



**NKYHEALTH**  
NORTHERN KENTUCKY HEALTH DEPARTMENT

# COVID-19 AND HOMELESS SERVICE SETTINGS

Now is the time to prepare in the event the virus begins spreading in our community. Use this fact sheet to help you plan. You can also stay up-to-date on current information about COVID-19 by visiting <https://nkyhealth.org/individual-or-family/health-alerts/coronavirus/>, or by following @nkyhealth on Facebook and Twitter.

## What is COVID-19 and how does it spread?

COVID-19 is a respiratory virus that can spread easily from person to person, mostly through coughing and sneezing. When a sick person coughs or sneezes near you, you can breathe in droplets that have the virus. The droplets can also land on surfaces you may touch with your hands.

## Minimize the risk of COVID-19 for clients.

### Promote the practice of everyday preventative actions including:

- Cleaning hands often and avoiding touching your eyes, nose and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Avoiding close contact with people who are sick.
- Covering coughs and sneezes with a tissue or use the inside of your elbow. Throwing used tissues in the trash.
- Cleaning and disinfecting frequently touched surfaces daily.

### Provide COVID-19 prevention supplies at your organization. These should include:

- Soap
- Alcohol-based hand sanitizers that contain at least 60% alcohol
- Tissues
- Trash baskets
- Disposable facemasks (Note: Facemasks should be kept on-site and only used when someone is sick.)

### Keep clients informed about public health recommendations by:

- Posting signs at entrances and in strategically placed areas providing instruction on hand hygiene, respiratory hygiene and cough etiquette.
- Providing educational materials about COVID-19 for non-English speakers, as needed.

### Assist clients in preventing disease spread and accessing care by:

- In general sleeping areas, keep beds/mats at least six feet apart and request that all clients sleep head-to-toe. Use temporary barriers between beds, such as curtains, in areas where clients with respiratory symptoms are sleeping.
- Provide access to fluids, tissues and plastic bags for disposing used tissues.
- Ensure bathrooms and other sinks are consistently stocked with soap and drying materials for hand washing. Provide alcohol-based hand sanitizers that contain at least 60% alcohol at key points within the facility, including registration desks, entrances/exits and eating areas.
- At check-in, provide any client with respiratory symptoms (cough, fever) with a disposable facemask.
- If possible, confine clients with mild respiratory symptoms consistent with COVID-19 to individual rooms, and have them avoid common areas.
- If you identify any client with severe symptoms, arrange for the client to receive immediate medical care.

# COVID-19 AND HOMELESS SERVICE SETTINGS

## Minimize the risk of COVID-19 for staff.

**Prepare contingency plans** for increased absenteeism caused by employee illness or by illness in employees' family members that requires employees to stay home. These plans might include:

- Extending hours
- Cross-training current employees
- Hiring temporary employees

### **Plan for staff and volunteer absences.**

- Develop flexible attendance and sick-leave policies. Staff and volunteers should stay home when they are sick or caring for a sick household member. Additionally, staff and volunteers may need to care for their children in the event of school dismissals.
- Identify critical job functions and positions, and plan for coverage by cross-training staff members. You can use a process similar to the one you use when you cover for staff workers during the holidays.

### **Plan for higher shelter usage during the outbreak.**

- Consider the need for extra personal protective equipment for staff members and volunteers.

### **Create a communication plan for distributing timely and accurate information.**

- Identify everyone in your chain of communication, and establish systems for sharing information.
- Stay informed, and keep staff informed about the local COVID-19 situation.

### **Minimize the number of staff members who have face-to-face interactions with clients with respiratory symptoms by:**

- Using physical barriers to protect staff who will have interactions with clients with unknown infection status (e.g. check-in staff).
- Install a sneeze guard at the check-in desk or place an additional table between staff and clients to increase the distance between them.
- If staff are handling client belongings, they should use disposable gloves.
- Consider reducing cleaning frequency in bedrooms and bathrooms dedicated to ill persons to as-needed cleaning to avoid unnecessary contact with the ill persons.

**Staff and volunteers that are considered high risk of becoming very sick with COVID-19** (those who are older or have underlying health conditions) should not be designated as caregivers for sick clients staying in the shelter.

## For more information:

- <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/homeless-shelters/plan-prepare-respond.html>
- <https://nkyhealth.org/individual-or-family/health-alerts/coronavirus/>