

Novel Coronavirus (2019-nCoV)

Los Angeles County Department of Public Health Guidance for Congregate Living Facilities

The Los Angeles County Department of Public Health (Public Health) is asking for your assistance to prepare for and help prevent the spread of the novel (new) coronavirus in Los Angeles County. Globally, there continues to be a growing number of people infected with this virus which causes “coronavirus disease 2019” (abbreviated COVID-19) in mainland China and elsewhere. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the World Health Organization, current global trends indicate that the virus may spread worldwide causing a pandemic. We need to prepare to prevent the spread of this infection locally.

While the immediate health risk of COVID-19 to the general public in Los Angeles is still considered low, Public Health is proactively taking steps to prevent the spread of this infection. We strongly recommend that all organizations review and update their emergency plans and consider ways to continue essential services if on-site operations must be reduced temporarily. We are particularly concerned about how a case of COVID-19 in a congregate setting such as yours might lead to the rapid spread of disease. We would like to provide you with some general information about COVID-19 as well as specific actions you should take to help prevent the spread of respiratory infections, including COVID-19 at your venue.

We encourage you to visit the DPH Novel Coronavirus webpage for resources including Guidance for Business and Employers, Frequently Asked Questions, and infographics: <http://publichealth.lacounty.gov/media/Coronavirus/>.

General Information

What is novel coronavirus?

Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses. Many of them infect animals, but some coronaviruses from animals can evolve (change) and infect humans, then spread from person-to-person. This is what happened with the current novel coronavirus. Diseases from coronaviruses in people typically cause mild to moderate illness, like the common cold. Some, like the SARS or MERS viruses, cause serious infections like pneumonia.

What are common symptoms of COVID-19?

Information to date shows this new virus causes symptoms consistent with a respiratory illness, such as cough, fever, and, in some, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing.

How are coronaviruses spread?

Like other respiratory illnesses, such as influenza, human coronaviruses most commonly spread to others from an infected person who has symptoms through:

- Droplets produced when an infected person coughs or sneezes.
- Close personal contact, such as caring for an infected person.
- Touching an object or surface with the virus on it, then touching your mouth, nose, or eyes before washing your hands.

COVID-19 is new, and we continue learning more each day about how it spreads and how long it takes for people to become sick. As information changes, we will keep you informed.

Do not assume that someone is at risk for novel coronavirus infection based on their race/ethnicity or country of origin.

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Congregate Living Facilities

What preventive measures should be taken at an organizational level to reduce the spread of respiratory viruses, like the virus that causes COVID-19?

- Educate and emphasize the importance of the everyday personal prevention actions (see below).
- Encourage and support your staff and volunteers to stay home when they are sick. Remind them to stay home and not return to work until they are free of fever for at least 24 hours without fever-reducing medication.
- Provide adequate supplies for good hygiene, including easy access to clean and functional handwashing stations, soap, paper towels, and alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- Minimize, where possible, close contact and the sharing of objects such as cups, food, and drink.
- Routinely clean and disinfect all frequently touched surfaces and objects, such as doorknobs, bannisters, countertops, faucet handles, and phones. Use the usual cleaning agents and follow the label directions.
- Provide members of the congregate living facility and employees with accurate information about novel coronavirus and steps they can take to protect themselves and their families.

Everyday personal prevention actions include:

- Stay home when you are sick. Stay home for at least 24 hours after you no longer have a fever or symptoms of a fever without the use of fever-reducing medicines.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not available, use alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol.
- Cover your coughs and sneezes with a tissue, and then dispose of the tissue and clean your hands immediately. If you do not have a tissue, use your sleeve (not your hands).
- Limit close contact with people who are sick.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces using a regular household cleaning spray or wipes.

What should our facility be prepared to do if there is increased community transmission of COVID-19

Increased community transmission of COVID-19 would indicate growing risk to the general public and that additional precautions may need to be taken to contain any local community transmission. Congregate living facilities should have a plan and be prepared to take these additional actions, if recommended by Public Health:

- Have a plan to communicate with your staff and volunteers. Visit our website, publichealth.lacounty.gov, for accurate and updated information that can be used for your communications. Identify and address potential language, cultural, and disability barriers associated with communicating COVID-19 information to workers and those you serve.
- Plan for worker absences. Do not require a healthcare provider's note for employees or volunteers who are sick with acute respiratory illness to validate their illness or to return to work. Healthcare provider offices and medical facilities will be extremely busy and not able to provide such documentation in a timely way.
- Plan for ways to continue essential services if on-site operations are reduced temporarily.
- Review your infection control plans for the management of aerosol transmissible infections and ensure that you can quickly identify and isolate residents of the facility presenting with signs or symptoms of COVID-19 through routine surveillance.

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- If your facility has staff members providing care for residents or individuals, then remind staff they must use Standard Precautions for any interactions that require potential contact with body fluids and should place particular emphasis on hand hygiene. Standard Precautions include:
 - Wearing gloves if hand contact with blood, body fluids, respiratory secretions or potentially contaminated surfaces is expected.
 - Wearing a disposable gown if clothes might become soiled with blood, body fluids or respiratory secretions.
 - Wearing a mask if respiratory secretions are expected to contact mouth and nose.
 - Changing gloves and gowns after each encounter and wash hands or use alcohol hand sanitizer immediately after removing gloves.
 - Washing hands with soap and water when hands are visibly dirty or contaminated with respiratory secretions.
- If sick residents are identified, call for medical consultation unless the patient is severely ill and may require hospitalization.
- Designate a sick room where residents with cold and flu symptoms can be housed in a separate building, room, or designated area. Separation of the beds in this area should be placed at least 6 feet apart or head-to-toe with beds 3 feet apart. Mobile screens can be used to encourage compliance with separation areas.
- A dedicated restroom should be identified if possible and reserved for use of the ill individuals only.
- Public Health will work with you if one of your residents is deemed to be a suspect case of COVID-19 to ensure appropriate infection control measures are in place.

Know where to get reliable information

Beware of scams, false news and hoaxes surrounding novel coronavirus. Accurate information, including announcements of new cases in LA County, will always be distributed by Public Health through press releases, social media, and our website. The website has more information on COVID-19 including FAQs, infographics and a guide to coping with stress, as well as tips on handwashing

- Los Angeles County Department of Public Health (LACDPH, County)
 - <http://publichealth.lacounty.gov/media/Coronavirus/>
 - Social media: @lapublichealth
- The Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health Access Center 24/7 Helpline (800) 854-7771.

Other reliable sources of information about novel coronavirus are:

- California Department of Public Health (CDPH, State)
 - <https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/Pages/Immunization/nCOV2019.aspx>
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC, National)
 - <http://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/novel-coronavirus-2019.html>
- World Health Organization (WHO, International)
 - <https://www.who.int/health-topics/coronavirus>

If you have questions and would like to speak to someone, call the Los Angeles County Information line 2-1-1 which is available 24 hours a day.