

# Pillar 3: Equitable and Accessible Social Services

RETHINKING MUNICIPAL POLICY RESPONSES TO ENCAMPMENTS:  
BUILDING A HUMAN RIGHTS APPROACH IN ONTARIO



A third component of a human rights approach to encampments is the equitable and accessible provision of social services. Encampment residents should have access to social services on an equitable basis and without discrimination due to housing status. Individuals staying at encampments often experience barriers to accessing services. For example, if municipalities mandate that service providers require those accessing services to provide identification or other personal data, that can impact service accessibility.

## Exploratory Questions

We used these questions to assess the extent to which municipalities had equitable and accessible service provision within their encampment responses. They show our guiding lens, as applied across the different jurisdictions we observed in Ontario.

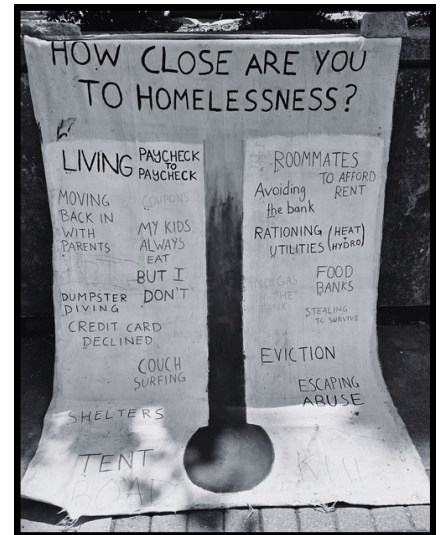
- *Do protocols include strategies for equitable access to services, for example health care, housing support, harm reduction, and culturally specific services?*
- *Do protocols require participation in data collection as a condition for accessing services?*
- *Do protocols include a statement regarding the ability to refuse services?*

## Report Findings

10 of 13 municipalities with encampment protocols did discuss service provision to some extent, typically in terms of connection to housing, health or harm reduction services. While most protocols discussed the importance of services in general terms, few described how those services should be provided. Very few municipalities included any reference to culturally-specific services or trauma-informed service provision.

Typically, protocols did not mention whether participation in data collection was required to access services, offering insufficient details to understand how data collection may impact service eligibility. Clarity about any data-sharing requirements is important because requiring data collection can discourage people from seeking the help they need.

Some protocols included a statement about ability to refuse services. Other protocols included language about the right to refuse services but also included elements of service coercion.



REALIZING THE RIGHT TO HOUSING:  
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