

ENGAGING VULNERABLE PERSONS

2023





Mission: To provide safe and caring environments for individuals whose lives have been impacted by alcohol and other substances

EVP OBJECTIVES



- DEVELOP UNDERSTANDING AROUND HOMELESSNESS & ADDICTION
- CONFRONT PERSONAL BIASES
- IMPROVE INTERACTIONS
- CONFIDENCE IN ACTION: UNDERSTANDING ROLE & PURPOSE

HOMELESS-SERVING SECTOR



- **Emergency Shelter**
- **Supportive Housing**
 - **Community**
 - **Permanent Supportive**
- **Encampment Team**

- **Needs and Services Questionnaire**
- **Coordinated Access Assessment**
- **FOIP / HMIS**

ADDICTION TREATMENT



- **Detox**
- **Transitional / Recovery**
- **Outreach**
 - **HELP Team**
 - **Needle Response Team**
 - **Ambassador Team**

- **Recovery Oriented System of Care**
- **Cultural Supports**
- **Meeting people where they're at**



CONTINUUM OF HOMELESSNESS



- Living on the streets or places not intended for human habitation

UNSHELTERED

- Staying in overnight shelters

EMERGENCY SHELTERED

- Accommodation is temporary

PROVISIONALLY ACCOMMODATED

- Current housing situation is precarious due to income, family violence, or unhealthy living spaces

AT RISK OF HOMELESSNESS

"Homelessness is not a choice, but rather a journey that many find themselves in."

– Dr. Asa Don Brown

WHAT CAUSES HOMELESSNESS?

HOUSING IS OUT OF REACH

More than at any other time, there is a lack of housing that individuals can afford. Without housing options, people face instability and homelessness.

INCOME & AFFORDABILITY

Low income households often do not earn enough to pay for food, clothing, transportation and a place they can call home.

LACK OF HEALTH SUPPORT

Physical & psychological health issues can cause a person's homelessness as well as be exacerbated by the trauma of the experience.

ESCAPING VIOLENCE

Many survivors of domestic violence become homeless when leaving an abusive relationship.

IMPACT OF RACIAL DISPARITIES

Impacted by intergenerational trauma & socioeconomic inequalities, Canada's Indigenous population experiences homelessness at disproportionately higher rates than other groups.

HOUSING FIRST

Housing First begins with the principle that people must have stable housing before they can successfully address the issues contributing to their experience of homelessness. Housing First is therefore the belief that everyone deserves housing, no matter what challenges they face.

An illustration of a person with long, thin legs and a blue and yellow striped sweater, standing on a small, circular patch of ground. The person is wearing a red and white striped scarf and brown shoes. To the right of the person is a brown hat with a blue band. The background is a light green color with several brown leaves scattered around. The text "we all want to belong." is written in a dark brown, serif font at the bottom of the illustration.

we all want to belong.

EFFECTIVENESS OF HOUSING FIRST

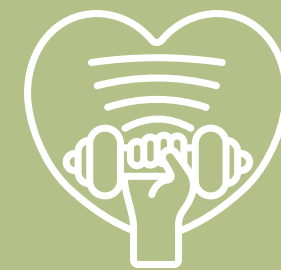


Housing First has led to several reductions in the use of public systems by individuals experiencing homelessness, including:

- Days In Jail: 75% Reduction
- Interactions With Police: 73.5% Reduction
- Court Appearances: 33.2% Reduction
- Days In Hospital: 45.1% Reduction
- Visits to ER: 27% Reduction

**From the Calgary Homeless Foundation's 2018-19 Grant
Accountability Review for the Provincial Government of Alberta

TRAUMA INFORMED CARE



EMPOWERMENT

FOCUS ON STRENGTHS

CHOICE & COLLABORATION

SAFETY & TRUST

EMPATHY

AWARENESS



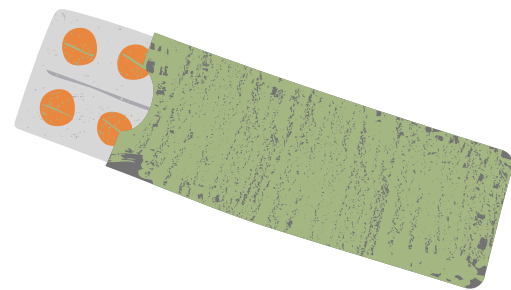
"Harm reduction is a set of practical strategies and ideas aimed at reducing negative consequences associated with drug use. Harm Reduction is also a movement for social justice built on a belief in, and respect for, the rights of people who use drugs."

- National Harm Reduction Coalition

HARM REDUCTION PRINCIPLES IN EVERYDAY LIFE



SUNSCREEN



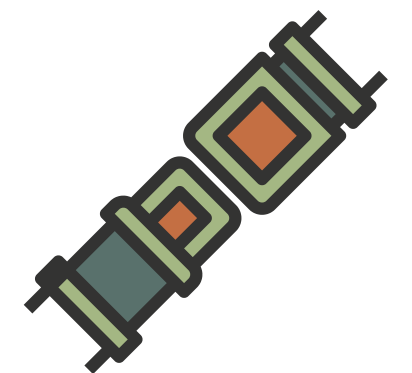
BIRTH CONTROL



ALCOHOL SERVICE



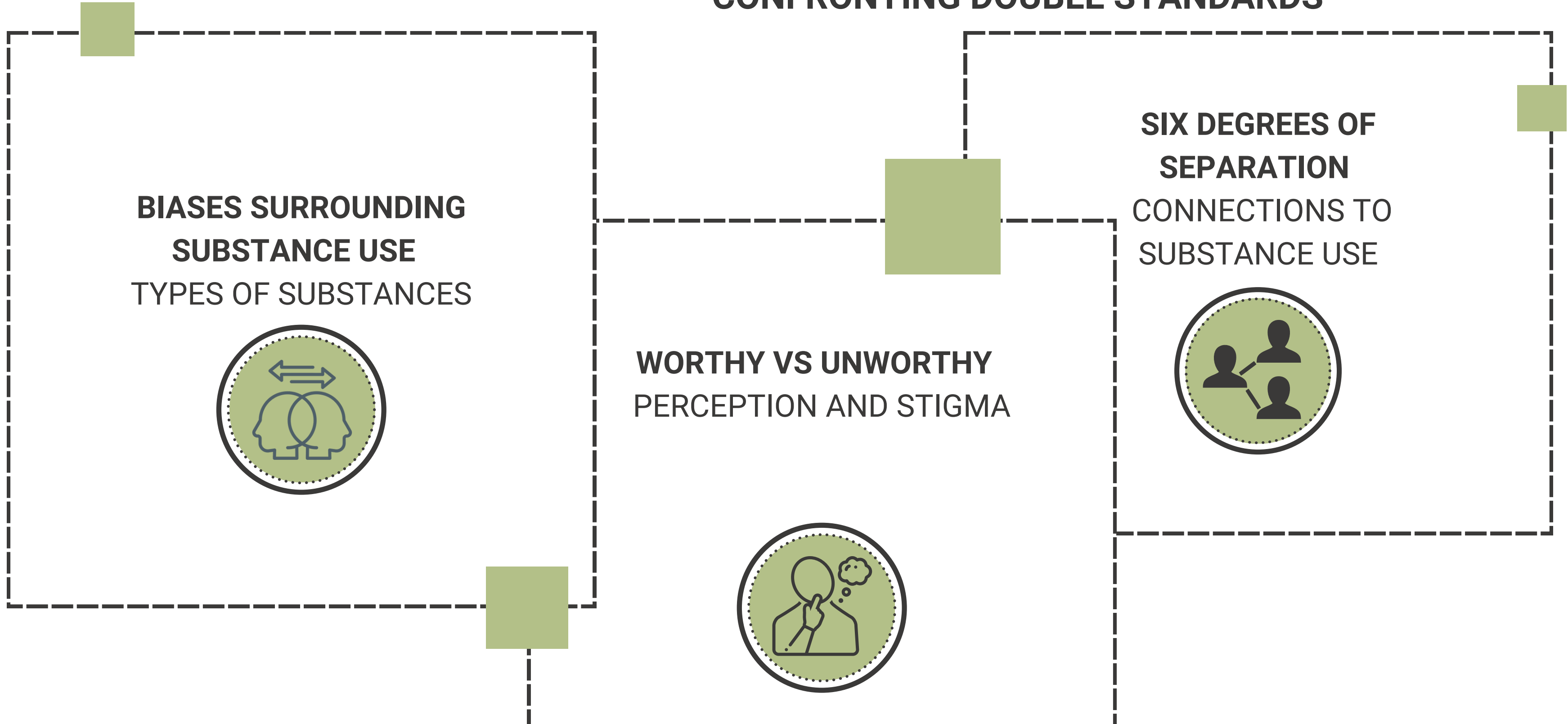
SPEED LIMITS



SEATBELTS

ADDICTION, SUBSTANCE USE & STIGMA

CONFRONTING DOUBLE STANDARDS

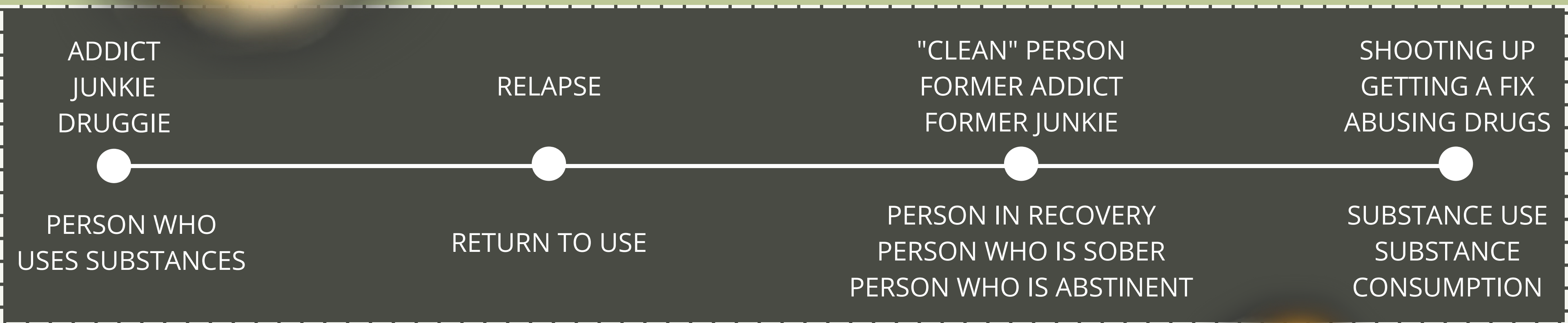


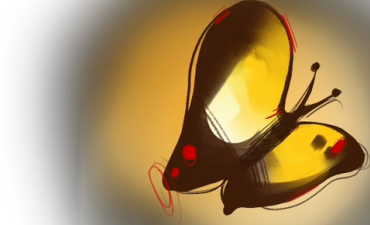
"What we don't need in the midst of struggle is shame for being human."

- Brene Brown

THE POWER OF NARRATIVE

Reducing stigma by rethinking the language we use to speak about substances and the people who use them





DIGGING DEEPER: UNPACKING PROBLEMATIC PHRASES

**"Life is hard
for everyone.
Get over it."**

**"Beggars can't
be choosers."**

**"Pull yourself
up by the
bootstraps."**

**"We all make
choices."**

"Just get a job."

ENGAGING VULNERABLE PERSONS

BOUNDARIES & LIMITATIONS



- Agency is the right to decide for oneself
- Engagement is **NEVER** obligatory
- Feel confident in establishing boundaries
- Good Samaritan Drug Overdose Act

SOCIAL ISSUES/ SOCIAL DISORDER/ CRIME

What are we working with here?



- Degree of vulnerability?
- Level of environmental disruption
- Level of engagement with supports
- Interactions with agencies / public services

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KEY CONCEPTS

BEHAVIOUR INFLUENCES
BEHAVIOUR

FACTORS INFLUENCING A
PERSON'S BEHAVIOUR

MANAGING OUR OWN
BEHAVIOURS AND ATTITUDE

Think of behaviour as an iceberg. What we are seeing is only a small part of the full story. Understanding that there are underlying factors which may not be immediately obvious to us helps us to engage more empathetically & effectively.

ENGAGING VULNERABLE PERSONS

PRACTICAL APPROACH - VERBAL

VERBAL Engagement refers to
*the words we use to send
messages to others*

- **Words are impactful -
be mindful of their
significance**
- **Keep messages:**
 - **short/simple/clear**
 - **respectful**
 - **phrased positively**

Example of Positive Phrasing:

Instead of...

"You're not supposed to be in this area."

Try...

"How are you doing my friend? What's going on with you today?"

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PRACTICAL APPROACH - PARAVERBAL

PARAVERBAL Engagement refers
to *how we say what we say*

This includes **TONE, VOLUME & RHYTHM OF SPEECH**

- Use a caring tone OR a casual tone depending on vulnerability level
- Keep volume level appropriate
- Deliver your message at a rate that the person can process



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PRACTICAL APPROACH - NONVERBAL

NONVERBAL Engagement refers to *personal space, body language, communication through touch & empathetic listening*

PERSONAL SPACE:

- Consider factors that may influence how comfortable an individual may or may not be with a person's proximity to them

COMMUNICATION THROUGH TOUCH:

- Physical contact expressive of feelings or emotion
- Could include a hand on the shoulder or a handshake
- Assess the situation - touch can be connective & comforting, but is not always an appropriate response

BODY LANGUAGE:

- The posture, facial expressions, eye contact, gestures or movements used to communicate
- Remain non-threatening, balanced & relaxed
- Approach from the side rather than head-on

EMPATHETIC LISTENING:

- Remain nonjudgmental - listen to facts & feelings
- Give your undivided attention - don't be dismissive
- Allow time for silence while information is processed
- Paraphrase what you understand

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VERBAL ESCALATION & LIMIT SETTING

DEFENSIVE BEHAVIOURS

Occasionally, we may encounter an individual in a more agitated state. Keeping in mind the tools we've just discussed, consider LIMIT SETTING as a technique to diffuse more defensive behaviours. These behaviours might present in the form of:

- **QUESTIONING**
- **CHALLENGING**
- **REFUSAL**
- **INTIMIDATION**
- **OUTBURSTS**

LIMIT SETTING

When setting limits, always keep them -

RESPECTFUL:

Phrase limits in a positive way using effective, verbal, nonverbal & paraverbal skills

SIMPLE:

Limit the number of words you use

REASONABLE:

Connect your expectation to the persons circumstances & level of ability

EXAMPLES

INTERRUPT & REDIRECT:

[Interrupt] "You're shouting pretty loudly.

[Redirect] "I'll be able to understand you better if you speak more quietly."

WHEN / THEN PATTERN:

"When you lower your voice, then I'll be able to help you."

IF / THEN PATTERN:

"If you lower your voice, then I'd be happy to buy you a coffee."

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SCENARIOS

Scenario 1:

You are about to pass by an individual who is not walking in a straight line, they are staggering a little, head bent down; you have seen them look up when people pass but if they are speaking to those passing by, you can't hear what they may have said

Things to Consider:

Verbal Engagement

Paraverbal Engagement

Non-Verbal Engagement

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SCENARIOS

Scenario 2:

There is an individual sitting in the corner of a business entrance, on the ground, hidden underneath a blanket

Things to Consider:

Verbal Engagement

Paraverbal Engagement

Non-Verbal Engagement

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SCENARIOS

Scenario 3:

There are two individuals standing near a dumpster by the entrance to an alleyway; there are bikes leaned up against the wall and they have some belongings spread out; they are moving about sorting their stuff

Things to Consider:

Verbal Engagement

Paraverbal Engagement

Non-Verbal Engagement

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SCENARIOS

Scenario 4:

There is an individual sitting down on the sidewalk; they are attempting to talk to the many people walking by them; no one is stopping; their manners aren't aggressive but they seem under the influence and agitated that no one has responded to them; you witness them getting more and more frustrated

Things to Consider:

Verbal Engagement

Paraverbal Engagement

Non-Verbal Engagement

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SCENARIOS

Scenario 5:

There are two individuals standing in the lobby area of the C-Train station on Memorial; they have a bunch of bags at their feet; and they are arguing

Things to Consider:

Verbal Engagement

Paraverbal Engagement

Non-Verbal Engagement

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SCENARIOS

Scenario 6:

An individual is standing at the meridian at a busy intersection. When the light goes red, they begin walking down the side of the cars with a sign saying 'homeless and hungry'

Things to Consider:

Verbal Engagement

Paraverbal Engagement

Non-Verbal Engagement

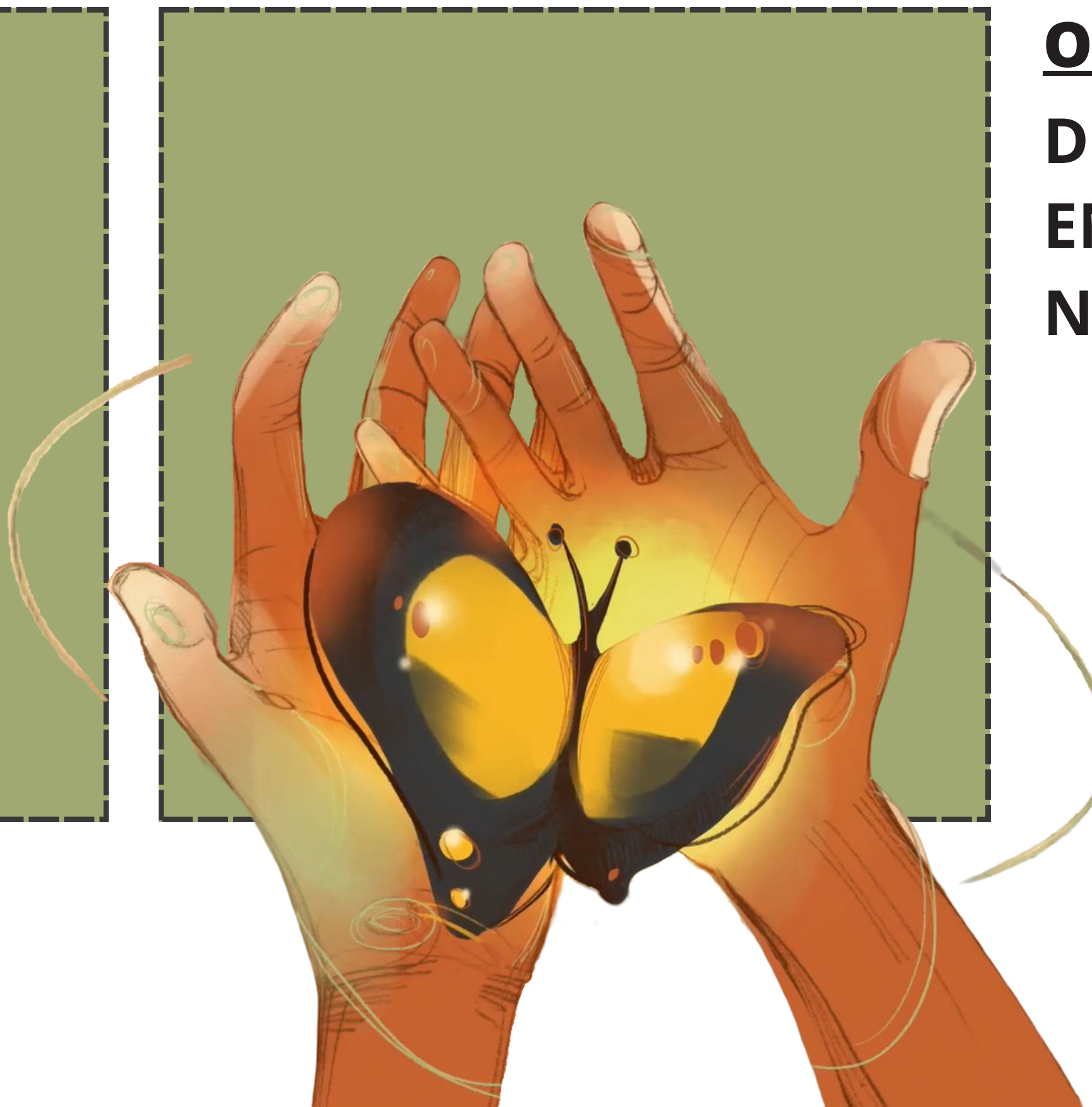
CITY-WIDE RESOURCES

OUTREACH

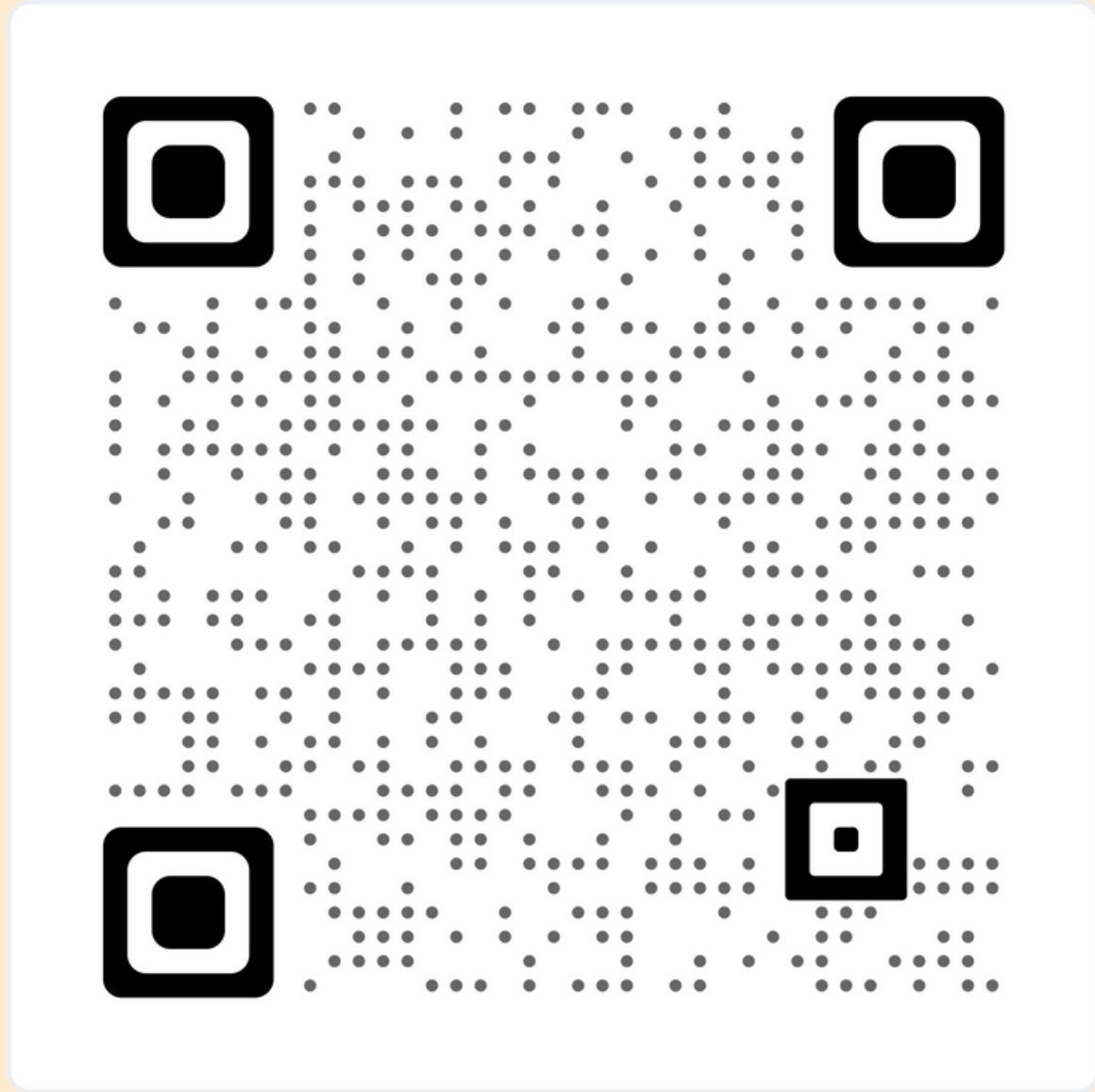
DOAP TEAM: (403) 998-7388

ENCAMPMENT TEAM: (403) 805-7388

NEEDLE RESPONSE TEAM: (403) 796-5334



ALL ALPHA HOUSE RESOURCE LINES ARE OPEN TO THE PUBLIC AND FREE TO CALL



THANK YOU FOR JOINING US!

