

## Recommendations for Homeless Shelter Facilities during a COVID-19 Outbreak

# Homeless Shelters

The Washington State Department of Health has developed this guidance to assist homeless shelter facilities in response to the 2019 novel coronavirus disease (COVID-19) outbreak. While the situation is evolving, at this time we believe that people over 60, immune-compromised people and those with chronic medical conditions may be at higher risk for severe illness from COVID-19.

### Stay up-to-date.

Monitor public health updates from:

- [Local Public Health Department](#)
- [Washington State Department of Health](#)
- [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Situation Summary](#)

### What you can do to protect staff and clients

Educate staff and clients about COVID-19. Make sure they know the potential risks and basic prevention measures, such as:

- Wash hands often with soap and water for 20 seconds or use alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- Avoid touching your face with unwashed hands especially your eyes, nose, or mouth
- Cough and sneeze into elbow or into a tissue. Throw away the tissue immediately after use and wash hands. (For staff tips, see [Respiratory Hygiene/Cough Etiquette in Healthcare Settings](#).)
- Consider providing masks to sick people.
- Maintain a minimum of six feet of distance between yourself and others when feasible.
- Frequently clean and disinfect high contact surfaces like doorknobs, tables, furniture, shared bathrooms, and countertops.
- Ensure adequate supplies of soap, hand sanitizers, and tissues are readily available.

Post signs sharing how staff and guests can protect themselves and others at the facility. Consider posting signs at entrances and in bathrooms.

- [DOH Coronavirus Factsheet](#)
- [DOH Education Material](#)

Facilities providing sleeping accommodations should attempt to **increase the distance between people**, where feasible. Offering individual rooms for groups or families is ideal, but not

typically available. In shared spaces, a “head-to-toe” sleeping arrangement with a minimum of six feet of distance between beds is recommended.

**Encourage guests to report illnesses and exposure to COVID-19 to staff** prior or upon entry to the facility. Reassure clients that they will not be denied or lose a bed if they report symptoms.

**Separate sick clients from those without symptoms.** Facilities with a single room should assign sick clients to one side and clients without symptoms to the opposite side.

Encourage staff and volunteers to remain home if they are sick with cough, sneezing and/or fever. Inform them about sick leave policies. For more information, review [DOH’s Resources for Workplaces and Employers](#).

If you have a guest (or an outbreak of several guests) exhibiting symptoms and you would like further guidance you should contact:

- Your local health department:  
<https://www.doh.wa.gov/AboutUs/PublicHealthSystem/LocalHealthJurisdictions>
- Or the state coronavirus hotline at 1-800-525-0127 and press #. Note: The hotline may be experiencing high traffic and may be temporarily unavailable, and keep trying.

## Additional COVID-19 Resources

- [DOH Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) webpage](#) – updated information and resources daily
- [Workplace and Employers](#)
- [Persons Who are at Higher Risk for Serious Illness](#)
- [Communities and Community Organizations](#)
- The [National Health care for the Homeless Council](#). Although this document focuses on influenza, much of the principals apply to Coronavirus.
- [The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development](#)
- [Stigma Reduction](#)
- [How Can I Be Prepared for a COVID-19 Outbreak?](#)