



Assistance Response Manual

Last updated April 2023

Recommendations, procedures, and resources to guide volunteers when an individual is seeking assistance at LCC.

This manual may be useful during our community meals, while volunteering in the office, during evening meetings, or any time when neighbors visit our building seeking food, financial support, or other resources.

QUICK RESPONSE

1

WELCOME AND SAFETY

Be kind and courteous. If you don't feel safe, stop and get help or ask them to come back another time.

2

MEET SIMPLE NEEDS

Offer a glass of water, a bathroom, a phone charger.

3

GUIDE TO RESOURCES

Share the NEOCH Street Card.
We aren't able to provide cash, but we have daily bus passes available.

1375 West Clifton Blvd. Lakewood, OH 44107
(216) 221-9555

What to do when someone comes in asking for support & a pastor isn't available:

1. Always be kind and courteous, even if you're unable to help. Remember, for folks who are going through a rough time, your smile and warmth can be as important as any other help you can provide.
2. **DO NOT PUT YOURSELF AT RISK.** If you don't feel safe, it is perfectly acceptable to ask someone to leave and come back another time. If they are unwilling to leave or you sense a threat to the church, consider leaving on your own. Call a pastor or church leader to let them know what happened.
3. As long as you feel safe, welcome them and ask what they're looking for. **We do not have cash.** You can offer them a daily bus pass from the office. Encourage them to look through the **NEOCH Street Card** or **call 211**. Those are the two best resources we have.
4. Offer to meet simple needs: a glass of water, restroom, phone charger. Be clear about how long they can stay inside the church (ie: a few minutes, until the office closes, until the bus comes).
5. If they need spiritual help, remind them they are welcome to attend worship on Sundays at 10:00 AM and they can come back during the pastor's office hours.
6. If you are comfortable, individuals are welcome to use the church phone to call agencies or hotlines for assistance.
 - Feeling suicidal? The National Suicide Prevention Hotline number is **988**
 - Mental health/substance abuse? SAMHSA National Helpline **800-662-4357**
 - The National Domestic Violence Hotline is **800-799-7233**
 - Unsure? Call **211** for resources / **911** for emergency
7. Offer to pray with them or for them. You can do it at that moment, or later in your regular prayers, or ask them if they'd like to be added to the prayer chain.
8. Leave a note in the church office that says the time, date, what they asked for, what help you were able to provide, and any other relevant info.

"I assure you that everybody who gives even a cup of cold water to these little ones because they are my disciples will certainly be rewarded."

—Matthew 10:42

The NEOCH Street Card is an excellent place to start.

www.neoch.org/street-card

The Northeast Ohio Coalition for the Homeless publishes the Street Card, a vital resource to inform people experiencing homelessness about the services in our community. The Street Card is designed to be portable, easy to read, and updated so people seeking services, outreach workers, and other organizations needing information on resources throughout Cuyahoga County can get current information they need.

The Street Card is attached at the end of this manual and can be found at the website above.

CUYAHOGA COUNTY STREET CARD

PRESENTED BY:



Northeast Ohio Coalition for the Homeless
3631 Perkins Ave. #3A-3, Cleveland, Ohio 44114
216.432.0540 | neoch.org



RTA Bus Route / Public Transport

Route Info: (216)-621-9500 or RIDERTA.com/routes

Daily Pass — \$5. Monthly Pass — \$95.

Discounts for seniors, students, & disabled individuals.
We try to have bus passes in the church office.



Find an AA Meeting: aa.org/find-a-meeting

LCC has a Monday evening Women's meeting and a Thursday evening open meeting.

WHY SHOULDN'T WE CALL THE POLICE? (unless there is immediate danger)

Police serve an important role in our community: they are tasked with ensuring people don't break the law and arresting them if they do. It is not a crime to be poor, homeless, disabled, or mentally unwell. We may have good intentions in calling the police to support an individual, but their presence may create undue fear and anxiety, especially for those who have had negative encounters with law enforcement in the past.

When we call the police to deal with people in our community who have these needs, it is not an optimal use of community resources.

Instead, we should strive to see ourselves as community connectors, communicators, and advocates who will work to promote the best paths and resources our neighbors deserve.

Reflections on Loving our Neighbors

Remember this motto: "[Solidarity not charity.](#)" Charity often is aid given to people in need based on whether our society decides they "deserve" help. People deserve care because they are people, not for any other reason. Whether or not you are comfortable with people's behaviors or attitudes or appearances, if they are in need and are asking for help, then they are deserving of assistance.

WWJD?

Jesus routinely cared for people who others believed to be undeserving of his (and God's) mercy and attention. In fact, the Syrochene woman called out Jesus himself for failing to see her and her daughter as deserving (Mark 7:24-30). Does our society today say some people are undeserving of our care and attention? Whose humanity do we place in a hierarchy, intentionally or unintentionally? How do we triage people in need in ways that are equitable and just?

Emotional support is critical in assistance response. Genuinely spending time with people in need can be one of the most powerful ways to care for them. Ask them their name, where they are from, and maybe even a bit of their story, if they're willing to share. Tell them your name and maybe a couple other things about yourself and what you care about. That builds trust and helps you both better understand your shared humanity.

WWJD?

An important aspect of Jesus' ministry was eating meals with all people, regardless of their place in society. Jesus understood that relationship building is a vitally important part of caring for his community, rather than simply preaching to them or healing them. This made his ministry mutual, because people got to care for Jesus, too, and share their thoughts and ideas and feelings with him.

Get creative with how to help. Creativity takes practice and time. The more you try to think outside the box or come up with different solutions, the better prepared you'll be to address complex situations and overcome obstacles. Many of our social issues have simple solutions (people need food, housing, medical care, etc.) but because of our society's power and resource imbalances, getting needs met can be a morass that is difficult to navigate. Don't get discouraged! Keep trying.

WWJD?

One of the less-appreciated elements of Jesus is his ingenuity. He came up with creative responses to socially complex problems, always with the intention of uplifting people who were being marginalized and oppressed (cf. Walter Wink's *Jesus and Nonviolence: A Third Way*). Even Jesus knew that simply speaking truth to power wasn't enough, which is why we have to organize and work together to build up a **just world for all**.

Further Thoughts & Reading

"Our job is to love others without stopping to inquire whether or not they are worthy." – Thomas Merton

More information about community care response:

- www.reachneo.com/care-response-in-neo
- Dontcallthepolice.com is a website that lists Community-based alternatives to calling the police in each city

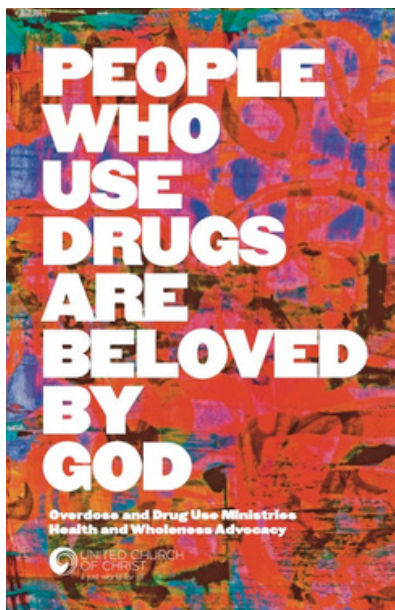
More information about non-carceral harm response:

- transformharm.org/

More information about mutual aid:

- [Mutual Aid: Building Solidarity During this Crisis \(and the next\)](#)
- [Values and Beliefs Underlying Mutual Aid: An Exploration of Collective Care During the COVID-19 Pandemic](#)

Learn about UCC Harm Reduction and Overdose Prevention Ministries



The Harm Reduction and Overdose Prevention Ministries of the United Church of Christ brings together pastors, lay leaders, theologians, people who use drugs, service providers, activists, and other collaborators in order to advocate for and increase the engagement of local churches in ministries with people who use drugs, people who have been affected by drug use, and people who may be at risk for or have experienced incidents of overdose.

Centering the voices of people with lived experience, including women and people of color, the project focuses its work on building the capacity of local churches and providing resources that equip local churches to engage in overdose and drug use ministries in their community, with particular attention to the intersections of stigma, trauma, drug use, faith, and spirituality.

<https://tinyurl.com/UCCHarmReduction>