

Insights



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Homeless Courts: An Alternative to the Criminalization of the Homeless

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It is a cold, overcast afternoon, and a man with no money and no place to stay, carrying his belongings in a plastic garbage bag, walks down the sidewalk of a city in South Carolina. As it starts to rain, the man ducks under an awning of a store in order to stay dry. The store owner, for whatever reason, does not like that the apparently “homeless” man is taking up space under the awning. The store owner calls the police. The police respond and cite the man for trespassing.

Up until now that man had three options: appear in court and be fined an amount he could not pay, appear in court and be sentenced up to 30 days in jail, or choose not to attend court and risk having a bench warrant issued for his arrest. However, now there is a fourth option for a man like this who is homeless—Homeless Court.

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