

CT Outreach (OR) Training

Best Practices in Outreach to Homeless People

Session #1: Values, Goals and Engagement

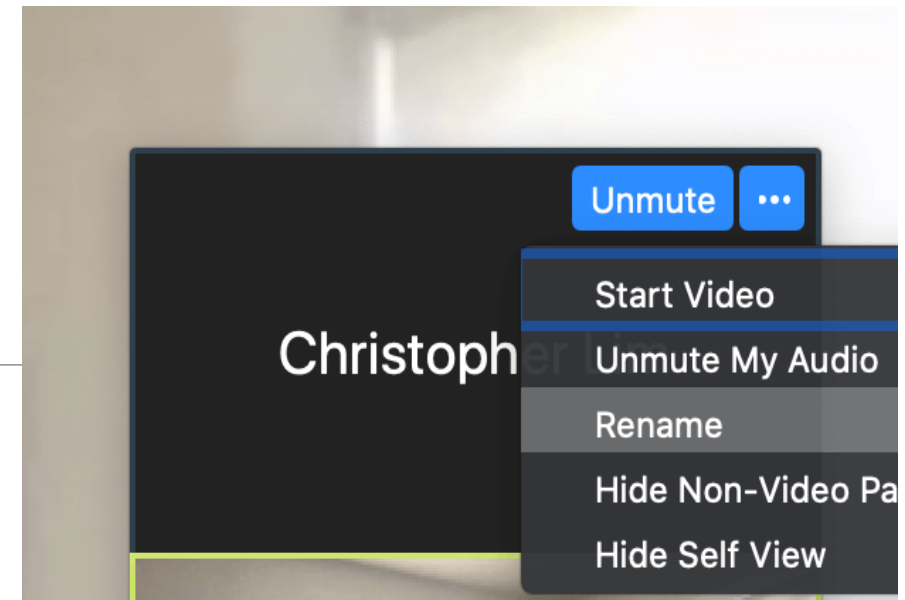
MARCH 10, 2026

Suzanne Wagner & Andrea White
Housing Innovations



Welcome

- Introduce Facilitators
- Goals for the Session
- Housekeeping
 - PLEASE TURN YOUR CAMERAS ON AS MUCH AS YOU CAN.
 - Please put your name as you would like to be addressed as your screen name.
 - We will upload the slides to the chat box momentarily.
 - We love interaction – please raise hand, use emojis, type comments in the chat box or just unmute and talk!
 - The session is being recorded and will be posted to the web.
 - Today's session is 2 hours- some slides are for reference.



A group of people are seated around a long table in a meeting room, engaged in discussion. The room is filled with people, some looking towards the camera and others looking at each other. There are water bottles, papers, and a tablet on the table. The background shows more people and a yellow wall.

We Love Interaction

If you don't have a microphone, participate in discussions by joining via phone:

- Phone: 646-876-9923
- Meeting ID: 844 5428 2209
- Passcode: 185525



Who is with us today?

Please put in the chat box:

- Your agency and role/title
- Your location (city, town or CAN)
- Something that makes you smile



AGENDA

- Welcome & Introductions
- Outreach Guidelines Overview: Values, Vision and Goals
- Engaging People experiencing Unsheltered Homelessness
 - *Identifying People*
 - *Engagement and Building Relationships*
 - *Maintaining a Client Centered Approach*
- Closing Comments
- Additional Resources

Zoom Polls

How long have you been in your current position?

How much experience do you have in street outreach work?



What Do We **Care** About Most?



Outreach Standards Overview

VALUES, VISION, & GOALS

Connecticut Statewide Street Outreach Standards

For projects serving people
experiencing unsheltered
homelessness funded by
CT Department of Mental Health
and Addiction Services,
CT Department of Housing,
CT Balance of State Continuum of Care

UPDATED JUNE 2024



- **April 2025:** CT Statewide Street Outreach Standards adopted

Key Changes:

- All projects to complete an assessment of client service needs and an initial service plan within 90 days of enrollment
- Assessment and Service Plan Template updated
- Standards LGBTQIA+ Policy moved to the DMHAS website

Content: Vision, Values, Outcomes; Practice Standards for Outreach Workers; Supervisory Standards; Project Standards for Program Managers; Standards for Agencies; Outreach Plan Template; Assessment and Service Plan Template

CT Street Outreach Values

- Housing is a primary goal of Outreach teams
- Urgency – end homelessness as quickly as possible
- Respect perspectives, motivations, choices & property
- Build trusted relationships and create transparency with clients & partners
- Become allies in clients' journeys and meet them where they are
- Minimize risk & reduce harm
- Create equal access and be consistent





Outreach Values (2)

- Engage as an interdependent provider in a network of committed service providers
- Practice and support culture of self-care
- Be flexible and creative problem-solvers
- Commit to data and documentation – use in collaboration and service improvement
- Rigorously plan outreach

Vision and Goals

Vision: to support people experiencing unsheltered homelessness in achieving some form of permanent, sustainable housing

Goals*:

1. Quickly connect to safe housing, income and other supports
2. Identify people living in unsheltered locations
3. Minimize service gaps or duplication
4. Use resources strategically to end homelessness
5. Support people to meet tenancy obligations
6. Provide warm handoff and aftercare



*Specific program outcomes related to these goals will be discussed in relevant sections of this series.

Small Group Discussions



Introduce yourselves to each other

Discussion Prompts:

- How and when did you come to work in Street Outreach (OR)?
- What do you think about the values, vision and goals in the OR standards?
- Are there things that seem harder?
- Things that seem easier?
- Are there questions about what any of the values, vision or goals mean?

Key Roles of Outreach Workers – Focus of Session #1

- Identify who is living unsheltered in your geographic area
 - Includes: canvassing, maintaining partnerships, responding to referrals, may include in-reach
- Make contact and establish credibility and relationships with people living unsheltered
 - Includes: earning trust, being consistent and reliable, demonstrating kindness and helpfulness



Key Roles of Outreach Workers – Focus of Sessions #2



- Provide housing-focused case management
 - Assessing needs and developing housing/service plans
- Coordinate with partners to move people to housing
 - Participating in the CAN,
 - helping people understand housing options and access other essential services,
 - providing after-care, and
 - warm-handoffs
- Maximizing safety & harm reduction
- Collect and enter data
 - entering prompt, accurate data into HMIS/DDAP, the Engage App & PIT count participation

Zoom Poll

Which statement about the CT Street Outreach Standards is most true for you.

1. Today is the first I am hearing about the Standards.
2. I knew something about the Standards before today, but not yet using them in my day-to-day work.
3. I am very familiar with the Standards and using them regularly/with some frequency.
4. I would like to learn more about the Standards.
5. Other: *Please type in the chat*



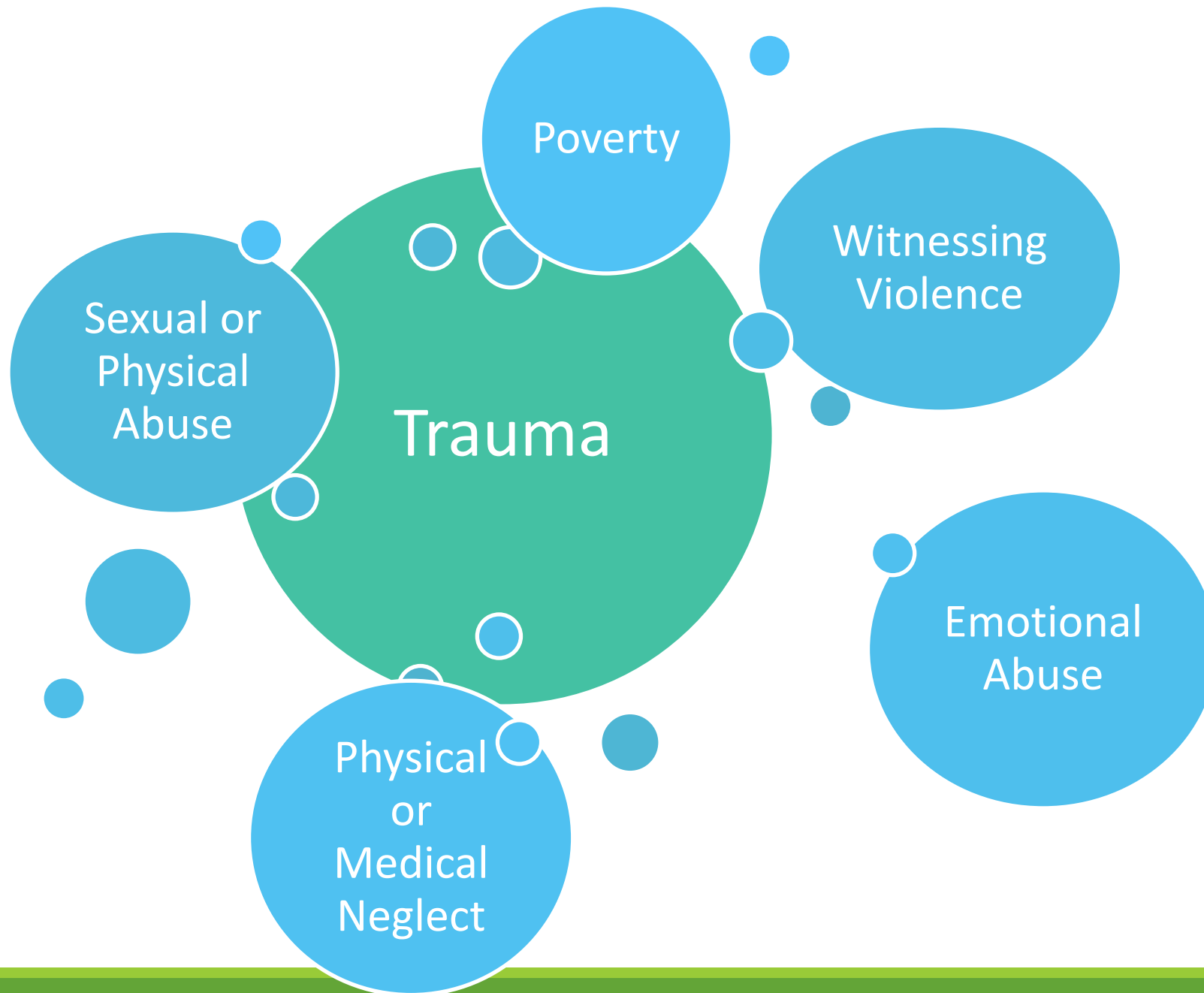


Engagement



Day One: Develop a relationship with the person.
Primary Goal: Create a “why” for them to engage with you.





Trauma & Homelessness

People experiencing homelessness are likely to have experienced & continue to experience some form of trauma, which can interfere with:

- Sense of safety
- Perception of control and self-efficacy
- Interpersonal relationships & ability to self-regulate

Trauma-Informed Care Principles:

- Emphasize safety and be predictable
- Emphasize client choice and rebuild control
- Be aware of triggers and avoid re-traumatization
- Assist to identify strengths and build skills



Building the Relationship



- Be yourself. People know if you are being authentic.
- Keep showing up and always follow through promptly.
- Listen to identify what the person wants and cares about.
- Be patient and don't push any agenda.
 - Be trauma-informed in all interactions.
- Find something to work on together.
 - Start with small goals and keep it simple.
- Provide concrete assistance: food, clothing, gear, hygiene & disease prevention supplies, documents.
- Present housing as a way to get wants, needs and goals met

Building the Relationship – 2



- Pay attention to race, gender and ethnicity and how they may impact the engagement.
- Offer as many choices as possible and talk about opportunities.
- Build confidence and trust as you accomplish things together.
- Provide relief/comfort
- Ask for help: Clinical consultation can help determine what is underlying what you are seeing and plan the best approach.
 - *If you don't have a clinician in your agency, Mobile Crisis Teams can provide case consultation – reach out to Mollie for help connecting*
- Seek information: client, CAN, HMIS, EMS, hospitals and healthcare providers, police, mainstream and homeless service providers
- Keep your promises

Break Out Discussions

Discuss a person you had difficulty engaging and ultimately connected with?

- What were the engagement barriers?
- How did you overcome those barriers?



How do I know if I was successful at Day One engagement?

The person wants to speak with me again!!

Tips to keep Momentum:

- Make every effort to engage new clients within 24 hours of referral
- Engage again within 48 hours
- Follow through on commitments
- Use warm hand-offs

Nice to meet you.



Tool Review: First Contact Practices

For a full version of the tool
See: [CT Statewide Street
Outreach Standards](#)

First Contact Practices:

Closing the Loop During & After First Contact

Before Leaving the Engagement:

- Did I offer something that would reduce the person's risk, harm or discomfort?
- Did I do a 360 scan for **emergency needs** (acute physical or mental health problems, e.g., imminent risk of suicide, homicide or other harm)?

Note: *If you believe there is imminent risk to the person or others, call 911. If they are hospitalized, check on them and continue the relationship.*

- Did I get the person to talk to me?
- Did I ask about whether they need an ID, Social Security Number or SSN card?
- Did I ask the person about income?
- Did I ask about military service?

Engagement Techniques: Maintaining a Client-Centered Approach

- Offer services multiple times and in different ways.
- Understand client perspectives, including any reasons they are not using shelter/services.
- Help people solve the problems that are most important to them.
- Advocate with community partners to make sure people get the services they need and that services are working for them.
- Assist in accessing temporary accommodations and permanent housing that can accommodate the entire family, including pets.



Tool Review: Things to Do Between Contacts

For a full version of the tool
See: [CT Statewide Street Outreach Standards](#)

Consistent Practice:

Doing Your Homework Between Contacts

Before Leaving the Engagement:

- Did I offer something that would reduce the person's risk, harm or discomfort?
- Did I revisit their plan to end their homelessness and what help they need?
 - If circumstances have changed with family or friends who could be a source of safe housing, did I ask if they need help to get in contact with them?*
- Did I commit to coming back and give the person a general sense of when that will be?
- Did I revisit benefits and income with the client and get their consent and availability to set up necessary appointments?

Within 72 Hours of the Engagement:

- Write down the commitments I made to this person so I won't forget, e.g. when I will come back, what I will bring or do for this person.

"We're all just walking each other home"

Ram Dass



www.ramonamckean.com

Closing Comments

Closing

- Building trusted relationships with clients is the foundation of outreach work.
- Permanent housing is the primary goal of outreach.
- Impacts of trauma and other life experiences can interfere with relationships.
- Be consistent, reliable, kind and helpful.
- Focus first on what's most important to the client.
- Implementation of Outreach Standards is required for all CoC and DMHAS funded outreach.
- Thank you and good luck with this very important work!





Additional Resources



Upcoming Outreach Webinars:

- Best Practices in Street Outreach – Part 2
 - March 17 from 1:30 – 3:30 pm

- Best Practices in Street Outreach – Part 3
 - March 31 from 1:30 – 3:30 pm

Communities of Practice: Schedule



All meetings will be from 10-11 AM

- Thursday 4/2/26
- Thursday 6/4/26

Join Zoom:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89419988419?pwd=5bzO1dsm5saZCmxXOBfnLcJb2Yd3iK.1>

Meeting ID: 894 1998 8419

Passcode: 917908

Phone: 646-876-9923



Quarterly Outreach Meetings

Next Meeting: 3/18 at 1pm

Join on your computer or mobile app

[Join the meeting now](#)

Meeting ID: 292 226 753 998 75

Passcode: KM2s6G66

Dial in by phone

[+1 860-840-2075,,378925443#](#) United States, Hartford

[Find a local number](#)

Phone conference ID: 378 925 443#

Street Outreach Training Inventory

Web-based training available on topics including:

- Best Practices and Engagement Strategies
- Homeless Response System Overview
- Housing Options
- Housing Assessment & Planning
- Mental Health
- Crisis Intervention & De-escalation
- Harm Reduction
- Encampments
- Trauma-Informed Outreach
- Self-Care, Vicarious Trauma & Staff Resiliency
- Working with Special Populations (Youth, Older Adults, LGBTQIA, DV)
- Racial Trauma & Equity
- Disaster Response Planning



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