

February 24, 2020

MEMORANDUM

To: Select Committee on Homeless Strategies and Investments
From: Jeff Simms, Central Staff
Subject: First Quarterly Response to CBA HOM-15-C-1: Navigation Team

On January 31, 2020, the Executive provided its [first quarterly report](#) responding to Council Budget Action [HOM-15-C-1](#) concerning appropriations for the Navigation Team in the Human Services Department (HSD). This information will be presented to the Select Committee on Homeless Strategies and Investments (Select Committee) on Wednesday, February 26. This memo provides analysis of the Navigation Team data for 2019 and identifies potential next steps or areas of concern relating to the four additional reporting requests.

Data Provided in the Report

The proviso imposed by HOM-15-C-1 requires that a two-part report be submitted quarterly in order to release an additional quarter of the Navigation Team appropriation. The first part of every quarterly report is a list of metrics for the quarter. The list of metrics is the same for every report. Every report also includes a second section of qualitative responses that change for each quarter. In this report, the qualitative responses for the second section are:

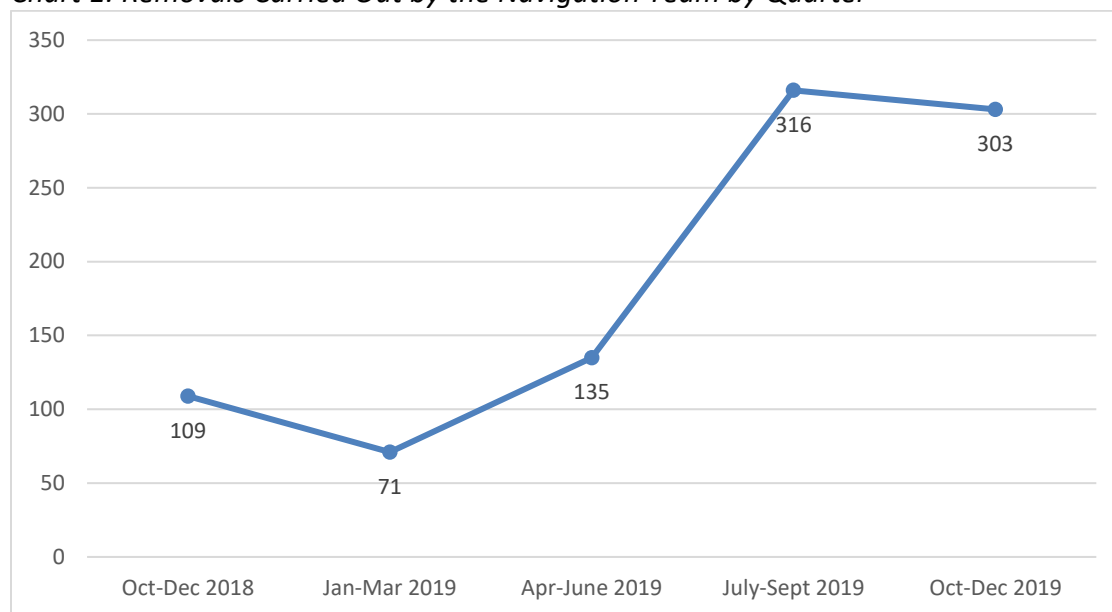
1. Clarify the definition in [FAS Rule 17-01](#) of “obstruction” and its meaning in associated rules and policies as shown: “people, tents, personal property, garbage, debris or other objects related to an encampment that: are in a City park or on a public sidewalk; interfere with the pedestrian or transportation purposes of public rights-of-way; or interfere with areas that are necessary for or essential to the intended use of a public property or facility.” Please clarify whether encampments in parks must be an interference in order to warrant an exemption to the requirement for prior notice.
2. Provide a report identifying any differences in how those outreach providers funded by the Human Services Department (HSD) that follow the Outreach Standards of Care are implemented or incorporated into the work of the Navigation Team compared to implementation or incorporation by other homeless outreach agencies. For agencies that do not yet meet these standards, please describe the steps and timeline these agencies have agreed upon to come into compliance with those standards.
3. Provide a list of recommendations to increase the rate that individuals referred to a shelter arrive at that shelter within 48 hours.
4. Transmit a table that describes the obstruction that warranted an exemption to the requirement for prior notice for all obstruction removals that were carried out in the previous quarter, including the name of the location, date of the removal, date that notice of removal was posted, and date(s) less than two weeks prior to the removal

when outreach services visited that location and spoke to all individuals dwelling in that encampment.

Number of Removals

The current report provides Navigation Team data for October 1, 2019 through December 31, 2019 (2019 Q4). For 2019 Q4, there were twice as many removals as for the same period in 2018 (see Attachment A). However, there were slightly fewer removals than in 2019 Q3. The number of Navigation Team removals does not include the 82 removals carried out by Community Police Team (CPT) or bike patrol officers for which the Navigation Team was asked to provide service connections.

Chart 1: Removals Carried Out by the Navigation Team by Quarter



Data previously provided by the Seattle Police Department (SPD) for the first half of 2019 found that the Navigation Team provided service connections for approximately one-third of the removals carried out by CPT and bike patrol. Assuming a similar rate in the latest quarter, the data would indicate as many as 550 removals may have been carried out by City personnel (both Navigation Team and SPD) in 2019 Q4.

Based on the above analysis, nearly all removals done by City personnel are exempt from requirements to provide notification and outreach 72 hours in advance of the removal. Looking only at removals carried out by the Navigation Team, 96 percent were deemed exempt. That continues the trend from the spring of 2019 where an increasing portion of removals do not require outreach or notification in advance. Some Councilmembers have expressed concern with this trend. Although no data was provided on the total number of removals carried out by CPT and bike patrol, it should be noted that all those removals are exempt from such requirements.

Connecting People to Services

The Navigation Team continues to have referral outcomes below those required of agencies doing homelessness outreach, which are expected to refer at least 60 percent of their contacts to an emergency shelter. Approximately 25 percent of Navigation Team contacts are referred to shelter, and six percent of the people contacted by the Navigation Team arrive at shelter.

There is no data to indicate that the Navigation Team’s effectiveness in connecting people with shelter improved in 2019 Q4. There were no increases in the number of people referred to shelter, number of people arriving at shelter, or overall number of contacts made by outreach staff (see Figure 1). It is possible decreases relative to the prior quarter stem from fewer removals carried out by the Navigation Team. However, other factors could account for this decrease as well. For example, the available shelter space during the quarter was nearly half the amount available during prior reporting periods. The proportion of contacted individuals that are referred to and arrive at shelter continued to decrease slightly, a trend that began last spring (see Figure 2), but it is not clear whether these decreases should be considered significant.

Figure 1: Trends in Outreach and Service Connections for the Navigation Team

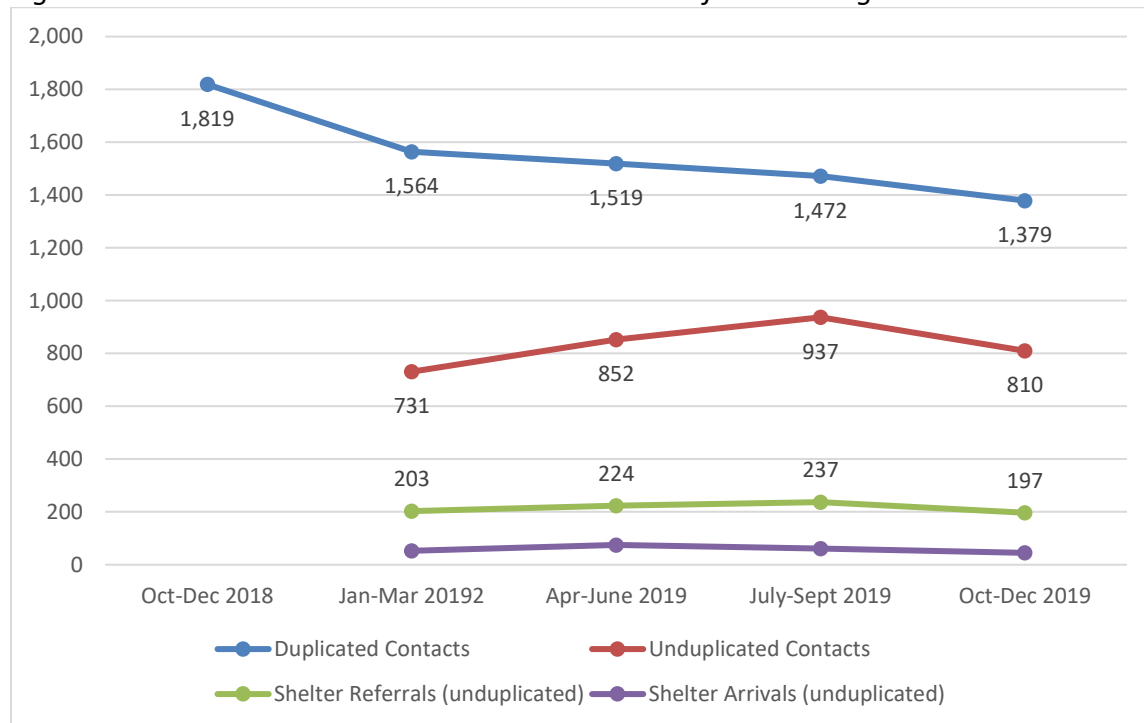
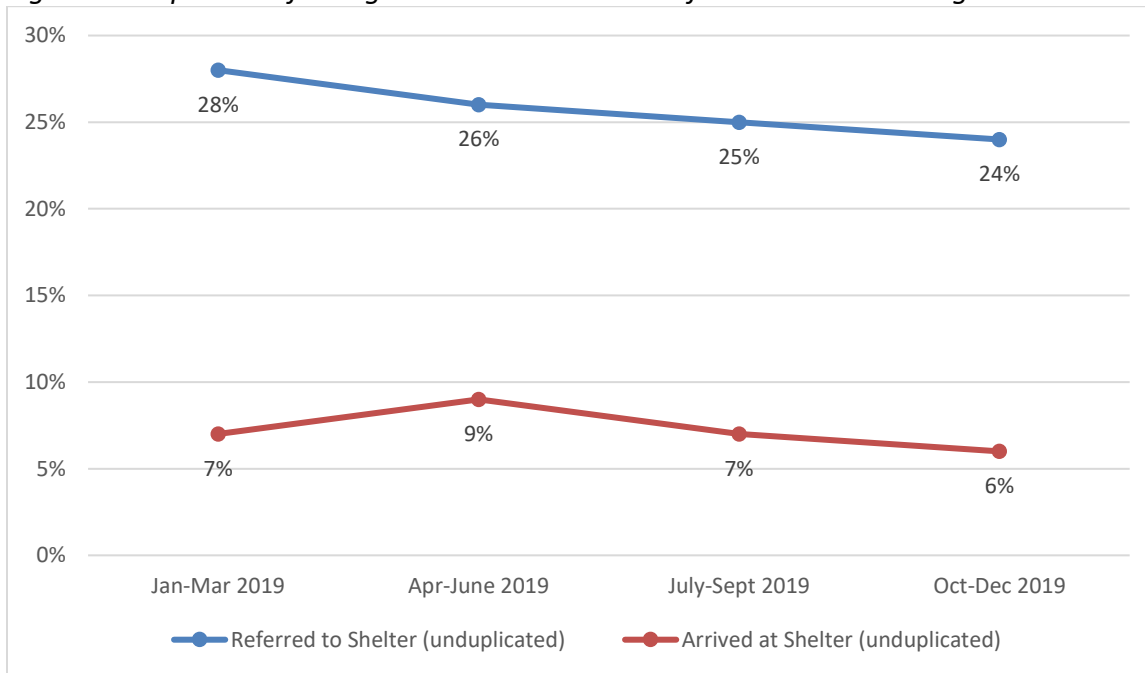


Figure 2: Proportion of Navigation Team Contacts Referred to and Arriving at Shelter



Additional Information Reported

As required by proviso, HSD submitted additional information that is not typically included in the quarterly data reports. However, the response provided for #4 did not include the data requested.

1. Clarify the definition of obstruction as used in policies and regulations, particularly whether encampments in parks must be an interference in order to warrant an exemption to the requirement for prior notice.

HSD indicates that the three criteria to warrant an exception to notification and outreach requirements are each assessed independently, and if any one of those criteria apply, the situation is deemed exempt from the notification and reporting requirements.

2. Discuss Outreach Standards of Care and how implementation of those standards for the Navigation Team differ from other outreach agencies.

HSD did not incorporate standards of care into contracts with outreach agencies, and therefore does not monitor compliance with these standards, though the standards informed the development of the request for proposals. Consequently, HSD could not provide information on how implementation may vary. In addition, HSD did not clarify why the standards have not been formally incorporated into agency contracts. Given the discrepancy between Navigation Team outcomes and the performance standards for outreach agencies, additional information on how other outreach agencies differ in their delivery of services may be useful.

3. *Provide recommendations to increase the rate individuals arrive at shelter.*

HSD identified four steps to increase the Navigation Team's success in connecting people to shelter: (1) add more System Navigators, (2) provide transportation to shelter when a referral is accepted, (3) streamline the shelter referral process, and (4) increase the availability of enhanced shelters and tiny home villages. Council's 2020 Adopted Budget included funding for an additional System Navigator and added as many as 100 additional beds in tiny home villages or enhanced shelters that prioritize Navigation Team referrals. The report indicates that changes were completed in December 2019 to enable System Navigators to transport individuals to shelters.

It is notable that HSD proposed to add more System Navigators (outreach workers directly employed by HSD). The Council has repeatedly requested a staffing assessment for the Navigation Team to identify whether the current staffing mix is best suited to accomplish the work of the Navigation Team. HSD has previously indicated that the staffing for the Navigation Team is appropriate and has not completed a staffing assessment despite numerous requests from the Council. In addition, HSD expanded the duties of the System Navigators to support CPT and bike patrol removals without identifying a need for additional staff to carry out that new function. It is unclear how HSD determined that the number of System Navigators is insufficient. Nor is it clear how HSD identified what an ideal staffing level would be or whether the funds provided for contracted outreach staff could be better utilized or increased in order to meet the recognized need. Further information is necessary to determine what additional steps the Council could take to address this need.

The report indicates that the process for referring a person to shelter may require streamlining, and that Navigation Team leadership is reviewing the shelter referral process to identify potential improvements. However, no further detail is provided on the existing challenges or a timeline for making improvements.

In the most recent quarter, shelter availability was nearly half the level available in prior quarters. It is unclear whether the widely recognized need for more enhanced shelter and tiny home village beds grew more acute during this period, and if so, why.

4. *Provide a table that describes the obstructions that warranted exempting the Navigation Team from notification and outreach standards.*

HSD provided an overview of how often an encampment was deemed an obstruction that would exempt the encampment from the notification and outreach requirements but did not provide any details on what constituted an obstruction.

Potential Areas for Further Consideration/Action

HSD is scheduled to present on this response to the Select Committee meeting on February 26, 2020. This will provide the opportunity to inquire about the trends noted above if Councilmembers have further questions. In addition, the Council may want to request further information or clarification on the additional reporting items, such as:

- How does the Navigation Team differ from other outreach providers in building relationships with individuals experiencing homelessness and use of approaches that increase the likelihood of those individuals entering shelter?
- What data informed the determination that additional System Navigators would improve the outcomes of the Navigation Team?
- What is the ideal staffing level for System Navigators?
- Could the contract for additional outreach services be better utilized to meet the need for additional System Navigators? Is there a benefit to using System Navigators rather than contracted outreach services to fill the unmet need?
- Did the lack of available shelter grow more acute in the last quarter? If so, why?
- Has Navigation Team leadership developed any recommendations to streamline the shelter referral process? What areas for improvement in the referral process have been identified?
- Given the proportion of removals that are exempted from notification and outreach on the ground that they are obstructions, is the definition of obstruction being accurately applied? Does HSD provide advance notification and outreach as frequently as possible before removing an encampment?

Attachment:

A. Navigation Team Performance Measures Oct. 2018 through Dec. 2019

cc: Kirstan Arestad, Central Staff Executive Director
Aly Pennucci, Central Staff Supervising Analyst

Attachment A - Navigation Team Performance Measures Oct. 2018 through Dec. 2019

Metric	Quarter Data Reported				
	Oct. - Dec. 2018	Jan. - Mar. 2019	Apr. - June 2019	July-Sept 2019	Oct-Dec 2019
Total Number of Removals	109	71	135	316	303
Exempt from 72-hour notification	74%	82%	80%	93%	96%
Tonnage Removed	319.9	355.4	405.3	393.6	423.9
Number of contacts	1,819	1,564	1,519	1,472	1,379
Unduplicated Contacts	Not available	731	852	937	810
Total Referrals to Shelter (duplicated)	301	222	258	269	224
Total Referrals to Shelter (unduplicated)	Not available	203	224	237	197
Rate of Referral to Shelter (using duplicated counts)	17%	14%	17%	18%	16%
Rate of Referral to Shelter (using unduplicated counts)	Not available	28%	26%	25%	24%
Number arriving at Shelter (unduplicated)	Not available	53	75	61	45
Rate arriving at Shelter (unduplicated)	Not available	7%	9%	7%	6%
Average Daily Shelter Bed Availability, by Type	Basic Shelter: 14	Basic Shelter: 11	Basic Shelter: 31	Basic Shelter: 14	Basic Shelter: 5
	Enhanced Shelter: 6	Enhanced Shelter: 5	Enhanced Shelter: 8	Enhanced Shelter: 10	Enhanced Shelter: 6
	Tiny House: 1	Tiny House: 1	Tiny House: 2	Tiny House: 1	Tiny House: 1