TO: Homeless Service Providers

FROM: California Business, Consumer Services and Housing Agency

DATE: April 27, 2020

SUBJECT: Interim Guidance for Homeless Assistance Providers on Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19)

The California Business, Consumer Services, and Housing Agency (BCSH) is releasing this updated interim guidance based on new information released by the Center for Disease Control and what we currently know about Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19). This guidance builds on the guidance released on March 10, 2020. BCSH will continue to update this interim guidance as needed and as additional information becomes available. Please check https://www.bcsh.ca.gov/hcfc/ regularly to ensure that you are accessing the most up-to-date information available.

Preventing & Mitigating COVID-19 Spread

As recommended in the recently updated Center for Disease Control's Interim Guidance for homeless services providers and Interim Guidance for people experiencing unsheltered homelessness, there are multiple steps homeless services providers and outreach workers should take to prevent, prepare for and respond to a COVID-19 outbreak. They include:

I.   Screening

Take the necessary prevention and mitigation steps to regularly assess clients and staff for symptoms (including taking an individual's temperature).

- Clients that screen positive for symptoms should be provided with a cloth face covering, separated from others, and referred to the appropriate isolation location as determined by your Continuum of Care (CoC), public health department and community leadership.

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- If an individual requires medical attention, providers should continue to direct them to a healthcare provider. We encourage you to become familiar with triage protocols and have these in place locally. To access additional information click here and here.

- Staff who are checking client temperatures should use a system that creates a physical barrier (such as a glass or plastic window or partition that can protect the staff member's face from respiratory droplets that may be produced if the client sneezes, coughs, or talks) between the client and the screener as described here.

II.   Supplies and Protective Equipment:

Provide the necessary cleaning and protective supplies for your organization. Have supplies on hand for staff, volunteers, and those you serve, such as soap, alcohol-based hand sanitizers that contain at least 60% alcohol, tissues, trash baskets, gloves, cleaning supplies, cloth face coverings, and personal protective equipment (PPE), as needed by staff.

- Recent guidance released by the California Department of Public Health notes the importance of essential social services workers who are providing direct service having access to PPE. PPE resources can be requested through counties' emergency services offices.

- Staff who do not have contact with COVID+ or Persons Under Investigation (PUI) should wear cloth face coverings while working, consistent with guidance for the general public. See below for information on laundering cloth face coverings.

- Staff who are having direct close contact or offering medical care with clients with suspected or confirmed COVID-19 should follow the PPE recommendations and infection control guidelines outlined here and ensure they are using that equipment properly as outlined here.

- If staff are handling client belongings, they should use disposable gloves. Make sure to train any staff using gloves to ensure proper use.

- For people staying in encampments, ensure nearby restroom facilities have functional water taps, are stocked with hand hygiene materials (soap, drying materials) and bath tissue, and remain open to people experiencing homelessness 24 hours per day.

  o If toilets or handwashing facilities are not available nearby, provide access to portable latrines with handwashing facilities for encampments of more than 10 people.

III.   Cleaning:

Follow good cleaning practices, particularly in all common areas within the facility. Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces at least daily and shared objects between use using an EPA- registered disinfectant.

IV.   Securing Additional Temporary Housing:

Homeless services providers should identify additional sheltering options that may be required, including:

a. Overflow sites to accommodate shelter decompression (to reduce crowding and allow for physical distancing) and higher shelter demands

b. Isolation sites for people who are confirmed to be positive for COVID-19

c. Quarantine sites for people were exposed to COVID-19

d. Protective housing for people who are at highest risk of severe illness from COVID-19

PLEASE NOTE: The state strongly encourages communities provide non-congregate housing options for the populations outlined above to be able to more safely isolate, such as Project RoomKey motels, hotels or trailers (see below for additional information). In addition, communities are encouraged to plan for how to connect clients to housing opportunities after they have completed their stay in these temporary sites.

V.   Preventing Spread in Shelters

Ensure clients receive assistance in preventing disease spread and accessing care.

- In general sleeping areas (for those who are not experiencing respiratory symptoms), ensure that individuals' faces are at least 6 feet apart to prevent disease spread. Use strategies such as having clients sleep head-to-toe with beds/mats separated enough to provide a minimum of 6 feet between their heads.

- In meal service areas, create at least 6 feet of space between seats, and/or allow either for food to be delivered to clients or for clients to take food away. Stagger meal services whenever possible.

- All clients should wear cloth face coverings any time they are not in their room or on their bed/mat (in shared sleeping areas). Cloth face coverings should not be placed on young children under age 2, anyone who has trouble breathing, or is unconscious, incapacitated or otherwise unable to remove the mask without assistance.

- Cloth face coverings should be [laundered regularly](). Staff involved in laundering client face coverings should do the following:
  - Face coverings should be collected in a sealable container (e.g., trash bag)
  - Staff should wear disposable gloves. Use of a disposable gown is also recommended, if available.
  - Gloves should be removed and disposed of after laundering face coverings; clean hands immediately after removal of gloves by washing hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds or using an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol if soap and water are not available.
- 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.
- Decisions about whether clients with mild illness due to suspected or confirmed COVID-19 should remain in the shelter or be directed to alternative non-congregate shelter or 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.

Project Roomkey: The State's Non-Congregate Sheltering Effort

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. In partnership with local communities, the state is working to identify hotel/motel rooms throughout California that can be made available to individuals or families experiencing homelessness who:

- test positive for COVID-19 but do not require hospitalization,
- have been exposed to COVID-19, or
- are asymptomatic, but are at high-risk of severe illness (people over 65 or who have certain underlying health conditions).

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 immediately.

The majority of Project Roomkey expenditures are [federally reimbursable under FEMA](#), for both hotel/motel room occupancy agreements and operating services, at 75 percent federal share of cost.

Please coordinate with your County Office of Emergency Management to determine your community's need for hotel/motel rooms to accommodate homeless individuals and families and request support from the state.

More information about Project Roomkey can be found [here](#). For any questions related to this effort, please contact the California Department of Social Services (CDSS) at housing@dss.ca.gov.

Emergency Funding to Protect those Experiencing Homelessness from COVID-19

On March 18, 2020, Governor Gavin Newsom issued an executive order to broaden the purposes of what local recipients can spend existing state homelessness funding 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 an additional $150 million for local emergency homelessness actions. BCSH issued award letters on March 23, 2020 for $100 million to [local governments and Continuums of Care](#) for shelter support and emergency housing to address COVID-19 among those experiencing homelessness. The remaining $50 million, administered by CDSS, is available to establish occupancy agreements to secure rooms in hotels, motels, and other facilities including trailers to provide immediate isolation placements throughout the state for individuals experiencing homelessness. Questions related to the BCSH funding can be directed to hcfc@bcsh.ca.gov; questions related to the CDSS funding can be directed to housing@dss.ca.gov.

Homelessness Prevention Efforts

On March 16, 2020, Governor Gavin Newsom issued a [executive order N-28-20](#) 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.

On March 27, 2020, Governor Newsom issued Executive Order N-37-20, which placed a statewide moratorium on evictions of certain tenants from residences or dwelling units for nonpayment of rent. Tenants protected by the order must meet certain criteria. They must have paid rent due to the landlord prior to March 27; they must notify the landlord in writing within seven days that they need to delay some or all of their rent payment due to an inability to pay because of reasons related to COVID-19; and they must have verifiable documentation that their inability to pay was due to COVID-19.

On April 6, 2020, the Judicial Council of California adopted an emergency court rule that effectively stops all evictions, other than those necessary to protect public health and safety, until 90 days after California's state of emergency is lifted.

The state encourages you to share this information regarding evictions 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.