

PANHANDLING

HOW TO ENGAGE WITH VULNERABLE INDIVIDUALS

“Panhandling is not fun. It’s a demeaning experience to beg for spare change. It is an act of desperation.”

“When I panhandle I feel I have to give up all of my dignity and self-respect to be able to ask complete strangers for money and help. It is my absolute last resort to get money to meet my needs and is humiliating.” –Kevin, Boyle Street Community Services Client

Most people who panhandle suffer from physical and/or mental health issues and are unable to work. Many have no regular income. Even those on social assistance typically receive less than \$1,000 per month.

So while panhandling may seem disruptive, irritating, or perhaps even frightening, it’s important to keep in mind the very vulnerable person behind the behaviour.

WHEN SOMEONE IS PANHANDLING:

How you approach someone panhandling is very important and will help set the tone for the entire engagement. Vulnerable people are no different than the rest of us: they appreciate courtesy. To that end:

1

Greet them and introduce yourself if you are comfortable - something as simple as a hello, and acknowledgment goes a long way.

2

Use their name whenever possible.

3

Tell them you understand why they’re panhandling but ask if they’d mind not doing so at your place of work/business.

4

Determine if there’s something you can offer (i.e. a bottle of water, a place to warm up, a list of social services). If not, dignity always goes a long way.



downtown
business
association

 **BOYLE**street
COMMUNITY SERVICES

edmontondowntown.com
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CONTACTS / RESOURCES:

If you're worried about the well-being of someone who is in crisis, call 211 and press 3 to contact Crisis Diversion and they can attempt to provide appropriate assistance.

If there's someone panhandling who would like to connect with an Outreach Worker about health/income/housing services, contact Boyle Street Community Services Street Outreach Team at (587) 336-5688.

If someone is panhandling aggressively (i.e. making threats, intimidating), or it is an emergency situation call 911.

If people from your business or workplace would like further information on how to engage with vulnerable individuals in downtown they can contact Boyle Street Community Services to arrange for someone to present to their staff at (587) 338-1959.

TOP FIVE ways to keep businesses looking inviting and safe:

1. Ensure transparency into and out of your business. Sightlines are important for employees, but also potential customers to know that you are open. Avoid covering your street-front windows with vinyl or tinting them.

2. Have a CPTED (Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design) audit done of your property/business or signup for CPTED training.
<http://www.edmontonpolice.ca/CrimePrevention/CommunitySafety/CPTED>

3. Proper lighting can do wonders to improve the look and feel of an area and business. Replace damaged or worn out lighting and consider adding additional lighting to problem areas.

4. Clean, well maintained and inviting. Ensure that your business is kept looking its best throughout the year. Repair any damaged items, remove graffiti and consider adding flowers from our Bloomin' BLVDs program to your front steps.

5. Report any and all issues. Whether you need to call 911 (emergencies), 311 (City of Edmonton), 211 (Crisis Diversion Team), your local Business Improvement Area, or any other number, be sure to track and share issues that you come across so that the proper resources can be dispatched.



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