

NATIONAL  
HEALTH CARE  
*for the*  
HOMELESS  
COUNCIL

## COVID-19 “COFFEE CHAT” SERIES

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**Testing for COVID-19 in Homeless Shelters & Encampments:**  
Discussing CDC’s New Health Department Guidance &  
NHCHC’s Newest Issue Brief

July 10, 2020

NATIONAL  
HEALTH CARE  
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# GOALS FOR TODAY'S DISCUSSION

- Learn about CDC's new testing guidance for health departments
- Provide an overview of the Council's new issue brief on universal testing events
- Talk with leaders in Baltimore and San Francisco about their testing experiences
- Facilitate a community discussion about testing
- Address as many of your questions/comments as possible!



Attendee Chat (Everyone) ☰

Enter your comments and questions here  
for group discussion.

Everyone 🗨️

# TODAY'S DISCUSSION PANEL

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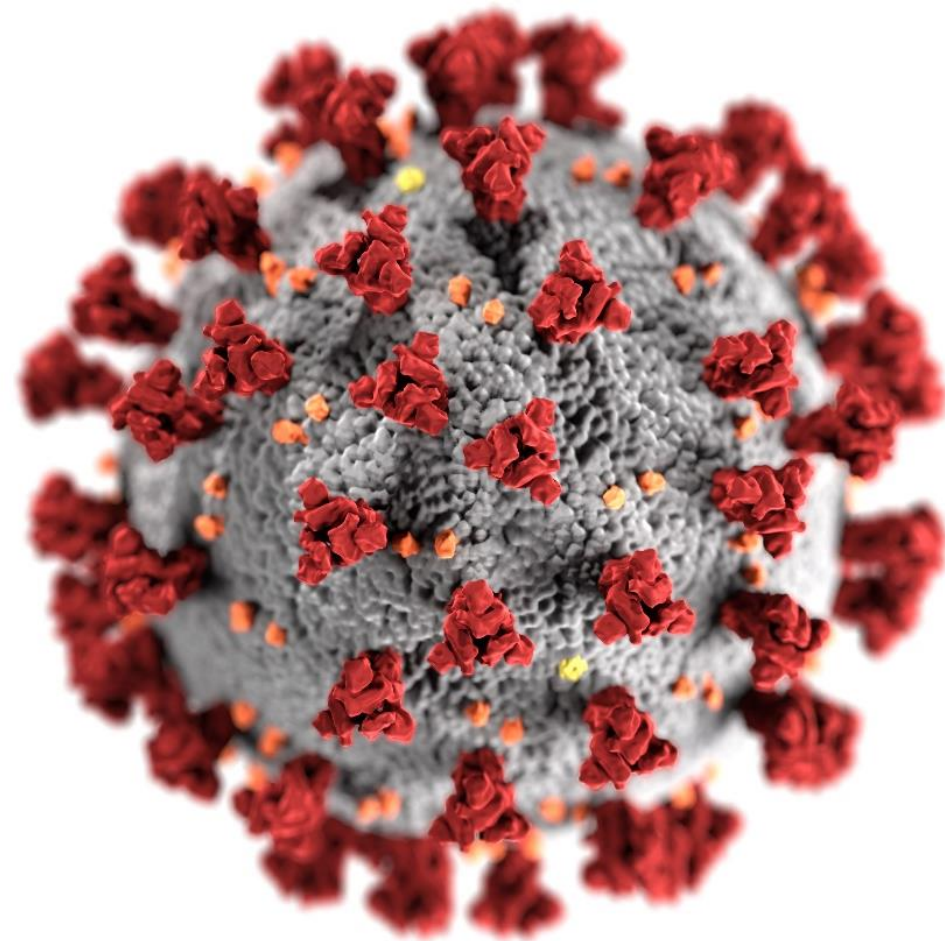
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# COVID-19 and Homelessness

## Guidance Updates

Homelessness Unit  
Disproportionately Affected Populations Team  
COVID-19 Response



[cdc.gov/coronavirus](https://cdc.gov/coronavirus)

# CDC guidance related to homelessness

On CDC COVID-19 site under “Helping Communities Plan and Respond”

## Shelters and other homeless service providers

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/homeless-shelters/plan-prepare-respond.html>

→ Whole community approach, communication, facility layout, facility procedures, supplies, staff considerations

## Providers serving people experiencing unsheltered homelessness

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/homeless-shelters/unsheltered-homelessness.html>

→ Whole community approach, communication, encampments, client considerations, outreach staff considerations



# CDC guidance related to homelessness

On CDC COVID-19 site under “Helping Communities Plan and Respond”

## Reopening: checklist of considerations for homeless service providers

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/php/homeless-service-providers.html>

## Testing strategies for health departments

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/homeless-shelters/testing.html>



# Testing strategies: Who to test

- People **with signs or symptoms** consistent with COVID-19
- Asymptomatic people with **recent known or suspected exposure** to SARS-CoV-2 to control transmission
- Asymptomatic people without known or suspected exposure to SARS-CoV-2 for **early identification in special settings**



# Testing strategies for homeless shelters and encampments

## Community transmission\*

## Testing strategy

**None** 

Baseline: Standard healthcare-based testing and testing for anyone who has been exposed

**Minimal-Moderate** 

Baseline + Consider increased testing for people who are symptomatic or asymptomatic to improve early detection

**Moderate-Substantial** 

Baseline + Consider facility-wide testing at least once. Follow-up testing weekly until no new cases identified for at least 14 days.



\*specific levels to be set by state and local health departments

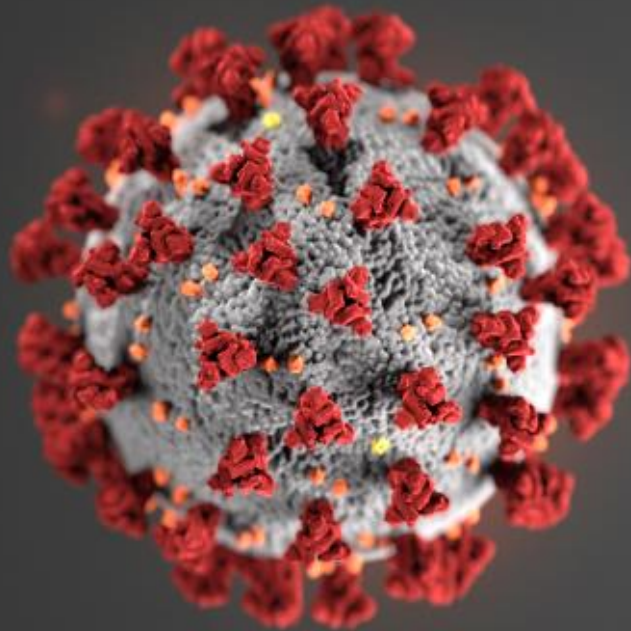


# Other CDC materials on homelessness

**Resources landing page:** <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/homeless-shelters/index.html>

- FAQs
- Communications materials for people experiencing homelessness
- Symptom screening tool
- Youth-focused information






For more information, contact CDC  
1-800-CDC-INFO (232-4636)  
TTY: 1-888-232-6348 [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov)

The findings and conclusions in this report are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official position of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.



# NEW ISSUE BRIEF: STRATEGIES FOR PROACTIVE UNIVERSAL TESTING

- Addresses public health authorities, emergency response systems, HCH programs, and other community providers
- Sites federal testing guidance (HHS, CDC, HRSA)
- Re-iterates importance of proactive, universal testing of this population
- Includes operational strategies, common challenges, and recommendations



## COVID-19 & the HCH Community

### Strategies for Proactive Universal Testing

Issue Brief | July 2020

As the response to the COVID-19 pandemic continues to evolve, there is an increasing focus on the need for universal testing (also called “facility-wide testing” or “point prevalence testing”) of both symptomatic and asymptomatic people in greater numbers. This will allow public health authorities to better track the spread of the virus and take appropriate response measures. As the supply and capacity for testing expands, wider testing initiatives targeting vulnerable populations—such as people experiencing homelessness—are not only feasible, they are critical components of effective community response plans.

Many [Health Care for the Homeless \(HCH\) programs](#) have been partnering with their public health authorities to assist with broader-scale universal testing activities. To learn more about these experiences, Council staff conducted in-depth focus groups with five HCH programs, as well as shorter discussions with staff at 12 other HCH programs.

**This issue brief complements the [most recent CDC guidance on testing](#) and provides public health authorities, emergency response systems, HCH programs, and other community providers with feedback about these experiences. It also offers lessons learned and strategies for conducting successful universal testing events among homeless populations.** The goal of this brief is to inform subsequent local testing events with new federal guidance, as well as feedback from the HCH focus groups on what has worked well (and not worked well) in individual communities.

#### Federal Guidance

**HHS:** The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) [COVID-19 Strategic Testing Plan](#) outlines three purposes of testing:

- **Diagnostic testing:** confirm individual cases of viral infection and inform subsequent treatment
- **Testing for contact tracing:** test and monitor persons in contact with infected individuals
- **Universal testing:** to limit the spread of disease and enable public health authorities to assess and manage the risks associated with COVID-19, including testing asymptomatic individuals. Objectives of universal testing include enabling rapid detection, isolation, and appropriate management of persons with viral infections; guiding the implementation of control measures; and detecting and containing outbreaks among vulnerable populations.

The HHS Strategic Testing Plan expects state and local governments to assume responsibility for planning and implementing COVID-19 testing activities, specifying that “State’s plans should address how the jurisdiction will meet the testing needs for vulnerable populations.”

Page 1      National Health Care for the Homeless Council      [www.nhchc.org](http://www.nhchc.org)

Check it out in the  
resource box below!



# NEW ISSUE BRIEF: STRATEGIES FOR PROACTIVE UNIVERSAL TESTING

## Operational Strategies

- Getting support
- Partners
- Frequency of testing
- Contact tracing/antibody testing
- Shelter characteristics
- Unsheltered/encampments
- Funding
- Services provided
- Next steps

## Challenges

- Gaining support
- Limited familiarity with homeless populations
- Gaining client trust
- Limited tests/capacity
- Lack of confidence in test results
- Ensuring sufficient services
- Leadership changes
- Locating vulnerable people
- Sharing data

# NEW ISSUE BRIEF: STRATEGIES FOR PROACTIVE UNIVERSAL TESTING

## 12 RECOMMENDATIONS

- Prioritize population
- Maximize legal authority
- Educate stakeholders
- Set up provider/public information
- Formalize partnerships
- Set up transportation
- Conduct COVID-19 education
- Provide services at testing
- Ensure safety of clients & staff
- Pursue permanent solutions
- Actively reverse disparities
- Share data

## Q&A & DISCUSSION



If you haven't already, please send us questions or comments using the chat box at the bottom of your screen

# TODAY'S DISCUSSION PANEL

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Lieutenant Commander, U.S.  
Public Health Service; Medical  
Officer, Surveillance,  
Epidemiology, Outbreak  
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Outbreak Management Branch,  
Departmental Operations Center,  
San Francisco Department of Public  
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# INFORMING SCIENCE: COVID-19 TESTING AMONG HOMELESS POPULATIONS

**What:** CDC-Council project collecting data on testing events

**Goals:** better understand the impact of COVID-19 on this vulnerable group, and to inform public health actions going forward.

**Scope:** Types of tests, client/staff test results, symptoms, demographics

**Please fill out the survey (or forward to someone who can!)**





# OUR RESOURCES

- Dedicated, newly re-designed, COVID-19 webpage:
  - [www.nhchc.org/coronavirus](http://www.nhchc.org/coronavirus)
  - HUD, CDC, & HRSA materials, local policies & guidance, consumer-specific materials
- **Request:** Please send us your local guidance and protocols!
  - Send to Michael Durham, TA Manager, at [mdurham@nhchc.org](mailto:mdurham@nhchc.org)
- Weekly editions of *Solidarity* (Wednesdays)