

## Homeless Street Outreach Interim Guidance for COVID-19:

**April 13, 2020**

*The following information is a general guide and is not intended to take the place of medical advice from a health care provider. Most outreach providers are not health care providers and ACHCH reminds all to carefully respect physical distancing guidelines. Outreach providers **should not place themselves at risk** through close contact with people, especially those who may be symptomatic.*

**Anyone providing ongoing outreach services to encampment or street settings should do so in coordination with County or City homeless outreach leads. People independently carrying out well-intentioned outreach activities are putting themselves and the community at risk.** If you are unsure of who you should coordinate with, please send your contact information and details to Alameda County Health Care for the Homeless Program at [achch@acgov.org](mailto:achch@acgov.org).

The Alameda County Health Care for the Homeless Program hopes that you have already read and learned key points from our [3/18/20 guidance](#) for street outreach providers. Please review [here](#).

### **Protective Personal Equipment and Physical Distancing:**

Outreach providers are carrying out limited essential services to people in encampment and street settings. **It is of utmost importance to carry out services using a Physical Distancing and infection control processes. We must take close care to prevent any transmission of disease between providers and the people they serve.**

- **Protective Personal Equipment (PPE):** Providers should carry and use hand sanitizer, wear rubber gloves and wear surgical masks at all times during outreach, and maintain sealable trash bags in vehicles. Please check ACHCH guidance [here](#). Providers should reach out to City or County leads if they have PPE supply needs.
- **Social Distancing:** Providers should **always** maintain 6' distance from all other persons, including co-workers. Providers should not share pens, phones, clip boards, surfaces, supplies with other persons.
- **Hygiene:** Providers should wash hands thoroughly before, during and after visiting an encampment or street site.

### **Outreach Provider Guidance:**

Outreach providers are primarily providing **Education and Outreach** work. While taking extreme care to respect physical distancing and disease control guidelines, they carry out the following essential services:

1. Assess Personal and Site Health and Needs
2. Provide Information and Communication

3. Provide Supplies
4. Refer People to Isolation Housing

## 1. Assessment

Outreach providers should assess, and report on services, conditions and needs at encampment and street sites on a daily basis. City and contracted providers should report to their City lead through a google doc specified by your lead. Community providers can upload reports to this [shared google doc](#). Reach out to [achch@acgov.org](mailto:achch@acgov.org) if you will be using this google doc to report. NO personal identifying information is to be reported on this document.

- **Site:** Please note how many people are sleeping at a site, how is the cleanliness at a site. Are there washing/restroom facilities? To what degree is food/water/supply delivery happening? Are residents aware of Covid and precautions to take? What are the most urgent unmet needs at sites?
- **Individual Health:** Are there residents with symptoms of Covid (fever, cough, shortness of breath, etc). Please note how many people may be symptomatic and need transfer to Isolation Housing. Are there people who would be at high-risk of serious illness (60+, chronic disease, immune compromise)?
  - Inform residents about [isolation housing](#) possibilities for symptomatic persons.
  - Inform residents about [Operation Safer Ground](#) for high-risk persons, connect to Housing Resource Centers/HMIS-CES update.

Outreach providers are filing daily reports on the sites they are serving to City and County leads. These reports are used to coordinate countywide street/encampment services and report needs.

## 2. Information, Education and Communication

- Provide updated information to residents around Covid symptoms. Post flyers for example [Symptoms](#), [Cover Your Cough](#), [Wash Your Hands](#), [What to Know](#).
- **Testing:** At this time, testing is done through primary care providers, hospitals or the Emergency Department. Priority testing is being provided for **first responders** (including shelter and outreach providers) at:
  - Alameda Health System (510-437-8500)
  - Oakland's Henry J. Kaiser convention center ([covid19testing@oaklandca.gov](mailto:covid19testing@oaklandca.gov))
  - Hayward Fire Station #7 [info here](#)
  - Fremont Fire COVID-19 Testing Center (7200 Stevenson Blvd) [Info](#) Call (510) 789-7231.
  - Symptomatic people experiencing homelessness can access testing through the [TRUST Clinic](#)
- Sanitation and Safety:
  - **Hygiene:** Provide information about importance of handwashing, covering coughs.
  - **Physical Distancing.** Encourage people to set up tents with at least 12x12 feet of space per individual.

## 3. Supplies:

- Provide the following supplies as possible:
  - Hand Sanitizer
  - Disposable Surgical Face Masks
  - Disinfectant wipes
  - Other items as needed
- Food distribution: Consider food/meal curbside drop-off roles. Contact Alameda County Food Bank at 510-635-3663 to arrange food/water pickup. Oakland providers, contact City of Oakland ([trubin@oaklandca.gov](mailto:trubin@oaklandca.gov)) for info on participating in Oakland meal distribution.
- Accessing outreach supplies: Please contact your City/County Lead for ordering supplies. If you have questions about how to access supplies contact [achch@acgov.org](mailto:achch@acgov.org)

#### 4. Referral to Isolation Housing for People with Confirmed or Suspected Covid Infection -- Alameda County's Project Roomkey:

- **Operation Comfort:** [Specified referral agencies](#) are now able to assess and refer people who are symptomatic, confirmed Covid cases, or contacts with a confirmed Covid case into Isolation Housing. They are trained in screening, referral and transportation procedures. Information flyer [here](#). Also see [ACHCH Isolation Housing](#) web page.
- Please have client review [Operation Comfort Checklist](#) to answer any questions and ally insecurities. Please have reviewed [Operation Comfort Annotated Checklist for Providers](#).
- If an outreach provider isn't able to refer a symptomatic client and wants to direct a referral provider to assess them, email [achch@acgov.org](mailto:achch@acgov.org) or call 510-891-8950 8:30-4:30pm MF for specific follow up from the ACHCH program.
- Anyone with symptoms who declines transfer to isolation housing should be encouraged and supported to shelter in place, physically isolating themselves as much as possible while still maintaining some social contact with others. They should be provided with masks, and having a plan to call 911 for hospital transport if their condition becomes serious. Please share this information with your city/county outreach lead or the ACHCH program at [achch@acgov.org](mailto:achch@acgov.org).
- **Operation Safer Ground:** The County has opened [Safer Ground](#) hotel isolation housing for high-risk and vulnerable people experiencing homelessness. *Providers cannot refer individuals in*, referrals are being generated out of existing countywide HMIS and Coordinated Entry System screenings and vulnerability assessments. Please ensure that people have an updated CES assessment. Call 211 or connect person to a [Housing Resource Center](#).
- Under no circumstances should outreach providers be transporting symptomatic persons in their cars, nor arranging taxis or ride share transportation. The only transportation for a symptomatic person is to arrange Operation Comfort transport or by EMS/911.

#### Protect yourself and your community:

Please review ACHCH Shelter Health guidance which provides extensive PPE information [ACHCH Shelter Health Guidance for Shelter and Homeless Services Providers \(4/7/2020\)](#)

- [PPE Training Video](#) (4/3/2020)
- [PPE Training PowerPoint \(.pdf\)](#)
- [Handwashing Comic Guide](#)

- [Mask Skills](#)
- [CDC recommendations](#) around extending use of scarce N95 masks

**Before, during and after Outreaching:**

- Do not go out if you are experiencing **any** symptoms or have had contact with a confirmed or suspected COVID-19 case.
- Wear clean clothes you can easily remove and permits washing hands to elbows easily, avoid scarves/flowy clothing.
- Wash up well before you leave.
- Wear a surgical mask at all times when outreaching, from leaving the car until returning to car.
- Wear gloves when in outreach setting; discard when you get back to car.
- When returning to car, carefully remove mask and gloves, take off outer layer, wash or sanitize hands, and keep a sealable garbage bag in car for refuse.
- When returning home, immediately change clothes and put work clothing in bag or in the washer (hot water and dryer), wash hands to elbow and wash face.

**Other Important Resources:**

[International Street Medicine COVID Guide \(3/20/2020\)](#)

[Harm Reduction Coalition COVID guidance for working with people who use drugs \(3/20/2020\)](#)

[Seattle King County Sanitation and Hygiene Guide](#)

[National Health Care for the Homeless Council COVID Resources](#)