

Shelter Tips

IDENTIFY AND ISOLATE

If a client is sick with symptoms consistent with COVID-19 (cough, fever, shortness of breath, etc.)

- For any client with severe symptoms (severe shortness of breath, bluish lips or face, difficulty breathing, unable to talk, difficult to arouse, etc.) call 911 and alert the EMT's to the possible COVID 19 infection.
 - If any of your residents test positive, they will be quarantined for a minimum of 14 days.
- If a client has non-emergent symptoms such as cough and fever, assist them with finding health care.
 - If they have a clinic or provider where they usually seek care, have them or assist them with calling the clinic. Tell the clinic the client is seeking care for upper respiratory symptoms. Do not have them go to the ER.
 - If they do not have a usual provider, they can utilize the nearest Healthcare for the Homeless clinic or a community health care provider.

If the person's doctor's office/clinic is closed, then:

- Encourage them to wear a mask, if masks are available.
- Find a private room or create a separate space (determine a separate part of the shelter or drop-in center that can be used for this purpose).
- Designate a bathroom for sick or suspected to be sick.
- Stagger mealtimes to maximize social distancing or divide it into sick/well.
- Provide access to drinking water, tissues, hand sanitizer, and plastic bags for the proper disposal of used tissues or any used Personal Protective Equipment such as gloves and masks.
- Encourage the client to rest and drink plenty of fluids.
- Bring meals to the sick client if possible.
- Get the person to a clinic as soon as it opens the next morning and when possible call ahead to the clinic to let them know someone is coming in who is presenting as sick.

INFECTION PREVENTION IN SHELTER/DROP-IN CENTER

Implement everyday preventive actions for both staff and clients to prevent the spread of disease:

- Increase bed spacing from 3 to 6 feet apart and require that all clients sleep head to toe.
- Post signs at entrances and in other areas where they are likely to be seen, providing instruction on proper hand washing technique (at least 20 seconds), and cough ("[cover your cough posters](#)") and sneeze etiquette.
 - Providing educational materials about COVID-19 for non-English speakers, as needed.
- Provide easy access to bathrooms for hand washing and hand sanitizers with at least 60-95% ethanol.
- Provide easy access to tissues and plastic-lined wastebaskets.
- Ensure bathrooms are stocked with soap and drying materials for handwashing.
- Make sure the shelter is well ventilated.
- Encourage staff and clients to wash or sanitize hands frequently and try not to touch their face.
- Use physical barriers (placing an additional table between staff and clients) to protect staff who will interact with clients with unknown infection status (e.g. check-in staff).

CLEANING AND DISINFECTION

- Increase the frequency of cleaning all surfaces. Implement and stay up to date on the latest CDC recommendations on environmental cleaning and disinfection:
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/organizations/cleaning-disinfection.html>

EDUCATE YOUR CLIENTS

- Educate clients on what will keep them safe and what they should do if they believe they have been exposed.
- Download [COVID-19 posters and CDC Fact Sheets](#) to help keep your clients informed about public health recommendations to prevent disease spread and about changes to services that might be related to the outbreak.

EDUCATE YOUR STAFF

What to communicate to your staff?

- Staff who are exhibiting symptoms should stay home.
- Sick staff and volunteers should stay home until they are well.
- Require staff to work remotely if possible.

What to communicate to managers?

- Let managers know to expect a higher rate of call outs than is typical and plan accordingly. Determine essential vs. non-essential services.
- Minimize the number of staff with clients who have respiratory symptoms.
- Send home staff or volunteers who become sick at work.
- Healthy staff should **not** wear masks, unless spending extended time in an area designated for guests with coughs or providing direct care to sick guests.

Basic information:

- Those most likely to become seriously ill from the virus includes people who are older and who are managing chronic health conditions such as COPD, cancer, diabetes, heart disease or lung disease.
- **Higher risk for infection is from those who have encountered other infected individuals.**

IMPLEMENT VISITOR POLICIES/EXCLUSION

- Your agency already likely has policies around visitors for your residents. Different policies need to be in place for a general population, for a senior population, and if one of your clients tests positive for the Coronavirus and is quarantined.

COMMUNICATIONS

- **MDH Hotline 651-201-3920**
- For up to date information on the COVID-19 virus please visit the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) they update the site at least daily. Go to www.cdc.gov
- For information on what is happening in Minnesota go to the Minnesota Department of Health or MDH. Go to www.health.state.mn.us