
Homeless Street Outreach Guidance for COVID-19 and Influenza:

March 18, 2020

The following are Alameda County Health Care for the Homeless COVID-19 Virus guidance and recommendations for outreach providers serving people experiencing unsheltered homelessness:

1. [Plan and be aware of guidance and resources](#)
2. [Provide education for staff and residents](#)
3. [Assess Encampment and Street Sites and Clients](#)
4. [Provide hygiene and prevention materials](#)
5. [Screen residents and clients for symptoms, symptoms and Testing Protocols](#)
6. [Social Distancing Efforts](#)
7. [Support street and encampment sanitation services](#)

1. Plan and be aware of COVID-19 guidance and resources. Stay in the loop: Things are changing *fast*, and the ACHCH program will bring new info as we have it.

- **Weekly Alameda County Street Outreach Providers conference call:**
Wednesdays 2-3pm call 888-204-5984 access: 710-5040#
Share this information within your teams.
- Alameda County Health Care for the Homeless guidance and resources at <https://www.achch.org/coronavirus>
- Alameda County Public Health updates and guidance at: <http://www.acphd.org/2019-ncov.aspx>
- **SUPPLIES:** ACHCH is working to locate and distribute supplies, and to assess outreach provider needs. PLEASE fill out this supply assessment sheet with the correct contact information for your program/organization/effort: <https://forms.gle/PLmG7CN8ypfy1ERDA> This is not an “order” form, but will help us to distribute supplies if and when we can get them.

2. Educate yourself, outreach workers, staff and clients

Staff and Volunteers: Take care of yourself!

- If you feel sick, DON'T COME TO WORK! *No-one needs “heroes” who may spread infection to their co-workers and clients.*
- Assess staff and volunteers for potential exposure risks. Redirect vulnerable (aging, chronic illness) staff or volunteers from higher risk positions providing prolonged close contact.
- Train staff on COVID as well as on handwashing, cough, and other hygiene techniques. Train staff on procedures around self-protection, disease identification and control.

- Consider offering influenza vaccines at the worksite to prevent the flu.
- Avoid any close contact with symptomatic persons. Have Protective Personal Equipment (PPE) on hand for situations involving close contact with symptomatic persons.
- Maintain program point persons to be in contact with the ACHCH program and Public Health department.

Supplies:
Protective Personal Equipment includes: **Face shields, gowns, gloves, N95 face masks**

Make sure that flyers and have credible educational information clearly visible and available to staff and clients.

ACHCH recommends at least the following posters/resources: [Symptoms](#), [cover your cough](#), [wash hands](#), [Coronavirus Information](#).

3. Assess Encampments, Sites and Clients You Serve:

- Identify the vulnerable (aging, immune-compromised, high-risk) persons you serve at each site
- How many people, tents/structures in each site?
- How well are site residents informed about COVID?
- How are tents/sleeping structures arranged?
- Are there symptomatic persons at site? High-risk people? Can they be they “isolated” or moved at sites?
- Are there handwashing stations/toilets/sanitation supplies at site or nearby?
- What are the other sanitation needs at site?

Supplies:
Encampment/Site Assessment tool: [Seattle/King County tool](#)

Be prepared to share this information with countywide outreach and emergency response partners. There will be movement in the coming days to identify safer locations for high-risk homeless and infected people experiencing homelessness.

Remember to submit supplies assessment and contact information [here](#) if you haven't.

4. Provide hygiene and prevention materials

- Handwashing with soap and running water is better than hand sanitizer
- Ensure everyone has access to and educated about their recommended vaccines like the flu shot
- Find out where people are using local hand-washing resources.
- If lacking hand wash resources, make hand sanitizer available for general use, and offer personal-sized hand sanitizer for clients to take.
- If possible, make tissue and waste baskets available.
- People should never share things like phones, cigarettes, pipes, food, or other items. Nor should they share bedding, clothes, blankets, etc.

Supplies:
Hand sanitizer: 2-8oz containers at least 60% isopropyl alcohol.
Tissue/Kleenex
Garbage bags for infectious waste
Disposable surgical face masks for symptomatic persons.

- If possible, distribute **disposable surgical face masks** to any person with a cough or other symptoms. If someone has a cough or is sneezing, please have them wear a disposable face mask when they are within six feet of other people. ACHCH is making efforts to acquire disposable surgical masks – please keep in touch [here](#) and [here](#)..
 - Reinforce that the only persons who should be wearing face masks **are people with symptoms**, wearing disposable surgical masks when they are in close proximity with others to prevent their transmission of droplet particles when they cough or sneeze.

5. Screen clients for symptoms or high risk

- **Symptoms Screening**, and instruct residents on how to self-screen:

Screening questions:

1. Are you currently experiencing any of the following:
 - Fever (temperature over 101 degrees)
 - Cough
 - Shortness of breath, respiratory difficulties
2. Have you had recent contact with someone known to have COVID disease?
3. If symptomatic, have they slept in a congregate living space (shelter) within the past 10 days?

Supplies: A **temporal thermometer** helps screen clients for fever. Also consider distributing **single-use thermometers**.

Risk Screen for people at high-risk of severe illness or death:

- Age 60+
- Other chronic conditions like heart, lung or liver disease
- Immune compromise (HIV, cancer, etc).

6. Connect severely symptomatic people to 911; help people at risk identify warning symptoms and make sure they have a way to alert 911. :

- If a person has symptoms of COVID-19 including fever, cough or shortness of breath, problem-solve with them how to isolate where they are. At the moment, there is little testing being carried out anywhere– this will change – and the ACHCH program will keep you updated.
 - Here is a [list of countywide primary care providers](#).
 - If a person has severe symptoms (shaking, high fevers, difficulty breathing, difficulty walking, inability to stay hydrated, unable to care for self in shelter/tent) CALL 911.
 - Contact the HCH program if you believe someone with COVID symptoms, needs to be transported to isolation and treatment, and cannot contact a primary care provider: Call the ACHCH program: 510-891-8950 (business hours) and email COVIDACHCH@acgov.org, or contact ACPHD (925) 422-7595 outside of business hours.

- A symptomatic person without any immediate housing/treatment options should be encouraged to temporarily isolate themselves, arrange to receive “to go” bag lunches, water, tissue and face masks, and keep themselves outside of close contact (6’) from anyone else. Please keep a safe distance, and work to try and locate isolation and treatment housing for them. They should be provided with medical care information, and make a plan with others, for how and when to call 911 if they are worsening.
 - “Home”-isolation [Tips and Guidance](#) is available from Alameda County:
- **COVID Testing:** At this time, testing is done through primary care providers, hospitals or the Emergency Department. There are no places to go to “get tested.” Testing is done as part of treatment of persons with confirmed contact to COVID cases or for very ill or very high-risk persons. This may change soon.
- **High Risk Persons:** Anyone over age 60, or who is immune compromised or with severe chronic health issues -- especially heart and lung – is at higher risk for death from COVID sickness. If anyone in this condition is **experiencing symptoms**, they should immediately contact their medical provider or call 911 and get transported to a hospital for immediate care and testing. The ACHCH program is working day-to-day to connect High Risk people experiencing homelessness to isolation housing as it becomes available.
- **Transportation:** At this time ACHCH does not recommend transporting symptomatic patients on your own, nor through rideshare or taxis. We are working on guidance for PPE while transporting patients and on alternatives to ambulance transport.

7. Social Distancing: Implement and Practice Social Distancing Efforts

Outreach Providers:

- Create opportunities to communicate with clients through text, phone, skype
- Approach others cautiously to avoid being close to people who may be ill. Always keep a 6’ distance from others until you know that they are non-symptomatic.
- Keep a supply of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and know how to use them for times that you are not able to maintain your distance.

Supplies:

Protective Personal Equipment includes: **Face shields, gowns, gloves, N95 face masks**

Encampment and Street Sites:

Limiting the spaces between people, the number of people who congregate and interact with one another, and allowing more physical space between people in camps and street setting will help to curb spread of infection. People with symptoms should [self-isolate](#), and wear protective face masks when close to others.

Explain to people that everyone is distancing themselves from others to avoid stigmatizing those who are affected., as well to comply with the Countywide Shelter In Place order.

Examples of Social Distancing in Encampment/Street Setting:

- Uses tissue or paper towel if you have to touch commonly touched surfaces

- Practice frequent handwashing and sanitizing.
- Keep 6 feet of “social distance” with other people, avoid handshakes, hugs, etc.
- Divide up encampment spaces to create at least 6’ between each tent room between tents and people.
- Set up areas of encampment where symptomatic persons who are self-isolating can be separate from other persons.
- Get “grab and go” lunches and meals from soup kitchens
- Help organize volunteer-based “home” delivery meal options for encampment residents, especially those who are isolating.

8. Hygiene and sanitation recommendations:

Routinely and efficiently clean facilities and surfaces often

- A 10% bleach solution (1/2 cup bleach to 1 gallon water) is adequate to kill COVID virus.
- Camp residents can be guided and supplied to take measure to clean and disinfect key surfaces at least daily.
- Cleaning: Wash surfaces with soap and water to remove dirt and food. Rinse with water, and follow with a bleach solution to kill germs. Even if a surface is not visibly dirty, you should clean and disinfect with bleach solution.
- Disinfection usually requires the bleach to remain on the surface for a certain period of time (e.g., letting it stand for 3 to 5 minutes) to kill virus and germs.

Supplies: Smaller bottles of 10% **bleach solution** to distribute to camp residents. **Sanitation/Disinfectant Wipes** to distribute and to use in outreach.

Other Resources:

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

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