



State of California

# BUSINESS, CONSUMER SERVICES AND HOUSING AGENCY

Gavin Newsom, Governor  
Lourdes M. Castro Ramírez, Secretary

**TO:** Homeless Assistance Providers  
**FROM:** California Business, Consumer Services and Housing Agency  
**DATE:** March 18, 2020  
**SUBJECT:** Interim Guidance for Homeless Assistance Providers on Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19)

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This interim guidance is based on what is currently known about Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) and is a follow up to the [guidance](#) released on March 10, 2020. The Business, Consumer Services and Housing Agency (BCSH) will update this interim guidance as needed and as additional information becomes available. Please check <https://www.bcsb.ca.gov/hcfc/> regularly to ensure that you are accessing the most up-to-date information available.

## **Shelter Environments: preventing disease spread among clients and staff**

As recommended in the [Center for Disease Control's Interim Guidance for homeless services providers](#):

- In general sleeping areas (for those who are not experiencing respiratory symptoms), ensure that beds/mats are at least 3 feet apart, and request that all clients sleep head-to-toe.
- Provide access to fluids, tissues, plastic bags for the proper disposal of used tissues.
- Ensure bathrooms and other sinks are consistently stocked with soap and drying materials for handwashing. Provide alcohol-based hand sanitizers that contain at least 60% alcohol (if that is an option at your shelter) at key points within the facility, including registration desks, entrances/exits, and eating areas.
- At check-in, provide any client with respiratory symptoms (cough, fever) with a surgical mask. (The Atlanta Continuum of Care developed a triage-screening tool focused on reorganizing the intake

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- workflow to effectively identify symptomatic and asymptomatic people entering congregate sites. A link to their tool can be found on the [HUD Exchange](#)).
- Per HUD guidance, shelter providers should consult with their local health department before turning away individuals with respiratory symptoms. Shelter providers should be establishing protocols for addressing such situations with the health departments as soon as possible. If an individual requires medical attention, providers should continue to direct them to a healthcare provider.
  - Confine clients with mild respiratory symptoms consistent with COVID-19 infection to individual rooms, if possible, and have them avoid common areas.
  - Follow CDC recommendations for how to prevent further spread in your facility.
    - If individual rooms for sick clients are not available, consider using a large, well-ventilated room for people with mild respiratory symptoms.
    - In areas where clients with respiratory illness are staying, keep beds at least 3 feet apart and use temporary barriers between beds, such as curtains, and request that all clients sleep head-to-toe.
    - If possible, designate a separate bathroom for sick clients with COVID-19 symptoms.
    - Consider reducing cleaning frequency in bedrooms and bathrooms dedicated to ill persons to as-needed cleaning (e.g., of soiled items and surfaces) to avoid unnecessary contact with the ill persons.
  - Decisions about whether clients with mild illness due to suspected or confirmed COVID-19 should remain in the shelter or be directed to alternative housing sites should be made in coordination with local health authorities.
  - If you identify any client with severe symptoms, notify your public health department and arrange for the client to receive immediate medical care.
  - Ensure that all common areas within the facility follow good practices for environmental cleaning. Cleaning should be conducted in accordance with [CDC recommendations](#).

**Please note that guidance around accessing additional Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), such as masks and gloves, has changed. The Medical Health Operations Area Coordinator (MHOAC) has begun prioritizing supplies for health**

**care workers and first responders.** Contact your local Offices of Emergency Management for any supply needs (see below for contact information).

### **Sheltering for Individuals who are at risk of infection, including in hotel/motels**

Collaboration is critical among the homelessness services system, local government and emergency services, public health system, and health care facilities to ensure that people experiencing homelessness have access to safe and adequate shelter or housing and medical care if they become ill with COVID-19. The state is working to identify hotel/motel rooms and other spaces around California to support homeless individuals or families who, in priority order:

- 1) Test positive for COVID-19 who do not require hospitalization but need isolation (including those exiting from hospitals);
- 2) Have been exposed, or potentially exposed to COVID-19 who do not require hospitalization;
- 3) Persons needing social distancing as a precautionary measure, particularly for high-risk groups such as people over 65 or with certain underlying health conditions (respiratory, compromised immunities, chronic disease); and
- 4) Other homeless populations that are not among the foregoing categories but whose living situation makes them unable to adhere to social distancing guidance.

To the extent outreach is occurring, the State strongly encourages prioritizing individuals 65 and older.

Homeless individuals who test positive and require hospitalization will need to be accommodated through the existing health care network – these hotel/motel rooms are not intended to serve as health care facilities and protocols for referrals and access to health care facilities should be developed ASAP.

Please coordinate with your County Office of Emergency Management (see below for contact information) to determine your community's need for hotel/motel rooms to accommodate homeless individuals and families and request support from the state. The local Emergency Operations Center, public health authority and social services department, in coordination with their local homeless services providers and Continuum of Care, will:

- Determine the clients that are to be served by the hotels/motels.
- Transport clients.
- Provide contracts and funding for basic wrap-around services such as sanitation, janitorial, feeding, and security as a requirement to receive

- the asset. In some cases the hotel's workforce can provide these services if the proper PPE and protocols are available.
- Plan for social and medical service enhancements, as needed, funded by local governments.

These emergency shelter costs are partially federally reimbursable under the declared state of emergency.

Important note: The local governments should continue any independent efforts to secure congregate shelter opportunities within their own jurisdictions. If local governments identify opportunities for any leases, congregate capacity or isolation capacity, they are advised to move forward with those leases independently and apart from the State's efforts.

For any questions related to this effort, please contact the California Department of Social Services directly by emailing JR Antablian at [George.Antablian@dss.ca.gov](mailto:George.Antablian@dss.ca.gov).

### **Homelessness Funding**

Today, Governor Gavin Newsom issued an executive order to, effective immediately, broaden the purposes of how local recipients can spend existing state homelessness funding funds to include shelter capacity expansion, emergency protective measures and supplies to limit infection among vulnerable homeless individuals, and other prevention and containment efforts related to COVID-19 and its impact on California's homeless population. Local providers are encouraged to contact their cities, counties, and Continuums of Care for details on accessing these resources.

The Governor also directed another \$100 million allocated to local recipients through the funding formula from the Homeless Housing, Assistance & Prevention program, including direct allocations to cities, counties, and Continuums of Care.

### **Homelessness Prevention Efforts**

On March 16, 2020, Governor Gavin Newsom issued an [executive order](#) that suspends any provision of state law that restricts a local government's ability to limit residential or commercial evictions, slows foreclosures, and protects against utility shutoffs. The state encourages you to share this information broadly to protect any potentially unstably housed individuals or families who have been impacted by COVID-19.

General questions? Contact the Homeless Coordinating and Financing Council at [HCFC@bcsh.ca.gov](mailto:HCFC@bcsh.ca.gov).