

# Preventing Spread of COVID-19 Among People Who Are Experiencing Homelessness

To stay informed about COVID-19 in San Diego County, please visit <http://www.coronavirus-sd.com>

For additional resources, please visit <https://www.rtfhsd.org/>

## Purpose:

This document is to provide guidance to those serving meals and providing services to those experiencing homelessness. It includes information helpful to disseminate to people experiencing homelessness.

## Specific locations considered in this guidance:

- Overnight shelters
- Congregant meal services
- Access Sites and Navigation/Day Centers
- Food Pantries

There are three primary areas of focus; those being served, those serving (both employees and volunteers) and facilities.

Locations where people experiencing homelessness will come for assistance should have the information on the following page posted near all entry points.



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## Please read the following information:

Although the risk of getting COVID-19 is low, there are many cold or flu infections you can get which can look like COVID-19 and will make it hard to take care of your daily activities.

## Practice everyday preventive actions that can help prevent the spread of germs:

- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- Cover your coughs and sneezes with a tissue, under the neck of your shirt, or into your elbow.
- Clean your hands as often as possible, especially after going to the bathroom, before eating, and after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing. When available, use soap and water to wash hands for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not available, use a hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% ethanol.
- If you have symptoms of a cold or flu (such as cough, runny nose, sore throat), wear a face mask when you are around other people.

## When working with service providers:

- If you have symptoms of a cold or flu, please wear a mask when seeing service providers.
- If you notice a service provider has symptoms of cold or flu, ask them to wear a mask before seeing you.
- If you have symptoms of a cold or flu or if there is an outbreak of COVID-19 in your community, limit your interactions with others. That includes avoiding, when possible, places such as:
  - Public transportation. Try to avoid taking public transportation while sick, but if you need to take public transportation and you have symptoms of a cold or flu, please wear a mask if one is available.
  - Libraries
  - Community centers
  - Shopping centers

**If you feel you are sick or at risk, please let the member of our team at the entrance know so they can appropriately direct you to the appropriate resource.**



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# HOMELESS SERVICE PROVIDERS

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## Stay up to date with local and state COVID-19 activity and developments (in addition to CDC):

- County of San Diego: <https://www.sandiegocounty.gov/coronavirus/>
- State of California: <https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/Pages/Immunization/ncov2019.aspx>

## HUD:

- [Disease Risks and Homelessness](#)
- [Infectious Disease Toolkit](#)
- National Health Care for the Homeless Council: <https://nhchc.org/clinical-practice/diseases-and-conditions/influenza/>
- King County Healthcare for the Homeless: <https://www.kingcounty.gov/depts/health/locations/homeless-health/healthcare-for-the-homeless.aspx>

## Provide education for staff, volunteers and clients:

- Place signs that encourage cough and sneeze etiquette, hand hygiene, and staying home when sick at the entrance to your building and in other areas where they are likely to be seen such as:
  - Entrances
  - Gathering areas
  - Dining areas
  - Bathrooms
  - Staff lounges
- Train employees and clients to clean their hands often with an ethanol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60-95% ethanol or wash their hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. Soap and water are preferred if hands are visibly dirty.

## Provide hygiene and prevention materials:

- Provide easy access to soap, water, hand drying resources, and ethanol-based hand rubs at:
  - All entries
  - Dining areas
  - Public phones
  - Computer stations
  - Elevators
- Encourage the use of and distribute disposable face masks to any person with a cough or other symptoms
- If someone is coughing or sneezing, have them wear a disposable face mask when they are within 6 feet of other people
  - Change the mask if it gets saturated
  - Wash hands after changing mask

# COVID-19 GUIDE FOR HOMELESS SERVICE PROVIDERS

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## Screening people for symptoms

- Begin using Screener at all intakes
- Prioritize screening current residents who are known to be high risk (elderly, lung/heart diseases, diabetes, other disabling conditions)
- Continue to screen all program residents until entire milieu complete
- Refer those who give affirmative answers to their Primary Care Physician, nearest Federally Qualified Health Center, or higher level of care, as needed
  - If you can measure temperature, do so. A temperature of 100.4 or higher represents a fever.
- Re-screen residents:
  - Upon a change in health status (e.g. seen coughing, with fever, and/or reports of these symptoms, etc.). If the person's illness is severe, seek emergency medical assistance
  - Every 2 weeks after initial screening
- If you can measure temperature, do so. A temperature of 100.4 or higher represents a fever.
- Clients should not be told to seek medical care if they are not ill or have mild symptoms for which they would not ordinarily seek medical care
  
- Clients should not be told to seek medical care if they are not ill or have mild symptoms for which they would not ordinarily seek medical care
  
- If a client is ill and requires isolation offsite while testing is pending or after confirming COVID-19, please follow the temporary lodging protocol.



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## **Ensure that adequate supplies are present and maintained:**

- Hot and cold running water. Hot water should be maintained at 100°F. If temperature control is automatic, ensure that it does not exceed 120°F
- Liquid hand soap
- Paper hand towels
- Ethanol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60-95% ethanol
- Facial tissues– place at entrances and community areas
- Plastic-lined wastebaskets– place at entrances and community areas
- Disposable surgical masks
  - For clients who are coughing or sneezing
  - For staff working closely with sick people
- Gloves in a variety of sizes (for staff and volunteers)
- Signs addressing hygiene (English) (Simplified Chinese) (Spanish)
- Disposable wipes for staff to clean surfaces
- Thermometers

## **Update your master cleaning schedule and instructions:**

- Train staff in how to mix and use disinfectants and sanitizer solutions, following all label instructions
- Use damp cleaning methods. Dry dusting or sweeping can cause airborne virus droplets
- Change mop heads, rags, and other cleaning items frequently
- Provide staff with gloves for cleaning
- Wipe down commonly used surfaces (for example, doorknobs, keyboards, remote controls, desks) before each use with disposable wipes
- Clean all common areas at least daily; clean heavily used surfaces more frequently (e.g. doorknobs, elevator buttons, public phones, banisters, tabletops, handrails, workstations, and countertops)
- Empty trash receptacles frequently
- Regularly clean air vents and replace filters, especially those with HEPA filters
- Encourage all staff, volunteers and clients to get the influenza vaccine to prevent illness that is similar to COVID-19

*No special disinfection products are required. See COVID-19 Environmental Cleaning and Disinfection Recommendations from the CDC found [here](#).*

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## Precautions for staff and volunteers:

- Actively encourage sick employees and volunteers to stay home
- Staff and volunteers with cold or flu-like illness should not work until 24 hours after fever and other symptoms are gone
- Ensure sick leave policies allow employees to stay home if they have symptoms of infection
- Do not require a healthcare provider note for employees who are sick with cold or flu-like illness to return to work, as healthcare provider offices may not be able to provide such documentation in a timely way
- Staff and volunteers developing symptoms while at the service location should immediately wear a facemask, notify management, and leave work

## Precautions for facilities:

- Facility
  - People should sleep head to toe in shelters when bunk beds are used or when sleeping closer than 6 feet from one another
  - Identify a location to isolate sick individuals until they are medically evaluated by phone or transferred to care
  - Stagger bathroom schedule to reduce the number of people using the facilities at the same time
- Mealtimes
  - Have staff hand supplies or food to clients, rather than clients reaching into common supplies
  - If feasible, stagger meals to reduce crowding
  - Stagger the schedule for use of kitchens
- Recreation/Common Areas/Group Activities to include distribution locations
  - Create a schedule for using common spaces
  - Hold fewer large group activities in favor of smaller groups
  - Consider cancelling group activities
- Transport
  - Transport fewer people per trip so passengers don't sit too close together
- Staff activities
  - Don't hold large meetings when information can be communicated through conference calls



# SANITATION & HYGIENE ASSESSMENT TOOL FOR

## Homeless Shelters, Day Centers, Access Sites, and Encampments

**Purpose of Assessment:** To ensure the health and safety of clients, staff, and volunteers, and to determine if additional support is needed to meet minimum sanitation and hygiene standards.

**Instructions:** Be sure to place a copy of this assessment form in your files. Check  that your facility meets these standards. If not applicable mark  NA.

### SUPPLIES AND EQUIPMENT

✓ or NA	Standard
	Liquid hand soap and single-use paper towels are stocked at all hand washing sinks/stations.
	Disinfectant labeled for control of infectious diseases.
	Hand sanitizer provided at entrance(s) and common areas.
	Hot and cold running water is always available when the facility is in operation. Hot water is maintained at a minimum of 100°F. If sensor or pedal-operated sinks are used (i.e., temperature is automatically set), temperature does not exceed 120°F.
	First aid kit(s) provided – size and/or amount of supplies appropriate for number of clients being served. Sharps container(s) provided and maintained.
	Appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) provided for staff, volunteers, and residents responsible for cleaning and maintenance of facility (e.g. gloves, dust mask, protective clothing, eye protection, etc.)

### PROTOCOLS AND PROCEDURES

✓ or NA	Standard
	Sanitation and hygiene training provided during onboarding process for new staff and volunteers (e.g., require new members to review Public Health information available on the County of San Diego's webpage; <a href="https://www.sandiegocounty.gov/coronavirus.html">https://www.sandiegocounty.gov/coronavirus.html</a> ).
	Master cleaning schedule developed, and cleaning instructions posted or provided for cleaning and sanitation of kitchen, restrooms, showers, and common areas. Including instructions for how to mix and use disinfectant and sanitizer solutions.
	Signage encouraging good hygiene and sanitation posted in restrooms and/or communal areas.
	Protocols developed specifically for handling and disposal of infectious waste (e.g., diapers, wound dressing, soiled bedding, sharps, animal waste, etc.).
	Bedding laundered at minimum once a week, per client. Dryer in laundry facility capable of reaching 165°F.

Facility Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Street Address: \_\_\_\_\_ City: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Program Staff Completing this Form: \_\_\_\_\_

Staff Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_



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# HOMELESS OUTREACH WORKERS

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- HUD: [Disease Risks and Homelessness](#)
- [Infectious Disease Toolkit](#)
- National Health Care for the Homeless Council: <https://nhchc.org/clinical-practice/diseases-and-conditions/influenza/>

## Provide education for staff and clients:

- Train employees and clients to clean their hands often with an ethanol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60-95% ethanol or wash their hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. Soap and water are preferred if hands are visibly dirty.

## When Conducting Outreach:

- Don't do outreach unless you are well
- Sanitize your hands after EVERY encounter
- Have hygiene and prevention materials available to share
- Educate unsheltered population on sanitation importance – share hygiene kits with hand sanitizer
- Know where all nearest community health centers are to where outreach is being conducted, and refer people to the nearest center for testing **DO NOT REFER TO EMERGENCY DEPARTMENT OR HOSPITAL FOR TESTING**
- Regional Liaisons:
  - Central/South:  
Dijana Beck, (619) 338-2636, [Dijana.Beck@sdcounty.ca.gov](mailto:Dijana.Beck@sdcounty.ca.gov)
  - East/North Central:  
Kim Forrester, (619) 668-3841, [Kim.Forrester@sdcounty.ca.gov](mailto:Kim.Forrester@sdcounty.ca.gov)
  - North Inland/North Coastal:  
Deanna Zotalis-Ferreira, (760) 740-3038, [Deanna.Zotalis-Ferreira@sdcounty.ca.gov](mailto:Deanna.Zotalis-Ferreira@sdcounty.ca.gov)
- If transportation is provided, clean vehicles after each transport- wipe down all surfaces
- Remain 6 feet away from someone who is feeling unwell

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## Tracking and Data

- Use HMIS outreach module
- Use PITC GIS locations of those over 60
- A list of identified encampments will be provided to outreach teams in each region

## Additional precautions for staff:

- Actively encourage sick employees and volunteers to stay home
- Staff and volunteers with cold or flu-like illness should not work until 24 hours after fever and other symptoms have gone
- Ensure sick leave policies allow employees to stay home if they have symptoms of infection
- Do not require a healthcare provider note for employees who are sick with cold or flu-like illness to return to work, as healthcare provider offices may not be able to provide such documentation in a timely way
- Staff and volunteers developing symptoms while at the service location should immediately wear a facemask, notify management, and leave work
- Encourage the use of and distribute disposable face masks to any person with a cough or other symptoms
- Encourage all staff, volunteers and clients to get the influenza vaccine to prevent illness that is similar to COVID-19
- If someone is coughing or sneezing, have them wear a disposable face mask when they are within 6 feet of other people
  - Change the mask if it gets saturated
  - Wash hands after changing mask



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**Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)** is thought to spread mainly from person-to-person. Especially between people who are in close contact with one another (within about 6 feet). People who are more at risk of getting very sick from this illness are older adults, and people with chronic medical conditions such as heart disease, diabetes and lung disease.

**When performing outreach, please maintain a distance of six feet from the individual if possible.**

- Greet the individual and ask how they are feeling.
- Ask the individual if they have a fever or feel feverish, have a cough or feel short of breath.
- If the individual answers yes to having the above symptoms, and there is **suspicion of exposure to COVID-19, immediately ask the individual to put on a mask.** Please ask the individual to practice hand hygiene by washing with soap and water. If soap and water is not available, ask them to use hand sanitizer.
- Instruct the individual to contact their health care provider. If they do not have a healthcare provider, refer them to call the nearest FQHC for evaluation and possible testing. If you do not know the nearest FQHC, call 2-1-1. for assistance in identifying the nearest location.
- If the individual requires non-emergency transportation, arrange transportation in a vehicle with an interior that can be wiped clean and with windows that can be rolled down. Have the individual wear a mask during the transport, keep the windows down during transport. Wipe down the interior with an EPA approved disinfectant following the manufacturer's directions. See this resource for a link to the EPA's list of approved disinfectants and other guidance:  
[https://www.sandiegocounty.gov/content/dam/sdc/deh/fhd/food/pdf/publications\\_covid19en.pdf](https://www.sandiegocounty.gov/content/dam/sdc/deh/fhd/food/pdf/publications_covid19en.pdf).
- If the individual requires transportation for a medical emergency, call 9-1-1. Assist the individual in seeking immediate medical attention if they are experiencing signs of serious illness such as:
  - Difficulty breathing or shortness of breath
  - Persistent pain or pressure in the chest
  - New confusion or inability to arouse
  - Bluish lips or face



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