



# Why Is the KC Health Department Stopping Neighbors from Feeding the Homeless?

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*By: Emily Stahly*

For the past several years, a group of friends and neighbors have gathered on Sunday afternoons in three public parks to share a meal together and serve hundreds of people in need in Kansas City. This past Sunday, unfortunately, the Kansas City Health Department [shut down the group and threw away the food](#) they had prepared even though there were still people waiting in line to eat.

Were there health-related complaints or reports of people getting sick from the food? No—they simply did not have a permit to be serving food. The group is not a nonprofit; it is just an informal network of people in the Kansas City metro area giving of their own time and resources, so getting permits for the weekly gatherings would not be so simple.

If the group had a track record of making people sick or there were other safety concerns, then it would make sense for the Health Department to step in and shut them down. But does the city really have a good reason to disrupt this community of individuals who want to feed and build relationships with the homeless and those in need? If the city does have health or safety concerns beyond the lack of a permit, it should make that clear. But with areas of need in the city, it seems that Kansas City could use more of these organic communities, not fewer of them.

In the discussion forum on the group's [Facebook page](#), several people noted that the police officers and some of the inspectors were not happy with having to shut down the gathering and throw away the food—so we're not dealing with heartless city officials here. The problem is that there are regulations in place, and they have to be enforced.

Unless there are compelling health and safety reasons to keep them in place, shouldn't Kansas City—along with other cities in Missouri—identify and amend these kinds of regulations that get in the way of people reaching out to those who are less fortunate?

## **About the Author**



*Emily Stahly  
Analyst*

*Emily Stahly is an analyst at the Show-Me Institute. She earned her B.A. in politics from Hillsdale College in Michigan and is researching education with the Show-Me Institute.*

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[1] <https://showmeinstitute.org/blog/local-government/why-kc-health-department-stopping-neighbors-feeding-homeless>

[2] <https://fox4kc.com/2018/11/04/kcmo-health-department-orders-group-to-stop-feeding-homeless-community/>

[3] <https://www.facebook.com/groups/FreeHotSoupKC/>

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5297 Washington Place	3645 Troost Avenue
Saint Louis, MO 63108	Kansas City, MO 64109
Phone: (314) 454-0647	Phone: (816) 287-0370
Fax: (314) 454-0667	

Email: [info@showmeinstitute.org](mailto:info@showmeinstitute.org)

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