

# COVID-19 Quick Reference for Homeless Shelters

Please note, Governor Northam's Executive Order issued on March 17, 2020, applies only to restaurants, theatres and fitness centers. While homeless shelters should use strategies to mitigate the spread of COVID-19 infections, such as social distancing, the 10-patron language included in the Executive Order does not currently apply to shelters. Shelters are encouraged to maintain operations and provide essential services to those in need.

## SHELTER RECOMMENDATIONS

- Know the during and after hours contact for your local health department to report outbreaks of disease.
- Staff and shelter guests should practice social distancing and minimize the sharing of objects such as cups, food and drink.
- Shelter guests and staff should wash their hands as per Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) guidelines.
- Ensure there are no shared utensils, cups or linens and guests are requested to wash their hands prior to eating meals.
- Where possible, stagger services so that they are offered in shifts to help increase social distancing.  
For example, establish shifts for meals.
- As much as possible arrange beds head to foot and, where possible, 6 feet apart.
- Make sure surfaces are cleaned and disinfected routinely, at least daily is recommended.
  - Gloves should be worn while cleaning and disinfecting surfaces and when handling trash, guest belongings and other items for laundering or disposal.
  - Hands should be washed prior to and after glove removal.
- If local fire codes allow, particularly in high traffic areas, leave doors propped open for better sight lines and fewer hands on doorknobs.
- Purchase pop up tents for beds.
- String shower curtains between beds.
- Bulk purchasing of hygiene, sanitizing and first aid supplies.
- Purchase temple thermometers.
- Provide adequate supplies for good hygiene, including easy access to clean and functional handwashing stations, soap, paper towels, trashcans and alcohol-based hand sanitizer (especially near food areas and restrooms).
- Know the symptoms of COVID-19 infection.
- Extend clinic hours, if feasible, and if your location has one included in your operation.
- Assess all guests daily and upon entry for symptoms of fever, cough and shortness of breath.
- Give a face mask to and isolate shelter guests with symptoms of COVID-19 and coordinate with a healthcare provider.
- Assign a space(s) for isolation of shelter guests who develop symptoms of COVID-19 and keep these space(s) separate from the nonsymptomatic population.
  - If possible keep any shelter guest with COVID-19 symptoms separated individually. If this is not possible, maintain social distancing of ill shelter guests who need to be kept in one room.
  - If possible, shelter guests with symptoms of COVID-19 should have access to a bathroom separate from the nonsymptomatic population.
  - Meals and other programming should allow for symptomatic guests to remain separate from nonsymptomatic guests.
- As staffing allows, designate staff assisting with shelter guests with symptoms of COVID-19.
  - Staff assigned to assist with any shelter guest with symptoms of COVID-19 should not be at higher risk for severe illness.
  - Staff assigned to assist with shelter guests with symptoms of COVID-19 should also practice social distancing as much as possible.
- If symptomatic guests need to move through areas with asymptomatic guests, they should be encouraged to perform hand hygiene, wear a surgical mask and minimize the time in these areas.
- Designate a method of transportation to healthcare providers so as to not overwhelm 911.
  - Staff assigned to assist with any shelter guest with symptoms of COVID-19 should not be at higher risk for severe illness.
  - Shelter guests should be wearing a face mask while being transported.
  - Where possible, open car windows to allow for greater air circulation and implement social distancing during travel.
  - Mass transit should not be used for this purpose.
  - Hard surfaces on individual vehicles should be cleaned and disinfected, particularly in the immediate area used by the shelter guest.
- Position a trash can near the exit inside any guest dorms to make it easy for employees to discard items such as gloves, masks and gowns.
- Increased frequency of environmental cleaning should be done with EPA-approved healthcare disinfectant consistent with recommended wet contact time.
- Identify and address potential language, cultural, and disability barriers associated with communicating COVID-19 information to workers and those you serve.

## STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS

- Staff should review and be familiar with the CDC guidance for Homeless Shelters and Workplace recommendations to decrease the spread of COVID-19 illness in the shelter environment.
- Staff and volunteers should also be familiar with the CDC's individual health recommendations in a home setting, as well as guidance for if you think you are sick with COVID-19.
- Prepare for staff and volunteer absences. Staff (and volunteers) may need to stay home when they are sick, caring for a sick household member, or needing to quarantine if they have been identified as a close contact of a COVID-19 case. Identify critical job functions and positions, and plan for alternative coverage by cross-training staff members.
- Encourage and support your staff and volunteers to stay home when they are sick.
- Monitor staff and volunteers for fever or respiratory symptoms before they start work.
- Staff with fever and respiratory symptoms should be sent home until they are fever free for at least 72 hours without use of fever reducing medication.
- Plan for ways to continue essential services if on-site operations are reduced temporarily.
- Post signs at facility entrance instructing visitors and guests to alert staff if they have fever, cough or shortness of breath. Do not discourage symptomatic guests from entering.
- Have a plan for quickly directing people who are ill to an area of the facility that is isolated from other parts of the facility.
- Describe what actions the facility is taking to protect staff and guests, answer questions and explain what they can do to protect themselves and their fellow guests.