

Contact, Enforcement, Accountability Policy

Authored by Rob Berry, 12/4/17-

To try to articulate the overall policy context we are promoting here at Chico First, below is a brief description of the key points of what I call the "Contact, Enforcement, Accountability" policy.

Each person living on the margins of homelessness is there because of an individual path that they followed to arrive there.

In some cases, they desire a better quality of life, are willing to work hard for it, and are capable of managing at least rudimentary activities of daily life. For those folks, they need to engage voluntarily with service providers, and those options should be available to them.

Others are just living a criminal life and preying on the generosity and vulnerabilities of other citizens. These need to be involuntarily removed until such time as they can prove they can live in a civil society.

For the rest, they may be hiding from law enforcement and not voluntarily seek services. For those we must find them, make contact, and move them through either the voluntary service door, or the involuntary law enforcement door.

Second, all laws should and must be enforced. To not do so is an injustice to victims of petty crimes. We deserve public safety, and those who endanger us through poor conduct must be the object of police contact.

Finally, accountability means meaningful consequences for offenses. This is where the concept of Community Court comes in. For example, a judge who is reasonably informed about the details of an individual may make a deal for offenses in exchange for submitting to rehab, medical treatment, or psychiatric evaluation. Or they can work off imposed fines by performing community service and restitution under supervision by the courts.

The implementation of this policy will have several impacts; one might be that for those who chose to prey on the vulnerable might find their ability to do so getting harder, and chose to go elsewhere. That will leave a smaller population more likely to be served by available services.

Always interested in your feedback and ideas.