

Evidence-based panhandling – summary (March, 2018)

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For-profit corporations are free to engage in evidence-based methods for persuading people to give them money. Others who are asking for money, such as people who are engaged in panhandling, should have equal access to the most effective strategies. This is in keeping with traditional ideas about liberalism and it is quite American (e.g., free market capitalism). Willingly providing resources to those in need also happens to be consistent with historical and current Indigenous practices around the world (and Native Americans are consistently represented in disproportionate numbers in official homeless counts).

The project team consulted literature on the most effective strategies for panhandling as demonstrated by people with lived panhandling experience. Best practices were sorted and synthesized into the following three dimensions and printed on a simple, weather proof card to hand out to people asking for money.

- Discursive content of the transactional request (i.e., the words people use in their request)
- Behavioral delivery of the request (i.e., the manner in which the request is made)
- Temporo-spatial location of the request (i.e., time and place where a request is made)

Intended Outcomes:

1. Increase the amount of money people engaged in panhandling receive.
 - *This could decrease their frequency of asking and/or improve their well-being. More research needed.*
2. Decrease incidence of conflict between people panhandling and law enforcement.
 - *This could improve law enforcement's productivity and/or decrease law enforcement expenditures. More research needed.*
3. Decrease incidence of conflict between people solicited and those soliciting thereby leaving both parties feeling safer and more respected.
 - *More research needed.*

The above three intended outcomes are described in abbreviated form on the card as: “What is this card for?”

- Grow your results.
- Avoid conflict with law enforcement.
- Help people feel safer.

Lorena is graduating with her BA in Social Work from Humboldt State University in May, 2018.

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TIPS FROM OTHER PANHANDLERS

Where/When should I ask?

- Crowded places and locations with a heavy flow of traffic. People feel safer there.
- Times when a location is more likely to be busy.
- Places where you can provide helpful information to tourists.

How should I ask?

- Make requests of couples or groups of 2-3 rather than large groups or people walking alone.
- Ask or fly signs for specific and small amounts.
- Be respectful at all times, thanking people regardless of amount.
- Finish interactions with a greeting, even if you do not receive anything.
- Stay polite in the face of insults and negativity toward you. Anger isn't likely to yield assistance.
- Give people space and don't touch anyone without their clear permission.



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HUMBOLDT BAY AREA PANHANDLING LAWS

Laws vary by city, county, and other jurisdictions and they are regularly changing. Generally, Humboldt Bay Area laws emphasize that it is illegal to engage in aggressive panhandling.

“Aggressive” panhandling usually refers to using fear, forcefully getting into someone’s personal space, and/or creating a feeling of danger when asking people for assistance.

You can reduce the potential for conflict and increase your chance of getting assistance by staying out of people’s personal space and absolutely do not touch people without permission.

What is this card for?

Grow your results.

Avoid conflict with law enforcement.

Help people feel safer.

References

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