

Tips for Approaching Homeless People

These tips are from Project Homeless Connect (PNC) Outreach Walk and have been modified to be for more general use. These modifications are not from PNC. The outreach walk is a good way to get experience outreaching to a variety homeless people with support. You can sign up here.

Be safe, be aware, and notice!

Do...

- 1. Meet Homeless People at their Level.**
 - o If they are sitting, crouch down. If they are standing, stand next to them. If they are performing, respect their audience space and stand to the side if you would like to reach out.
- 2. Listen to the Homeless Person.**
 - o If they say 'no,' thank them for their time.
- 3. Offer Resources.**
 - o You can offer resources. At PNC they offer kits. On this website we will suggest things to offer. One favorite thing is new socks.
- 4. Stay in Groups of Two.**
 - o One person "engaging" with the homeless person, one person on "lookout" and staying aware. You may switch roles between interactions. This depends on the situation around you. PNC outreach walks are conducted in the Tenderloin neighborhood where the buddy system is beneficial.
- 5. Say Who You Are.**
 - o Explain that you are a Project Homeless Connect volunteer (if you are). Ask the individual if they would be interested in learning more about PHC. PHC cards can be printed from this website.

Don't...

- 1. Offer Housing.**
 - o There is limited availability in San Francisco. PHC is open Monday through Friday. People *may* know about our events but *may not* be aware of our every day program.
 - o *Drop In Hours: Mondays and Wednesdays, 8:30am - 12:30pm* (the earlier people arrive the better). Appointments are possible outside of these hours too.
- 2. Wake People.**
 - o Sleep is a very precious commodity when you are experiencing homelessness. Please do not disturb people if they appear to be asleep.
- 3. Offer Personal Information, Belongings, or Money to Homeless persons.**
 - o During the outreach walks, you are volunteers of PHC, and we have a strict policy accepting or giving gifts to homeless people. Offering money outside of PHC volunteering is up to you.
- 4. Accept Gifts or Money from a Homeless Person.**
- 5. Attempt to Assess the Homeless Person's Needs.**
 - o Refer a homeless person to PHC and our services. Our team of specialists are equipped to assess and assist people experiencing homelessness.
- 6. Touch Individuals or Their Belongings.**
 - o When approaching a homeless person, imagine sitting in your living room and having a stranger walk in your front door and attempting to engage you, that is what you are doing with the homeless persons you are meeting today. Be kind, polite, and aware of everyone's personal space.
- 7. Push It.**
 - o If someone isn't interested in talking with you, thank them for their time and walk away.

Other Tips...

- If you feel uncomfortable approaching anyone, trust your instincts and do not approach them.
- Treat everyone with respect and dignity. You can make someone's day simply by being polite and friendly (remember the last time someone treated you nicely in public?).