

LOCAL NEWS

# San Bernardino County prioritizing outreach as anti-camping rules go into effect



San Bernardino County 5th District Supervisor Joe Baca Jr., center, and members of the Homeless Outreach and Proactive Enforcement, H.O.P.E team, survey an encampment near the storm drain in Muscoy area of San Bernardino on Feb. 23, 2022, during the San Bernardino County’s annual point-in-time-Count, an annual tally of the region’s homeless population. (File photo by Watchara Phomicinda, The Press-Enterprise/SCNG)



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PUBLISHED: September 14, 2025 at 7:15 AM PDT

San Bernardino County says it will offer unsheltered people with access to low-barrier shelters, short-term or permanent housing and residential treatment as it begins encampment clearings next month.

The new development follows San Bernardino County supervisors' approval of a new ordinance Tuesday, Sept. 9, which will impose fines on those camping or obstructing public spaces. The county will start enforcing the ordinance on Oct. 9. Supervisors passed the ordinance without discussion after it had made its [debut to supervisors weeks earlier](#).

The ordinance, in part, will impose fines for violations, starting at \$100 for the first offense, \$200 for the second and up to \$500 for subsequent violations. This regulation applies only to the unincorporated areas of the county and county properties.

Homelessness has led to recent action at both the federal and state levels. Last year, the U.S. Supreme Court, in a [6-3 decision](#), ruled that cities can enforce bans on homeless people sleeping outside in public places, effectively paving the way for the enforcement of anti-camping ordinances.

In July, President Donald Trump signed an [executive order](#) pressuring local and state governments to enforce prohibitions on public camping, squatting and loitering.

Months earlier, California Gov. Gavin Newsom called homelessness "[the crisis of our time](#)" as he announced the state would allocate \$3.3 billion to local governments for housing and drug treatment programs for the unhoused. Along with the funding, Newsom released a [model ordinance](#) that instructs county and city policies to prohibit encampments on public property for three consecutive days or nights.

However, the governor's ordinance also reads in part that "no person should face criminal punishment for sleeping outside when they have nowhere else to go" and "encampment policies must prioritize shelter and services and ensure that people experiencing homelessness and their belongings are treated with respect."



Gavin Newsom urges local cities and counties to ban homeless encampments as he announces the release of \$3.3 billion in voter-approved funds to expand housing and treatment for those without permanent shelter. (Photo by Sarah Reingewirtz, Los Angeles Daily News/SCNG)

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The county has worked to address its homelessness issues, investing millions of dollars in recent years. The 2025 San Bernardino County Point in Time count, [conducted in January](#), found 3,837 homeless people, with 1,201 of them sheltered. The [results](#) show a [14.2 percent decrease](#) in unsheltered homelessness compared to previous years.

The [county recently broke ground](#) on Phase II of the Pacific Village Platinum Campus project, a comprehensive care campus in Highland. The completed Phase I included 28 interim housing units, and Phase II added 58 permanent supportive housing units, 32 recuperative care beds, and a 16-bed facility to provide substance-use disorder (SUD) residential treatment for adults. Phase III plans will add another 16-bed SUD residential treatment facility to serve adults. The total project cost is estimated at \$75 million.

The county says it will not immediately impose fines on individuals impacted by encampment clearings. According to a [news release issued the same day supervisors adopted the ordinance](#), the county plans to prioritize connecting unhoused residents with health care, housing and supportive services prior to any encampment clearing.

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“Once services are offered, if those services are declined, the ordinance will apply, and those individuals will receive verbal and written notices to relocate at least 30 days in advance,” said Ashley Jones, San Bernardino County deputy public information officer. The county is currently assessing how to use any funds collected from fines.

The county’s [Office of Homeless Services](#) will act as the initial point of contact with the unhoused population. “OHS will work in partnership with other county departments and nonprofit providers to connect individuals with housing, behavioral health services and other essential support before any encampment clearing takes place,” Jones said.

The county has also stated that it has established a housing and healthcare response plan to adopt a standard procedure for addressing homeless encampments, reviewed by several agencies, such as the departments of Behavioral Health, Public Health, Aging and Adult Services, Transitional Assistance, Community Development and Housing, Arrowhead Regional Medical Center, Children and Family Services and the Sheriff’s Homeless Outreach and Proactive Enforcement (H.O.P.E.) team. The county also says that it has partnered with community-based providers to assist those without permanent shelter.

Jones said the county will use its Homeless Management Information System, a data collection system, to monitor support and resources provided to individuals and identify locations that need more attention from outreach teams.

Vanessa Perez, executive director of [Time for Change Foundation](#), a San Bernardino-based nonprofit, considers the new ordinance to be counterproductive. The foundation offers emergency shelter, permanent supportive housing, and develops affordable housing with supportive services, primarily focusing on unhoused women and children. Members from the organization, along with other homelessness support advocates, voiced strong opposition to county’s ordinance during the Tuesday meeting. They contend that punitive measures are ineffective.

“Criminalizing homeless individuals is not the answer. We see that treatment, not punishment, has always been the solution,” Perez said.

“What that does is it taps into the strengths of the individuals that we serve, utilizing their strong points and strong areas and things that they’re good at, and where they’re going to most likely succeed,” Perez said.

The Foundation uses this model when creating case and self-sufficiency plans. The nonprofit also practices trauma-informed care, and motivational interviewing techniques involve guiding the client to fully understand their needs and goals, and highlighting a pathway to achieve those goals and meet their needs from their perspective.

Perez argued that governments tend to favor law enforcement, and criminalizing individuals can trigger a chain reaction.

“You’re already dealing with a population that is living in poverty, that has very little to no income, and so of course, they’re not going to be able to pay these fees, which obviously warrants for arrest and incarceration, increasing criminal records, creating more barriers that are going to prevent them from having secure jobs and housing,” Perez said.



**2025 > September > 14**