

# Daily Update: Homeless and Vulnerable Populations in the Context of COVID-19

Date: April 2, 2020

*Please note this document is not comprehensive, but the result of a scan of recent news articles, literature, and organizational guidelines.*

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

### 1.1 Summary of Recent Initiatives/Actions:

- |  |                            |
|--|----------------------------|
| 1. Mobile canteens for safer food program delivery                                     | (Montreal)                 |
| 2. Dedicated hospital or separated hospital wing for elderly homeless                  | (Montreal)                 |
| 3. On-site testing of homeless populations   | (Los Angeles)              |
| 4. Portable hygiene stations installed   | (Austin; Los Angeles, USA) |
| 5. Outreach workers connecting homeless people with services using printed information | (Los Angeles, USA)         |
| 6. Motel vouchers to elderly homeless people   | (Los Angeles, USA)         |
| 7. Food parcel deliveries to vulnerable people   | (UK)                       |
| 8. Support line for socially isolated individuals                                      | (France)                   |

**1.2 In previous updates:**

1. Use of parking lots as homeless shelters (white-lined spaces) (Las Vegas, USA)
2. Firefighters will not be responding to emergency medical calls (Montreal)
3. COVID-19 testing near shelters (Winnipeg)
4. Central command team of doctors & public health experts, divided into 2 teams: symptomatic and not (UK)
5. All 'rough sleepers' to be housed (UK)
6. 'Local coordination cell' bridging local authority and Health Authorities (UK)
7. Stopping homeless people congregating in shelters and street encampments (UK)
8. Triaging homeless people into (3): symptomatic; pre-existing conditions but non symptomatic; others (UK)
9. Separating homeless with "significant drug and alcohol needs" from those without (UK)
10. Hotels/hostels/B&Bs to offer accommodation to key workers and vulnerable people (UK)
11. Requisitioning hotels/holiday homes/Airbnbs for homeless (London, Paris, Prague, Barcelona)
12. Outdoor day centres (Montreal)
13. Former Hospital repurposed for homeless population care (Montreal)
14. Homeless isolation sites specifically for families and youth (Montreal)
15. Hotel rooms for families currently in shelters for distancing and access to cooking (Montreal)
16. Emergency housing for families at risk of displacement (Boston, USA)
17. Homeless isolation/treatment shelters with separate floors for homeless people awaiting results and those who are COVID-positive (Montreal)
18. Isolation centre with 24-hour nursing team (Ottawa)
19. Mobile unit (to visit shelters and other sites) (Ottawa)
20. Distribution of tents for distancing (Toronto)
21. Eviction freeze of homeless encampments (with monitoring) (Toronto; USA)  
 - as per CDC recommendations: [Responding to Coronavirus Disease 2019 \(COVID-19\) among People Experiencing Unsheltered Homelessness \[Updated 22.3.20 : see previous Daily Update series document\]](#)
22. Screening at entrance to shelter (Boston, USA)
23. 24/7 Medical tent (Boston, USA)
24. 24/7 Hotline and mobile service to support shelter (Boston, USA)
25. Creation of RV Village to house self-isolating individuals (Los Angeles; Texas, USA)
26. Mobile hygiene clinic that visits camps on a rotating basis to offer showers and toiletries. (Texas, USA)
27. Any symptomatic homeless person immediately housed in hotel while awaiting results (Montreal)
28. Increased access to washing facilities and medical and psychological care (Germany)

29. “Donation fences” where public can hang bags of basic supplies (Germany)
30. Volunteer ride-hailing taxi drivers to ferry homeless symptomatic people to their hotel rooms  
(London, UK)
31. Anyone experiencing or at risk of homelessness can contact Homeless Hotline  
(Queensland, Australia)
32. Enhancing Home Assist Secure program to provide support for older people or those with a disability who need essential supplies and services.  
(Queensland, Australia)
33. Change to homeless food programing: hours, structure, delivery system  
(Berlin, Germany, Copenhagen, Denmark, Detroit, USA)
34. City contracting restaurants as part of a pilot program to deliver meals to homeless shelters  
(Cambridge, USA)
35. Plans for “Tiny house villages”  
(Seattle, USA)
36. Drop-in homeless centers  
(Montreal; Edmonton; Toronto; Ottawa)
37. Increased shelters for distancing  
(Ottawa; Toronto; France; Germany)
38. Isolation/recovery specific shelters  
(Edmonton; Toronto; Atlanta; UK)
39. Hotel rooms booked for 14-day isolations  
(Toronto)
40. Hotels/Community centers/offices repurposed for shelters/isolation/COVID-19 positive cases  
(Toronto; France; London, UK; Texas)
41. “Rapid housing access” for shelter users  
(Toronto)
42. Flexible rent for rent-geared-to-income population  
(Toronto)
43. Freeze on evictions  
(France)
44. Outreach education and screening teams  
(Atlanta; Seattle; New York, USA)
45. Testing sites specifically for homeless population  
(Atlanta)
46. Expanded Emergency Assistance program/ reduced requirements for Social-assistance  
(Ontario)
47. 15-minute home test kits – antibody testing distributed by pharmacy or amazon  
(UK)

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

1. The US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)
  - a. (3.20). Preventing & Managing the Spread of Infectious Disease for People Experiencing Homelessness <https://files.hudexchange.info/resources/documents/Infectious-Disease-Toolkit-for-CoCs-Preventing-and-Managing-the-Spread-of-Infectious-Disease-for-People-Experiencing-Homelessness.pdf>
  - b. (26.3.20). Health and Well-being of People in Encampments During an Infectious Disease Outbreak [https://files.hudexchange.info/resources/documents/COVID-19-Essential-Services-for-Encampments-During-an-Infectious-Disease-Outbreak.pdf?utm\\_source=HUD+Exchange+Mailing+List&utm\\_campaign=613abe45ab-SNAPS-COVID-19-Digest-3.24.20&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_term=0\\_f32b935a5f-613abe45ab-19569413](https://files.hudexchange.info/resources/documents/COVID-19-Essential-Services-for-Encampments-During-an-Infectious-Disease-Outbreak.pdf?utm_source=HUD+Exchange+Mailing+List&utm_campaign=613abe45ab-SNAPS-COVID-19-Digest-3.24.20&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_f32b935a5f-613abe45ab-19569413)
  - c. (23.3.20). Shelter Management During an Infectious Disease Outbreak [https://files.hudexchange.info/resources/documents/COVID-19-Shelter-Management-During-an-Infectious-Disease-Outbreak.pdf?utm\\_source=HUD+Exchange+Mailing+List&utm\\_campaign=613abe45ab-SNAPS-COVID-19-Digest-3.24.20&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_term=0\\_f32b935a5f-613abe45ab-19569413](https://files.hudexchange.info/resources/documents/COVID-19-Shelter-Management-During-an-Infectious-Disease-Outbreak.pdf?utm_source=HUD+Exchange+Mailing+List&utm_campaign=613abe45ab-SNAPS-COVID-19-Digest-3.24.20&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_f32b935a5f-613abe45ab-19569413)
2. Gov UK Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government. (UPDATED 1.4.20). Coronavirus (COVID-19): guidance for local government <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-for-local-government>
  - Including: (UPDATED 25.3.20) COVID-19: guidance for hostel or day centres for people rough sleeping <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-on-services-for-people-experiencing-rough-sleeping>
  - (26.3.20). Letter from Minister Hall to local authorities on plans to protect rough sleepers. [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/876466/Letter\\_from\\_Minister\\_Hall\\_to\\_Local\\_Authorities.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/876466/Letter_from_Minister_Hall_to_Local_Authorities.pdf)
3. WHO (31.3.20). Falsified medical products, including in vitro diagnostics, that claim to prevent, detect, treat or cure COVID-19 [https://www.who.int/docs/default-source/essential-medicines/drug-alerts20/no3-2020-falsified-mp-forcovid-en.pdf?sfvrsn=cd866001\\_16](https://www.who.int/docs/default-source/essential-medicines/drug-alerts20/no3-2020-falsified-mp-forcovid-en.pdf?sfvrsn=cd866001_16)
  - This Medical Product Alert warns consumers, healthcare professionals, and health authorities against a growing number of falsified medical products that claim to prevent, detect, treat or cure COVID-19.
4. WHO (25.3.20). Off-label use of medicines for COVID-19 <https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/events-as-they-happen>
  - Although In many countries, doctors are giving COVID-19 patients “off-label” medicines, no pharmaceutical products have yet been shown to be safe and effective for the treatment of COVID-19. However, a number of medicines have been suggested as potential investigational therapies, many of which are now being or will soon be studied in clinical trials, including the SOLIDARITY trial co-sponsored by WHO and participating countries.

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

#### **3.1 CANADA**

1. Global News (31.3.20). Calgary TELUS Convention Centre to serve as emergency shelter amid COVID-19 crisis <https://globalnews.ca/news/6760366/calgary-telus-convention-centre-emergency-shelter-covid-19-coronavirus/>
  - The Calgary TELUS Convention Centre is now set up as an emergency shelter with capacity for 350 people.
  - The convention space will only be for people who are not showing symptoms of COVID-19, and temperature checks and standard screening will be in place as clients enter the building.
  
2. Montreal Gazette (1.4.20). Coronavirus: Montreal announces new measures for homeless. <https://montrealgazette.com/news/local-news/coronavirus-montreal-announces-measures-for-homeless/>
  - ramping up measures to help homeless people during the COVID-19 pandemic, with three new shelters, three more day centres and a mobile canteen.
  - A 50-bed shelter for men opened Tuesday in the Bonsecours Market.
  - A 60-bed centre for men and women opens thursday in the Jean-Claude Malépart Centre, a recreation centre.
  - A wing of the former Royal Victoria Hospital is being repurposed to care for 100 elderly, homeless men and women and will open next week.
  - The former Royal Victoria Hospital is also ready to accommodate homeless people infected
  - Last week, the city requisitioned 30 rooms in a downtown hotel for homeless people awaiting the results of a COVID-19 test.
  - Day centres will open in Place du Canada, Jeanne Mance Park and outside the Francis-Bouillon Arena in Mercier–Hochelaga-Maisonneuve.
  - The downtown YMCA has also set up a mobile canteen in the Sud-Ouest borough to provide meals to the homeless starting Tuesday.
  
3. Now Toronto. (30.3.20). City acquires five hotels to house homeless people during COVID-19 crisis <https://nowtoronto.com/news/march-30-coronavirus-updates-toronto-news/>
  - City councillor Joe Cressy said on Sunday that Toronto has acquired five hotels and is in the process of acquiring five more to house homeless people during the COVID-19 crisis.
  - Two vacant rental buildings are in the process of being secured and 50 more permanent housing units have been identified. He also said 19 households have been permanently housed.

- The city has already set up nine sites to provide emergency social distancing improvements within the shelter system and is funding five community partners that run overnight programs. Those programs will now stay open all day.
  - "This is to provide daytime spaces for the homeless in the face of many closures across the city," Cressy said. "We will continue to work flat out to leave nobody behind."
4. Global News (27.3.20) Coronavirus: Winnipeg organizations working to support homeless population <https://globalnews.ca/news/6740207/coronavirus-winnipeg-organizations-homeless-population/>
- End Homelessness Winnipeg facilitating a COVID-19 response plan for the homeless population, collaborating with more than five dozen local and regional agencies, including the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority and the City of Winnipeg.
  - Main focuses include securing the following:
    - Overflow emergency shelter spaces big enough to accommodate social-distancing measures
    - Individual rooms for quarantine purposes
    - COVID-19 testing near shelters
    - Health and safety supplies such as masks, gloves and sanitizer

### 3.2 UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

1. Los Angeles Times (1.4.20). Coronavirus strikes skid row as Union Rescue Mission reports first confirmed case <https://www.latimes.com/homeless-housing/story/2020-03-31/coronavirus-skid-row-first-case-homeless-union-rescue-mission>
- In the first confirmed case on skid row, an employee of the Union Rescue Mission has tested positive for the novel coronavirus and is being treated at Los Angeles County + USC Medical Center. The employee's recent contacts are being tracked down.
  - The employee, who previously was homeless, graduated from the mission's recovery program, the Christian Life Discipleship Program, and was hired by the mission and continues to live there.
  - Mayor Eric Garcetti said he told county officials on Monday that he'd like to see a focus on renting hotel rooms downtown so homeless people will have a place to go that is not far away from skid row in order to isolate or quarantine.
  - He also said testing for the virus has begun on skid row.
  - The city has run out of sources for getting more hand-washing equipment for the public, he said, but was trying to acquire more portable toilets.
2. Patch (31.3.20). Community Invited To Help Austin Homeless Amid Coronavirus <https://patch.com/texas/downtownaustin/community-invited-help-austin-homeless-amid-coronavirus>
- City of Austin has implemented efforts to try to mitigate the spread of the disease and is providing access to services including basic hygiene, social services, and food.
  - Portable toilets and handwashing stations have been placed in 20 areas across town, aligning with current Violet Bag sites and near areas of known encampments.

- The community is invited to offer monetary donations so that community volunteer groups may go purchase needed items.
3. LA Times (01.04.20). In coronavirus fight, workers in ski masks are holding L.A.'s social safety net together  
<https://www.latimes.com/homeless-housing/story/2020-04-01/coronavirus-homeless-outreach-vehicles-shelters>
- Some outreach workers exclusively working with homeless people who live in vehicles, providing motel vouchers to those over 65 years old to bring them inside.
  - Outreach workers connecting homeless with various new services using flyers with information about shelter offerings, locations, hours, meal programs, and rehousing people in motels where they are able to.
  - Outreach workers arranging for medical transport to quarantine RVs set up at a State Beach for any homeless person with COVID-19 symptoms
4. Times Herald (30.3.20) RVs get new role as 'quarantine and isolation housing' and for homeless  
<https://www.usatoday.com/story/travel/2020/03/30/coronavirus-crisis-rvs-motor-homes-used-quarantine-homeless/5080088002/>
- Motor home village parked at Dockweiler, a stretch of asphalt for RVs by the Los Angeles International Airport, was set up as an emergency measure by Los Angeles County.
  - "We need places where people can be safely isolated from the public and even from their families," said County Supervisor Janice Hahn in a statement. "We are using the Dockweiler RV Park for this purpose and we are actively identifying more sites like it for quarantine and isolation housing across the county."
  - The beach location is only the start. California Gov. Gavin Newsom said last week that the state is obtaining 1,309 travel trailers. The trailers are being deployed to different cities around the state under a \$50 million program that also includes hotel vouchers.
  - "People experiencing homelessness are among the most vulnerable to the spread of COVID-19," Newsom said in a statement. "California is deploying massive resources to get these vulnerable residents safely into shelter."
5. KVUE ABC (30.3.20). Here's how the City of Austin is protecting the homeless from coronavirus  
<https://www.kvue.com/article/news/health/coronavirus/coronavirus-austin-homeless-protection/269-b79428db-ac72-4182-9f44-ff59fc67a42b>
- The City has set up portable bathrooms and hand-washing stations and is working with nonprofits and restaurants to hand out food.
  - Work includes installing portable bathrooms and hand-washing stations at at least 20 locations throughout Austin.
  - The City is also temporarily pausing all encampment cleanups
  - The City is working with local nonprofits and restaurants to hand out at > 5,000 meals a week

- The City is also finalizing leases to start using hotels to house people who are homeless if they get COVID-19. The City is also still considering leasing or buying other hotels to give homeless individuals a place to quarantine during this pandemic.

Source media release: <http://www.austintexas.gov/edims/pio/document.cfm?id=338058>

- The issues addressed in this memorandum include:
  - (1) Access to Services: Basic Hygiene, Social Services, and Food, and Health Services and Community Coordination
  - (2) Hotel and Motel Leasing and Acquisition,
  - (3) The Homeless Outreach Street Team & Emergency Medical Services Community Health Paramedics,
  - (4) Underpass and Encampment Cleaning Process and Coordination Efforts, and
  - (5) Communications

### 3.3 INTERNATIONAL

1. UK Gov Press Release. (29.3.20). First food parcels delivered to clinically vulnerable people <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/first-food-parcels-delivered-to-clinically-vulnerable-people>
  - Government confirms first boxes have been delivered to those at highest risk from coronavirus as biggest effort to deliver supplies to those in need since World War Two begins.
  - 1.5 million clinically vulnerable people have been advised by the NHS to stay at home for 12 weeks. Since Monday, 900,000 extremely vulnerable people received letters from the NHS giving them guidance on how to shield from coronavirus.
  - First of 50,000 free food boxes containing essential supplies and household items such as pasta and tinned goods will be delivered this weekend.
  - The packages contain essential food and household items for those who need to self-isolate at home for 12 weeks but have no support network of family or friends to help them.
  - The government is working with a partnership of the food industry, local government, local resilience and emergency partners, and voluntary groups, to ensure that essential items can be delivered to those who need it. Medicines will be delivered by community pharmacies and groceries and essential household items by food distributors, working with supermarkets.
6. Euronews (1.34.20). Coronavirus in Europe: France's homeless struggle amid lockdown <https://www.euronews.com/2020/04/01/coronavirus-in-europe-france-s-homeless-struggle-amid-lockdown>
  - Armies of volunteers are now conducting a mix of food distribution and medical checks for homeless people all over the country.
  - They have also decided to create new services, including a hotline for those socially isolated: Croix Rouge Chez Vous (Red Cross At Home). "We offer to listen, some moral support, we also offer a delivery service," 7day a week, from 8 am until 8 pm.



## 4. APPENDIX B: Noted Research and news articles

### 4.1 Research Articles of Note

1. MIT Innovation Initiative. COVID-19 Open Research. <https://innovation.mit.edu/cord19/>
  - A Free, Open Resource for the Global Research Community

### 4.2 News Articles of Note

1. Global News (1.4.20). WATCH LIVE: B.C. health officials provide daily update on COVID-19 response. Coronavirus: B.C. confirms 53 new cases, death toll climbs to 25  
[https://globalnews.ca/news/6763036/bc-coronavirus-update-april-1/?utm\\_source=site\\_banner\\_persistent](https://globalnews.ca/news/6763036/bc-coronavirus-update-april-1/?utm_source=site_banner_persistent)
2. Justin Trudeau, Prime Minister of Canada (31.3.20). Partnerships with Canadian industry to fight the COVID-19 pandemic <https://pm.gc.ca/en/news/backgrounders/2020/03/31/partnerships-canadian-industry-fight-covid-19-pandemic>
  - The federal government is mobilizing industry to fight COVID-19, increasing Canada’s ability to respond to the outbreak with necessary medical equipment and supplies, boosting capacity to manufacture items such as portable ventilators, surgical masks, and rapid testing kits.
  - It is also investing \$2 billion to support diagnostic testing and to purchase ventilators and PPE, including for bulk purchases with provinces and territories.
  - The government has ordered millions of supplies to ease the pressure on health care facilities. It has also signed letters of intent with five companies to produce additional test kits, hand sanitizer, and protective apparel including masks and gowns.

**Nicole Cragg, RN(C) - Clinical Nurse Educator  
Regional Overdose Emergency Response  
Vancouver Coastal Health**