

# Detroit Continuum of Care | Supportive Housing Providers

## Working to Equitably End Homelessness in Detroit, Highland Park, & Hamtramck

### COVID-19 and Shelter-in-Place Guidance for PSH, RRH, and TH providers

April 16, 2020

This guidance is targeted to PSH, RRH, and TH programs where clients reside in their own individual units containing a private bathroom and kitchen/food prep area. It is designed to help providers think through program operations, client and staff education, remote engagement, and how to support clients in the midst of COVID-19.

Supportive housing providers play an essential role in slowing the spread of COVID-19 and in helping to protect some of Detroit's most vulnerable residents. The Detroit Continuum of Care is recommending that providers follow the guidance outlined below to help their agencies and clients to slow the spread of COVID-19 in Detroit, while still maintaining the critical services and support that you provide.

#### Ensure timely and consistent communication with your staff:

- Create a COVID-19 response team, identifying which staff will be responsible for receiving the highest-level communications and overseeing the design and implementation of relevant protocols. This team should be staying informed of, and discussing, new information and guidelines as they emerge from federal, state, and local partners. You may want to designate certain members of this team to be responsible for implementing education and training for staff; communicating with and coordinating care for shelter residents; facility readiness (including signage, supplies, staffing); housekeeping.
  - Ensure the appropriate members of the response team are receiving pertinent CoC Communications related to COVID-19. If they are not, reach out to [amanda@handetroit.org](mailto:amanda@handetroit.org) and/or [kaitie@handetroit.org](mailto:kaitie@handetroit.org) to have them added to communication lists.
- Create an internal email or other alert system for program staff.
- Hold educational sessions to provide information about how to reduce COVID-19 spread.
- Post educational materials/signage for both staff and clients (particularly in site-based facilities) in a way that can also be understood by non-English speakers. Signage should address cough/sneeze etiquette, promote proper handwashing, and encourage people to report symptoms to the Detroit Health Dept. and/or to staff. Centers for Disease Control posters can be [found here](#) (with multiple language options). If applicable, consider showing a streaming video in common areas with a TV demonstrating proper handwashing and cough etiquette.
- Provide employees with COVID-19 information from the [CDC](#), [State of Michigan](#), and [HUD](#)

#### Develop or review a Continuity of Operations Plan:

- Identify and cross-train employees to perform essential roles in the case of severe staffing shortages and consider which employees would most likely have familial obligations to attend to in the midst of the pandemic.
- Plan how to efficiently communicate and coordinate with employees, customers/clients, and suppliers during emergencies.
- Ensure the availability of essential technology and supplies.
- Work with IT to support continued communications (e.g., email, remote access, conference calls, webinars, etc.).
- Identify supply needs for 2-5 week periods and consider stockpiling infection control supplies and business essentials like handwashing products and tissues, and paper, printer ink, toner.
- Please note the following addition in the Governor's extension of the "Stay Home, Stay Safe, Save Lives" Executive Order:
  - *"All businesses, operations and government agencies that continue in-person work must develop a COVID-19 preparedness and response plan. This plan must be consistent with recommendations in 'Guidance on Preparing Workplaces for COVID-19', developed by the Occupational Health and Safety Administration (OSHA) and [available here](#). Such plan must be available at company headquarters or the worksite."*

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### Alter workflows where necessary:

- Ensure staff understand sick leave policies and consider adopting an interim policy requiring staff to stay at home if they are ill with COVID-19 symptoms (fever, cough, shortness of breath).
- Develop flexible policies for employees when they or their family members are sick. Educate employees about Family and Medical Leave Act ([click here](#) for more information on FMLA and COVID-19). Consider mandatory sick leave for employees with fever or respiratory symptoms. Consider suspending policies requiring physicians' notes for extended sick leave.
- Promote influenza vaccination for staff and clients. The flu shot is available for those ages 6 months and older via family doctor or by calling the Detroit Health Department Immunizations Clinic at (313) 876-4667.
- Take steps to reduce in-person employee interaction with each other and clients without diminishing support. Use creative technologies to engage with clients and staff during the pandemic.
- Limit or cancel non-essential travel and avoid areas with active COVID-19 transmission.
- Reduce unnecessary assembly of staff or clients and use bulletin boards, signs, posters, emails, conference calls etc. where appropriate in place of large meetings so that important information can still be disseminated.
  - This requires ensuring that clients and staff have the technology necessary for such interactions.
- Please note the following language from the Executive Order regarding the designation of employees as critical infrastructure workers:
  - *“Consistent with sections 8 and 9 of this order, businesses and operations must determine which of their workers are critical infrastructure workers and inform such workers of that designation. Businesses and operations must make such designations in writing, whether by electronic message, public website, or other appropriate means. **Workers need not carry copies of their designations when they leave the home or place of residence for work.**”*
    - It is up to your discretion whether you would like to provide the employees you have deemed critical for your agency with documentation to carry when they drive to work. However, such a letter is not mandatory under the Executive Order.
- Regularly check HAND's website at [www.handetroit.org/covid19](http://www.handetroit.org/covid19) for updates on CoC policies that have been modified in light of COVID-19.
- Consult this [linked platform](#) from Corporation for Supportive Housing (CSH) for resources and information geared directly toward Supportive Housing Providers.
  - Note: Access to this platform is free, however, you will need to login to CSH's Training Center. If you do not already have a login, you can create one at no charge.

### Apply for HUD Waivers for CoC programming:

On Wednesday, April 1, HUD released guidance on available waivers to provide flexibility for CoC Programs in light of the challenges presented by COVID-19. [Please click here](#) for a summary of the waiver opportunities, guidance for how to notify HUD of your intent to use a waiver, and a template you can use for your notification. Please also note the following things:

- The waivers are intended to reduce burdens on clients and staff and expedite moving people into housing as quickly as possible.
- If your agency would like to utilize these waivers, you must notify HUD of your intent to do so **at least two calendar days prior to using the waiver**. You do not need to get HUD's approval, but you do need to give them a two-day notice of your intent. Details are in the linked document above. Also included is template language you may use for this notification.
- Notification of intent to utilize a waiver must be submitted by the grantee (ie, your agency). It is not something the CoC can submit on behalf of all providers.

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- The notification must be sent to [CPD\\_COVID-19WaiverDET@HUD.gov](mailto:CPD_COVID-19WaiverDET@HUD.gov). Please cc [amanda@handetroit.org](mailto:amanda@handetroit.org) on any waivers you submit.
- It is recommended your agency submits for these waivers, even if it is currently unknown the extent to which they will be needed. Doing so will provide more flexibility across programs and across our CoC.
- Reach out to [amanda@handetroit.org](mailto:amanda@handetroit.org) with any questions you have about these waivers.

**IMPORTANT:** These waivers are for CoC funded programs. The waivers for ESG funded programs must be submitted by the City of Detroit, as they are the ESG recipient. HAND is working with the City on that waiver request.

### Encourage regular environmental cleaning:

- Clean and disinfect common areas. Use diluted household bleach, alcohol solutions with at least 60-95% alcohol, and most common EPA-registered household disinfectants.
- Share with staff explicit guidelines regarding surface cleaning, disinfection, and other basic infection control measures. Recommended CDC protocol [can be found here](#).
- Staff cleaning the facility (picking up used tissues, emptying wastebaskets, disinfecting surfaces, etc.) should be wearing gloves.
- Ensure a clearly communicated and coordinated process for obtaining infection control supplies, such as bleach, disinfectant wipes, scrubbers, mops, and protective equipment such as masks, disposable gloves. In the midst of the shortage, consider creative ways to clean and protect. For instance, ordinary soap is an effective cleaning tool; create your own cloth face mask [using CDC guidance here](#); etc.
- If you have on-site health care professionals (either full time or part time) contact the Detroit Health Department at [dhoutbreak@detroitmi.gov](mailto:dhoutbreak@detroitmi.gov) to receive additional screening guidance and protocols.

### Educate your clients:

Accurate information and understanding are very valuable tools in combatting the spread of COVID-19. Client actions and response should be motivated through knowledge rather than fear or mere mandate. Providers are encouraged to communicate the following to their clients (we have provided links to the most current educational materials to help inform your efforts):

- **To the extent necessary for each client, explain the following about the outbreak:**
  - [What COVID-19 is](#), what the [symptoms](#) are, and [how it's spread](#) (local printable educational materials can be found [here](#) and [here](#); CDC printable educational materials can be [found here](#)).
    - Instruct clients on good handwashing practices and ensure each household has soap. [Linked are some printable flyers](#) related to handwashing that you can pass out and/or hang up.
    - Help clients to distinguish between mild and severe symptoms so they understand when it is safe to stay at home and when they need to seek medical attention.
    - Work with clients to obtain their most current health insurance and healthcare provider information in the event that they need to seek medical attention.
      - The City of Detroit has posted information on [doctors accepting new patients](#), if the client doesn't have a doctor.
      - Note: if a client is exhibiting symptoms and needs a COVID-19 test, the City of Detroit is offering free testing at the fairground. [Click here](#) for more information and for guidance on how to schedule an appointment. The City is also offering roundtrip rides to the testing for \$2.
  - What a [pandemic](#) is, what [social distancing](#) is and why it's important, and [who is most at risk](#) (make sure to spend particular time educating those clients who are in a high-risk population)
    - [www.michigan.gov/coronavirus](http://www.michigan.gov/coronavirus) has the most up-to-date information on the scope of COVID-19's spread in Michigan.

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- To the extent necessary for each client, explain the following about the Governor’s “Stay Home, Stay Safe, Save Lives” Executive Order(s):
  - What the Executive Order(s) state as well as what it means for clients and *all* Michiganders.
    - The full text of Executive Order [2020-21](#) (original) and [2020-42](#) (extension) are linked. Additional information is also linked – [2020-21 summary](#); [2020-42 summary](#); [state FAQ page](#) (allows filtering for specific questions).
    - When communicating with clients about what is currently restricted, it may be helpful to emphasize that this is a governmental mandate and not merely a programmatic policy. Do what you can to help clients voluntarily choose to comply with the Executive Order in light of the education you have provided.
      - For your knowledge, Pursuant to the [Michigan Emergency Management Act](#), a willful violation of E.O. 2020-21 or 2020-42 is a misdemeanor punishable by up to 90 days in jail and/or a \$500 fine.
  - **Some critical elements you should be sure to emphasize with clients:**
    - Subject to the recent expansion of the executive order: **“all public and private gatherings of any number of people occurring among persons not part of a single household are prohibited”**
      - Whereas in the initial order, providers were not permitted to forbid visitation in buildings they directly managed, the language in the most recent order suggests that providers can now do so. *However, providers are encouraged to check with visitors before turning them away as some visitors may be coming to help clients with essential tasks such as obtaining food, medication, or other life-sustaining activities.*
    - Leaving one’s apartment should be done on a very limited basis and only to meet essential, basic needs. In other words, no leaving home unless it’s for the following reasons:
      - To go to work, if one’s job is considered “necessary to sustain or protect life or to conduct minimum basic operations”.
        - You may need to partner with clients to help them locate and/or request notice from their employer on whether or not they have been deemed essential.
      - To go to the doctor, under certain circumstances (clients are encouraged to call the doctor’s office before making a visit)
        - As noted above, you may need to partner with clients to understand their healthcare benefits, who their primary care physician is, and how the client can contact them.
      - Playgrounds and parks have closed. However, it is still acceptable to go outside to take a walk, be in the yard, exercise etc.
        - Emphasize to clients, however, that when they are outside they should still practice social distancing (keeping 6 feet between them and anyone who is not a member of their household)
        - Consider setting up designated areas for clients to smoke and putting markers on the ground so that clients can visibly see how much distance to keep between them and others.
    - Help clients understand that if they do need to go out, it is important to keep a least 6 feet between them and another person, to prevent the spread of the virus. Health officials have also started recommending wearing face masks when leaving home so work with clients to help them comply. The CDC has [information on how to make masks with household items](#). Clients can also

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tie scarves, bandanas or other garments around their face if they are unable to obtain or craft a mask themselves.

- Wash hands frequently and thoroughly (as mentioned above, consider providing handwashing guidance for clients and ensuring they have soap).
  - Help clients understand that the requirement to stay home applies to all of us, even if we don't feel sick or have tested negative for COVID-19. And it definitely applies if we have tested positive for COVID-19. Help them recognize that even if they don't feel sick, they may still be carrying the virus, and may pass it on to someone else. That person they pass it on to may have a health condition that may make it harder for him or her to recover.

### Consider creative ways to help clients comply with the social distancing mandate:

- Acknowledge with clients these are challenging times for *all* of us, and *it is important for us to all work together for the good of our entire community*. Help them process the implications of the rapid changes our community has undergone and provide them tailored support.
- Close access to non-essential common areas in your building.
- Restrict access to use of common laundry areas (For example, create a sign-up schedule to use the laundry, and clean/sanitize the area following each use.)
- CSH has provided [suggested guidance on visitors, including templates of signage](#). Review and consider adopting (making modifications if needed for your program).
- To help keep clients in their units, consider dropping off food, medication, or other necessities for them outside of their unit. Then knock/call to let them know the resource is on their doorstep.
- Consider what can be provided to clients to help improve the “creature comforts” within their units to combat boredom or the need to leave, such as:
  - TV/DVD player, movies, streaming subscriptions
  - Radio/CD players
  - Microwave
    - Mini fridge for clients in SRO units
  - Easily prepared simple meals (microwavable) or snacks
  - Books/puzzles/craft supplies
  - If they're involved with a faith community, are there print resources their church/synagogue/mosque is making available to congregates they could read or study? Can they request these items be mailed to them?
  - Stationary supplies and postage with encouragement to write cards/letters to friends and family
  - Create incentives or friendly contests to keep people inside (for example, anyone who stays within their unit for X amount of time will get a gift card to XXXX).
  - Toys and games for families
  - Internet access
  - Cleaning supplies
  - Provide phones and minutes for clients so they can keep in contact with case managers, families, etc.

### Develop strategies to ensure continued, regular communication with clients:

- Continue supporting clients remotely. Remote support for clients can include: working over the phone, using technology, and even meeting through open windows or in hallways while ensuring effective social distancing.
- In the same way that you should be working to educate clients about COVID-19 and the Governor's Executive Order, you should also educate clients on the changes your organization has made that impact the ways you

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engage with clients. Explain these changes to clients, the rationale behind them, and when you expect to be able to engage with them in the future.

- If you're struggling to keep up with client engagement amid the other COVID-19 related challenges your organization is facing, consider the following prioritization process for which clients to engage with first:
  - a. Those at higher risk for death from COVID-19 due to the [CDC's guidance on high-risk populations](#).
  - b. Those at higher risk for acquiring COVID-19 due to difficulty in self-isolating
    - i. This difficulty may be influenced by their job, lifestyle or mental health concerns, food or economic insecurity, etc.
  - c. Those at greatest risk of losing their housing.
    - i. This risk may be influenced by ongoing guest management issues, mental health, or other factors which place the client in higher acuity.
  - d. Those who have demonstrated continued success at setting and achieving program goals.

### Screen clients for wellness and work to address their needs:

- You or someone from your organization may be the only person that clients engage with during the pandemic. Therefore, it is vital to regularly connect with clients and to screen for client wellness upon every engagement.
  - Wellness checks should address the following aspects beyond physical health: food security, financial stability, apartment cleanliness and personal hygiene, mental health, guest management, and any risks of harm the client may face.
- Below are links to an array of local resources. Be sure to check regularly and connect clients with the plethora of supports available:
  - Physical Health
    - Doctors accepting new patients [LINK](#)
    - For COVID-19 questions, call the Detroit Health Department 24/7 at 313-876-4000
  - Food Resources
    - [LINK](#) to compilation
  - Mental Health
    - Telehealth resources through Team Wellness Center are available 24 hours day. Dial 888-813-TEAM(8326). [LINK](#)
    - Resources from Detroit Wayne Integrated Health Network [LINK](#)
  - Water Shutoff Assistance
    - [LINK](#)
  - Financial Resources
    - Unemployment benefits expansion information [LINK](#)
    - COVID-19 Stimulus Check access assistance [LINK](#)
  - Distance Learning Resources for K-12 Students
    - [LINK](#)
  - Free WiFi Opportunity for low-income families
    - [LINK](#)
  - Resource Compilation Guides
    - City of Detroit COVID 313 Page [LINK](#)
    - Wayne State Resource Compilation [LINK](#)
    - CoC Resource Compilation [LINK](#)