

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.

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SHELTER RECOMMENDATIONS (continued)

- 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.



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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.