Provisional Guidance for Homeless Shelters during the COVID-19 Pandemic

Tri-County Health Department, in accordance with State and National guidance, recommends this interim guidance based on what is currently known about coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19). This guidance is intended to support homeless shelters, including overnight and day shelters. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention will update their interim guidance as needed and as additional information becomes available. The Colorado Department Public Health and Environment has also released their resources for homeless assistance providers and will also be updated as needed.

Key Prevention Strategies

- Implement everyday preventive actions and provide instructions to your staff about actions to prevent disease spread. Meet with your staff to discuss plans to help clients implement personal preventive measures.
- Download COVID-19 posters and CDC Fact Sheets and keep your clients and guests informed about public health recommendations to prevent disease spread and about changes to services that might be related to the outbreak.
  - Messaging may include:
    - Posting signs at entrances and in strategic places providing instruction on hand hygiene, respiratory hygiene, and cough etiquette.
    - Providing educational materials about COVID-19 for non-English speakers, as needed.
    - Encouraging ill staff and volunteers to stay home (or be sent home if they develop symptoms while at the facility), to prevent transmitting the infection to others.
- Minimize the number of staff members who have face-to-face interactions with clients with respiratory symptoms. Use physical barriers to protect staff who will have interactions with clients with unknown infection status (e.g. check-in staff). Note: Disposable facemasks should be reserved for use by clients who exhibit respiratory symptoms. Clients who become sick should be given a clean disposable facemask to wear while staying at the shelter.
- 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 who are staying in the shelter.
- If staff are handling client belongings, they should use disposable gloves. Make sure to train any staff using gloves to ensure proper use.
- Limit visitors to the facility.
• Ensure that clients receive assistance in preventing disease spread and accessing care, as needed.

**Assist clients in preventing disease spread and accessing care, as needed.**

• In general sleeping areas (for those who are not experiencing respiratory symptoms), ensure that beds/mats are at least 3 feet apart (6 feet apart is preferred), and request that all clients sleep head-to-toe.
• Provide access to fluids, tissues, plastic bags for the proper disposal of used tissues.
• Ensure bathrooms and other sinks are consistently stocked with soap and drying materials for handwashing. Provide alcohol-based hand sanitizers that contain at least 60% alcohol (if that is an option at your shelter) at key points within the facility, including registration desks, entrances/exits, and eating areas.
• At check-in, provide any client with respiratory symptoms (cough, fever) with a surgical mask.
  If there is person to person spread in your local community, clients may have COVID-19.
• Monitor clients who could be at high risk for complications from COVID-19 (those who are older or have underlying health conditions) and reach out to them regularly.
• Confine clients with mild respiratory symptoms consistent with COVID-19 infection to individual rooms, if possible, and have them avoid common areas.
  o Follow CDC recommendations for how to prevent further spread in your facility.
  o If individual rooms for sick clients are not available, consider using a large, well-ventilated room.
  o In areas where clients with respiratory illness are staying, keep beds at least 3 feet apart and use temporary barriers between beds, such as curtains, and request that all clients sleep head-to-toe.
  o If possible, designate a separate bathroom for sick clients with COVID-19 symptoms.
  o Consider reducing cleaning frequency in bedrooms and bathrooms dedicated to ill persons to as-needed cleaning (e.g., of soiled items and surfaces) to avoid unnecessary contact with the ill persons.
• Decisions about whether clients with mild illness due to suspected or confirmed COVID-19 should remain in the shelter or be directed to alternative housing sites should be made in coordination with local health authorities. Similarly, identifying respite care locations for patients with confirmed COVID-19 who have been discharged from the hospital should be made in coordination with local healthcare facilities and your local health department.
If you Identify any client with severe symptoms, contact emergency medical services, and notify the transfer team if the client has symptoms consistent with COVID-19 (e.g., difficult breathing, bluish lips or face, persistent pain or pressure in chest, severe dizziness or lightheadedness, confusion or inability to arouse, or has a seizure).

Ensure that all common areas within the facility follow good practices for environmental cleaning. Cleaning should be conducted in accordance with CDC recommendations.

Cleaning and Disinfection after Persons Suspected/Confirmed to have COVID-19 in the Facility

View CDC Guidance for Environmental Cleaning and Disinfection Recommendations

Timing and location of cleaning and disinfection of surfaces

At a facility that does not house people overnight:
- Ensure that all common areas within the facility follow good practices for environmental cleaning. Cleaning should be conducted in accordance with CDC recommendations.
- It is recommended to close off areas used by the ill persons and wait as long as practical before beginning cleaning and disinfection to minimize potential for exposure to respiratory droplets. Open outside doors and windows to increase air circulation in the area. If possible, wait up to 24 hours before beginning cleaning and disinfection.
- Cleaning staff should clean and disinfect all areas (e.g., offices, bathrooms, and common areas) used by the ill persons, focusing especially on frequently touched surfaces.

At a facility that does house people overnight:
- Ensure that all common areas within the facility follow good practices for environmental cleaning. Cleaning should be conducted in accordance with CDC recommendations.
- Follow Interim Guidance for US Institutions of Higher Education on working with state and local health officials to isolate ill persons and provide temporary housing as needed.
- It is recommended to close off areas used by the ill persons and wait as long as practical before beginning cleaning and disinfection to minimize potential for exposure to respiratory droplets. Open outside doors and windows to increase air
circulation in the area. If possible, wait up to 24 hours before beginning cleaning and disinfection.

- In areas where ill persons are being housed in isolation, follow Interim Guidance for Environmental Cleaning and Disinfection for U.S. Households with Suspected or Confirmed Coronavirus Disease 2019. This includes focusing on cleaning and disinfecting common areas where staff/others providing services may come into contact with ill persons, but reducing cleaning and disinfection of bedrooms/bathrooms used by ill persons to as needed.
- In areas where ill persons have visited or used, continue routine cleaning and disinfection as in this guidance.

### How to Clean and Disinfect

**Surfaces**

- If surfaces are dirty, they should be cleaned using a detergent or soap and water prior to disinfection.
- For disinfection, diluted household bleach solutions, alcohol solutions with at least 70% alcohol, and most common EPA-registered household disinfectants should be effective.
  - Diluted household bleach solutions can be used if appropriate for the surface. Follow manufacturer’s instructions for application and proper ventilation. Check to ensure the product is not past its expiration date. Never mix household bleach with ammonia or any other cleanser. Unexpired household bleach will be effective against coronaviruses when properly diluted.
- Prepare a bleach solution by mixing:
  - 5 tablespoons (1/3rd cup) bleach per gallon of water or
  - 4 teaspoons bleach per quart of water
  - Products with EPA-approved emerging viral pathogens claims are expected to be effective against COVID-19 based on data for harder to kill viruses. Follow the manufacturer’s instructions for all cleaning and disinfection products (e.g., concentration, application method and contact time, etc.).
- For soft (porous) surfaces such as carpeted floor, rugs, and drapes, remove visible contamination if present and clean with appropriate cleaners indicated for use on these surfaces. After cleaning:
  - If the items can be laundered, launder items in accordance with the manufacturer’s instructions using the warmest appropriate water setting for the items and then dry items completely.
- Otherwise, use products with the EPA-approved emerging viral pathogens claims (examples at this link) that are suitable for porous surfaces
Linens, Clothing, and Other Items That Go in the Laundry

- Do not shake dirty laundry; this minimize the possibility of dispersing virus through the air.
- Wash items as appropriate in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions. If possible, launder items using the warmest appropriate water setting for the items and dry items completely. Dirty laundry that has been in contact with an ill person can be washed with other people's items.
- Clean and disinfect hampers or other carts for transporting laundry according to guidance above for hard or soft surfaces.

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and Hand Hygiene

- **Cleaning staff should wear disposable gloves and gowns for all tasks in the cleaning process, including handling trash.**
  - Gloves and gowns should be compatible with the disinfectant products being used.
  - Additional PPE might be required based on the cleaning/disinfectant products being used and whether there is a risk of splash.
  - Gloves and gowns should be removed carefully to avoid contamination of the wearer and the surrounding area. Be sure to [clean hands](#) after removing gloves.
- Gloves should be removed after cleaning a room or area occupied by ill persons. [Clean hands](#) immediately after gloves are removed.
- Cleaning staff should immediately report breaches in PPE (e.g., tear in gloves) or any potential exposures to their supervisor.
- **Cleaning staff and others should clean hands often**, including immediately after removing gloves and after contact with an ill person, by washing hands with soap and water for 20 seconds. If soap and water are not available and hands are not visibly dirty, an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains 60%-95% alcohol may be used. However, if hands are visibly dirty, always wash hands with soap and water.
- Follow normal preventive actions while at work and home, including cleaning hands and avoiding touching eyes, nose, or mouth with unwashed hands.
  - Additional key times to clean hands include:
    - After blowing one's nose, coughing, or sneezing
    - After using the restroom
    - Before eating or preparing food
    - After contact with animals or pets
    - Before and after providing routine care for another person who needs assistance (e.g., a child)
Available Trainings/Resources

National Health Care for the Homeless Council: Coronavirus and the HCH Community: Status Updates, Available Guidance, Local Preparations, and Outstanding Issues webinar 3/20/20

HUD Exchange: Infectious disease preparedness for homeless assistance providers and their partners

Interim Guidance

Seattle-King County DPH: Interim Guidance on COVID-19 for Homeless Service Providers
LA County DPH: Guidance on Congregate Living Facilities: COVID-19
NYC Health: COVID-19 Interim Guidance for Homeless Shelters

Additional Resources Specific to Homeless Services Providers

HUD Exchange Infectious Disease Toolkit for CoC

CDC: Interim Guidance for homeless service providers to plan and respond to COVID 19

CDC: Interim Guidance for Homeless Service providers, including overnight emergency shelters, day shelters, and meal service providers for COVID-19 in the United States

U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. Disaster Preparedness Toolkit. Disaster Preparedness to Promote Community Resilience: Information and Tools for Homeless Service Providers and Disaster Professionals

City of Toronto: Infection Prevention & Control Resources for Homelessness Service Settings

CDC: Environmental Cleaning and Disinfection Recommendations

CDC: Interim Guidance for homeless service providers to plan and respond to COVID 19

Denver Public Health Shelter Best Practices: Prevention of Communicable Disease

CDC Communication Resources

COVID-19 Readiness Resources

- Visit [www.cdc.gov/COVID19](http://www.cdc.gov/COVID19) for the latest information and resources
- What to Do If You Are Sick [https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-nCoV/about/steps-when-sick.html](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-nCoV/about/steps-when-sick.html)
- Handwashing: A Family Activity [https://www.cdc.gov/handwashing/handwashing-family.html](https://www.cdc.gov/handwashing/handwashing-family.html)