



*August 1, 2021*

JustCARE Alliance Statement Regarding Situation In City Hall Park

The JustCARE field team has been working with people living in City Hall Park for the past several weeks, assessing their needs and plan appropriate bridge housing options. 52 people have been preliminarily assessed, and we can move forward rapidly as soon as we have a contract and funds are released. (We are working only with those who have been living in the park to date, lest additional people relocate there now—we will not be able to provide shelter to new arrivals.) However, the City Hall Park JustCARE project will take a month or slightly longer, because we need to open and staff the locations many of those in the park would be moving to.

The plan we've arrived at would have been put into effect months ago, if we had had the necessary resources, but JustCARE has just this past week been offered and signed a contract going forward. We started working in the park daily several weeks ago, in anticipation of this being our first major project under the new contract which begins August 1. We are awaiting transfer of funds to hire care teams and equip the additional non-congregate rooms we will need to use for this effort.

It's important to be aware that many of the people in the park arrived there after being removed from other locations without offers of non-congregate shelter that matched their situation. Those who are rightly upset about conditions in the park should join the many voices opposing shuffling people around the city--that practice contributed significantly to this situation. Each time people are dispersed without a meaningful offer of help, it makes it harder to create relationships of trust to make an actual plan to leave the street.

The JustCARE field team has been quietly working for weeks to make those connections and show that we are operating differently. We are poised to complete this work as rapidly as possible once the resources we need are provided. Moving people out of the park to no clear destination will not solve courthouse or neighborhood safety, or address the situation of anyone currently living there. It feels like action--but it actually makes matters worse.

We understand the urgent situation in the area—PDA offices are directly across the park from the courthouse, and we are there daily. There is tremendous suffering, and our hearts go out to people in the park as well as to those trying to work in the courthouse and other nearby businesses. There *is* a response that doesn't involve scattering the individuals living there through the surrounding neighborhoods, and having to start all over, which of course likely won't even actually change conditions near the courthouse. We hope local leaders will continue to support actually resolving the situation of those in the park, rather than just dispersing people to adjacent blocks.

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