

# How **you can help** people experiencing **homelessness** in Baltimore

## **TALKING IS EASY and it makes us all feel good**

Stop and talk to people experiencing homelessness, even if briefly. Make a comment about the day or weather. Not all people will respond, but don't be deterred—try again next time. More often than not, people experiencing homelessness are ignored, and your acknowledgement can make a big difference.

## **Requests for help can be met with money, food or a HELLO AND A SMILE**

There are many ways to respond when somebody asks for help—but responding is important. You can give money if you'd like to; pulling spare change from your pocket is better than opening your wallet if you feel unsafe. You can offer a granola bar, banana, bottle of water or other nutritious item. Smile and share a kind word. Or simply make eye contact, say "Sorry, no" and move on.

## **THERE IS HELP and you can help people get it**

- Direct people to the nearest soup kitchen, shelter or clinic.
- Look up Baltimore City's Street Outreach Information Card (or "street card") on your phone for information about local services.
- If a person is in crisis or intoxicated, you can do one of a couple of things:
  - If he or she is unresponsive or appears to be a threat, call 911.
  - If he or she is willing to talk to a crisis worker, call the Baltimore Crisis Response Team (410-433-5175); their mobile teams come to individuals with help.
- If you are not sure what to do and the situation is not an emergency, call 311. Provide a description and location for the person in need.

## **Panhandling DOES NOT EQUAL homelessness**

Panhandling is a visible and public demonstration of need, and people panhandle for a variety of reasons. Some are trying to raise the small daily fee that some downtown shelters charge. Some are trying to buy food or cigarettes. And some are trying to buy drugs. But not all panhandlers lack housing, and not all people who lack housing panhandle.

## **Aggressive panhandling is NOT OKAY**

Aggressive panhandling is against the law and creates a hostile environment. When confronted with aggressive panhandling, you can:

- Simply keep walking.
- Ask the person in a clear, calm manner to stop.
- Call for help from someone nearby.

## **Everyone has a STORY**

When you next have the chance, ask somebody experiencing homelessness to share his or her story. Or get to know some of our neighbors without homes at [www.hchmd.org](http://www.hchmd.org).

