



**Lee County**  
Continuum of Care



**Lee County**  
Homeless Coalition



**Lee County**  
*Southwest Florida*

Guidance for Homeless Service  
Providers to Plan and Respond  
to Coronavirus Disease 2019  
(COVID-19)

March 31, 2020

This guidance is based on what is currently known about Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19). Information has been compiled from The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD).

Persons experiencing homelessness may be at risk during an outbreak of COVID-19. This guidance is intended to support response planning by homeless service providers, including overnight emergency shelters, supportive service providers and meal service providers.

There is much to learn about COVID-19, the transmissibility, severity, and other features of the disease. Everyone can do his or her part to help plan, prepare, and respond to this emerging public health threat.

## Sheltered Populations

### Planning

- Establish ongoing communication with the Lee County Department of Health to facilitate access to relevant information before and during an outbreak.
- Connect to community-wide planning - collaborate and share information with the Lee County Homeless Coalition.
- Develop or update emergency operations plans.
  - Include 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, or hiring temporary employees.
  - Address key prevention strategies in your emergency operations plans using health messages and materials developed by the Lee County Department of Health or the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).
- Inventory supplies on hand, and designate responsible persons to manage distribution of supplies to staff, volunteers, and those you serve. Supplies include:
  - Soap
  - Alcohol-based hand sanitizers that contain at least 60% alcohol
  - Tissues
  - Trash baskets
  - Disposable facemasks

*Note: Disposable facemasks should be kept on-site and used only when someone is sick at your organization. Those who are sick should be immediately isolated from those who are not sick and given a clean disposable facemask to wear while staying at the shelter.*

## Responding

- Report cases of respiratory illness that might be COVID-19 to Lee County Department of Health by calling 239-332-9501, and transport persons with severe illness to medical facilities.
- If possible, identify space that can be used to accommodate clients with mild respiratory symptoms and separate them from others.
  - Most persons with COVID-19 infections will likely have mild symptoms and not require hospital care.
  - Identify clients who could be at high risk for complications from COVID-19 (those who are older or have underlying health conditions) and ensure they are separated from others.
- Report changes in operations, and any Covid-19 cases encountered to the Lee County Homeless Coalition daily.
  - The Lee County Homeless Coalition will disseminate information regarding agencies operational changes and up to date information provided by the CDC and HUD.
- Consistently communicate with staff, volunteers, and clients regarding preventative measures, and operational changes.
  - Learn more about preventative measures and symptoms at:  
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>
- Conspicuously post COVID-19 posters and CDC Fact Sheets to keep your clients and staff informed about public health recommendations. Messaging should include materials for non-English speakers.
- Minimize face-to-face interactions whenever possible, including meetings with other agencies, clients, and other staff or volunteers.
- Use physical barriers to protect staff who interact with clients. 3
  - Note: Disposable facemasks should be reserved for use by clients who exhibit symptoms. Clients who become sick should be given a clean disposable facemask to wear while staying at the shelter.*
- Limit visitors to the facility.
- Use gloves when handling client belongings.
- In general sleeping areas (for those who are not experiencing respiratory symptoms), ensure that beds are at least 3 feet apart, and request that all clients sleep head-to-toe.
- Provide access to fluids, tissues, plastic bags for the proper disposal of used tissues.
- Consider reducing cleaning frequency in bedrooms and bathrooms dedicated to ill persons to as-needed cleaning (e.g., of soiled items and surfaces) to avoid unnecessary contact with the ill persons.
- Ensure that all common areas within the facility follow good practices for environmental cleaning. Cleaning should be conducted in accordance with CDC recommendations.

## Unsheltered Populations

### Encampments

- Encampments shall not be cleared during the COVID-19 outbreak.
  - Clearing encampments can cause people to disperse throughout the community and increases the potential for infectious disease spread.
- Encourage people staying in encampments to set up their tents/sleeping quarters with at least 12 feet x 12 feet of space per individual.
- Provide soap, hand sanitizer and other hygiene products as frequently as possible.

### Communications

- Distribute information and flyers from the CDC, including, but not limited to:
  - The most recent information about COVID-19 spread
  - Social distancing recommendations
  - How to recognize the symptoms of COVID-19 and what to do if they are sick
  - What to do if their friends, family, or community members are sick
  - How to isolate themselves if they have symptoms
  - Updated information on where to find food, water, hygiene facilities, regular healthcare, and behavioral health resources if there have been local closures or changes
- The Lee County Homeless Coalition will distribute daily agency operational updates, and keep current information and guidance posted on the Homeless Coalition Facebook Page: <https://www.facebook.com/leehomeless/> and Homeless Coalition Webpage: <https://www.leehomeless.org/>
- CDC/HUD Guidance is distributed to the Homeless Coalition distribution list as available.

### Identification

- Identify persons who are at higher risk of moderate to severe disease because of certain conditions, and coordinate services with other providers whenever possible, to ensure isolation.
- Complete the COVID-19 screen in HMIS for all new intakes.
- Complete the Coordinated Assessment screens in HMIS for persons who are higher risk to ensure those persons are prioritized for permanent housing resources.