

## DIRECTIONS FOR HELPING THE HOMELESS DIRECTLY

Provided by COPE Ministries and authored by Minister Angela Smith

WANT TO HELP RIGHT NOW? If so, you are doing so of your own accord and independently of COPE Ministries unless an official HEAL Missionary volunteer listed at <http://www.heal-online.org/help.htm> and then you are still doing it of your own accord but officially associated with COPE Ministries and the HEAL Mission. Here's what you'll need to start helping the homeless in your area right now: a tablet with mobile internet access and bookmark our resources guide at: <http://www.churchofphilosophicalexploration.org/resources.htm>. Once you've done that, you are prepared to help the homeless apply for public assistance.

Now, the issue you may run into is that homeless people may be distrustful having been abused or trafficked for sex and labor both in and out of "systems of care" including foster care placements in segregated congregate care where they were denied any form of reasonable academic or educational services and then found themselves unprepared for independent living spending their developmental years in institutional settings that are controlled and therefore undermine developing independent living skills. So, they may not feel comfortable or assume you are with the government if you begin asking a lot of questions. You need to ask these questions so you can help them. But, they may be reluctant if having been trafficked in private foster segregated congregate care and see any public assistance similar to foster care as a threat to their safety where now they just feel more comfortable on the street and being left alone. That's not going to be the case for everyone, but, for quite a few that will be the case most likely. Be prepared for rejection of your offer to assist. And, be as understanding as possible that the fear to you may seem unreasonable but if you walked a mile in their shoes it would seem perfectly reasonable given their life experiences. If distrustful of the government or anyone offering assistance given trauma from past experiences, buy them dinner or give them what you can directly within your budget with a prayer or wish that they find sanctuary and reason to hope. Perhaps if enough individuals show them generosity and kindness without expectation and with understanding they've been traumatized and are likely in survival mode, they will begin to trust humanity again and find the courage to risk being trafficked again while hoping those offering help are sincere and not devils in disguise luring them with false hope of a step towards financial freedom just to strip them of all freedom while failing to compensate for coerced/forced labor once enrolled. So, that's the reality for many who are homeless. A little kindness and compassion goes a long way.

So, if you feel ready for the task and have your tablet charged with all the bookmarks ready to go, here are the questions:

1. Are you a US citizen? (If the answer is "no", you will need to move on to someone where the answer is "yes". You can wish them well or handle it however you see fit. Calling INS might be harsh, but, arguably the right thing to do. But, more likely than not they are not getting public assistance and going straight into some unregulated segregated congregate care storefront that is involved in some form of sex or labor trafficking if

undocumented and waiting to be deported. That's the truth.) If the answer is "Yes", continue to next question.

2. Do you currently receive any public assistance including Medicaid or Medicare? (If the answer is "no", ask this second question "Would you like to sign up for Medicaid or Medicare?") If the answer is "Yes" continue to the next question. If "No" to both questions, then they are refusing public assistance and if they say no to Medicaid or don't currently have it, the other questions become moot. If the answer to the second question is "Yes" go to the Medicaid enrollment online in your area and help get them set up. If they must have a physical address to receive Medicaid in your area, then, you will want to find the nearest free clinic and see if a doctor will diagnose for free and if they determine there to be a significant disability that can be documented and submitted to Social Security Disability Insurance to apply for that assistance. If you need to print a confirmation of any sort, you may need to agree to meet back with the person after you get to a printer unless you have a mobile printer too.

3. Do you consider yourself disabled and can you reasonably document the nature of your disability in applying for Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI)? If the answer to both parts of the question is "Yes", help them apply for SSDI. If the answers are "Yes" and "No" respectively, they will need to get documentation so revisit the suggestions in #2. So, you may need to take time with just one person at a time in helping them get their basic needs met and back on their proverbial feet. If the answer to both is "No", go to next question.

4. Do you have children living with you that you are the legal guardian for at this time? If the answer is "Yes", they can get immediate public housing assistance even if not disabled. The same is true if they are elderly in many cases. So, ask if they need help applying for public housing assistance and help them do it. The same goes for SNAP and food stamps.

And, once approved and confirmed, the homeless people you assist in this manner will have their basic needs met and all it took was a little time, patience, and care from someone willing to bridge the gap between government assistance and private enterprise without exploiting anyone because you are a good person who chose to do something that benefits everyone including those in need of the most assistance. And, if this is too much work for you and sounds like a headache you don't need, we understand. Perhaps consider making a donation to our church because this is used by it to help the homeless and/or will be as soon as we get a tablet with mobile internet connection. At time this was originally written, working at home from a desk top while building the dream that is COPE Ministries. Up to you how you want to proceed. God bless you.