

# Relational Stages of Outreach and Engagement

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Outreach and engagement is the process of coming along side of someone who is struggling with homelessness and related health and social concerns, and sharing the journey in a way that leads to healing, wholeness and stability in the community. Outreach and engagement activities can be seen as a movement through four phases of relationship: approach, companionship, partnership, and mutuality.

**Approach:** The approach phase involves observation and introduction. It is helpful to spend time simply watching, to see how a person acts, how they relate to others, what kind of space they need, how they seem to be experiencing their environment and responding to the world. Careful observation helps us shape an introduction. We may simply pass by with a nod or greeting, the most minimal of neighborly acknowledgments. We may introduce ourselves in a general way, or with a more specific role and concern. The key is to begin generally as someone who cares, and define our role more specifically as the relationship develops and trust builds between us.

**Companionship:** At its simplest, companionship means sharing a little of the journey with another, standing or sitting with them, walking a little ways with another, listening, and hearing a person's story. Perhaps it may include suggesting some possibilities to assist someone along the way, maybe going with them to some destination, or arranging for another to accompany and help them.

**Partnership:** The partnership phase of outreach and engagement begins when we introduce the person to others who can help or assist. In partnering with others – case managers, medical providers, social service programs, family members – a widening circle of care is created upon which the individual can rely for support and care in various aspects of their lives.

**Mutuality:** In the phase of mutuality, we recognize one another as fellow citizens and community members. We continue to encourage the other in making use of appropriate resources for their journey and support the individual in becoming a stable part of the neighborhood and community. In time, it is recognized that the relationship has come to fruition and thus is brought to closure as appropriate.