

■ If you are stopped by the police, always ask for the names and badge numbers of the officers and write this down immediately, along with the date, time and location of the incident. **MAKE SURE TO SAVE ALL DOCUMENTS, SUCH AS TICKETS, WARNINGS, ETC.**

■ For more information, or if you feel you've been a victim of police harassment or mistreatment, call the **WASHINGTON LEGAL CLINIC FOR THE HOMELESS** at 202-328-5500, or the **OFFICE OF POLICE COMPLAINTS (OPC)** at 202-727-3838. OPC Complaints must be filed within 45 days of the incident, and complaints from homeless persons will be expedited.

SHELTER HOTLINE
1-800-535-7252

**Department of Mental Health
Access Helpline**
888-793-4357 or 202-673-9319

Domestic Violence Hotline
202-347-2777

DC Rape Crisis
202-333-7273

Substance Abuse/Detox
202-698-6080

Office of Police Complaints (OPC)
(Deals with complaints re: the MPD)
202-727-3838

Metropolitan Police
Emergency: 911
Non-Emergency: 311

FACTS ABOUT STREET RIGHTS

Your Rights on the Street

- "Vagrancy" or loitering is not a crime – you can't be stopped or arrested simply for being in a public space like a sidewalk or park. Police cannot force you to move from public property if you are doing nothing illegal.
- You have the right to keep or carry your belongings in any type of bags or containers, as long as you don't leave them unattended or block the sidewalk or right of way.
- You have the right to panhandle, as long as you are not "aggressive," which means touching or threatening someone; panhandling after someone says no; blocking someone's way; or being within 10 feet of an ATM or 15 feet of a Metro stop.

NOTE: All panhandling is illegal on *federal* parkland, which includes McPherson Square, Rock Creek Park, Lafayette Park, and the National Mall.

- You generally have the right to lie down or sleep in public (except on *federal* parkland), as long as you are not blocking the sidewalk, or in an automobile, tent or other structure. If police attempt to arrest or ticket you for "temporary abode," contact the **WASHINGTON LEGAL CLINIC FOR THE HOMELESS** at 202-328-5500.
- You have the right to have your personal property registered and stored for at least 45 days if it is taken by city workers or the police during a "clean up" of public space. To prevent destruction of your property, make sure that all of your bags are clearly marked with identification. If you need assistance in retrieving your property, contact the Legal Clinic at 328-5500.

Illegal Conduct

- Aggressive panhandling; panhandling from someone in an automobile; panhandling in exchange for cleaning car windows, reserving a parking space, or protecting a car; panhandling within 10 feet of an ATM or 15 feet of Metro property.
- Drinking alcohol or having an open container in public, or being intoxicated in public. (Note: If you are intoxicated and outside in severe cold weather, the Police can require you to go to detox. if you refuse to go inside).
- Urinating or defecating in public.
- Camping, sleeping, panhandling, or storing property on federal parkland.

Dealing with the D.C. Metropolitan Police Department (MPD)

- If you are approached or questioned by an MPD officer and are not told you are suspected of a crime, you do not have to answer any questions or give any information, and are free to leave. **(MPD General Order 304-10).**
- If the police ask or order you to move from a particular area, you do not have to move unless you are violating the law by being there. The police cannot order you to "move on" unless you are in a group of 3 or more and are disturbing the peace or blocking the street/sidewalk. **(MPD Special Order 92-9).**
- If you are not under arrest, the police may only frisk you or search your belongings if they reasonably suspect that you are carrying a concealed weapon and are a threat to their safety. **(MPD General Order 304-10).**