Alameda County Health Care for the Homeless
Weekly Shelter Provider COVID Zoom Call #7
Wednesday, April 22, 10:30am-11:30am

Participants/Programs Represented:
211, A Safe Place, Abode Services, Alameda County Health Care Services, Alameda County HSO office, Alameda County Social Services Agency, Bay Area Community Services (BACS), Berkeley Emergency Storm Shelter, Berkeley Food and Housing Project (BFHP), Bridget Transition House, Building Futures, City of Berkeley, City of Emeryville, City of Fremont, City of Hayward, City of Oakland, City of Union City, Covenant House, Dorothy Day House Shelter, East Oakland Community Project, Family Bridges, First Pres Hayward/South Hayward Parish, La Familia/FESCO, Oakland Dream Center, Operation Dignity, Roots Community Health Center, Safe Alternatives to Violent Environments (SAVE), Seventh Step, Swords to Plowshares, Tri-Valley Haven, Women's Daytime Drop-In Center

1. **Introduction:** This is the seventh weekly call hosted by the Alameda County Health Care for the Homeless program. Calls will be **every Wednesday at 10:30-11:30am.** Please email [achch@acgov.org](mailto:achch@acgov.org) if you would like to gain access to this weekly call.

   • Thank you for all your hard work! Take care of yourself, your families, and your communities outside of 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.
   • We’ll operate an email chain for updates and information sharing. Participants are encouraged to contact Kari Jennings-Parriott LCSW, ACHCH Shelter Health manager at [kari.jenningsparriott@acgov.org](mailto: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, please email ACHCH at [achch@acgov.org](mailto:achch@acgov.org) with details so we can follow up with you.

2. **Grounding Exercise:** Take a deep breath, set an intention for today’s meeting.

3. **Situation Report:**

   Dr. Kathleen Clanon, Medical Director for Health Care Services Agency
   • 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’s Henry J. Kaiser convention center (covid19testing@oaklandca.gov)
- Hayward Fire Station #7 info here

**Talia Rubin, City of Oakland**

- There continue to be some beds available at local shelters, so please continue to refer.
  - Let people know that physical distancing guidance is in place
- Oakland specific- if you have meal delivery needs, contact Talia (TRubin@oaklandca.gov).
  - Yesterday 2600 meals were distributed to a range of sites including permanent supportive housing units, transitional housing units, Covenant House Youth Shelter
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

4. Isolation Housing Update:

Kara Carnahan, Director of Programs at Abode Services

Reminder
Please save shelter beds for individuals going to Operation Comfort, this is a short term stay and they will return once medically cleared. Guests at Safer Ground can stay in place for the duration of the pandemic, so you do not need to save those beds.

Decompression Efforts
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 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.
• When people have previously been assigned to a housing navigator, should they be exited from that navigator if they go to Safer Ground? What if their navigator was connected to a residentially-based program and they have been exited from their shelter bed?
  o Individuals should continue to work with their original housing navigator, even if they are exited from their shelter bed. Abode case managers can be an added resource and would likely exit if a person were to be placed offsite. Navigators are encouraged to stay in touch with clients by phone and to collaborate with Abode Case Managers.

• Who is the lead agency/primary provider if a person is now at Safer Ground with Abode case management?
  o The lead agency continues to be the provider who was working with the individual prior to their transition into Safer Ground.

Visiting and deliveries
There are no outside visitors allowed onsite. If you are a payee or need to bring a person’s belongings from the shelter to the hotel, you can bring items to the security booth at the entrance to Safer Ground. You can drop off items there and an Abode staff member will coordinate delivery.

• What are the parameters around guests coming and going from the Safer Ground hotel? Some providers have reported seeing Safer Ground guests at encampment sites. How should this be addressed in alignment with Safer Ground program guidelines?
  o There are no explicit restrictions in terms of coming/going from Safer Ground. Education about the sheltering in place and the importance of keeping the virus out of the hotel is provided, and more may be needed. People are encouraged only to leave for essential business, but no established curfews.
  o Questions raised about the balance of individual rights and the safety of the others in the hotel and the wider community. Suggestion raised about having participants agree to more restrictive criteria around going offsite from the hotel.

5. Updated Face Covering Guidance and Supplies
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 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:

This link, from the CDC, provides instructions on to wear, clean, and make cloth masks:

6. Questions and “Answers”

- How do individuals and/or shelters get information about test results?
  - Any individual who is tested will receive their own test results. Individuals can choose to share their test results. Task-forces are continuing to explore if/how test results can be shared with previous residences or if an individual does not want their results shared.

- If a resident tests positive, will the shelter be notified and will staff and other residents be tested?
  - Yes, if a person tests positive the shelter will be notified and supported by the Public Health Department and/or Health Care for the Homeless with additional guidance.

- How would shelters know that it is safe for a resident to come back, since some are leaving AMA?
  - For individuals who were accepted into Operation Comfort, they will receive written medical clearance at the time of check-out and staff at Operation Comfort will collaborate with the shelter staff for D/C planning. If they do not have this, you are not required to hold their bed/allow them back into the shelter.

- How can individuals get a written copy of their test results?
  - Kari agreed to follow up with testing providers to explore a process for this.

- Dr. Clanon reminded that test results cannot confirm that a person does not currently have COVID, only that they did not have it at the specific time that they were tested.

- What will be the process for communicating how to get people into new hotel spaces?
  - This may look different depending on the eligibility criteria, funding source, and where the hotel is geographically located. The focus will remain on engaging the most vulnerable members of the community. More details will be shared as they become available.

- If our type of case management program isn’t in HMIS, how will we be notified by Abode to partner with service coordination?
Abode staff will have access to other data systems, such as the Community Health Record, that will help verify participation in programs outside of HMIS.

Where are guests from Operation Comfort being discharged to if they were not referred from a shelter? Are they completing a Housing Plan with a Navigator before being discharged?

The duration of stay is much shorter at Operation Comfort than it is at Safer Ground. Case managers are still assigned and will do what they can to connect people who are interested with a place to transition to after they are medically cleared (respite programs, shelters, family/friend, etc). Some may transfer over to Safer Ground, if they meet eligibility criteria.

Where does the Coordinated Entry System/Housing Resource Center fit into this process?

If someone has never been assessed before, contact 2-1-1 to get connected to the HRC serving their geographic area.

If someone needs an updated assessment, contact the HRC who serves their geographic area.

Is Operation Comfort considering extended hours for receiving referrals, to better match up with shelter hours of operation?

This request is being considered. It would require the coordination of multiple programs and systems to facilitate, so exploring the feasibility.

Are there opportunities for Safer Ground residents to interact with other people and/or to support socialization/interaction with other people?

Safer Ground guests are not restricted to their rooms in the same way as Operation Comfort guests. They are able to interact with one another from appropriate social distance. Additionally, family, friends, and providers are encouraged to remain in contact with these individuals by phone.

How long will EOCs continue to offer PPE supplies? Will supplies run out before pandemic is over?

Per Dr. Clanon, the EOCs have reported that typical supply chains are opening up again, and they feel pretty confident about being able to provide supplies, except for gowns/ventilators.

What are other shelters doing about food services?

At E.O.C.P. we have moved to individual servings and portions of condiments and beverages to lessen cross contamination. We are also sanitizing tables and chairs after every meal service.

Thank you all!

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