerable encampment residents.
The HRT paused some coordination meetings and had limited access to shared information systems.	2.2 Develop and document internal procedures for collecting data on HRT activities and encampments. Include plans for regular review for data accuracy.	City Manager	Not Started	Implemented. The HRT adopted the Encampment Coordination policy in September 2025, which establishes written procedures for collecting, reviewing, and validating data related to HRT activities and encampments, including use of HMIS as the primary system of record and regular data quality review processes.

Finding	Recommendation	Department	Previous Status Update	Current Status Update
The HRT paused some coordination meetings and had limited access to shared information systems.	2.3 Fully transition to the Outreach module and work with HHCS to consider including the module in contracts with city-funded outreach teams who work with encampment residents. As part of this recommendation, consider developing shared procedures for how HRT and city-funded outreach teams can use the data to inform delivery of services.	City Manager	Not Started	Partly Implemented. The Encampment Coordination policy establishes the HMIS Outreach module as the primary system of record for encampment-related outreach and sets shared expectations for documenting outreach contacts, shelter offers and responses, client engagement, and encampment activities. The policy also encourages non-City outreach providers with HMIS access to use the Outreach module and provides that participation in HMIS Outreach will become a requirement for City-funded outreach providers beginning with the FY28-31 Community Agency Funding cycle.
The HRT can strengthen its approach to using outcomes for measuring progress toward goals and keeping the public informed.	3.1 Expand reported outcomes that align with the HRT's goals and define how they will be measured. Public reporting could include key information such as outreach efforts and shelter enrollments, along with demographic breakdowns and reasons people decline shelter, where possible. Report on the same outcomes over time using a consistent timeframe to support comparisons.	City Manager	Not Started	Implemented. The Homeless Response Team implemented a standardized public performance reporting framework that expands reported outcomes, aligns those measures with the HRT's goals, and supports comparisons across consistent reporting periods. The HRT released reports in May 2025, November 2025 and June 2026 which include comparative analyses of demographic characteristics, vulnerability indicators, Coordinated Entry assessment rates, shelter enrollment, shelter type, and participant shelter and housing outcomes.

Finding	Recommendation	Department	Previous Status Update	Current Status Update
The HRT can strengthen its approach to using outcomes for measuring progress toward goals and keeping the public informed.	3.2 Consider sharing public data in a more accessible format, such as on a single landing page on the City's website or through a dashboard.	City Manager	Not Started	Implemented. HRT performance data reports are published through the City's Reporting Safety Concerns at an Encampment webpage, providing the public with a consistent location to access information about the team's activities and outcomes. Since the audit, the HRT has continued producing recurring public performance reports using its standardized reporting framework, including reports issued in November 2025 and June 2026.
The HRT can strengthen its approach to using outcomes for measuring progress toward goals and keeping the public informed.	3.3 Assess staffing resources needed to support data and reporting efforts without impacting HRT's operational duties.	City Manager	Not Started	Implemented. Neighborhood Services completed an assessment of staffing resources needed to support HRT operations, which identified the need for additional administrative, analytical, and operational capacity within Neighborhood Services and the HRT. Neighborhood Services received an additional Administrative Assistant FTE in November 2024 to provide division-wide administrative support, and the FY2026 Mid-Biennial Budget added a third Social Services Specialist position to the HRT which was subsequently frozen and removed as part of the City's response to its structural budget deficit. Future staffing additions will remain dependent on available resources and Citywide budget priorities.

Homeless Response Team (HRT): Encampment Coordination

I. Purpose

This policy establishes a comprehensive framework for the coordination of encampment-related outreach, data collection, and performance measurement for the Homeless Response Team (HRT). Its purpose is to ensure consistency, transparency, and accountability across City staff and partner agencies engaged in encampment response. This policy was designed in accordance with regional encampment guidance and the Alameda County HMIS Street Outreach Protocols.

II. Scope

This policy applies to all HRT staff, contracted outreach providers, and City partners engaged in encampment-related activities. It governs meeting coordination, data collection, and use of the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) Outreach module as the primary system of record.

III. Guiding Principals

When responding to encampments, the City's HRT is bound by the Berkeley Municipal Code and the City Council's "Encampment Policy Resolution to Promote Healthy and Safe Neighborhoods" (Resolution No. 71,513-N.S.) as the team's overarching policy directives. In implementing these policy directives, the HRT strives to uphold the following principles:

- **Harm reduction:** responsive strategies directed at reducing existing harm within encampments and between encamped individuals and the surrounding community. Harms could be dangerous conditions, violent crime, transmission/exposure of communicable illnesses, substance use, and more.
- **Harm mitigation:** proactive strategies directed at reducing future harm
- **Non-Criminalization:** While criminal and nuisance behaviors may warrant enforcement intervention, the circumstance of experiencing homelessness itself is not a crime, and criminalizing based on this circumstance alone is ineffective
- **Prioritization:** recognition that the City's available resources are insufficient in capacity to respond to every non-emergent issue in encampments and, as such, resources must be prioritized
- **Culturally informed:** infusing cultural sensitivity and racial equity considerations into all aspects of outreach and resource referrals, to respond fairly across racial and ethnic groups and geographic locations
- **Stability:** recognition that moving individuals or longstanding groups unnecessarily should be avoided, and that the safest and most stable place for an unsheltered individual to be moved is indoors
- **Trauma-Informed:** sensitivity to the histories of trauma, past and present, that affect those living in encampments, using evidence-based practices to reduce the exacerbation thereof across all engagements

IV. Definitions

- **Berkeley Encampment Case Conference:** Weekly coordination meetings convened to align outreach, services, and interventions at identified encampments

- **Case Conference Key Participants:** City staff, housing/shelter providers, outreach teams, and other service providers designated by the City as important components of a coordinated encampment response
- **Data Accuracy Review:** The process of validating information for consistency, completeness, and accuracy before it is used for reporting or analysis
- **Encampment:** any tent, vehicle, structure, or collection of belongings where one or more unsheltered individuals are residing for a prolonged duration, in a place not meant for human habitation including but not limited to streets, campgrounds, undeveloped properties, abandoned buildings, vehicles, or parks
- **HMIS Outreach Module:** The shared data system used to document engagement, referrals, outcomes, and encampment-level activities
- **Homeless Response Team:** Resolve unsheltered homelessness through the provision of interim and permanent housing and other supportive services, as well as to coordinate the many City and nonprofit staff who work in and are impacted by homeless encampments in providing harm reduction oriented, pragmatic interventions that maintain health and safety for the unsheltered and the broader Berkeley community. It includes divisions such as Health, Housing and Community Services; Parks, Recreation and Waterfront; Public Works; Police; Fire; and the City Attorney's Office
- **Outreach:** refers to any and all employees and contractors who, by the nature of their work, actively outreach to unsheltered residents to connect them to critical services and information, including health supplies
- **Shelter and/or alternative interim housing:** refers to any approach to providing appropriate accommodations consistent with the local, state, and federal guidelines or laws

V. Encampment Coordination Structure (*Recommendation 2.1*)

1. Membership

- **Required Participants:** HRT outreach workers, Homeless Services Coordinator (Chair), contracted housing navigation and shelter providers
- **Optional Participants:** Any person seeking support or looking to support an encampment resident or residents

2. Roles

- **Chair:** Sets agenda, facilitates meetings, ensures follow-up
- **Recorder:** Designated City staff who documents decisions and action items
- **Participants:** Share updates, coordinate cases, and enter data into HMIS
 - Individual advocates/community members supporting persons experiencing homelessness may stay for the first part of the meeting to provide information and share updates with the rest of the case conference
 - Staff working for agencies that participate in Alameda County's HMIS are welcome to stay for the entire meeting, where data and information protected by the County's HMIS privacy policies will be discussed

3. Meeting Frequency and Agenda

- Meetings will occur weekly, staffing permitting
- Standard agenda includes:
 1. Welcome and announcements (all members)
 2. Meeting ground rules (all members)
 - Take a client centered approach
 - Be mindful of different levels of privacy access
 - Respect others
 - Focus on problem solving
 - Prioritize resources by each client's vulnerability
 3. Resource updates (all members)
 4. Data quality review (members with HMIS access only)
 5. Client case conferencing (members with HMIS access only)

4. Decision-Making

- Decisions are made by consensus when possible
- When consensus is not possible, the Homeless Services Coordinator, in consultation with the Assistant to the City Manager overseeing Neighborhood Services, will make the final determination

VI. Data Collection and Accuracy *(Recommendation 2.2)*

1. Data Collection Requirements

- **Outreach Contacts:** Documented in HMIS within 72 hours
- **Shelter Offers/Responses:** Recorded in HMIS within 72 hours
- **Encampment Activities:** Notices, clean-ups, and closures documented internally and summarized in HMIS under the encampment profile description.
- **Demographics:** Recorded per HMIS data standards

2. Workflows

- **Entry:** Outreach staff/providers enter data directly into HMIS
- **Review:** Supervisor reviews weekly for timeliness/completeness
- **Verification:** Administration staff cross-checks monthly against case notes, shelter rosters, and meeting records
- **Reporting:** Quarterly reports generated from HMIS and validated against provider records

3. Data Quality Reviews

- Built into Case Conferences as a standing agenda item
- Corrections made within 10 business days of identification

VII. HMIS Outreach Module Utilization *(Recommendation 2.3)*

1. Use Requirements

- **Mandatory:** City of Berkeley staff and contracted partners must record all outreach and encampment activities in the module
- **Voluntary:** Non-City of Berkeley providers encountering encampment residents and with HMIS access are encouraged to use the module

- **Contracted Providers:** Beginning in the City's FY28-31 Community Agency Funding RFP cycle, use of HMIS Outreach will be a required scope of work for contracted providers

Shared Procedures

- The HRT and partners will follow standardized data entry timelines and service tracking requirements as laid out in the [Alameda County HMIS Data Quality Policies and Procedures](#), [Alameda County Homeless Response System Written Standards](#), [HMIS Street Outreach Exiting Protocol](#), and HUD's [HMIS Data Standards](#), to be in accordance with HUD and Alameda County best practices. Integration of standardized procedures into weekly Case Conference processes to review data completeness and accuracy.

2. Data Quality and Security

- When sharing personally identifiable information for the purposes of care coordination, the HRT and participating agencies must comply with applicable data privacy regulations, federal HMIS Data Standards, and confidentiality protocols
- HRT staff and participating partners will attend all relevant trainings to ensure data completeness and accuracy.
- Quarterly audits and cleanups of module data by the Homeless Services Coordinator

3. Implementation Timeline

- **Phase 1 (September 1, 2025):** HRT staff full transition to Outreach module
- **Phase 2 (August 1, 2028):** Full integration into City-funded outreach contracts

VIII. Accountability and Evaluation

- Meeting attendance and participation tracked weekly and reviewed quarterly
- Data entry timeliness and accuracy monitored monthly
- Annual evaluation of policy effectiveness, including housing placements, service connections, and encampment outcomes
- Noncompliance may result in corrective actions pursuant to City disciplinary procedures or individual agency contracts
- This Policy will be subject to periodic evaluation and may be modified by the Neighborhood Services Division, in partnership with participating agencies and as needed, to respond to shifts in funding streams, emerging legal/policy mandates, changes to participating agencies, and/or other changing circumstances.

X. Effective Date

This policy is effective September 15, 2025, and shall remain in force until modified or rescinded by the City Manager's Office.