



Faith Based Safe Car Camping Program in Clark County Case Statement

VISION

The Clark County Safe Car Camping Program is a **COLLABORATIVE** effort between faith communities and local social service agencies to provide safe, secure and legal car camping for families and individuals who live in their vehicles transitionally.

As a steering committee of faith partners and community advocates of Clark County, we are compelled by our beliefs to provide a safe option for individuals and families experiencing homelessness. Living in a vehicle presents many issues besides a lack of access to warmth, sanitation and food preparation. Local ordinances limit legal locations to park and sleep in vehicles overnight, and sleeping in public spaces leaves one visible and vulnerable to violence and theft. They are often unable to rest because they have to move regularly to avoid community complaints, harassment and police intervention.

By providing this program which offers a formalized intake system, those living in their vehicles will not only have the protection of a safe place to park overnight, but also the support of a local faith community and local agencies.

MISSION

By utilizing all of our resources, including our vacant parking lots and buildings, the faith communities of Clark County can fill a real need among an underserved population for whom there is a lack of shelter options. This program will serve homeless individuals and families with a working vehicle and in need of a place to park overnight.

STRUCTURE

Both state and federal law permit faith communities to use their property (including parking lots) and their resources to carry out their mission. (Two documents are enclosed which state these laws: Washington House Bill 1956 and Full Text of federal law RLUIPA.) This program is intended to provide a structure for facilitation of car camping that creates safety for the person in the car and for the church hosting. Initiation to the program will include the following:

- **Coordinated Intake Through Council for the Homeless including housing coordination services**
- **Background Check of all participants and volunteers**
- **A Code of Conduct for participants and a volunteer policy statement**
- **Individual Church Stay Agreement, (requirements set by the hosting church)**
- **Participant Identification Placards**
- **Informal Review Process and Training for the faith partner**
- **Contact information for interested supportive congregations**

CONSIDERATIONS FOR POTENTIAL PARTNERS

Homelessness can be an indicator of many other complications including financial, social isolation, unemployment, lack of access to resources, mental and physical health issues, unsafe relationships, environmental hazards and natural disasters, among many others. We realize that these complications cannot all be addressed by this program. One of our challenges will be to clearly define the limits of this program and strengthen connections with other agencies who can help address these complications.

This program was initiated by a steering committee of faith partners and community advocates. As a partner in this program, you are welcome and encouraged to participate on the steering committee, which meets as often as needed and/or to contact a steering committee member at any time for which a contact list has been provided in this packet.

Attached is a list of Safe Car Camping Basics and a Partnership Document for potential partners to read and consider.

WHAT WE OFFER

A safe site to park overnight (daytime access based on location)

Connection to social services and resources

Community with those in the same transitional position and with the faith community

Restroom facilities

Encouragement and Hope

(Additional offerings like showers and access to a kitchen or place for school children to do homework can be determined by each site)

REPUTATION/STABILITY

A growing network of faith communities around Clark County along with the Council for the Homeless, the local advocacy group Outsiders Inn, Friends of the Carpenter, local city governments are in support of this program. We will also be networking with local law enforcement, school districts and neighbors. We are modeling this program after several other successful programs from around the west coast. Links to testimonies of the positive effects of this program model will also be provided for you and your church leadership.

By starting our pilot program with a large supporting network of partnering churches, local organizations, and representatives from those who have or are currently experiencing homelessness, we believe this program is beginning with a solid base of community support that can grow into a larger, sustainable network to serve those in transition. Your partnership is greatly appreciated!

Continuation Task Force/Steering Committee

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Ren Autrey or Adam Kravitz – Outsiders Inn – Voice FOR the Homeless
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St. Luke’s - Denmark Wichar – spokesperson for St. Luke’s regarding parking lot use
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