

COVID-19 Best Practices for DHS Shelters

Purpose: This document provides the suggested guidance for minimizing COVID-19 transmission among New Yorkers experiencing homelessness. The details below are best practices which in implementation should take into account differences among shelters.

Sleeping Arrangements

- Redistribute number of beds in each dorm, space permitting, to reduce number of clients.
- All beds should be arranged in a head-to-toe arrangement, or use temporary physical barriers (e.g. lockers, curtains, etc.) to create barriers between beds

Bathrooms

- Increase number of cleanings and ensure soap and disposable towels are available.

Mealtimes

- Stagger mealtimes for shelter residents to reduce crowding in shared eating facilities
- Stagger the schedule for use of common/shared kitchens
- Serve pre-packaged meals or meals dispensed by food service workers when possible, as opposed to self-service
- Provide hand washing stations with disposable towels, or alcohol-base hand rubs, for use prior to entering food lines, if available
- Keep shelter residents at least 6 feet apart when standing on food lines

Transportation

- If possible transport fewer people per trip, and ensure that passengers have more space between one another
- Healthy shelter residents should not be transported in the same vehicle as a sick shelter resident

Recreation, Common Rooms and Group Activities

- Create a schedule for common spaces
- Cancel group activities
- Rearrange furnishings to reduce the likelihood of close physical contact
- Provide reading materials (such as books or magazines) and single-player games (such as puzzles or playing cards for solitaire)

Medical Needs

- TeleHealth appointments should be scheduled when possible
- Medication delivery should be arranged to be delivered by a pharmacy
- Provide staff and residents with NYC Well brochure and contact numbers (Phone: 888-692-9355 or Text WELL to 65173)

Staff Activities

- Use bulletin boards, signs, posters, brochures, emails, phone, mailbox, or sliding information under someone's door
- Minimize face-to-face interactions, consider technology and virtual programs, for example: face time, skype, zoom.
- If in-person interactions are absolutely necessary, maintain at least 6 feet between staff