



Recent Updates About COVID-19

Dear Congregation Leaders and PADS Shelter Site Captains,

As we continue to monitor the evolving reporting, communications, and guidance on COVID-19, I wanted to reach out to provide information about how Housing Forward is preparing and actions we are taking regarding this issue.

First and foremost, our goal, in partnership with you, is to provide uninterrupted shelter services while safeguarding our shelter clients, volunteers, and staff. Last week we sent out the attached guidelines to our volunteer base with a second email going out today.

To ensure we stay informed and prepared, we have been in communication with the Village of Oak Park's Public Health Department and the Cook County Department of Public Health and have asked to be included in a community-wide response alert system. We have viewed HUD's webinar on Infectious Disease Preparedness for Homeless Assistance Providers and Their Partners (HUD). Finally, we are working to enact recommendations received this week from the CDC which has issued guidance for homeless shelters and can be found here [CDC: Interim Guidance for Homeless Service Providers to Plan and Respond to Coronavirus Disease 2019 \(COVID-19\)](#). We are following these guidelines and ask that you help enforce and share the below summary with your congregation staff and shelter volunteers for whom we may not have an email address:

**Guidelines for Keeping us and our Spaces Healthy
and Safe During the Coronavirus Epidemic**

- respond if people are manifesting symptoms that may be related to a contagious illness. Encourage people to report whenever they experience symptoms.
2. Encourage hand-washing and hand sanitizing. Have hand sanitizer available near the entrances to your service sites, and encourage everyone to get a squirt on their way in, before eating, etc. **NOTE, all hand sanitizer supplies are currently on back order. We will be providing Purell packets as soon as they are received.**
 3. Reconfiguring the placement of sleeping pads, whenever possible, to allow for by 3 feet distance reduce the potential for spread of respiratory droplets between shelter guests and having clients sleep head-to-toe.
 4. Do frequent wiping down of surfaces, tables, sleeping mattresses, etc. with disinfectant wipes. If the site is out, disinfect using any standard household disinfectant.
 5. Providing shelter sites with prevention supplies for clients, volunteers and staff: including hand sanitizer wipes, tissues, and disposable thermometers.
 6. Instructing program staff and site captains to monitor and report on any symptoms (i.e. coughing, shortness of breath and fever) of our shelter clients and to take prompt action, when appropriate, for our clients to seek immediate medical care for treatment and screening.
 7. To stop the spread of germs, we are strongly urging volunteers who are sick should stay home and, ideally, find a replacement for your shift.
 8. CDC does NOT recommend that people who are well wear a facemask to protect themselves from getting respiratory diseases. However, agencies should make sure every site is outfitted with biohazard cleanup kits which include gloves, masks, disinfectant solution, and a clumping agent for liquid biohazards, and make sure staff and volunteers are trained on the safe management of human waste and other biohazardous material. – **EACH SHELTER SITE HAS BOTH A FIRST AID KIT AND A SPILL-KIT, PLEASE FAMILIARIZE YOURSELF WITH WHERE THEY ARE STORED.**

As an agency, we are also ramping up outreach to serve those who are unable or unwilling to come to the shelter sites because they are afraid of contracting illness, or because they can't be served onsite due to symptoms.

We will continue to closely monitor the status of COVID-19 and public health recommendations and will provide updates as they become necessary. If you

- Dale Nowicki, Shelter Manager (708) 338-1724 x228, shelter@housingforward.org
- Deirdre Kassay, RN, MSN, Community Health Nurse, (708) 338-1724 x225, dkassay@housingforward.org.
- Armando Smith, Director of Operations & Client Services (708) 338-1724 x222 asmith@housingforward.org

Lastly, as a reminder, we also ask our community to practice kindness. There is already stigma associated with COVID-19 and we don't want our already vulnerable clients to feel in any way ostracized during this time.

Thank you for your commitment to people experiencing homelessness. We are deeply grateful for your partnership.

Yours in service,

Lynda Schueler

Executive Director

1851 S. 9th Ave., Maywood, IL 60153

708.338.1724 x223

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