

## Daily Update: Homeless populations in the context of COVID-19

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Date: March 26, 2020

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What select jurisdictions (within Canada, Europe, and Asia) are doing to support homeless populations during the COVID-19 pandemic.

### *Summary of Actions*

*\*Further details and references in Appendix A*

1. Drop-in homeless centers (Edmonton)
2. Increased shelters for distancing (Toronto; France)
3. Isolation/recovery specific shelters (Edmonton; Toronto; Atlanta; UK)
4. Hotel rooms booked for 14-day isolations (Toronto)
5. Hotels/Community centers/offices repurposed for shelters/isolation/COVID-19 positive cases (Toronto; France; London UK)
6. “Rapid housing access” for shelter users (Toronto)
7. Flexible rent for rent-geared-to-income population (Toronto)
8. Freeze on evictions (France)
9. Outreach education and screening teams (Atlanta)
10. Testing sites specifically for homeless population (Atlanta)
11. Expanded Emergency Assistance program/ reduced requirements for Social-assistance (Ontario)
12. 15-minute home test kits – antibody testing distributed by pharmacy or amazon (United Kingdom)

New/Updated guidelines from WHO, BCCDC, USA CDC, other related organizations

1. BCCDC (NEW VERSION 23.3.20) Overdose in the context of COVID-19  
[http://www.bccdc.ca/Health-Info-Site/Documents/OD\\_BVM\\_COVID\\_FINAL.pdf](http://www.bccdc.ca/Health-Info-Site/Documents/OD_BVM_COVID_FINAL.pdf)

2. CDC (UPDATED 22.3.20). Resources to support people experiencing homelessness <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/homeless-shelters/index.html>
3. CDC (UPDATED 22.3.20). Interim Guidance for Responding to Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) among People Experiencing Unsheltered Homelessness <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/homeless-shelters/unsheltered-homelessness.html>
4. IASC (17.3.20) Interim Guidance on Scaling-up COVID-19 Outbreak in Readiness and Response Operations in Camps and Camp-like Settings (jointly developed by IFRC, IOM, UNHCR and WHO) <https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/other/interim-guidance-scaling-covid-19-outbreak-readiness-and-response-operations-camps-and-camp>
5. IASC (17.3.20) COVID-19: How to include marginalized and vulnerable people in risk communication and community engagement <https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/covid-19-how-include-marginalized-and-vulnerable-people-risk-communication-and-community-engagement>

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**APPENDIX A: Further details:** What select jurisdictions (within Canada, Europe, and Asia) are doing to support homeless populations during the COVID-19 pandemic.

1. Global News (23.3.2020). Edmonton EXPO Centre homeless shelter to have drop-in, COVID-19 health care services. <https://globalnews.ca/news/6721081/expo-centre-open-covid-19-homeless/>
  - Edmonton EXPO Centre is set to open as a temporary health and drop-in centre. It will be jointly run by the city, Alberta Community and Social Services, Alberta Health Services, Homeward Trust and community partners.Two options for homeless support:
  - 1) Drop-in centre: 8 a.m. to 8 p.m., seven days a week. It will be in a large space allowing for social distance. Will not act as overnight option for individuals who don't require health services.
  - 2) Health attention due to COVID-19. A separate portion of the facility has been converted into a 24/7 isolation shelter, which will be a space for Edmontonians experiencing homelessness to self-isolate or recover if they have been exposed to the virus. The isolation shelter will be run by the Boyle McCauley Health Centre, with support from AHS.
2. Global News (24.3.2020). Coronavirus: Toronto announces measures to help those who are homeless, in community housing. <https://globalnews.ca/news/6725973/coronavirus-toronto-homeless-shelters-community-housing/>
  - 9 new homeless facilities with a total capacity of 350 spaces have opened to spread people out. A tenth facility is being prepared to be opened. Hotel and motel rooms, as well as recreation and community centres that are temporarily closed, are currently being used in some cases.
  - City staff have also instituted a “rapid housing access” initiative to expedite access to Toronto Community Housing for those in the shelter system. Sixty-five homes have been filled or are in the process of being readied for occupancy.
  - Toronto Community Housing would be “flexible” with those who pay rent-geared-to-income or market rent if there was a change in employment income. Depending on the resident’s circumstances, rent will be “adjusted or deferred.”Details in embedded media release video:
  - Regular webinars with sites– to share information and best practice and communication tools for COVID-19 response.
  - 9 facilities: COVID recovery site, isolation site, city has also booked hotel rooms that people who typically use the shelter system can stay in if they need to self-isolate for 14 days.
3. News Release (23.3.20). Ontario Protecting the Most Vulnerable During COVID-19 Crisis. <https://news.ontario.ca/opo/en/2020/03/ontario-protecting-the-most-vulnerable-during-covid-19-crisis.html>
  - Expanded Emergency Assistance program administered through Ontario Works (OW) to cover these individuals' needs such as food, rent, informal childcare, and services. There will also be discretionary benefits available to those who already receive social assistance.

- Funding will also be made available to organizations delivering social services to vulnerable First Nations individuals and families
  - Social-assistance clients and caseworkers: the government has also temporarily removed the requirement for clients to provide written documentation at this time. Ontario Works (OW) and Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) payments will be made as usual and will continue based on previous levels of income support. Individuals will not have to visit their local office to provide written documentation during this time.
4. EuroNews (18.3.20). France opens homeless self-isolation centres amid coronavirus pandemic.  
<https://www.euronews.com/2020/03/18/france-opens-homeless-self-isolation-centres-amid-coronavirus-pandemic>
- France's Ministry of Housing is opening two isolation centres in Paris to cater to the city's homeless as the coronavirus lockdown enters its second day.
  - Each will have 150 beds for homeless people who test positive for COVID-19 but do not need to be hospitalised, it said.
  - The initiative will be expanded across France, with authorities planning to open one centre in every region, with several centres in larger regions. Over 80 sites across the country have been chosen by the authorities for now, with a total of 2,875 available places.
  - The French government announced on Sunday that the end of the "winter truce", during which no one can be asked to leave their current accommodation, has been delayed until 31 May.
  - "Housing centres must stay open to keep offering accommodation for people in precarious situations," the ministry said.
5. AA. (19.3.20). France houses its homeless to combat COVID-19  
<https://www.aa.com.tr/en/europe/france-houses-its-homeless-to-combat-covid-19/1772011>
- The French government has announced it will establish shelters in every region of the country, with several to open in those with higher populations, to contain the spread of coronavirus.
  - There will be 2,875 available spaces in 80 sites that have been chosen to date. Some 150 beds will also be established in each facility for those who test positive for COVID-19 but whose condition does not need hospitalization.
  - Hotel rooms are also being requisitioned both in the capital and throughout France to house those most vulnerable, announced Julien Denormandie, the minister responsible for City and Housing.
  - Several facilities opened in Paris on Wednesday evening, and "more than 170 should be open by the end of the week in the capital," Denormandie said.
6. The Guardian (21.3.20). UK hotels to become homeless shelters under coronavirus plan  
<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/mar/21/uk-hotels-homeless-shelters-coronavirus>
- Hotels and offices will be converted into emergency safe spaces under a national action plan drawn up by Tony Blair's former homelessness expert, to protect rough sleepers from coronavirus
  - The strategy to safeguard the homeless will be announced on Monday and follows the lead of California in allowing vacant hotels to be requisitioned into homes for rough sleepers and those vulnerable to the virus.

- Up to 45,000 'self-contained accommodation spaces' need to be urgently found. Along with hotels, disused office blocks and student accommodation have also been identified as possible solutions.
7. Wabe (23.3.20). Atlanta Rolls Out New Measures As COVID-19 Affects People Who Are Homeless  
<https://www.wabe.org/as-homeless-test-positive-for-covid-19-atlanta-rolls-out-new-measures/>
- According to statement from city. Outreach teams are starting by visiting encampments to educate people about the risk of the coronavirus and how to prevent its spread. They're also bringing hand sanitizer and hygiene kits.
  - Next, the teams will screen people for symptoms. Homeless shelters already have been checking their residents for fevers or coughs.
  - Plan from the Atlanta Continuum of Care, a city-managed collection of service providers, is to set up testing sites specifically for people who are homeless (said Tom Andrews, CEO of St. Joseph's Health System.)
  - City is working to set up isolation sites
8. Aljazeera (23.3.20) Homeless amid the coronavirus pandemic  
<https://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/inpictures/pictures-homeless-coronavirus-pandemic-200323081742572.html>
- Hundreds of homeless people in London are being housed in hotels to self-isolate to provide them with "vital protection". Three hundred rooms have been made available in two hotels for the next 12 weeks
  - Officials in the French town of Cannes said they would open the pavilion of their prestigious annual film festival, postponed due to the coronavirus, to homeless people
    - French homeless organisations accused police of issuing fines to rough sleepers for failing to comply with self-isolation requirements under a strict social lockdown to halt the spread of the coronavirus.
9. The Independent (25.3.20). Coronavirus test: UK to make 15-minute at-home kits available 'within days'.  
<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/coronavirus-test-uk-kit-home-nhs-cases-symptoms-public-health-england-a9424741.html>
- New 15-minute home test kits for coronavirus will be made available to the British public within days, said a Public Health England (PHE) director.
  - Thousands of tests will be sold in chemists such as Boots or delivered by Amazon to people with symptoms who are self-isolating as soon as next week.  
Matt Hancock, the health secretary, said the government bought millions of the tests on Tuesday and is ordering millions more.
  - The antibody test involves pricking a finger and analysing a drop of blood in a device that looks like a pregnancy test. It will only tell the person if they have had Covid-19, not if they currently have it. The test will detect the presence of the antibodies IGM, which emerges in the early stages of infection.

