

Questions from Shelter Providers regarding Covid-19

Public Health Related Questions:

1. **Is there a screening tool that the shelters can use to assess a client's need to be sent to the hospital? If a screening tool is available, can it be completed by a lay person?**

The following questions can be used in assessing a client's need for further intervention:

Ask the following questions for **ALL CLIENTS**:

- A. Have you/contacts/family traveled to the designated Level 3 or Level 2 risk countries:
 - a. Level 1: Hong Kong
 - b. Level 2: Japan
 - c. Level 3: China, Korea, Italy, Iran
- B. If No, provide services as usual
- C. If Yes, ask if the person is experiencing any of the following conditions:
 - a. Fever
 - b. Shortness of breath
 - c. Coughing (deep cough)
- D. If they answer yes to **all of the above**, please send straight to Emergency Room. Transport and Emergency Room personal should be notified of suspected Covid-19.
- E. During standard business hours if you need assistance you can call the **240-777-1435** – Dennis Avenue Health Center Call Line. After hours, can call the crisis center 240-777-4000.

2. **Will there be medical personnel who can come to our facilities to test clients with symptoms, including in the evenings and on weekends?**

Testing is not currently available to be brought to sites. Testing can only be conducted at hospital emergency rooms.

3. **What are the appropriate precautions should shelter staff and residents take in order to mitigate the potential risk of spreading or exposing themselves to coronavirus/COVID19?**

Per the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) There is currently no vaccine to prevent coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19). The best way to prevent illness is to avoid being exposed to this virus. However, as a reminder, CDC always recommends everyday preventive actions to help prevent the spread of respiratory diseases, including:

- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth.
- Stay home when you are sick.

- Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces using a regular household cleaning spray or wipe.
- Follow CDC's recommendations for using a facemask.
 - CDC does not recommend that people who are well wear a facemask to protect themselves from respiratory diseases, including COVID-19.
 - Facemasks should be used by people who show symptoms of COVID-19 to help prevent the spread of the disease to others.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after going to the bathroom; before eating; and after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing.
 - If soap and water are not readily available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol. Always wash hands with soap and water if hands are visibly dirty.

4. Is use of a face mask a good precaution to utilize in the shelter by staff and clients? If not, why?

The CDC *does not* recommend that people who are well wear a facemask to protect themselves from respiratory diseases, including COVID-19.

Facemasks should only be used by people who show symptoms of COVID-19 to help prevent the spread of the disease to others.

5. If the virus continues to spread, what will be next steps for people in congregate settings?

The Maryland Department of Health, and the County Department of Health and Human Services continue to monitor the situation and will provide additional updates as applicable. The best place to for the most up-to-date information is from www.montgomerycountymd.gov/coronavirus

6. Is it necessary for us to temporarily stop our volunteer meal program?

NO.

7. What precautions should our volunteers take in the meal preparation process?

We should continue to remind volunteers to utilize the same preventative measures that staff, and clients should be using. Proper handwashing is key.

- 8. What are any immediate trainings can we provide our shelter staff and residents to decrease the anxiety within the Homeless system community?**

Video trainings are available at the County's dedicated Covid-19 website
<https://montgomerycountymd.gov/HHS/RightNav/Coronavirus.html>

- 9. Are there any additional precautions needed to take for residents in medical beds to reduce their potential for exposure?**

No additional precautions are recommended at this time.

Questions for Services to End & Prevent Homelessness:

- 10. What alternatives do we have if someone needs to be isolated in the shelter environment?**

If an individual tests positive for Covid-19 Healthcare for the Homeless will work closely with the hospital to develop a discharge plan that supports the individual in following all CDC guidelines. If an individual is identified by the public health officials to be at high risk and isolation is required, DHHS has identified alternative placements to shelter for the individual to comply with the health officials' guidelines.

- 11. What will happen if staff do not or cannot come to work?**

Each agency should prepare of Continuity of Operations Plan (COOP) to ensure shelter operations continue. This may require pulling staff from other programs to cover essential services. Your COOP should be submitted to your contract monitor, Kim Ball, and Ilana Branda. If you do not have adequate staffing to continue shelter operations, DHHS will provide trained employees to supplement your efforts.

- 12. Will the health dept provide additional supplies like more hand sanitizer? (this is getting difficult to find); would the health dept be able to supply bulk thermometers, maybe like use and throw?**

We ask that each agency conduct an inventory of supplies and submit a list of needed items to their contract monitor, Kim Ball, and Ilana Branda. DHHS will provide supplies to the extent we are able.

13. Is there any emergency overtime funding if we become short-staffed?

The Office of Procurement and the Contract Management Team within DHHS is preparing for any additional costs incurred as a result of COVID-19. More specific guidance will be released shortly. In the interim, please keep track of any expenses not currently covered in your existing contracts.

14. Is Health Care for the Homeless available at every shelter every day.

The Health Care of the Homeless staff will continue to support emergency shelters and will respond to any urgent requests. Currently there is daily nurse coverage at both locations on Taft Court and Dorothy Day. Mobile Med is also available at multiple locations including Progress Place. If there is a particular need or request, please contact LaSonya Kelly.