

COVID-19

Los Angeles County Department of Public Health Guidance for Homeless Shelters

Recent Updates:

7/14/21: Updates to method of reporting to DPH, quarantine guidance, bed positioning, and personal protective equipment.

The Los Angeles County Department of Public Health (DPH) is asking for your ongoing assistance to slow the spread of [COVID-19](#) in Los Angeles County. We need to continue to work together to slow the spread of this infection locally.

As a basic, first step in response to the COVID-19 outbreak, we strongly recommend that all homeless shelters review and update their emergency plans and consider ways to continue essential services if onsite operations must be reduced temporarily. Beyond that first step, this document provides general information about COVID-19, followed by specific actions you should take to help slow the spread of respiratory infections, including COVID-19.

The goals of this document are to help homeless shelters develop strategies to:

- Prevent and reduce the spread of COVID-19 within your shelter.
- Prevent and reduce the spread of COVID-19 between and outside of facilities.

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General Information

What is novel coronavirus?

COVID-19 is caused by a virus that has never been seen in humans before. In some ways it is like other viruses we have seen, but there are important factors that set it apart:

- Since it has never infected humans before, none of us are immune to it;
- It can be spread from person to person more easily than some other viruses;

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- It can be spread by someone who doesn't have any symptoms and has no idea they are infected ;
- While it causes mild or moderate symptoms in most people, it can be very serious and even fatal for people in high-risk groups.

High-risk groups

High-risk groups for COVID-19 include people over age 65, people with chronic conditions, including those that affect heart, lungs or kidneys, people who have weakened immune systems due to disease, chemotherapy or other medical treatments or conditions and people who are pregnant.

What are common symptoms of COVID-19?

People with COVID-19 have had a wide range of symptoms ranging from mild symptoms to severe illness. Symptoms of COVID-19 may include some combination of the following:

- Fever (100.4 F or higher)
- Cough
- Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
- Diarrhea
- Nausea or vomiting
- Fatigue
- Runny nose or congestion
- Muscle pain
- Headache
- Sore throat
- New loss of taste or smell

This list of symptoms is not all inclusive. Clients or staff should consult a medical provider about the need for testing and isolation for these or any other symptoms that are severe or concerning.

If a staff member develops fever, cough, or shortness of breath, or a health care provider tells them they are likely to have COVID-19, they should stay home, talk to their health care provider, and get a test for COVID-19. If they have COVID-19 they need to isolate. See the section below, titled "when guests are symptomatic", for what to do if a client develops symptoms.

Isolation duration: at least 10 days from when symptoms first appeared AND at least 1 day (24 hours) after fever has gone without the use of medications AND symptoms (such as cough and shortness of breath) have improved. If the person has a [condition](#) that severely weakens their immune system they might need to stay home for longer than 10 days. They should talk to their healthcare provider for more information.

Seek immediate medical attention by calling 911 for any of these COVID-19 emergency warning signs:

- Trouble breathing
- Persistent pain or pressure in the chest
- New confusion or inability to arouse
- Bluish lips or face
- Other serious symptoms

When calling 911, notify the operator that the individual who is sick might have COVID-19. The person should put on a cloth face covering before medical help arrives.

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How are coronaviruses spread?

Like other respiratory illnesses, human coronaviruses most commonly spread to others from an infected person through:

- Droplets that contain the virus produced through coughing, sneezing, and talking
- Close personal contact, such as caring for an infected person
- Touching eyes, nose, or mouth with hands that have the virus on them.

COVID-19 may also spread by touching a surface or object that has the virus on it and then touching the mouth, nose, or eyes but this is not thought to be the main way the virus spreads. Some people get COVID-19 without ever showing symptoms but they can still spread the infection to others.

As we continue to learn more each day about COVID-19 and information changes, we will keep you informed. Visit the DPH COVID-19 webpage for resources and the latest recommendations for COVID-19 prevention and care. Additional resources are noted through this document where relevant.

Steps to Protect the Health and Safety of Guests and Staff

Prevent and Reduce Spread of COVID-19 Within Your Shelter

1. Steps to reduce risk of infection

Vaccination

- Provide education on vaccination for COVID-19 ([COVID-19 Vaccination FAQ](#)).
- When possible assist unvaccinated guests and staff with getting vaccinated.

Please note that vaccination status should not be a barrier to accessing homeless services. Being vaccinated should not be a pre-requisite for entrance to homeless service sites.

Signage

- Post signs for guests and staff on the importance of handwashing and hand sanitizing.
- Provide signs and remind guests to alert staff if they have new fever, cough and/or shortness of breath.

Hygiene

- Make it easy for staff and guests to practice good [hand hygiene](#). Make sure bathrooms are well stocked with soap and disposable towels.
- Post reminders to wash hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds and to dry hands on a single-use or personal towel.
- If handwashing is not feasible, staff and guests should use hand sanitizer containing at least 60% alcohol.
- It is especially important to clean hands after going to the bathroom, before and after eating, and after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing.
- Tissues should be widely available, and staff and guests should be reminded to cover coughs and sneezes with a tissue, and then dispose of the tissue and clean hands

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	<p>immediately. If tissues are not available, they should sneeze or cough into an elbow, rather than a hand.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Minimize the sharing of objects such as cups, utensils, food, and drink. <p>Physical distancing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Promote physical distancing: no handshakes, no hugs, no close-up conversations. Guests and staff need to stay at least 6 feet away from each other.- If there are circumstances in which guests stand in line, inside or outside your site, make sure spacing of 6 feet is maintained between people.- Re-arrange common areas, including waiting areas, so seats are at least 6 feet apart and facing away from one another.- Beds should be placed at least 6 feet apart and positioned head-to-toe, with heads positioned as far apart as possible. When positioning beds 6 feet apart is not possible, beds must be spaced at least 3 feet apart with a head-to-toe arrangement. Consider placing partitions between beds as an additional precaution to prevent respiratory droplets from reaching others (see Guide to Bed Positioning at (ph.lacounty.gov/media/Coronavirus/GuidanceBedPositions.pdf)). Stop group meals. Stagger meals so groups can be kept small (ideally groups of 10 or less). If guests have more than one meal at your site, serve meals with same group of guests at each meal to reduce transmission risk and maintain 6 feet distance at all times. If weather permits, serve them in outdoor areas that allow for social distancing.- Restrict entry into the site. Only guests, essential staff and other essential personnel should be going in and out of the shelter.- Limit transportation of guests to essential trips only. Make sure guests know how to practice safe distancing when they must leave.- Limit any in-person group activities that may be offered at your site. One-to-one interactions between staff and guests should be kept to a minimum and arranged so preventive guidelines (distance of 6 feet, no physical contact (such as handshakes), no sharing of objects, etc.) can be followed.
<p>2. <i>Screen guests for symptoms of COVID-19</i></p>	<p>Screen guests</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Assess all guests at admission and, if stay is longer than overnight, at least once per day for symptoms of acute respiratory illness. These may include feeling feverish or alternating sweats and chills, a new cough, or difficulty breathing. Remind guests to report any new respiratory symptoms to staff.- If able, take guest temperatures with a scanning or disposable thermometer at admission and, if stay is longer than overnight, at least once per day. A temperature of 100.4 °F or higher is considered a fever for screening purposes.

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Given the current situation any guest with symptoms of respiratory illness should be assumed to have COVID-19 until they have been reviewed by a healthcare provider and had a test for COVID-19.- As part of screening, ask guests if they have close contact with a symptomatic person. <p>Close contact is defined as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Contact within 6 feet of an infected person for <u>a total of 15 minutes or more over a 24-hour period.</u>• Contact with body fluids and/or secretions of a symptomatic person (they were coughed on/sneezed on, shared utensils or saliva or provided direct clinical care to a symptomatic person) without wearing a surgical mask or gloves. <p>The contact may have occurred while the infected person was symptomatic OR up to two days BEFORE the infected person showed symptoms or tested positive if asymptomatic.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Any guest who meets criteria for close contact with a person with a positive laboratory test should follow current quarantine guidelines. Guidelines for self-quarantine are described below, under the heading “Arrange for Self-quarantine of Exposed Guest.”
<p>3. <i>When guests are symptomatic</i></p>	<p>Separate symptomatic guests</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Individuals with symptoms need to be separated from others to avoid spread and allow for appropriate care of the symptomatic person. This is true whether or not they have been tested for COVID-19. <p>If your site provides extended care:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Rapidly move guests who present with respiratory symptoms into a separate sick area that is isolated from the rest of the shelter<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ideally, it should be a separate building, room, or designated area, away from non-symptomatic guests. A separate bathroom is also optimal.• Place clear signage outside isolation areas so other staff and guests know to maintain distance from those areas.• If there is no way for symptomatic guests to reside in separate rooms or buildings, partitions (e.g., linen, dressers, etc.) should be constructed to create as much of a barrier as possible between symptomatic and non-symptomatic guests.- A designated restroom should be identified and reserved for use by symptomatic individuals only. If this is not possible, cleaning after the room has been used by a symptomatic person is essential.- If symptomatic guests need to move through areas used by guests without symptoms, they should wear a surgical mask and minimize their time in these areas.- Symptomatic guests should eat meals separately from guests without symptoms.

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- If dining space must be shared, stagger meals so symptomatic guests are not eating with non-symptomatic guests and clean after use by each group to reduce transmission risks.
 - Mobile screens (or other ways to form partitions – linens, etc.) should be used to encourage compliance with separation in shared spaces.
- Minimize the number of staff members who have face-to-face interactions with guests with symptoms. Provide instructions to all staff to prevent disease spread. Section 8, below, provides guidance on use of Personal Protective Equipment for staff who must have contact with a symptomatic guest.
- Guest isolation may be discontinued when they have met the [isolation duration](#) noted at the top of this document.
- Staff should keep a daily log of all guests in isolation to monitor symptoms and determine when criteria are met for ending the guest's isolation.
- If a guest is symptomatic at admission or during a stay, encourage them to call their primary care provider and get tested. If their symptoms worsen, they should notify a staff member to call 911. When calling 911, staff members should notify the dispatcher that this guest has COVID-19 symptoms.

If you provide single night stays only

- If a guest screens positive at entry to your facility and you are not set up to offer extended stays, you should do your best to identify an alternative place for that guest to go.
 - Place the symptomatic guest in a separate, temporary space while you make arrangements for alternative placement. Ideally, this should not be a private office or other site containing items that would be difficult to clean if contaminated.
 - The guest should be given a surgical mask and instructed to wash their hands before moving to the designated space.
 - Guests who are symptomatic and have nowhere to stay may be eligible for temporary medical shelters for quarantine/isolation housing. Call DPH's referral line for available placements at 833-596-1009 from 8am to 8pm daily.
 - If it is not feasible to move the guest promptly, you should follow guidelines for isolation provided above for longer-stay sites. As above, if a private space is not available, do your best to separate the symptomatic guest from others by creating a barrier. Make sure their bed is at least 6 feet in all directions from anyone else and make sure they can use a separate restroom or that a shared bathroom can be effectively cleaned after they have used it. Guidelines for cleaning appear in Section 10, below.

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Should this kind of temporary isolation arrangement be needed, contact the Hotline number above in the morning to learn where the guest can find a more appropriate place while ill.● Guests who have symptoms may return to your site only after they have met the isolation duration criteria at the beginning of this document. <p>Seek immediate medical attention by calling 911 for any of these COVID-19 emergency warning signs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Trouble breathing- Persistent pain or pressure in the chest- New confusion or inability to arouse- Bluish lips or face- Other serious symptoms <p>If possible, separate guests at high risk even if they have not been exposed</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- When possible, designate a separate area for non-symptomatic guests who are also high-risk (e.g. age over 65 with chronic medical problem). This is intended to protect the person at high risk from infection. However, if separate areas are not possible, use partitions or other means to keep high risk individuals separate from others.- This area would be separate from low-risk non-symptomatic, non-symptomatic quarantine, and symptomatic guests.- Consider placing high-risk guests in separate rooms or shared rooms with a maximum of 10 beds even when there are no suspected or confirmed cases of COVID-19 at the site.
<p>4. <i>When staff have symptoms</i></p>	<p>Symptomatic Staff</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Staff should monitor their own health daily and stay home if they are ill.<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Staff with symptoms of COVID-19 should be instructed to go home, call their healthcare provider and arrange a COVID-19 test. They should also be reminded to call their health care provider should symptoms worsen. Information for people with symptoms is available at ph.lacounty.gov/covidcare.● Symptomatic staff with COVID-19 caring for themselves at home may discontinue home isolation only when they have met the isolation duration criteria at the beginning of this document. Information on self-isolation can be found on the DPH website at: ph.lacounty.gov/covidisolation.
<p>5. <i>Dealing with Exposure</i></p>	<p>Arrange for Quarantine of Exposed Guests</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Guests who do not screen positive for symptoms of COVID-19 but have come in close contact with a lab-confirmed case should follow current quarantine guidelines. Please check frequently, as guidelines evolve depending on community transmission levels and vaccination coverage.

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- If your site has capacity to provide the guest with shelter for the duration of their quarantine period, they may remain at your site. As in the case of infected guests, they should be kept apart from other guests.
- If your site does not have capacity for self-quarantine, the procedure is the same as for an infected client:
 - An exposed guest should be kept separate from other guests and staff while you contact the DPH Hotline (833-596-1009) and arrange for alternative placement.
 - As in the case of an infected guest, if it is not feasible to find an alternative placement for the night, the guest may remain on site overnight but separated from other guests to the extent feasible. A distance of 6 feet must be kept between the exposed client and others and they must be instructed on the need to wash hands frequently and avoid sharing of any objects.
- Exposed guests who are sent elsewhere to quarantine or are in quarantine at your site, may only rejoin the general guest population at your site when the quarantine period is over.
 - If a guest begins to show symptoms during the quarantine period, the guidelines for isolation described above apply. The guest's isolation period must be counted from the start of symptoms rather than the start of their quarantine period.

Arrange for Quarantine of Exposed Staff

- Staff who have come in [close contact](#) with a lab-confirmed case should also follow [current quarantine guidelines](#).
- The guidelines for staff quarantine are the same as those for guests (see Quarantine Exposed Guests, above).

6. Returning to work

Returning to Work after Isolation or Quarantine

- If a staff is sent home, guidelines for transportation (below) must be followed and the person should be given DPH Guidelines for Self-Isolation or Quarantine.
- A staff person or guest may return to the site after they meet the [isolation duration](#) criteria noted at the top of this document:
 - Some examples of what this means:
 - A guest sent to an alternative Quarantine and Isolation site or staff person sent home with symptoms that were mild and only lasted a day, would be able to return if their provider instructs them that they do not have COVID-19 AND they are fever free for 24 hours and symptoms have improved. If they test positive for COVID or their provider instructs them that they have COVID they will need to remain away from the site until they meet the full

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	<p>isolation duration criteria noted at the beginning of this document. A guest who was being quarantined on site and then on day 6 of quarantine developed symptoms needs to start a new period of isolation (see ph.lacounty.gov/covidisolation for instructions) from the day the guest first had symptoms if they test positive or their provider tells them they have COVID-19.</p>
<p>7. <i>Reporting requirements</i></p>	<p>When Should Cases or Symptomatic Persons Be Reported?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Sites must report to the Department of Public Health under two circumstances:<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Any single confirmed case of COVID-19 in either a client or a staff person; or• Two or more individuals, clients or staff, who show symptoms of acute respiratory illness occurring within 14 days of each other, whether or not COVID-19 has been confirmed.- Reports should be made online via Los Angeles County Dept of Public Health COVID-19 Suspected Outbreak Facility Reporting Form If you experience technical difficulties with this website, please call the LAC Communicable Disease Reporting line at 888-397-3993 to report. Reporting should only be done during business hours (Monday through Friday, 8am-5pm) unless there is an urgent question about the report.- If you have a single symptomatic but unconfirmed case, reporting is at your discretion. If you would like consultation on dealing with a symptomatic but unconfirmed case, you may contact DPH for assistance at the number above.- If you have symptomatic guests who cannot be isolated onsite during their illness, consider transfer to the medical shelters for quarantine/isolation housing. Call DPH's referral line at 833-596-1009 (8am to 8pm daily).
<p>8. <i>Guidelines for use of PPE</i></p>	<p>Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Non-medical face coverings should be worn by staff and clients in settings where other people are present. It is important to note that face coverings are not a substitute for always practicing physical distancing and frequent handwashing. For guidance on use of face coverings, see: publichealth.lacounty.gov/acd/ncorona2019/masks/- Symptomatic individuals (guests or staff) should be given surgical face masks to wear whenever they are around other people.- Quarantined individuals (guests or staff) should also be given surgical face masks to wear whenever they are around other people.- In circumstances in which staff have direct contact with isolated or quarantined guests (delivering meals to bedside, administering medications, or performing a physical exam or procedures), they should put on an N95 or higher level of respirator (or a surgical mask if respirators are not available or staff are not fit tested) gloves, eye protection, and gown.- Necessary PPE should be provided in clinical care areas for staff performing clinical duties.



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	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Ensure that all staff clean their hands, including before and after contact with guests, after contact with contaminated surfaces or equipment, and after removing PPE items.- Make sure tissues are available and all sinks are well-stocked with soap and paper towels for hand washing. Hand sanitizer should be available to staff and guests where soap and water washing is not feasible.
<p>9. <i>Best practices for sanitation and housekeeping</i></p>	<p>Cleaning Practices</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Routinely and effectively clean and disinfect all frequently touched surfaces and objects, such as doorknobs, bannisters, countertops, faucet handles, and phones.- Environmental cleaning should be done with EPA-registered healthcare disinfectant consistent with recommended wet contact time. <i>Reference: California Department of Public Health AFL for Environmental Infection Control for the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) (02/19/20)</i><ul style="list-style-type: none">• If EPA-registered disinfectant is not available, you may make your own disinfectant by mixing 1 tablespoon of 2% chlorine bleach solution in 1 quart of water.• Alcohol-based disinfectants may be used if > 70% alcohol and contact time is per label instructions.- Linens, eating utensils, and dishes belonging to those who are sick do not need to be cleaned separately, but should not be shared without thorough washing. Instruct cleaning staff to avoid “hugging” or shaking out laundry before washing it to avoid self-contamination. Instruct cleaning staff to wash their hands with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand sanitizer immediately after handling infected laundry. <p>Supplies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Provide adequate supplies for good hygiene, including easy access to clean and functional handwashing stations, soap, paper towels, and alcohol-based hand sanitizer (especially near food areas and restrooms).- Hand hygiene stations (sinks with antibacterial soap and alcohol gel products) should be readily available throughout the shelter, especially at the entrances of the shelter.- Make sure tissues are available and all sinks are well-stocked with soap and paper towels for hand washing.- Educate and remind guests to perform proper hand hygiene throughout the day, particularly after using the restroom and prior to eating their meals.- Position a trash can near the exit inside any guest rooms to make it easy for employees to discard items such as gloves, surgical masks, and gowns.

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Prevent and Reduce Spread of COVID-19 Between Facilities

Transportation

- Limit transport of all guests to essential purposes only.
- When transportation of symptomatic guests is necessary:
 - Symptomatic guests should NOT be transported with non-symptomatic guests.
 - Have symptomatic guests wear surgical masks.
 - Avoid transporting multiple symptomatic guests together. When multiple guests need to be transported simultaneously, appropriate physical distancing (at least 6 feet) should be practiced both for guests and the driver. The guest should be placed on the opposite side of the car from the driver in the seat farthest away from the driver's seat.
 - Vehicle windows should be rolled down to improve ventilation in the car.
 - Transporting vehicles should be outfitted with plastic tarps or coverings over the seats that can be cleaned and appropriately disinfected after each transport.
 - Include supplies for good hygiene, including tissues, trashcans or trash bags for disposal of used tissues, and alcohol-based hand sanitizer in vehicles used to transport guests.
 - If you plan to transfer the guest to higher level of care due to worsening respiratory status, notify EMS or other transporter that the guest has an undiagnosed respiratory infection.

Guidance for Drivers

- Drivers of symptomatic guests should take appropriate precautions, including wearing personal protective equipment, including disposable facemask, gloves, eye protection and gown.

Additional Resources

- LAC DPH coronavirus website: ph.lacounty.gov/media/Coronavirus/
- Los Angeles Health Alert Network: DPH emails priority communications to health professionals. Topics include local or national disease outbreaks and emerging health risks. publichealth.lacounty.gov/lahan/
- Mental Health - LAC Department of Mental Health's [COVID-19 webpage](#) and [211 LA](#) provide local resources for mental health & wellbeing needs. You can also view CDC's webpage [Coping with Stress](#).
- [COVID-19 FAQ](#)
- [What You Should Know \(Infographic\)](#)
- [Staying at Home If You Are Sick - Poster](#)
- [Handwashing](#)
- [COVID-19 Vaccination FAQ](#)

If you have questions and would like to speak to someone call the Los Angeles County Information line at 2-1-1 which is available 24 hours a day.

We appreciate your commitment and dedication to keeping Los Angeles County healthy.