



**RICHARD SANCHEZ**  
DIRECTOR

**DAVID M. SOULELES, MPH**  
DEPUTY AGENCY DIRECTOR  
PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICES

**MARC MEULMAN, MPA**  
CHIEF OF OPERATIONS

**MATTHEW ZAHN, MD**  
MEDICAL DIRECTOR  
COMMUNICABLE DISEASE CONTROL

**PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICES**  
**COMMUNICABLE DISEASE CONTROL**

1719 W. 17<sup>TH</sup> STREET  
SANTA ANA, CA 92706  
PHONE: (714) 834-8180  
FAX: (714) 564-4050  
E-MAIL: [MZahn@ochca.com](mailto:MZahn@ochca.com)

March 24, 2020

To: Homeless Shelter Operators in Orange County, California

From: Matthew Zahn, MD  
Medical Director, Communicable Disease Control Division

Re: OCHCA Interim Guidance on COVID-19 for Homeless Shelters

As you are aware, community spread of COVID-19 is ongoing in Orange County. Persons experiencing homelessness are at heightened risk of infection and many, because of age and underlying medical conditions, are at greater risk of severe illness. There is no vaccine; therefore social distancing, good hygiene and sanitation are the best defense we have against the virus. These are particularly challenging for homeless persons and shelter settings. Despite the challenge it is imperative that homeless providers do everything reasonable to prevent the transmission of COVID-19 among this highly vulnerable population.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and State of California Business, Consumer Services and Housing Agency (BSCH) have provided interim guidance for homeless shelters to prevent disease spread among clients and staff. HCA has outlined key recommendations in the attached "Interim Guidance on COVID-19 (Novel Coronavirus) for Homeless Shelters" and created a tool for screening to assist shelter operators.

We are asking shelter operators to review the attached guidance and observe the following minimum standards:

**Personal hygiene.** Soap and water and/or hand sanitizer and tissues should be readily available, along with signs and verbal reminders for residents and staff to wash hands frequently, and cover their cough.

**Clean and disinfect commonly touched surfaces and common areas frequently throughout the day.** Follow product label instructions and [CDC Environmental Cleaning & Disinfection Recommendations](#).

**Screen for fever and respiratory illness.** Actively screen clients, staff and visitors every time they enter the shelter. Remind clients to report illness immediately. Staff that are sick should not come to work.

**Isolate sick clients.** Clients who are sick with fever, AND cough OR shortness breath should be masked and immediately separated from others. Identify a location and plan for isolation of ill clients.

**Minimize close contacts.** Limit staff member face-to-face interactions with clients with respiratory symptoms; provide personal protective equipment for those who must.

**Limit visitors and mixing of clients.** Don't allow non-residential clients receiving food or other support service to enter residential areas, and reduce social interactions as much as possible.

**Establish social distance:** Space beds/mats at least six feet apart and set bedding in a head-to-toe pattern.

We appreciate your commitment to serve this vulnerable population, especially during this difficult time. Together we can work to mitigate the impact of this emerging public health threat on our clients and staff.



Matthew Zahn, MD  
Medical Director  
Communicable Disease Control Division