

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

Date: March 27, 2020

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

Summary of Recent Actions

**Further details and references for today's update in Appendix A*

1. Any symptomatic homeless person immediately housed in hotel while awaiting results (Montreal)
2. Increased access to washing facilities and medical and psychological care (Germany)
3. "Donation fences" where public can hang bags of basic supplies (Germany)
4. Volunteer ride-hailing taxi drivers to ferry homeless symptomatic people to their hotel rooms (London, UK)
5. Anyone experiencing or at risk of homelessness can contact Homeless Hotline (Queensland, Australia)
6. Enhancing Home Assist Secure program to provide support for older people or those with a disability who need essential supplies and services. (Queensland, Australia)
7. City contracting restaurants as part of a pilot program to deliver meals to homeless shelters (Cambridge, USA)
8. Plans for "Tiny house villages" (Seattle, USA)

In previous updates:

1. Drop-in homeless centers (Edmonton)
2. Increased shelters for distancing (Toronto; France; Germany)
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. BCCSU (NEW 26.3.20) COVID-19. <https://www.bccsu.ca/covid-19/>
 - I. Interim Clinical Guidance: [Risk Mitigation in the Context of Dual Public Health Emergencies](https://www.bccsu.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Clinical-Guidance-Risk-Mitigation-in-the-Context-of-Dual-Public-Health-Emergencies.pdf)
<https://www.bccsu.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Clinical-Guidance-Risk-Mitigation-in-the-Context-of-Dual-Public-Health-Emergencies.pdf>
 - II. [Bulletin: Clinical Guidance for Prescribers and Pharmacists](#)
 - III. [Education: BC ECHO on Substance Use](#)
 - IV. [List of Resources for COVID-19 and Substance Use](#)
 - V. [Statement from BCCSU on COVID-19](#)

News Release: BC Gov News (NEW 26.3.20) New clinical guidance to reduce risk for people during dual health emergencies https://news.gov.bc.ca/releases/2020MMHA0008-000572?fbclid=IwAR0psHb0OfC5j_WhBv9tGyE9pmuz7QgiBZwKff4DVnzRBNq_tFewZXJfOFg

2. Homeless Hub. York University (2020). <https://mailchi.mp/edu/covid-19-resources-for-the-homeless-serving-sector?e=80e181a7b6>
 - I. Canadian Network for the Health and Housing of People Experiencing Homelessness. Andrew J. COVID-19 Response Framework for People Experiencing Homelessness
<https://www.homelesshub.ca/sites/default/files/attachments/HPD-Doc-CHN3CovidPlanningRevisedwithHealthRecos-20200320%20%282%29.pdf>
 - II. Homeless Learning Hub. COVID-19 Preparation for Homeless Populations
<https://www.homelessnesslearninghub.ca/library/resources/covid-19-preparation-homeless-populations>
 - [Pandemic Planning: How Can My Agency Prepare for the Potential Spread of Coronavirus?](#)
 - [Coronavirus Resources for the Homelessness Sector](#)
 - [Lessons from H1N1](#)
 - Infectious Disease Toolkit for Continuums of Care for [people experiencing homelessness](#), [people residing in shelters](#), and [people living in encampments](#)*
 - II. Inner City Health Associates, City of Toronto. Svoboda, T, et al. (16.3.20). A High-Level Policies and Procedures Guide for Isolation Sites for People Experiencing Homelessness
<https://www.homelesshub.ca/sites/default/files/attachments/HPD-Doc-CHN3IsolationShelterFrameworkRevised-20200320%20%282%29.pdf>
 - III. Canadian Observatory on Homelessness (2016). The Challenges of Pandemic Planning in the Context of Homelessness <https://www.homelesshub.ca/resource/1-challenges-pandemic-planning-context-homelessness>
 - IV. Western University (25.3.20). Protecting People Experiencing Homelessness During a Pandemic <https://www.homelesshub.ca/blog/protecting-people-experiencing-homelessness-during-pandemic>

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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. Montreal Gazette. (26.3.20). Coronavirus crisis pushing homeless shelters to the brink, experts say
<https://www.healthing.ca/news/coronavirus-crisis-pushing-homeless-shelters-to-the-brink-experts-say>
 - Any homeless person who is tested for COVID-19 and exhibits symptoms of the virus will be able to stay at a hotel designed to accommodate patients until they get their results
 - Meals served from large tents outside with heaters

2. World Economic Forum (23.3.20). This is how cities are helping homeless people self-isolate
<https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2020/03/homeless-self-isolation-cities-coronavirus>
 - London’s Mayor is making 300 hotel rooms available so homeless people can self-isolate.
 - A day earlier, California Governor Gavin Newsom announced a goal of providing 51,000 hotel rooms across the state for homeless people. At the time, 2,000 hotel rooms had been lined up and 1,300 trailers ordered.
 - In Seattle, which saw the first known case of COVID-19 in the US, outreach workers are working on social distancing in shelters. The city’s Mayor, Jenny A. Durkan, has announced plans to open emergency quarantine and isolation sites and to provide accommodation for homeless people in “tiny house villages”.
 - Paris has also opened self-isolation centres with hundreds of beds for homeless people who test positive for COVID-19 but who do not need to be hospitalized.

3. Human Rights Watch (26.3.20) How Can Germans ‘Stay at Home’ If They Are Homeless?
<https://www.hrw.org/news/2020/03/26/how-can-germans-stay-home-if-they-are-homeless>
 - The Berlin city government has emergency plans to accommodate 350 homeless people in a former youth hostel and elsewhere, including access to washing facilities and medical and psychological advice.
 - “Donation fences” have been initiated where the public can hang bags of basic supplies

4. Easter Boston (23.3.20) Cambridge Is Partnering With Local Restaurants to Help Feed Homeless People
<https://boston.eater.com/2020/3/23/21191330/cambridge-restaurants-feeding-local-homeless-people>
 - Pinocchio’s Pizza, Orinoco, Zinneken’s, and several other Cambridge restaurants are contracting with the city as part of a pilot program to deliver meals to homeless shelters around Cambridge.
 - DePasquale noted that many shelter programs are currently short-staffed, making it difficult to prepare meals onsite
 - The goal is to deliver around 2,000 meals to shelters this week

5. National Post (26.3.20). London's homeless stuck on the streets during coronavirus lockdown
<https://nationalpost.com/pmnl/health-pmnl/londons-homeless-stuck-on-the-streets-during-coronavirus-lockdown-2>
 - London mayor Sadiq Khan announced on Saturday that 300 rooms in hotels owned by the Intercontinental Hotels Group had been booked for the next 12 weeks, to help homeless people self-isolate.
 - Homeless charity St Mungo’s coordinated a scheme for volunteer ride-hailing taxi drivers to ferry people to their rooms.

6. Lakeside Hope House (18.3.20). Guelph's Plan to Help the Homeless and Food Insecure Population During COVID-19 <https://lakesidehopehouse.ca/covid-19/>

- 24hour Drop In Centres and shelters where meals will be provided
- Hygiene and groceries supplies provided

7. National News (25.3.20) \$24.7M Coronavirus Housing and Homelessness Response <https://www.power100.com.au/headlines/163616-247m-coronavirus-housing-and-homelessness-response>

Mr de Brenni said Queensland's (Australia) housing support package would deliver:

- Safe accommodation for vulnerable and homeless Queenslanders needing to self-isolate
- Brokerage funds for specialist homelessness services to provide crisis accommodation
- Increased outreach capacity for homelessness service providers
- Accommodation assistance for vulnerable people requiring self-isolation
- Enhancing the Home Assist Secure program to provide support for older Queenslanders and people with a disability who need essential supplies and services.
- Expanding access to private market support products for people who face economic hardship from coronavirus.
- Anyone experiencing or at risk of homelessness can contact their local Housing Service Centre or the Homeless Hotline on 1800 474 753.

APPENDIX B: Further noted research

1. Culhane, D. P., Treglia, D., Steif, K., Kuhn, R., & Byrne, T. (2020). Estimated Emergency and Observational/Quarantine Bed Need for the US Homeless Population Related to COVID-19 Exposure by County; Projected Hospitalizations, Intensive Care Units and Mortality. https://works.bepress.com/dennis_culhane/237/download/
2. Leung, C. S., Ho, M. M., Kiss, A., Gundlapalli, A. V., & Hwang, S. W. (2008). Homelessness and the response to emerging infectious disease outbreaks: lessons from SARS. *Journal of Urban Health*, 85(3), 402-410. <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s11524-008-9270-2>
3. Center for Disease Control, Rothstein, M. A., Alcalde, M. G., Elster, N. R., Majumder, M. A., Palmer, L. I., ... & Hoffman, R. E. (2003). Quarantine and isolation: Lessons learned from SARS. University of Louisville School of Medicine, Institute for Bioethics, Health Policy and Law. https://stacks.cdc.gov/view/cdc/11429/cdc_11429_DS1.pdf