

CORONAVIRUS DISEASE 2019 (COVID 19)



March 11, 2020

WHAT SUPPORTIVE HOUSING PROVIDERS NEED TO KNOW

The news is filled with stories about the Coronavirus and its impact. When supportive housing providers hear “vulnerable populations are most likely to be impacted by the disease,” we all know that few groups are as vulnerable as our residents. Most supportive housing residents have histories of homelessness and are managing multiple health conditions. CSH has pulled together information from a variety of sources, considering the material from the vantage point of supportive housing providers, to help your agency best support your residents, your staff and your community.

How to Prepare

The old adage says that ‘Prevention is the best Cure’ and this is certainly true for the Coronavirus. The best way to prevent the negative effects of the disease and assist your community is to PREPARE by preventing either widespread transmissions of the disease or treatment for those who are infected. CSH recommends that you consider preparation from the perspective of your residents, your staff and your agency. And while the best information currently available is that the virus was first recognized in China, no ethnicity is more at risk than any other group and a public health crisis requires that we continue our work to further health equity and not discriminate.

You Need Partners

If your agency offers health services, such as a [Health Care for the Homeless clinic](#), as well as supportive housing, then bring together your medical staff to develop a comprehensive plan to protect your agency.

If you do not have health services as part of your agency’s service array, connect with your [local public health department](#) or [Health Center](#) for support in developing or implementing the plan to address the disease. If your agency is one of many offering supportive housing, reach out to your peers in your local provider network to pool information and gather resources jointly that will help prevent further spread of the disease.

PREPARATION FOR ALL COMMUNITY MEMBERS

Anyone can transmit the virus so we all should:

Avoid close contact with people who appear sick

Wash your hands regularly and frequently and for at least 20 seconds each time

If you cough, cough into your elbow, not into your hands

Limit physical contact such as shaking hands

Limit contact with high touch surface areas such as handrails, door knobs etc.

FOR YOUR RESIDENTS

EDUCATE YOUR RESIDENTS

Educating your residents can be group classes, [posting materials](#) around your developments or speaking with residents individually. Residents who are at [higher risk](#) should be engaged individually and educated on what will keep them safe and what they should do if they believe they have been exposed. Higher risk for infection is from those who have encountered other infected individuals. 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.

SUPPLIES

Your residents may also need supplies that they may or may not be able to access. Hand sanitizer is an effective manner to prevent against the spread and your agency may want to provide it for your lowest income residents.

HEALTH INSURANCE

All your residents need to be covered via health insurance, if possible. This is most challenging in states that have not expanded Medicaid. Your agency should track information regarding their health care coverage, their primary care physician, diagnoses, medications and other key health related information. Your case management staff should consider which residents are able to manage their own health and which ones will need extra support in order to be sure they report any symptoms and reach out to appropriate medical personnel as needed.

FOR YOUR STAFF

EDUCATE YOUR STAFF

Educate your staff about the virus and how to protect anyone against the spread. Staff, who can work from home, should be given that opportunity. Staff who are exhibiting symptoms should be encouraged to stay home. Staff patterns and back up staff should be set up to expect a higher rate of call outs than is normally expected.

STAY UPDATED

The health crisis is evolving and you and your team need the most up to date information on how to stay safe. [Monitor the Center for Disease Control \(CDC\) website on Coronavirus](#) regularly for updates.

FOR YOUR AGENCY

CONNECT WITH YOUR CoC

Your agency needs to be in contact with your Continuum of Care (CoC) or public health department for regular updates and how to respond as the situation evolves. Make sure the public health department understands your role, resources and who you serve, so they can offer the most educated support.

COMMUNICATIONS

Health communications tells that the most effective messenger is a person who is viewed as more similar to your audience. Therefore, as you share information and work to spread the knowledge and resources, consider your peer networks, your projects' community leaders and other strategies to align your message with your audience.

VISITOR POLICIES

Your agency already likely has policies around visitors for your residents. Those policies should be reviewed and modified in light of this outbreak. Different policies need to be in place for a general population, for a senior population and if one of your residents tests positive for the Coronavirus and is quarantined.

QUARANTINE PREPAREDNESS

If any of your residents test positive, they will need to be quarantined for 14 days. Make sure necessary supplies are available and prepare your agency by having medications, food and activities to keep your residents busy. In your conversations with the CoC or public health departments, let them know the guidance you need to support your residents and keep them and your community as safe and healthy as possible.

HUD TOOLKIT

HUD has created an [Infectious Disease Toolkit](#) with many good ideas homeless services providers should consider as they prepare and are responding to the virus.

FOR AFFORDABLE HOUSING PROVIDERS & PROPERTY MANAGERS

Affordable housing providers, particularly those that serve seniors, will want to take some basic precautions as well. Your agency can also post the materials listed above and set up protocols around visitors. Your agency may already have a partnership agreement with local healthcare agencies such as Health Centers or perhaps now is the right time to create one for the support and knowledge they bring for your residents and your agency. Leading Age has a great [summary of best practices](#) for this sector.

While the headlines right now seem very concerning, currently we are in a short time window where too little information is available. However, knowledge about the virus, how to prevent the spread and how to treat those who are infected is growing every day. To that end, learn all you can be and be sure to gather your information from reputable sources and share that information, support and resources effectively with your residents, your agency and your staff.

Remember that the most effective messengers are people whose experience is similar to your staff and residents, so pull in your peer networks. And remember that this outbreak, is likely to be harder for people in poor health and limited networks of support, so your support to your staff and residents can make all the difference.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

1. The Center for Disease Control's Coronavirus Webpage
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>

2. The National Health Care for the Homeless Council Webpage on Coronavirus
<https://t.e2ma.net/webview/e8jgcl/39270471477b06ca2ade3ef09d164068>

3. The National Alliance to End Homelessness Webpage on Coronavirus
<https://endhomelessness.org/coronavirus-and-homelessness/>

