

Monterey Police Department
Multi-Disciplinary Outreach Team (MDOT)

Monterey Police Officers contact homeless individuals on a daily basis. The majority of the homeless individuals contacted by officers have untreated mental health and/or substance abuse issues. Many of the chronic homeless individuals occupy makeshift camps in city parks, city forested areas, beaches and other waterfront areas, and along the City's recreation trail. Homeless camps in parks and forested areas are of great concern for several reasons – one of the more prominent concerns being fire danger. The fire in Paradise, California this past year highlighted the danger and speed in which a fire can travel and destroy whole communities. It is not uncommon for officers to locate propane stoves and other flammable equipment at these makeshift homeless camps.

Being homeless is not a crime, yet community members and visitors alike often call the police to address quality of life issues, such as panhandling, loitering, and camping in public.

In 2018, the Monterey Police Department recognized it was lacking important connections and relationships with local social service providers whose mission it is to assist with these matters and get individuals the help they truly deserve.

However, preliminary research into the service providers revealed something surprising – the service providers were having trouble finding people to help. The Monterey Police Department contacted and partnered with several key local agencies to help provide services to the homeless. This newly formed team was called the Multi-Disciplinary Outreach Team (MDOT) and it consisted of:

- Monterey Police Department
- Adult Protective Services
- Monterey County Behavioral Health
- Montage Health / Community Hospital of the Monterey Peninsula (CHOMP)
- YWCA (Domestic Violence)

Each of these organizations assigns a social worker to MDOT and they each have a desk at the Monterey Police Department. Monterey Police Officers are now able to have direct contact to social workers with a broad spectrum of experience and resources.

This team performs direct outreach and intervention efforts with the goal of establishing a relationship with homeless individuals and assisting them with accessing benefits and housing. MDOT provides a social work function, offering homeless individuals a connection to local community service programs, health care, mental health services, and housing. The team has the time and ability to assist individuals with procuring necessary documents to obtain certain services, such as identification cards, birth certificates, Social Security income, and disability income. MDOT works in conjunction with law enforcement to provide the City of Monterey with a long-term relationship with our community partners and other government agencies that law enforcement may not be aware of.

In addition to the principal MDOT partners, the Monterey Police Department meets monthly with several local service providers to help provide services to those in need. These service providers include:

- The Veterans Resource Center
- The Veterans Transition Center
- Gathering For Women
- Interim / McHome
- Community Human Services
- Alliance on Aging
- Interfaith Homeless Emergency Lodging Program
- Salvation Army

Each of these organizations are aware of different resources and provide specialized resources for various segments of the homeless population. This collaborative effort provides a comprehensive and exhaustive approach to addressing the needs of Monterey's homeless. Further, these monthly meetings have been beneficial in the way of identifying potential grants and funding streams that can further assist Monterey's homeless population.

MDOT has had many successful cases in helping individuals out of homelessness and into housing. Two such cases include the following:

C.R.

C.R. was homeless in Monterey for many years. In that time, she had over 90 police contacts, which included many arrests for public intoxication.

C.R. agreed to receive services and she was accepted into a live-in program in Watsonville. After initially receiving services, C.R. returned to Monterey for a visit and was again arrested for public intoxication. With the help of MDOT, she entered a different recovery program, which she has since completed. C.R. has maintained sobriety, is independent, working and spending time with her family. C.R. still regularly meets and talks with MDOT members.

L.F.

L.F. was homeless starting in 2005. Since 2005, L.F. has had over 200 police contacts, which included many arrests for public intoxication. L.F. has five children, which he had lost custody of due to his alcohol addiction. After many discussions with the MDOT team, they were able to locate one of L.F.'s daughters and arranged for her to talk to him on Skype. L.F. spoke to her and other family members and subsequently agreed to go to a treatment center in Northern California.

A Go Fund Me account was created for L.F., which paid for one year of sober living. L.F. has since maintained sobriety, been hired in the retail industry and recently received a promotion. L.F.'s commitment to sober living and his family has paid off in many ways, as he was able to attend his daughter's graduation and meet his seven grandchildren.

These examples are just two of many success stories MDOT has had in getting individuals out of homelessness. MDOT continues to work with local service providers, city departments, and community groups to address this very challenging problem.