



Congregate Living Facility Guidance for Prevention and Management of COVID-19

Preliminary Guidance for Homeless Shelters and Behavioral Health Residential Facilities

Updated: April 15, 2020

This guidance was developed by Contra Costa Health Services (CCHS) for use by providers and staff serving people experiencing homelessness and other providers/staff working in residential care facility programs. The purpose of this document is to assist in preparing your facility, staff, and residents for possible cases of COVID-19. These recommendations will be posted online at cchealth.org/coronavirus and updated as new information becomes available.

BACKGROUND: COVID-19 is a new respiratory infection caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus. Illness severity ranges from asymptomatic to life-threatening. The most common signs and symptoms of infection include fever, cough, and difficulty breathing. Based on the limited available data, older adults and those with chronic medical conditions are at highest risk for severe illness.

At present, there is no vaccine to prevent COVID-19 and no antiviral medication that can be used after exposure. Thus, prevention and control efforts must rely on other measures.

COVID-19 may be introduced into a shelter and/or congregate living facility by admitted residents, staff, or visitors. Spread can occur between and among residents, healthcare personnel, staff and visitors. Spread is thought to mostly occur through respiratory droplets in the air or on surfaces.

GENERAL MEASURES THAT CAN BE IMPLEMENTED NOW

- **Educate staff and residents** on the novel coronavirus, symptoms, how it is spread, and preventive measures that can reduce the spread of viruses like COVID-19
- **Gather and/or procure necessary cleaning supplies**, personal protective equipment, and signage
- **Increase frequency of facility cleanings**
- **Perform daily active monitoring** for residents in the facility who may have fever and respiratory symptoms.
- **Identify private rooms** or create spaces that can be used to isolate individuals who may be sick



- **Plan for employee absences and ways to keep essential services operational**, including food service.
- **Stay up to date** with local and state COVID-19 activity and developments from [CCHS](#).

***All “required” items below come from Health Officer Order HO-COVID19-06 found here:**

https://813dcad3-2b07-4f3f-a25e-23c48c566922.filesusr.com/ugd/84606e_a6073a4ed9bb4659b541f30cd894632d.pdf. The order addresses:

- Temperature Screening
- Self-Evaluation
- Prohibition of Entry
- Masking
- Physical Distancing
- Notification to emergency dispatch and ambulance transporters
- Staff working at multiple facilities

EDUCATE STAFF AND RESIDENTS

Hand Hygiene and Respiratory/Cough Etiquette

Staff should review and follow recommendations for hand hygiene before and after contact with residents, after contact with contaminated surfaces or equipment, and after removing personal protective equipment (PPE).

- For more information about hand hygiene, procedures, and recommendations, please view the following link: <https://www.cdc.gov/handwashing/when-how-handwashing.html>
- Staff should encourage more frequent handwashing and/or use of alcohol-based hand sanitizer when in group settings or when water is not available.
- Place hand sanitizer at front desks, inside and outside residents’ rooms, in staff offices; have sinks available with soap and paper towels for hand washing.
- Coughing should be done in a tissue and/or the curve of the elbow.

Signage

REQUIRED:

- Health Order HO-COVID-19-06 (8) requires a posting of the Health Order to be posted at all entrances to each facility. For the full order, go to: https://813dcad3-2b07-4f3f-a25e-23c48c566922.filesusr.com/ugd/84606e_a6073a4ed9bb4659b541f30cd894632d.pdf

RECOMMENDED:

- Posting signs encouraging hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette in all common areas around your facility is a great way to spread information, and to teach or remind staff and clients how to practice



good hygiene. Hand hygiene signage written in multiple translations is available for download at <https://www.cdc.gov/handwashing/posters.html>

- Signs should be posted at:
 - Entrances and exits
 - Communal gathering areas
 - Dining areas
 - Bathrooms
 - Staff lounges
 - Dormitories or sleeping areas

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

REQUIRED:

- Staff and adult visitors (not residents) are required to wear a surgical mask or cloth mask or other cloth covering at all times while in the facility.
- If there is a suspected or confirmed case of COVID-19 the Facility Operator shall implement then-current guidelines of the CDC applicable to the use of n-95 masks for suspect or confirmed COVID-19 cases, unless otherwise directed by the County Health Services DEPARTMENT

RECOMMENDED:

- Staff should use Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and be trained to use Standard Precautions when cleaning and decontaminating.
- Post signs on the door or wall outside of the resident room that clearly describe the type of required PPE.
- Make PPE, including facemasks and gloves, available immediately outside of the resident spaces.
- Position a trash can near the exit inside any resident room to make it easy for staff and consumers to discard PPE.

Agency and Facility Emergency Operations Plan

It is also recommended to develop or update the agency or facility emergency operations plan. The plan should include at minimum:

- A list of key contacts at local and state health departments;
- Identify a list of healthcare facilities and alternative care sites where clients with respiratory illness can seek housing and receive appropriate care;
- Contingency plans for increased absenteeism caused by employee illness or leave to care for family members. (Consider planning for extended hours, cross-training current employees, or hiring temporary employees).

FACILITY SANITATION & HYGIENE PRACTICES

Cleaning and Disinfecting Shelters and Other Residential Programs

To reduce the spread of infectious diseases at your facility, provide basic hygiene supplies (refer to next section) to staff and residents, clean and decontaminate regularly, and post information on how to



reduce transmission. This will reduce the spread of diseases through the air and through droplets, and will also reduce diseases spread through contact, like COVID-19.

RECOMMENDED:

- Clean and sanitize frequently touched surfaces several times per day. Pay special attention to doorknobs, light switches, elevator buttons, public phones, banisters, tabletops, handrails/bedrails, toys, faucets, copy machines, etc.
- Wash surfaces with a general household cleaner to remove germs. Rinse with water and follow with an EPA-registered disinfectant to kill germs. Read the label to make sure it states that EPA has approved the product for effectiveness against Novel Coronavirus SARS-CoV-2. EPA-registered products can be found at https://www.epa.gov/sites/production/files/2020-03/documents/sars-cov-2-list_03-03-2020.pdf
- If a surface is not visibly dirty, you can clean it with an EPA-registered product that both cleans (removes germs) and disinfects (kills germs) instead. Be sure to read the label directions carefully, as there may be a separate procedure for using the product as a cleaner or as a disinfectant. An EPA-registered disinfection usually requires the product to remain on the surface for a certain period (e.g., letting it stand for 3 to 5 minutes) to kill germs.
- Staff and/or residents performing the cleaning and disinfecting should use disposable gloves each time they perform the cleaning procedures.
- Use damp cloth cleaning methods. Dry dusting or sweeping can cause airborne viruses to spread.
- Change mop heads, rags, and similar items used for cleaning and disinfecting frequently.
- Clean, disinfect, and dry equipment used for cleaning after each use.
- Items such as dishes, linens, or eating utensils do not need to be cleaned separately, but it is important to note these items should not be shared or used by others.
- All trash cans should have plastic liners.
- Empty trash receptacles frequently throughout the day.

Necessary Supplies:

- Hand sanitizer (with at least 60% alcohol) should be located at:
 - All entrances and exits
 - Front desks
 - Staff offices
 - Kitchen
 - Dining areas
 - Public phones
 - Computer stations
 - Elevators
 - Community/multi-purpose rooms
 - Dormitory or sleeping areas
- Liquid hand soap
- Paper hand towels
- Facial tissues– place at entrances and community areas
- Disposable surgical masks/surgical mask substitute/n-95 masks (to be used based on guidance from Contra Costa Health Services)
 - For all staff in the facility and for symptomatic residents
- Plastic-lined wastebaskets (for used tissues and masks) with closing lids
- Gloves in a variety of sizes



- Alcohol wipes
- EPA certified cleaning and disinfecting products
- Thermometers for screening staff and residents

Consider setting up "hygiene stations" in designated areas with hand sanitizer, tissues, masks, a garbage can and educational signs. None of these supplies will prevent infection by simply being in your facility, so train staff to use them regularly and to teach residents how to effectively use them too.

Alterations to Daily Operations and Staff Activities

Visitors to facility

REQUIRED

- Individuals who are not a patient or existing or new resident at a facility shall:
 - Immediately prior to entering a facility submit to a temperature screening; and self evaluation for symptoms for COVID-19 or other respiratory illness, including fever, sore throat, coughing, shortness of breath, or general weakness in the past seven days and report to the site manager;
 - Physically distance at least 6 feet from others;
 - Wear a mask; and
 - Be denied entry to the facility if their body temperature is 100F or greater or has identified any symptoms listed above. (See full Health Order for exemptions)

Meal Times and Multipurpose Area Use

REQUIRED

- Residential group activities and communal dining are prohibited.

RECOMMENDED

- Staff must remain stationed at the door or entrance and enforce this protocol. These areas must remain locked all other times.
- All food must be stored and served individually (trays, cereal, etc.). No eating or serving from large containers.

Sleeping Arrangements

REQUIRED:

- All residents of a Facility shall practice physical distancing by remaining at least 6 feet apart from other persons when out of their individual rooms

RECOMMENDED

- All residents/families should be housed in individual rooms
- Enforce sleeping head to toe. No consumer should face another consumer while lying down or sleeping. Eliminate staff transportation of consumers during this time.

Use Social Distancing Practices in Staff-Client Meetings

REQUIRED:

- All residents of a Facility shall practice physical distancing by remaining at least 6 feet apart from other persons when out of their individual rooms



RECOMMENDED

- Note: CORE will not be providing consumer transportation during this time.
- Greet and interact with clients from a distance of 6 feet when possible.
- Explain that you are taking additional precautions to protect yourself and the client from COVID-19
- Wear gloves if you need to handle client belongings (wash hands or use sanitizer before and after wearing gloves)
- Provide all clients with hygiene products when available
- Conduct house or shelter-wide meetings where consumers are instead of gathering as a large group
- Maintain good hand hygiene by washing hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds or using hand sanitizer (with at least 60%) alcohol on a regular basis
- If at any point staff does not feel they are able to protect themselves and clients from spread of COVID-19 (i.e., symptomatic client declines to wear mask or if unable to maintain a distance of 6 feet) contact supervisor

MONITORING AND SCREENING FOR SYMPTOMS

Preventing the spread of illness at each site is very important, but with new residents coming and going all the time sick residents will inevitably enter program sites. Sites need to be able to **identify** sick residents, **isolate** them from other residents and staff members and work with appropriate medical staff.

Monitoring

Active surveillance should be performed daily to help identify residents showing signs of respiratory illness. Surveillance activities include, but are not limited to:

- Checking in daily with all residents and staff for symptoms (please see Screening Questionnaire below)
- Watching for trends in your facility regarding residents and staff with fevers and respiratory symptoms.

Staff must have a thermometer on hand to help staff and residents self-screen for fever. Remember to clean thermometer with alcohol wipes after every use.

Screening and Identification

Implement routine screening procedures to help identify potentially ill staff, residents and visitors. Screening for these symptoms can be accomplished through a combination of self-screening and screening questionnaires administered by general staff, with a follow-up done by a medical professional.

Remember, having symptoms is NOT a reason to exit a client from your facility or services.

REQUIRED

- Individuals who are not a patient or existing or new resident at a facility shall:
 - Immediately prior to entering a facility, submit to a temperature screening; and self evaluation for symptoms for COVID-19 or other respiratory illness, including fever, sore throat, coughing, shortness of breath, or general weakness in the past seven days and report to the site manager;



- Be denied entry to the facility if their body temperature is 100F or greater or has identified any symptoms listed above. (See full Health Order for exemptions)

RECOMMENDED

Self-screening refers to residents identifying themselves as having symptoms. The following activities may encourage self-screening among residents:

- Post signs with general symptoms near the entrance of your site and in other key locations, such as bathrooms.
- Post signs with instructions to notify staff if clients are feeling unwell.
- Remind clients upon check-in and at community meetings of common symptoms of infectious diseases, and how they should notify staff.

If a resident feels ill and is reporting any of the symptoms outlined below, follow the guidance under the “Care for Symptomatic Residents” section. If they feel ill with symptoms that are not included below, have staff record the residents’ names, symptoms, and room/bed numbers so they can be followed up with later by a supervisor, counselor, clinician, or case manager (unless the situation is urgent and needs immediate medical attention).

Screening questionnaire is a simple survey that helps to quickly identify if a resident may be sick.

The following screening questions should be asked at intake and daily:

- Contact with a confirmed COVID-19 positive patient (within the last 14 days)
- Fever (100 degrees or higher; may rely on patient self-report)
- New cough or a cough that is getting worse
- New or worsening shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
- New onset of diarrhea

CARE FOR SYMPTOMATIC RESIDENTS

REQUIRED

- If there is a suspected or confirmed case of COVID-19 at the facility and either an emergency medical response to, or transport by ambulance from the facility is requested, the facility operator must notify the dispatcher and ambulance operator of the presence of a suspected or confirmed case of COVID-19 and the COVID-19 status, if known, of the patient or resident to be transported.

RECOMMENDED

If a resident develops any of the symptoms outlined in the previous section symptoms, the facility should follow the process outlined here: https://813dcad3-2b07-4f3f-a25e-23c48c566922.filesusr.com/ugd/84606e_a727bde57115471f831599802a461c81.pdf

TESTING OF INDIVIDUALS IN SHELTERS OR LIVING IN CONGREGATE SETTINGS

Contra Costa Health Services will screen and test individuals for COVID-19 who are living in congregate settings.



For the most up-to-date guidance for the testing process, please go to:

<https://www.coronavirus.cchealth.org/for-the-homeless>

WHAT TO DO AFTER COVID-19 INFECTION IS CONFIRMED

When a resident who has tested positive has stayed or remains at your facility, staff need to determine who else among staff and residents might have been exposed to the virus.

Please review the [COVID-19 Outbreak Management Checklist for Congregate Living](#) available at [cchealth.org](https://www.cchealth.org) for information on what to do if there is an outbreak at the facility.

Additional control measures and duration of implementation will be determined in consultation with Contra Costa Public Health staff.

CONSIDERATIONS TO PROTECT STAFF AND CONSUMERS

REQUIRED

- Facilities must try to avoid as much as possible using employees who have worked at another facility in the past 14 days, while maintaining adequate staffing needs of the facilities. Facilities shall keep a daily log of employees present, identifying any other facilities they have worked at the previous 14 days. That log shall be immediately produced upon demand by any staff of the County Health Services Department

RECOMMENDED

Assessing Risk to Employees and Measures to Maintain Their Health

- Contra Costa Health Officer requires all homeless service provider staff to be screened at the beginning of each shift for temperatures over 100 degrees F. Individuals with fevers of 100 degrees or above should be sent home immediately.
- Assess the potential exposure risks to COVID-19 for all employees. Consider those who require prolonged close contact in heavily occupied encampment areas.
- Provide employees with information about preventing the spread of respiratory illnesses. Ensure staff are aware of sick leave policies and are encouraged to stay home if they are ill with respiratory symptoms.
- Advise employees to check for any signs of illness before reporting to work each day and notify their supervisor if they become ill.
- Encourage ill staff and volunteers to stay home (or be sent home if they develop symptoms while at work), to prevent transmitting the infection to others.
- Plan staffing to minimize the number of staff members who have face-to-face interactions with clients with respiratory symptoms; have surgical masks for distribution if needed.
- Staff and volunteers at high risk of severe COVID-19 (those who are older or have underlying health conditions) should not be designated as caregivers for sick clients.
- Use self-care practices at home and at work, as appropriate, to support coping and managing stress
 - Acknowledge and reduce secondary traumatic stress reactions
 - This may include taking breaks, asking for help, exercise, healthy eating, sleeping, meditation, avoiding alcohol and drugs, and connecting with others.



ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Center for Disease Control

- <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>
- [Preventing COVID-19 Spread in Communities](#)
- [Coronavirus Disease 2019 Interim Guidance for Homeless Shelters](#)
- [Coronavirus Disease 2019 \(COVID-19\) Print Resources \(handouts and posters\)](#)
- [Managing Anxiety and Stress for Staff and Consumers](#)
- [Cleaning and Disinfection for Community Facilities: Interim Recommendations for U.S. Community Facilities with Suspected/Confirmed Coronavirus Disease 2019 \(COVID-19\)](#)
- [Cleaning and Disinfection for Households: Interim Recommendations for U.S. Households with Suspected or Confirmed Coronavirus Disease 2019 \(COVID-19\)](#)

Department of Housing and Urban Development

- [Preventing and Managing the Spread of Infectious Disease for People Experiencing Homelessness \(PDF\)](#)
- [Preventing and Managing the Spread of Infectious Disease within Shelters \(PDF\)](#)
- [Preventing and Managing the Spread of Infectious Disease within Encampments \(PDF\)](#)

National Healthcare for the Homeless

- [Pandemic Influenza Guidance for Homeless Shelters and Homeless Service Providers](#)

California Department of Public Health

- <https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/Pages/Immunization/ncov2019.aspx>

Contra Costa Health Services

- <https://cchealth.org/coronavirus/>
- [CCHS webpage: “For People Experiencing Homelessness”](#)
- [Guidance from Contra Costa Health Services for Persons at Higher-Risk from COVID-19](#)
- [Healthcare for the Homeless](#)
- [Health, Housing, and Homeless Services](#)
- [Behavioral Health Services](#)

