

Sanguen Health Centre Statement on the Impact of Encampment Evictions

Sanguen Health Centre provides low-barrier, health-focused outreach and harm reduction services to people across Waterloo Region, many of whom are living in highly marginalized and precarious situations, including encampments. As a trusted community partner, we recognize the complexity of addressing unsheltered homelessness and remain committed to working collaboratively toward long-term, dignified housing solutions for all.

We also know that encampments are not an appropriate or fair solution for anyone. No one in our community should have to live without reliable access to shelter, sanitation, food, or safety. But in the absence of accessible alternatives, encampments are sometimes the only option available to individuals facing severe gaps in housing affordability, food security, and access to essential care. The decision to stay in an encampment is often made for safety, community, and stability in an otherwise unpredictable and chaotic landscape.

Evictions—no matter how thoughtfully approached—can have serious impacts on the health and well-being of people who live in these spaces. These include:

- **Emotional distress and trauma:** For many, displacement retriggers past trauma and can result in heightened anxiety, depression, and fear.

Disruption of care: Residents who require ongoing medical support—such as wound care, antipsychotic medication, or harm reduction services—may lose touch with outreach teams, risking serious health complications.

Loss of belongings and relationships: Personal items, survival gear, and even social connections can be lost during evictions, compounding instability.

Geographic displacement: When residents are dispersed, they may move to locations that are less accessible to service providers, making it more difficult to provide consistent care.

Trust is foundational to our work. Disruptions that fracture that trust—especially without viable, individualized alternatives—make it harder for people to seek or accept support in the future.

We are hopeful that any transitions that occur as a result of encampment evictions will continue to include meaningful options that reflect the lived realities of those affected, including considerations for couples, pets, and proximity to essential services. In the meantime, it is critical that responses continue to be grounded in compassion, care continuity, and a commitment to human dignity.

— Sanguen Health Centre Leadership Team