



Introduction to COVID-19: Questions and Resources

**for Housing and Homeless Assistance
Providers**

August 25, 2020

Key Objectives

Learn basic information about transmission, symptoms and prevention of the 2019 novel coronavirus (COVID-19)

Identify steps to prevent and respond to COVID-19 while working with people experiencing homelessness

Discuss protocols and resources for working with people experiencing homelessness

Review resources for ongoing information and support

COVID-19 Basics

What is COVID-19? How is it spread?

COVID-19 is an illness caused by a virus that can spread from person to person.

You can become infected by coming into close contact (about 6 feet, or two arms' lengths) with a person who has COVID-19.

You can become infected from respiratory droplets when an infected person coughs, sneezes, or talks.

You may also be able to get it by touching a surface or object that has the virus on it and then touching your mouth, nose, or eyes. However this is not thought to be the main way the virus spreads.

What are the symptoms of COVID-19?

Fever or chills

Cough

Shortness of breath or
difficulty breathing

Fatigue

Muscle or body aches

Headache

New loss of taste or smell

Sore throat

Congestion or runny nose

Nausea or vomiting

Diarrhea

This list does not include all possible symptoms.

Symptoms can range from mild to severe illness and appear 2-14 days after exposure to the virus that causes COVID-19.

Some individuals with COVID-19 are asymptomatic, they never develop symptoms.

The virus can be spread by those that are asymptomatic and by those that are pre-symptomatic, they have not yet developed symptoms, but they will.

How to protect yourself and others

Avoid close contact with others.
Maintain at least 6 feet of distance
at all times if possible.

Wear a cloth face covering that
covers your nose and mouth in
public settings.

Always cover your mouth and nose
with a tissue when coughing or
sneezing or use the inside of your
elbow.

Limit the amount of time when you
are close to someone to less than
15 minutes.



Prevention basics, continued



Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol.

Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces daily.

Try to avoid crowded public settings, particularly indoors.

Do not touch your eyes, nose, or mouth with unwashed hands.

Homeless Services Procedures and Supports

An Infection Prevention Mindset

An infection prevention mindset can help problem solve how to best limit the risk of getting or spreading of COVID-19.

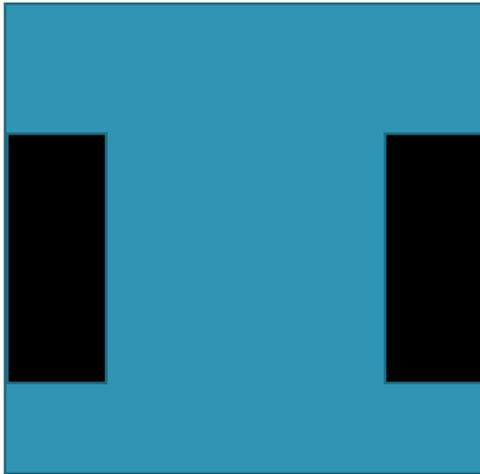
Ask yourself:

What can be done to limit exposure to respiratory particles?

- Think:
 - Barriers (physical barriers, masks)
 - Distance (spacing or arrangement)
 - Ventilation (inside vs. outside)

How to Use an Infection Prevention Mindset

Question: The sleeping quarters of the shelter has two sets of bunk beds. How many ways can you arrange the beds to best limit potential exposure?



Think:

- Bed Placement
- Head-to-toe sleeping
- Having one person on top of one bed and one person on the bottom of the other bed
- Curtains around the beds

Shelter Intake and Admissions Process for the General Population

If you can, screen guests for intake over the phone.

Use physical barriers when working with guests, like sneeze guards or additional tables.

If guests do not have a face covering, provide them with a clean, disposable face mask.

Screen guests to determine if they are Hyper-vulnerable (over 60 years or have underlying [medical conditions](#)).

Screening Questions

- Do a temperature check or ask, **“Have you had or felt like you had a fever in the past day?”**
- **“Do you have any of these symptoms?”**
 - New or worsening cough
 - Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
 - Fatigue
 - Muscle or body aches
 - Headache
 - New loss of taste or smell
 - Sore throat
 - Congestion or runny nose
 - Nausea or vomiting
 - Diarrhea
- **“In the past two weeks have you:**
 - Had contact with someone diagnosed with COVID-19?
 - Lived in or visited a place outside of Vermont?”

Isolation and Quarantine Housing

Only a health care provider can make a clinical diagnosis based on symptoms or refer someone for testing to confirm diagnosis.

Symptoms for COVID can also be due to other illnesses. Shelters should not deny services to guests who have respiratory symptoms. In these cases, consult with a Health Care Provider and refer the guest to [Isolation and Quarantine Housing](#)

Isolation and Quarantine Housing

Harbor Place is accepting guests who are suspected to be COVID-19+, at high risk for being COVID-19+, or who are confirmed COVID-19+

Guests require limited health care monitoring, can care for themselves, and do not need assistance with activities of daily living.

Medical providers are offsite except for testing-support intake, health monitoring, discharge and infection prevention control.

Guests stay at the Harbor Place site on a voluntary basis.

Referral to Harbor Place

If a guest screens to have symptoms or exposure to COVID-19:

- Contact the guest's PCP or your Shelter's identified Health Care Provider by phone.
 - **Do not** go to the doctor's office or send a guest to the hospital **unless** instructed to do so or in a medical emergency.
- The Health Care Provider will determine if this is a suspected case of COVID-19 and will refer to testing or provide a diagnosis as appropriate.
- If the Health Care Provider CANNOT be reached right away, contact your facility's designated medical consult or the state's medical consult to arrange for referral.

Accessing testing options

Test through a primary care provider or FQHC

- Some PCPs will not do testing onsite and will refer to the local FQHC or hospital for sample collection

Visiting a “Pop-up” testing site

- Make appointments [online](#)
- Only for asymptomatic people
- Transportation for asymptomatic people is available. Schedule the appointment, and then at least two days before the appointment call 833-387-7200.

Test at a Pharmacy

- More info about sites and contact information [here](#)
- Only for asymptomatic people

Shelter specific testing options for symptomatic guests

EMS Agency Specimen Collections

- Symptomatic individuals connected with an agency or shelter without transportation to a specimen collection site
- Contact the Primary Care Provider, shelter Medical Consult or State Medical Consult for referral
- Contact EMS provider directly or the Health Department District Director at your local office of health
- EMS provider may collect the sample on site or may transport

Facility-wide testing

- In case of a positive case at the shelter, VDH may be able to arrange for facility-wide testing on site

What a negative test result means:

Most tests are **PCR tests**, or tests that look for the active virus, *not* an antibody response.

When someone tests negative for COVID-19 that is an indication that at the time they were tested, they were not infected or had not had enough time to develop enough virus to show on a test.

Because someone could come into contact with the virus after getting tested, it is important to be diligent about handwashing, physical distancing, and wearing masks (when possible).

Cleaning and Disinfection

Wash your hands and put on gloves before cleaning and disinfecting surfaces.

Cleaning with soap and water **reduces the number** of germs, dirt and impurities on the surface. Disinfecting **kills** germs on surfaces.

Use EPA-approved disinfectants and follow the directions on the bottle.

Post a list of “high touch” areas for others to make sure everything gets cleaned. These areas should be cleaned regularly, at least once a day. More frequent cleaning and disinfection may be required based on level of use.

After cleaning, remove gloves and wash hands thoroughly.

Congregate Dining

Build a plan to make sure that everyone is aware of safety measures.

Consider:

Physical distancing and space measures

- Assigned tables for households

Reducing the number of people at a time

- Sign Up sheets and time slots

Delivering food vs. self-serve

- Prepackaged and “to-go” meals

Single use table-ware

Proper cleaning, waste disposal and PPE

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

PPE refers to multiple types of equipment that are used when people will be in close contact with others or close contact with items or surfaces that are potentially contaminated.

PPE helps protect the person using the equipment.

These include eye protection (e.g., goggles, face shields), isolation gowns, facemasks, respirators (e.g., N95s, PAPRs), and gloves.

CDC recommends that use of specific types of PPE (e.g., facemasks, respirators) be limited to healthcare personnel and very few other groups (e.g., corrections staff, law enforcement).

Masks

Cloth face covering

Cloth face coverings are for the protection of others and are what is recommended the general public use when they are out and around others. These can be washed and worn again.



Facemask

Facemasks are used when there is a potential for splashes and sprays to protect the person wearing them, particularly in the medical field when people need to be in close contact with others. These are one-time use.



Respirator (including N95)

Respirators provide protection to the person wearing them and helps filter out airborne particles. These require fit testing to ensure they properly fit the person wearing them.



What kind of personal protective equipment (PPE) should be worn?

T. Shelters for Marginally Housed Persons

Classification of Individual Wearing PPE	Respirator	Facemask	Eye Protection	Gloves	Gown / Coveralls	Cloth Face Covering (Not PPE)
Essential personnel				X (if handling client belongings)		X
Essential personnel conducting temperature checks			X	X		X
Shelter clients						X
Shelter clients with signs or symptoms of illness		X				
Setting Notes:						
Guidance relevant to this setting:						
1. CDC's COVID-19 Guidance for Homeless Service Providers						

- For most people working in shelters or with limited close contact with individuals, a cloth face covering is the only protective gear recommended

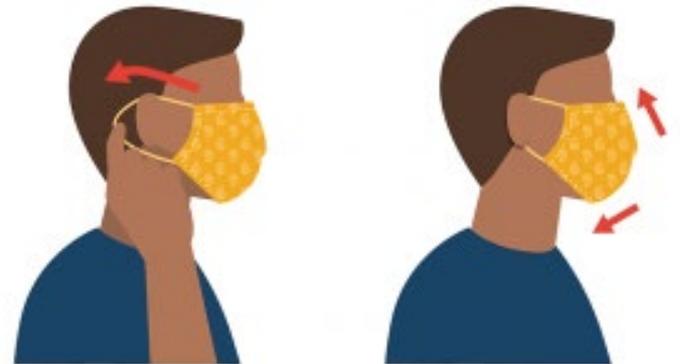
Using a Face Covering

How to wear a cloth face covering: Cloth face coverings should

- fit snugly but comfortably against the side of the face
- be secured with ties or ear loops.
- include multiple layers of fabric.
- allow for breathing without restriction.
- be able to be laundered and machine dried without damage or change to shape.

Who should NOT wear a cloth face covering

- Children younger than 2 years old
- Anyone who has trouble breathing
- Anyone who is unconscious, incapacitated, or otherwise unable to remove the cloth face covering without assistance



Do gaiters and bandanas work as well as masks?

Masks are most effective when there are limited gaps where respiratory droplets could escape.

Gaiters and bandanas may not provide as much protection to others as masks that fit more snugly do.

There is some evidence that gaiters may aerosolize the particles further, causing them to be worse than *not* wearing a mask.

****Remember: Contain large particles!**

Some people wear face shields. Are they as effective as cloth face coverings?



Cloth face coverings help reduce the spread of COVID-19 if someone is sick but asymptomatic. Because the virus is spread by respiratory droplets, the mask helps to trap them, so they do not potentially infect others.

Face shields do not provide as much protection since the shield is open and allow air flow potentially spreading the virus. However, they can provide more protection for a person wearing a cloth mask and a face shield.

NOTE: Wearing a face covering AND physical distancing should be done together.

Should providers have N95 masks on hand?

N95 masks are not recommended for the general public to wear as they are necessary PPE for those in the medical field or those whose job requires them to be near others.

N95 masks require fit-testing as they are not a one size fits all. If they are not properly fit-tested they will not provide appropriate protection.

How can we obtain PPE and supplies?

The Health Department has an [online form](#) to provide PPE supplies.

**Please note: Submitting a form does not guarantee provision of supplies. Supply requests are prioritized based on the services provided by the requestor.*

Resources for COVID-19

Support Resources

Office of Economic Opportunity

- Support with PPE and other supplies
- Guidance
- Funding

Vermont Department of Health Primary Prevention

- One-on-one consultation about infection control

Vermont Department of Health Office of Local Health

- Ongoing support for infection control
- Potential in some places for an on-site walkthrough

Guidance and more information

[OEO Webpage](#)

Helpful Documents:

- Guidance Documents
- Recorded Trainings

[AHS Website](#)

Helpful Documents:

- Isolation and Quarantine Housing Information and Referral Forms
- Transportation Process

[VDH Webpage](#)

[CDC](#)



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healthvermont.gov/covid19