

**POLICY NUMBER:**

**APM- 1- 19**

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ISSUED BY:

*Emilio T. Gonzalez*  
City Manager/Designee

  
SIGNATURE

# CITY OF MIAMI



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## ADMINISTRATIVE POLICY

### **SUBJECT: TREATMENT OF HOMELESS PERSONS' PROPERTY**

**Purpose** The purpose of this policy is to establish a standard practice for the handling, temporary storage, and disposition of property belonging to homeless persons.

**Scope** This Administrative Policy shall apply to all City employees, whether probationary, classified, unclassified, executive, temporary, or part-time, except employees of the Miami Police Department shall be bound by and follow the procedures set forth in Departmental Order 11 Chapter 10, or any existing Departmental Order addressing the treatment of homeless persons' property, to the extent there is any conflict between this Administrative Policy and any Departmental Order.

**Definitions**

- A. "Contaminated or Dangerous Items" are those items that present a hazard to the health and safety of City Personnel or the public. These items include, but are not limited to, hazardous materials, flammable materials (e.g., propane tanks), fabric contaminated with human or animal waste, fabric contaminated with flammable substances (e.g., oil or petroleum products), wet fabric (mold hazard), etc.
- B. "Homeless Person" shall mean a person who lacks a fixed, regular, and adequate night-time residence and has a primary night-time residency that is: (a) supervised publicly or privately operated shelter designed to provide temporary living accommodations; (b) an institution that provides a temporary residence for individuals intended to be institutionalized; or (c) a public or private place not designed for, or ordinarily used as, a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings. The term "homeless person" does not include any person imprisoned or otherwise detained pursuant to an Act of

Congress or a state law. 42 U.S.C. §11301, et seq. (1994).

C. “Homeless Person’s Property” or “Homeless Property” shall mean personal property known to belong to a homeless person, or readily recognizable as property of a homeless person (i.e., bedding or clothing and other belongings organized or packaged together in a way indicating it has not been abandoned).

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**Procedures****I. General procedures:**

1. City Personnel will attempt to secure personal items such as identification, medicines and eyeglasses and other small items of importance identified by the Homeless Person or readily identifiable as intimate personal property.
2. Notwithstanding anything herein:
  - a. Homeless Property that is contaminated or otherwise poses a health or safety concern to City Personnel or to members of the public may be disposed of.
  - b. The City is not responsible for taking custody of mattresses, upholstered furniture, or other bulky items on public property, and may dispose of those items.
  - c. Nothing herein prevents the disposal of items reasonably believed to be refuse.
  - d. The City may prohibit the presence of unattended property in specified areas where the presence of such unattended property poses a threat or risk to the public health or safety.

**II. Tagged/Labeled Homeless Persons’ Property:**

1. In order to aid the City in its ability to readily identify and handle the property of homeless persons, the City requires that all homeless individuals who wish to identify their personal property place a tag or label with their name and contact information (telephone and/or email) on the outside of any such property, such that City employees can easily identify the property as belonging to a specific individual and will have a means of contacting that individual with regard to any actions taken as to that property.
2. Whenever a City employee encounters unattended but tagged/labeled homeless persons’ property, the following procedure shall be employed:
  - a. Any personal items such as identification, medicines and eyeglasses and other small items of importance readily identifiable as intimate personal property will be collected and held for a period of ninety (90) days, after which the City will dispose of the property if unclaimed. An Inventory Storage Form will be completed by City personnel, and a copy of that

form will be provided to the Homeless Person by e-mail (if provided/available).

- b. Any items that are contaminated or otherwise pose a health hazard or obvious safety issue will be disposed of according to this policy.
- c. Any Homeless Property that does not appear to be contaminated or otherwise pose a health hazard or obvious safety issue, such as identification, clothing, bedding, photographs, personal papers, and keepsakes, will be collected and held for a period of ninety (90) days, after which the City will dispose of the property if unclaimed. An Inventory Storage Form will be completed by City personnel, and a copy of that form will be provided to the Homeless Person by e-mail (if provided/available).
- d. Whenever possible, City personnel will photograph the homeless property prior to taking action.
- e. Following any such action described above, the City will attempt to contact the homeless individual identified on that tag/label to inform them of the disposition of their unattended property, and to notify them of any stored property and the method through which the homeless person can claim that property. Three (3) attempts at contact will be made. The City shall document any such attempts.

### **III. When a Homeless Person accepts voluntary placement in shelter:**

- 1. When a Homeless Person accepts placement in a shelter, City personnel will request the Homeless Person to secure the personal items that they wish to take to shelter with them. These items should include, at a minimum, any identification, medication, eyeglasses, and electronics in the homeless person's possession.
- 2. City personnel will request that the Homeless Person identify any of their remaining Homeless Property that they are willing to voluntarily discard. When a homeless person voluntarily agrees to discard property, they will be asked to sign a Waiver for Voluntary Disposal of Property Form.
- 3. Any remaining Homeless Property that cannot be taken to the shelter, which is not contaminated or does not otherwise pose a health hazard or obvious safety issue, will be documented, secured, and stored by City personnel. The Homeless Person will be required to sign an Inventory Storage Form, and a copy of that form will be provided to the Homeless Person. Any such stored property will be held for a period of ninety (90) days, after which the City will dispose of the property if unclaimed.
- 4. Whenever possible, City personnel will photograph the homeless property prior to taking action.

**IV. During a Cleanup operation:**

1. All Cleanup operations will be coordinated by the Department of Human Services.
2. City personnel will place notices of Cleanup operation, at least seven (7) days prior to the cleaning date. The notice will inform individuals of the date of cleaning and will provide the phone number and address of the Veterans Affairs/Homeless Assistance Program Division in the Department of Human Services, where any collected Homeless Property can be retrieved.
3. Whenever possible, City personnel will photograph the Homeless Property prior to the Cleanup operation.
4. Cleanup operation when the Homeless Person is present:
  - a. City Personnel will inform the Homeless Person that the Cleanup is about to commence and request that they relocate themselves with their Homeless Property. These items should include, at a minimum, any identification, medication, eyeglasses, and electronics in the homeless person's possession.
  - b. City personnel will request that the Homeless Person identify any of their remaining Homeless Property that they are willing to voluntarily discard. When a homeless person voluntarily agrees to discard property, they will be asked to sign a Waiver for Voluntary Disposal of Property Form.
  - c. Any remaining Homeless Property that cannot be left on the site, which is not contaminated or does not otherwise pose a health hazard or obvious safety issue, shall be documented, secured, and stored by City personnel. The Homeless Person will be required to sign an Inventory Storage Form, and a copy of that form will be provided to the Homeless Person. Any such property will be held for a period of ninety (90) days, after which the City will dispose of the property if unclaimed.
5. Cleanup operation when the Homeless Person is not present:
  - a. Any personal items such as identification, medicines and eyeglasses and other small items of importance readily identifiable as intimate personal property will be collected and held for a period of ninety (90) days, after which the City will dispose of the property if unclaimed. An Inventory Storage Form will be completed by City personnel.
  - b. Any items that are contaminated or otherwise pose a health hazard or obvious safety issue will be disposed of according to this policy.
  - c. Any Homeless Property that does not appear to be contaminated or otherwise pose a health hazard or obvious safety issue, such as identification, clothing, bedding,

photographs, personal papers, and keepsakes, will be collected and held for a period of ninety (90) days, after which the City will dispose of the property if unclaimed. An Inventory Storage Form will be completed by City personnel.

- d. If the property was tagged/labeled, the City will attempt to contact the individual identified as the property owner in the manner set forth in section II, above. If the property was not tagged/ labeled, the City will post a notice at the location of the property disposition, notifying the potential owner of the property that their property was either discarded or stored, and informing the reader of how to contact the City to discuss that property.

## **V. Procedures for unattended and unidentified (untagged/unlabeled) Homeless Property:**

1. The Department of Human Service shall be contacted prior to City personnel taking action with respect to Homeless Property.
2. Any personal items such as identification, medicines and eyeglasses and other small items of importance readily identifiable as intimate personal property will be collected and held for a period of ninety (90) days, after which the City will dispose of the property if unclaimed. An Inventory Storage Form will be completed by City personnel.
3. Any items that are contaminated or otherwise pose a health hazard or obvious safety issue will be disposed of according to this policy.
4. Any Homeless Property that does not appear to be contaminated or otherwise pose a health hazard or obvious safety issue, such as identification, clothing, bedding, photographs, personal papers, and keepsakes, will be collected and held for a period of ninety (90) days. An Inventory Storage Form will be completed by City personnel.

## **VI. Storage Procedures**

1. The City homeless property storage site will be accessible by public transit or other means accessible to persons with low income.
2. When Homeless Property is collected by City personnel it should be labeled with the date of its removal and location from which it was removed to assist with its being reclaimed by its owners. Bags may be used to keep items collected from the same sites together.