

PANHANDLING

Panhandling can be found in areas of our county and frequently generates questions and complaints. Panhandlers who are truly in need require more resources than small amounts of money and the county has many services available to help those in need.

Here are some important things to know about Fairfax County's approach to this issue:

Laws

- Asking for money is a protected act under the First Amendment.
- Asking for money in public areas, including roadway medians, is not a violation of law.
- The County monitors legal developments related to panhandling.

Public Safety

- Our police officers will intervene when panhandlers commit traffic offenses or engage in criminal activity.
- If you witness a panhandler breaking the law, contact the Fairfax County Police Department. The emergency number is 9-1-1 and the non-emergency number is 703-691-2131.
- Our police officers are very responsive and will take immediate action if a crime is being committed. Proactive community assistance with reducing criminal activity is invaluable.
- Police officers refer panhandlers they encounter to available Fairfax County services, but **cannot force them to receive services.**

Panhandlers

- Not all panhandlers are homeless, but may be in need of food and other critical services.
- However, not all stories panhandlers use to solicit money are true.
- Some panhandlers come from outside Fairfax County or even outside Virginia.
- Some panhandlers operate as part of organized, professional panhandling rings.

Why Not To Give Money

- **Giving money to panhandlers will encourage more panhandling.**
- Donations of cash will not help to solve the underlying reasons why someone panhandles. Panhandlers who are truly in need require more resources than small amounts of money.
- Panhandlers' needs can be met much more effectively through our social services.
- Fairfax County advises residents not to give money to panhandlers.

You Can Help

- Refer panhandlers – or anyone you see who may be in need - to Fairfax County social services programs. We have a wide-range of services and resources to assist the less fortunate and those suffering from mental illness or substance abuse disorders. If you do want to assist a panhandler, make copies of this handout [insert hyperlink when available] with information on where and how to obtain critical services, including food and shelter.
- Donate to or volunteer for one of our [nonprofit community partners](#) dedicated to assisting those in need.
- County residents can obtain brochures listing available community and County services from the Office to Prevent and End Homelessness or from the district offices of individual Board of Supervisors members.

We can provide assistance to people and families who are seeking shelter or services:

Call 703-222-0880, TTY 711
Monday - Friday, 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

Our multilingual staff can assist callers in **Amharic, Dari, Farsi, Hindi, Italian, Korean, Pashto, Punjabi, Somali, Spanish, Swedish, Tigrinya, and Urdu**. Information is also available in other languages.

Fairfax County Services

Mental illness, substance use disorders and intellectual disabilities

Contact: Fairfax-Falls Church Community Services Board (CSB). Provides services for people with mental illness, substance use disorders and intellectual disabilities.

Entry and Referrals: 703-383-8500, TTY 711

Emergency Services: 703-573-5679, TTY 711

Victims of domestic violence

Contact: **Fairfax County Domestic Violence Hotline/Helpline.** 24-hour hotline and helpline for victims of domestic violence to provide information and referrals for shelter, counseling services and treatment.

Call 703-360-7273, TTY 711

Chronic health conditions, prescriptions and dental and eye care

Contact: **Fairfax County Homeless Healthcare Program.** Ensures that homeless residents receive care for chronic health conditions, prescriptions are refilled and arrangements for dental and eye care are provided.

Call 703-246-2411, TTY 711

Emergency food, shelter, clothing, transportation, health care and dental services, job training, job search and legal assistance

Contact: **Fairfax County Coordinated Services Planning** provides information and referrals for emergency food, shelter, clothing, transportation, health care and dental services, job training, job search and legal assistance.

Call 703-222-0880, TTY 711