Participants/Programs Represented:
97 participants, including AIDS Housing Information Project (AHIP), Alameda County Health Care for the Homeless, Alameda County Health Care Services Agency, Bay Area Legal Aid, City of Berkeley, City of Emeryville, City of Oakland, Cornerstone Fellowship, Curbside Care Clinic, East Bay SPCA, HIV Education and Prevention Project of Alameda County (HEPPAC), Homeless Action Center, Love & Justice in the Streets, PALS East Bay, Punks with Lunch, Roots Community Health Center, Tri-City Health Center, Tiburcio Vasquez Health Center, City of Livermore, Trust Street Team, Women’s Daytime Drop-In Center & Others

1. Introduction: This is the seventh weekly call hosted by the Alameda County Health Care for the Homeless program. Calls will be every Wednesday from 2:00-3:00pm. Email achch@acgov.org to get on mailing list for calls.

- The purpose of this call is to bring together countywide outreach providers to share updates, knowledge, practices, build supportive community, and develop effective responses to protect our health and the health of the persons living unsheltered in Alameda County.
- We’ll hear questions and bring those questions to public health for response if we can’t answer them.
- We’ll operate an email chain for updates and information sharing. Participants are encouraged to send contact information in to David Modersbach, at David.modersbach@acgov.org, or send email to achch@acgov.org.

2. Situation Report:

David Modersbach, Health Care for the Homeless on behalf of Dr. Kathleen Clanon

- High-level update
  a. Projections are showing Alameda County has done a good job of flattening the curve.
  b. Models being used for predictive purposes are changing frequently. And, with a fair amount of confidence, it is looking like Alameda County will be able to stay within “normal surge parameters”, meaning we will likely be able to meet the treatment needs with our current medical facilities (unlikely to need auxiliary sites/field hospitals).
c. If there is a larger surge, it is likely that it would not happen for several weeks, giving
time for continue preparing for this option.

- Contract tracing and testing
  a. Public Health has organized a task force for each of these topics, and will be looking
     for several hundred volunteers and/or staff to assist with this work.
  b. Testing team is working to develop a more coherent strategy for all test sites related
to who is being tested and how to use antibody testing when it becomes available.
  c. Increased attention on trying to prevent outbreaks in Skilled Nursing Facilities (SNFs),
     and preparing to address a potential outbreak in that type of facility, given the
     importance of access to medical equipment onsite.

- General services
  a. Operation Comfort and Safer Ground are approaching capacity at the two existing
     properties. New space will become available at Comfort as people recover and
     return to the community. There are plans in the works for additional hotel spaces;
     the hope is to have these in place in a couple of weeks.
  b. Alameda County seem to be doing well compared to other local municipalities,
     especially in terms of the number of confirmed cases among individuals experiencing
     homelessness (fewer than 10 confirmed cases).

Testing Information regarding staff, provided by AHS:

At this time, testing is done through primary care providers, hospitals or the Emergency
Department. If your primary care provider is unable to provide a test, or, if you do not have a
primary care provider, testing is also available at the sites listed below. These sites prioritize
symptomatic first responders (including shelter and outreach providers):

- Alameda Health System (510-437-8500)
- Oakland free COVID-19 testing (Kaiser Center) to anyone in Alameda County who is working
  or volunteering outside the home and has symptoms or has had contact with the virus. The
  testing is even broader for health workers and shelter workers since they can receive testing
  even if they are asymptomatic. For more information or to schedule your appointment, visit
  www.oaklandca.gov/testing.
- Hayward Fire Station #7 info here

County has just released a list of public testing sites.

3. Updates from the field:

Minimal changes to report from cities, review notes from 4/15/20 or contact city leads.

- City of Livermore noted that Ashbury church shower facilities are back up and running

Heather MacDonald-Fine, Alameda Health System (AHS)

AHS has started providing some clinical care and testing for Operation Roomkey sites. To date, 18
tests have been done onsite, all have been returned, and only 2 confirmed positive cases.
Liz Torkington, Tiburcio Vasquez
- The end of last week was primarily focused on getting on permanent supportive housing and getting people into Safer Ground.
- Not observing serious symptoms in the field, still no referrals to Operation Comfort
- Focus of work transitioning to more education and supply delivery (especially masks)

Rachel Cole Jensen, Abode Housing Navigation
- Team has worked to get individuals at hotel sites onto caseloads
- Leveraging local resources, like CityServe and Islander Motel, for people who are not eligible for isolation housing options currently available through the county.
- Seeing some gaps in eligibility criteria between conditions identified by the CDC/Public Health Department and who is being flagged in HMIS for Safer Ground. ACHCH staff passing on these concerns.

Kate Dettmer, Abode
- Have been connecting people to Safer Ground via HMIS. Have been able to connect more people this week as some of the previously unknown details about the program are becoming more clear.
- Encountering some people who are starting to show symptoms; working to coordinate with other agencies to try to get people connect with Operation Comfort.
- Lots of requests for new assessments coming in for people who are realizing the importance of connecting to the coordinated entry process. Advice for folks who need an assessment:
  - If someone has never been assessed before, contact 2-1-1 to get connected to ask about getting a coordinated entry assessment and to be connected with the Housing Resource Center (HRC) serving their geographic area.
  - If someone needs an updated assessment, contact the HRC who serves their geographic area. Individual will be asked to provide name, date of birth, phone number, and then they will be called back by an assessor.
  - ACHCH plans to have more information about the local HRCs and connecting to this process on next week’s call.

Marcos Gonzalez, Bay Area Community Services
Contact Info: 510-850-7796, mgonzalez@bayareacs.org
- There are two Berkeley outreach teams who have the ability to do in-person assessments; they have some flexibility/availability, contact Marcos for more information.
- Stair Center program temporarily closed following a couple of confirmed cases. This initiated one of the first contact investigation processes for individuals experiencing homelessness.
- Noting that the Women's Daytime Drop-In also reported having availability to do family assessments in Berkeley (510-548-2884).

4. Project Roomkey hotels

David Modersbach on behalf of Kara Carnahan, Director of Programs at Abode Services
• **Reminder:** Operation Comfort is a short term stay and individuals will return to the community once medically cleared. Guests at Safer Ground can stay in place for the duration of the pandemic.

• **Shelter Decompression:** There was a big push last week to decompress shelter spaces by moving high-risk individuals into Safer Ground. Last week, 178 households were brought into Safer Ground. There are 268 total households currently residing at Safer Ground. The final 22 available rooms are being filled soon by people from the HMIS target list. Additional hotel sites are anticipated in the near future.

• **Onsite Case Management/Services:** All guests will be assigned to a case manager within the next week. This person will work with guests at Safer Ground around housing navigation and other needed services (medical, behavioral health, SUD, etc.). This team will be working closely with HomeStretch, so as guests get matched to housing through coordinated entry that they are still able to access those opportunities.

• There are some HCH and ACBH behavioral health and SUD providers working onsite to connect or reconnect guests to these services. Because of the importance of keeping the site healthy, telephonic services are encouraged whenever possible to reduce the number of people coming onsite.

• There is continued coordination of medications, including a daily delivery from Mid-Town pharmacy so that anyone who needs medications continues to have access.

• The ACHCH team is working to put together a list of approved providers from outreach and/or medical teams that can come onsite. The plan is to identify one person per team to be added to a list of providers approved to conduct services onsite.

5. **Masking order**
   • As of 4/22/20, all individuals must wear face coverings while conducting essential activities outside of the home; use of face coverings is also encouraged in congregate living settings. Wearing a mask is not a replacement for maintaining appropriate social distancing.

   • Use of masks is intended to reduce spread from people who have the virus and are asymptomatic or pre-symptomatic as well as to prevent individuals from touching their own faces, which is a primary way that the virus can be transmitted.

   • If your mask is not soiled, follow recommendations from the CDC about storing and reusing masks. Fold the side of the mask that faces out over on itself and store in a paper bag (do not use plastic bags for mask storage). Cloth masks should be washed after each use, if possible. Consider whether you may be able to wash masks at your sites.
If you have requested and received masks through your local EOC, continue ordering! Ideally, we want to have enough masks to offer to all residents. HCHP is available to assist with establishing connections to supply sources, and has some masks/supplies onsite in the meantime.

Refer to the ACHCH PPE training for additional guidance on use of masks and other topics:
- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Bi_tXapx-hQ

This link, from the CDC, provides some FAQs on use of cloth masks: https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/cloth-face-cover-faq.html

This link, from the CDC, provides instructions on to wear, clean, and make cloth masks: https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/downloads/DIY-cloth-face-covering-instructions.pdf

BOTTOM LINE: Feel free to get more surgical masks from ACHCH and distribute them freely among unsheltered people.

6. Safety strategies for outreach teams

Talia Rubin, City of Oakland

It is important to balance the desire to be of service to the community, to keep all involved safe, and to manage worries related to potential risks and unknowns. We understand there may be less capacity as things will likely take longer to make sure they are done in a way that is safe.

Here are some generalized ideas of best practices for people doing outreach at this time.

- Maintain physical distancing
  - Limit the number of people in your office space at any one time
  - Consider staggering shifts
  - Curbside drop off of supplies are encouraged.
  - Any contact should be made with great caution and with proper use of PPE and hygiene practices.
- PPE and hygiene
  - Wear masks all the time
  - Wear gloves as much as possible
  - Have hand sanitizer for each staff person and in each office or van location
- Minimize exposure risk through strategically formulating teams
Form smaller teams
- Cohort staff to reduce cross-exposure (always have the same 2-3 people working together)
- Stagger shifts
  - Consider having a group that is in the community from 8am-2pm, another from 10am-4pm, and another from 12-6pm.
  - This reduces the likelihood of being in the office at the same time.
  - Each shift can take on different types of tasks connected to the time of day they are working. For example, the earlier shifts can pick up donations and the later shifts can do more supply distribution/harm reduction.

Street Health and Outreach Guidance
- Continue to refer to shelter health guidance on ACHCH website and share updates with your teams: [https://www.achch.org/street-health--outreach-guidance.html](https://www.achch.org/street-health--outreach-guidance.html)
- This site will continue to have the most up-to-date guidance for outreach providers on a range of topics including PPE, supply requests, sanitation/hygiene guides, education resources for clients and staff, screening, information on isolation housing options, etc.

7. What happens if there is a positive COVID case in an area served by my team?

David Modersbach, Health Care for the Homeless
- Through joint efforts with Public Health, Health Care for the Homeless, and service providers there is work being done to establish protocols for conducting contact investigations in shelter settings.
- These plans focus on reporting and responding to individuals with confirmed cases of COVID-19 as well as supporting staff, guests, and physical spaces that have had contact with these individuals.
- The goal is to have a comprehensive response, which will be shared as it becomes available. Additional guidance around the development of these processes are coming from: [https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/php/guidance-evaluating-pui.html](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/php/guidance-evaluating-pui.html)

8. Questions and “Answers”
- Why are Operation Comfort guests not accepted to Safer Ground.
  - These hotels have different eligibility criteria. Operation Comfort is broadly available to anyone who has tested positive for, is demonstrating symptoms of, or has been exposed to COVID-19. For those who meet the more restrictive criteria for Safer Ground, they may be eligible to transfer over once their symptoms resolve.
- If a guest has case management services that are not in HMIS, how can we share that with Abode for continuity of service?
Abode staff will have access to data systems, such as the Community Health Record, that will help verify participation in programs outside of HMIS. ACHCH is working to get contact information for outreach providers to Abode and Safer Ground.

- Are people in Safer Ground getting access to harm reduction and other services onsite?
  - Yes, harm reduction being done in coordination with the pharmacist onsite.
  - There are also case managers onsite who can work to connect guests with housing navigation resources, medical services, behavioral health and/or SUD treatment, etc.

- Has CES/HIMS reconfigured the algorithm to triage at-risk clients with regard to the BNL? Older folks might be triaged/ranked higher?
  - The CES prioritizes and weights different criteria according to a set algorithm. The referrals for Safer Ground were determined using a process of filtering for particular medical criteria.

- We have initiated referrals for Safer Ground and Operation Comfort and find that the doctor will call and want to speak directly with the referring doctor regarding the client. Is there a way to get all needed information asked on the referral?
  - The intake team, including the doctor, should be contacting whoever made the referral. So, consider having the referral contact be someone who would be available to participate in the phone assessments. All the content on the medical screening could be collected in advance. This tool was included as a part of the initial referral packet; contact covidhousing@acgov.org if your organization needs a copy.

- How does one get a medical evaluation for someone who qualifies by assessment for Safer Ground but hasn't had recent medical eval to verify conditions?
  - Work with the primary care provider/medical home to verify conditions, and ensure the HMIS assessment reflects the most up-to-date information about this person.

- Can we get people harm reduction supplies to the hotels? Who can continue providing services to folks in the hotels? Lots of CBOs are unclear on what we can provide for folks. I am concerned that our folks who actively use drugs and may not be open to or eligible for MAT (non-opioid users are going to leave these hotels or be in more unsafe positions if they're not able to access safe supplies. Are there any syringes, or other safer drug using supplies being provided? I understand there is Narcan and MAT access which is wonderful but I think we'd be naïve not to think that folks who need to use won't figure out a way to do so.
  - There is a robust harm reduction model in place at the Project Roomkey sites, and Safer Ground staff is working further to incorporate harm reduction strategies at the site.

- RESOURCE: The East Bay SPCA is offering a free pet food drive-through on Fridays. It is only accessible by car (for reasons of physical distancing), and can only serve one family per car. Agencies can also arrange call or text Kim Coady at ACBH to coordinate pick up of pet food- her number is (510) 846-9535.

Thank you all for the coordinated efforts being made to support persons living unsheltered!

Weekly Outreach Provider COVID Phone Call #7
Wednesday, April 22, 2:00-3:00pm
More information: achch@acgov.org