

Alameda County Health Care for the Homeless
Weekly Shelter Provider COVID Zoom Call #17
Wednesday, July 1, 2020; 10:30am-11:30am

Participants/Programs Represented:

A Safe Place, Abode Services, AC Health Care Services, AC Health Care for the Homeless, AC Social Services, Alameda Health System (AHS), Bay Area Community Services, Berkeley Food and Housing Project, Building Futures, City of Emeryville, City of Hayward, City of Oakland, City Team, Dorothy Day House Shelter, East Oakland Community Project (EOCP), Family Bridges, Fred Finch Youth and Family Services, La Familia/FESCO, Mental Health Association of Alameda County, Multicultural Institute, Oakland Dream Center, St. Vincent de Paul, Sword to Plowshares, Women's Daytime Drop-In Center

- 1. Introduction:** This is the seventeenth weekly call hosted by the Alameda County Health Care for the Homeless program. Calls will be **every Wednesday at 10:30-11:30am on Zoom.**
 - Thank you for all your hard work! This is a marathon not a sprint, so take care of you so that we can continue to support our shelter community and those who are unhoused.
 - The purpose of this call is to bring together countywide shelter providers to share updates, knowledge, practices, build supportive community, and develop effective responses to protect our health and the health of the persons living in our shelter environments.
 - To be added to the email list for more updates and information sharing, contact Kari Jennings-Parriott LCSW, ACHCH Shelter Health manager at kari.jenningsparriott@acgov.org, 510-891-8938.
 - If shelter staff have specific issues or challenges with individuals who may be symptomatic, infected or at-risk of COVID-19, email achch@acgov.org with details so we can follow up.

2. Grounding Exercise:

Breathing exercise- breathe in for 4 seconds, hold for 1 second, breathe out for 5 seconds. Repeat. Breathe in positive things you have been observing/experiencing. Breathe out negativity/stress.

3. Situation Report:

David Modersbach, Health Care for the Homeless

- Refer to [Alameda County COVID-19 Dashboards](#)
 - **Countywide totals as of 6/30: 5964 confirmed cases, 135 deaths**
 - About 600 newly confirmed cases, 15 deaths in the last week
 - Transmission continues to disproportionately impact communities of color
 - Highest rates of getting the infection in Hispanic/Latinx communities
 - Highest rates of death from infection in Black/African American communities
- Health Care for the Homeless (HCHP) has continued to keep track of every known positive case for people across the county who are experiencing homelessness

- Total cases: 43 in shelters, 42 unsheltered, 30 additional people under investigation
- To date: 11 shelter, 12 encampment-based rapid response interventions to outbreaks
- Rate of transmission ~900 per 100,000 for individuals experiencing homelessness
- Public Health Department Updates
 - Community/business reopening plans have been paused due to recent increases in cases
 - Need to continue protecting vulnerable populations, so shelter guidance is to maintain health/safety practices (handwashing, masking, social distancing, etc.)
 - Continued expansion of testing resources
 - Updated list of testing sites: <http://www.acphd.org/2019-ncov/testing.aspx>
 - Expanding who can get a test
 - With or without insurance
 - Community testing sites are free of charge
 - Dr. Erica Pan has taken a job with the State of California. Dr. Nick Moss will be stepping in to take on the role of Interim Health Officer for the County.

Lucy Kasdin, Health Care for the Homeless

[Project Roomkey](#)

- Operation Comfort started as an isolation and quarantine (I/Q) option for people who meet the HUD definition of literal homelessness and have tested positive, have symptoms, or have been in contact with someone else who has COVID-19. Currently about 200 rooms for this purpose.
 - When a second site opened, the population expanded to include people in overcrowded housing situations, but required that they have a positive test result to qualify.
 - Last week a decision was made to further expanded criteria to allow people in overcrowded spaces to qualify for quarantine without a positive test, if they have symptoms and/or had contact (clinical eligibility is now the same for all Comfort referrals).
- Currently at about 93% occupancy for Safer Ground sites (high risk, HUD homeless)
- Yesterday, the Board of Supervisors approved plans to bring on 335 new rooms at full leased sites and 100 more scattered site rooms- working toward goal of 1200 total Project Roomkey rooms.
 - The goal of 1200 rooms captures 15% of the last point in time count (PIT)
 - More information will be shared in the next 6 weeks or so about transitions into these expanded Safer Ground resources

Heather MacDonald-Fine, Alameda Health Services (AHS)

- 2 testing sites for ambulatory patients: Highland and San Leandro Hospitals
 - To date: 3460 tests have been given (about 250 tests in last week), 517 total confirmed cases, 23 patients currently being treated in the hospital
 - 23 inpatient cases is the highest number at any single point in time, though it has come close (22) on a couple of other occasions
- For July, the mobile clinic will maintain the same schedule it had in June
 - Safer Ground on Wednesdays and Operation Comfort on Thursdays

4. Group Discussion: Risk Management and Remaining Vigilant (feedback de-identified and reported in summary)

Because there is no known end date for the pandemic, we want to support one another and our teams to remain vigilant. Continue best practices for: handwashing, wearing masks, social distancing, only going out for essential needs, and symptom management checks (temperatures, asking residents about sore throat/coughing/other symptoms).

How are residents and staff managing? Are you noticing any changes/symptoms of COVID fatigue?

- Important for staff to take care of themselves outside of work and to take breaks at work as needed.
- There is a growing sense of fatigue with both staff and clients/residents. No identified end date pushes on the fatigue. Noticing the need for more frequent reminders about PPE, social distancing, handwashing.
- Some sites have been able to shift staff around within the organization to address shifting needs
- Decompression efforts have helped to give more physical and mental/emotional space to staff and residents.
- The “better”, more consistent, residents are with sheltering in place, the more difficult it is becoming to deal with the fact that people are staying indoors all the time.
- The hardest part to deal with is that there are no concrete answers to give; starting to feel like forever because there is not an identified “light at the end of the tunnel”.
- Sharing information from CDC and other legitimate sources. As things are starting to open back up, there can be a lot of confusion.

Has your staff been doing anything different in terms of programming?

- Have adjusted model of services to have more consistency with who is staying onsite (more of a transitional housing model than a traditional shelter).
- Providing increased opportunities for healthy engagement, while also promoting the importance of respecting safety of the community (ie. voluntary/socially distanced groups and activities, especially outdoors)
- More housing-focused case management services
- Noticing an increase in some behavioral issues. Out of a desire to keep people inside to reduce risks, some programs had decreased consequences like suspending/exiting people for particular behaviors. Recognition that there are still times this may be needed for the safety of the community. Working to build stability in the cohort and will still discharge residents when needed due to behavioral issues.
- Different things work at different sites/agencies! At one site, staff approves all outings at another site residents do not need to take this step. Important to maintain people’s rights within the scope of the order (going out for exercise, essential needs, etc.).
- Reminding people often that we are doing these new practices to keep each other safe.
- No visitors allowed in building, so facilitating a number of outreach activities (meals, clothing distribution, etc) outdoors.

5. Resource Sharing, Questions and “Answers”

- Is there a source you recommend for obtaining information on COVID fatigue?

- CityTeam has openings at Turning Point, transitional housing program for women. Call 510-766-2420 to start the intake process. Someone will call back with an appointment time for a phone intake. Please do not go to site until resident has been accepted.
- Reminder: Testing only offers a snapshot of whether or not someone is likely to have COVID at the exact moment of the test. There are reasons why both positive and negative test results may not tell the whole story about whether or not someone is infectious. Best practice continues to be quarantining for 14 days when entering a new environment. Contact Kari for additional guidance about how to implement this in your specific site/context.

Thank you all! Be compassionate in your care for yourself and others!

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