

NATIONAL LAW CENTER ON HOMELESSNESS & POVERTY

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REPORT: LAWSUITS PROTECTING HOMELESS PEOPLE FROM CRIMINALIZATION

WASHINGTON, D.C. – As the criminalization of homelessness continues to rise in cities across the country, a majority of the lawsuits filed to challenge criminalization laws and enforcement practices have found success in court. According to a [new report](#) released by the National Law Center on Homelessness and Poverty, 57% of cases challenging restrictions on camping in public, 75% of cases challenging evictions of homeless encampments and seizure of homeless persons’ property, and 100% of cases challenging panhandling laws over the last two years have resulted in favorable outcomes for homeless people and their advocates.

“These cases demonstrate that criminalizing the survival acts of people who are forced to live outside is not a sound strategy for addressing the problem of homelessness,” said Maria Foscarinis, Executive Director at the Law Center. “Not only are these laws a waste of precious community resources, they also expose cities to costly litigation that they are likely to lose.”

The report, “[Housing Not Handcuffs: A Litigation Manual](#)” is a companion piece to the Law Center’s November 2016 [report](#) on the prevalence and dramatic rise of local laws that criminally or civilly punish the life-sustaining activities of homeless people. The Litigation Manual analyzes recent trends and includes a how-to guide designed for legal advocates working in our nation’s courts to protect the rights of homeless people

To combat the disturbing rise of criminalization of homelessness, the Law Center and more than 100 partner organizations nationwide launched the Housing Not Handcuffs Campaign (“HNH Campaign”), which is designed to move cities from losing criminalization strategies toward cost-effective policy solutions to homelessness, like expanded access to permanent housing. The litigation manual is offered as a tool for HNH Campaign members and other advocates to successfully use litigation strategies to end the criminalization of homelessness in their communities.

You can learn more about the manual and the Campaign by attending a [webinar](#) hosted by the Law Center on March 28, 2017 at 2pm ET/11am PT.

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The National Law Center on Homelessness & Poverty (www.nlchp.org) is the only national organization dedicated solely to using the power of the law to prevent and end homelessness. With the support of a large network of pro bono lawyers, we address the immediate and long-term needs of people who are homeless or at risk through outreach and training, advocacy, impact litigation, and public education.