

Practical Tips for Working with Patrons Experiencing Homelessness

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Fact: Homelessness is Exhausting

Imagine:

- Sleeping in a crowded shelter or dangerous street.
- Walking everywhere.
- Eating poorly and sporadically.
- Being stressed out about your survival

Fact: Space is different when you are homeless

Imagine having absolutely nowhere in the entire world that is completely yours where you can be alone.

Not a bedroom, not a bathroom... nowhere!

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Fact: Possessions are different when you are homeless

Imagine owning only one bag. Imagine that everything you own fits in that one bag.

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Skill: How to stand

- A few feet away, **at a slight angle.**
- Hands in one of the following positions:
 - In pockets
 - Behind back
 - “Praying” position

Skill: Explain, Don't Debate or Dictate

- Explain = 1 sentence explanation about rule
- Debate = round and round and round
- Dictate = no explanation for the rule

Skill: Have Your Phrases Ready

- “Would you mind turning the volume down a notch or two?”
- “You probably didn’t realize we have a rule about this, but...”
- “I would let you do that, but the bosses would probably fire me.”
- 1 sentence answer for every major rule

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