

Daily Environmental Scan: Homeless and Vulnerable Populations in the Context of COVID-19

Date: April 3, 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. School breakfast program repurposed into vulnerable youth food pack deliveries (Ottawa)
2. Motel rooms rented with priority to vulnerable homeless (elderly or co-morbid) (London, ON)
3. Significant Emergency relief funding directed towards homeless services (Can Gov; Ont Gov)
4. Sports Complexes to house homeless (Peterborough, ON)
5. MSF offering support to nursing homes and homeless (Italy, Belgium, Spain, Switzerland)
6. Catholic churches offering rooms for medical personnel to avoid spreading to their families (Italy, other European countries)
7. Allowing temporary camps to open up in parks (Victoria, BC)

1.2 In previous updates:

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)
9. Use of parking lots as homeless shelters (white-lined spaces) (Las Vegas, USA)
10. Firefighters will not be responding to emergency medical calls (Montreal)
11. COVID-19 testing near shelters (Winnipeg)
12. Central command team of doctors & public health experts, divided into 2 teams: symptomatic and not (UK)
13. All 'rough sleepers' to be housed (UK)
14. 'Local coordination cell' bridging local authority and Health Authorities (UK)
15. Stopping homeless people congregating in shelters and street encampments (UK)
16. Triaging homeless people into (3): symptomatic; pre-existing conditions but non symptomatic; others (UK)
17. Separating homeless with "significant drug and alcohol needs" from those without (UK)
18. Hotels/hostels/B&Bs to offer accommodation to key workers and vulnerable people (UK)
19. Requisitioning hotels/holiday homes/Airbnbs for homeless (London, Paris, Prague, Barcelona)
20. Outdoor day centres (Montreal)
21. Former Hospital repurposed for homeless population care (Montreal)
22. Homeless isolation sites specifically for families and youth (Montreal)
23. Hotel rooms for families currently in shelters for distancing and access to cooking (Montreal)
24. Emergency housing for families at risk of displacement (Boston, USA)
25. Homeless isolation/treatment shelters with separate floors for homeless people awaiting results and those who are COVID-positive (Montreal)
26. Isolation centre with 24-hour nursing team (Ottawa)
27. Mobile unit (to visit shelters and other sites) (Ottawa)
28. Distribution of tents for distancing (Toronto)
29. 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 \[Updated 22.3.20 : see previous Daily Update series document\]](#)
30. Screening at entrance to shelter (Boston, USA)
31. 24/7 Medical tent (Boston, USA)

32. 24/7 Hotline and mobile service to support shelter (Boston, USA)
33. Creation of RV Village to house self-isolating individuals (Los Angeles; Texas, USA)
34. Mobile hygiene clinic that visits camps on a rotating basis to offer showers and toiletries. (Texas, USA)
35. Any symptomatic homeless person immediately housed in hotel while awaiting results (Montreal)
36. Increased access to washing facilities and medical and psychological care (Germany)
37. “Donation fences” where public can hang bags of basic supplies (Germany)
38. Volunteer ride-hailing taxi drivers to ferry homeless symptomatic people to their hotel rooms (London, UK)
39. Anyone experiencing or at risk of homelessness can contact Homeless Hotline (Queensland, Australia)
40. Enhancing Home Assist Secure program to provide support for older people or those with a disability who need essential supplies and services. (Queensland, Australia)
41. Change to homeless food programing: hours, structure, delivery system (Berlin, Germany, Copenhagen, Denmark, Detroit, USA)
42. City contracting restaurants as part of a pilot program to deliver meals to homeless shelters (Cambridge, USA)
43. Plans for “Tiny house villages” (Seattle, USA)
44. Drop-in homeless centers (Montreal; Edmonton; Toronto; Ottawa)
45. Increased shelters for distancing (Ottawa; Toronto; France; Germany)
46. Isolation/recovery specific shelters (Edmonton; Toronto; Atlanta; UK)
47. Hotel rooms booked for 14-day isolations (Toronto)
48. Hotels/Community centers/offices repurposed for shelters/isolation/COVID-19 positive cases (Toronto; France; London, UK; Texas)
49. “Rapid housing access” for shelter users (Toronto)
50. Flexible rent for rent-geared-to-income population (Toronto)
51. Freeze on evictions (France)
52. Outreach education and screening teams (Atlanta; Seattle; New York, USA)
53. Testing sites specifically for homeless population (Atlanta)
54. Expanded Emergency Assistance program/ reduced requirements for Social-assistance (Ontario)
55. 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. BCCDC (UPDATED 1.4.20) Interim Guidance: Public Health Management of cases and contacts associated with novel coronavirus (COVID-19) in the community www.bccdc.ca/resource-gallery/Documents/Guidelines%20and%20Forms/Guidelines%20and%20Manuals/Epid/CD%20Manual/Chapter%201%20-%20CDC/2019-nCoV-Interim_Guidelines.pdf
Revisions to note:
 - The period of communicability has been updated, with onset of symptoms involving not just respiratory symptoms and/or fever, but also at least one of the following: low grade fever, cough, malaise, runny nose, fatigue, sore throat, nausea, vomiting, or diarrhea
 - An updated table has been added with guidance for ending isolation of people with COVID-19 and those under investigation, including those who are tested and those who are not tested
 - The term “close contact” has been clearly defined as those who have been within two metres of someone with suspected or confirmed COVID-19 for more than 15 minutes (which may be cumulative over multiple interactions)
 - BC will no longer be following up with people who were seated near someone with COVID-19 on a flight. In lieu of this, airlines and cruise information will now be posted on the BCCDC website for the public to review.
2. CDC. (UPDATED 2.4.20) Resources to support people experiencing homelessness <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/homeless-shelters/index.html>
3. CDC. (UPDATED 1.4.20) Disinfecting your facility if someone is sick <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prepare/disinfecting-building-facility.html>
4. CDC. (3.4.20) Healthcare Provider and Facility Guidance for Non-US Settings <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/non-us-settings/index.html>
Includes:
 - i. [Strategic priority infection prevention and control \(IPC\) activities for containment and prevention of COVID-19 cases at healthcare facilities in non-US settings](#)
 - ii. [Standard Operating Procedure \(SOP\) for Triage of Suspected COVID-19 Patients in non-US Healthcare Settings](#)
 - iii. [Guidance for the Identification of Healthcare Workers and Inpatients with Suspected COVID-19 in non-US Healthcare Settings](#)
5. Ministry of Health Ontario (NEW 1.4.20). COVID-19 Guidance documents:
 - I. COVID-19 Guidance: Group Homes and Co-Living Settings https://myrnao.ca/sites/default/files/attached_files/Group%20Homes%20Guidance%2001%2004%2020%20FINAL.pdf
 - II. COVID-19 Guidance: Homeless Shelters https://myrnao.ca/sites/default/files/attached_files/Homeless%20Shelters%20COVID-19%20Guidance%20Document%20-%20March%202031_2020_final_for%20translation.pdf
 - III. COVID-19 Guidance: Outbreak Guidance for Long-term Care Facilities https://myrnao.ca/sites/default/files/attached_files/OLTCH%20Guidance%202020-04-01.pdf

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. Ottawa Citizen (2.4.20). During COVID-19 crisis, Ottawa chefs cook to help homeless families
<https://ottawacitizen.com/news/local-news/during-covid-19-crisis-ottawa-chefs-cook-to-help-homeless-families/>
 - With their restaurants closed during the COVID-19 outbreak, some prominent Ottawa chefs are aiming to cook hundreds of meals each week to feed homeless families.
 - The ingredients for the meals are being supplied by the Food-for-Thought Net-Cafe, a community resource and meeting place
 - Funding from the Ottawa Community Foundation is bolstering the project.

2. Ottawa Citizen (31.3.20). Ottawa's school breakfast program transformed into food pack deliveries for families
<https://ottawacitizen.com/news/local-news/ottawas-school-breakfast-program-transformed-into-food-pack-deliveries-for-families/wcm/6033b0fa-4954-4793-9806-d31a8a6f5c9e/>
 - Free in-school breakfast for 13,500 Ottawa children will begin delivering food packages directly to food agencies instead this week
 - Each kit contains 18 days of breakfast, including fresh fruit, milk in Tetra packs, cereal or bagels, wholegrain crackers, applesauce and granola bars.
 - 14 food agencies have signed up for the deliveries so far which begin Tuesday

3. Global News (1.4.20). City of Saskatoon calling on province to act now to help city's homeless during pandemic
<https://globalnews.ca/news/6766251/city-of-saskatoon-homeless-covid-19-coronavirus/>
 - Saskatoon is calling on the province to make creating a plan to help this population their top priority
 - City is “lacking clear and adequate funding commitments and the implementation of easily accessible systems to help house the homeless, to help provide testing and food and the supports to people who are vulnerable”
 - City Mayor has requested the following initiatives
 - Block-based funding for shelters, even if not operating at full capacity.
 - Support for First Nations agencies who are helping 25,000 members of the province's “urban First Nation” population
 - Housing the city's homeless in hotels with a hotel-based shelter service, along with supports for clients such as mental health and addictions services
 - Streamline processes to make it easier for people to access social services

4. Global News (1.4.20). City of London moving homeless into motels to combat spread of COVID-19
<https://globalnews.ca/news/6764303/coronavirus-london-ont-homeless-motels/>
 - City of London (Ontario) has rented 100 motel rooms to help house the municipality's vulnerable population during the COVID-19 pandemic.
 - The rooms are to house people who are considered the most at risk, including the elderly and people with pre-existing health conditions.
 - By moving those most at risk, plan to give shelters more space to adequately distance people as well as free up more beds to transition people off the street and get a roof over their heads.
 - Also, 26 'Portable Comfort Stations' portable toilets with sanitizer have been set up throughout the Old East Village and the downtown core

5. Global News (2.4.20). Coronavirus: Peterborough receives \$1.1M in provincial funding to support most vulnerable
<https://globalnews.ca/news/6767639/coronavirus-peterborough-1-1-m-provincial-funding/>
 - Ontario government is providing more than \$1.1 million in services relief funding to Peterborough
 - Service providers, such as homeless shelters, food banks, emergency services, charities and non-profits, have used relief funding to help support the delivery of critical services, hire additional staff, acquire personal protective equipment and find ways to improve physical distancing and self-isolation.
 - Part of Ontario's \$200 million in services relief funding to help protect the province's most vulnerable people.
 - The city is using the Peterborough Sport and Wellness Centre as a temporary emergency shelter and has reported an average of 50 people are at the shelter each night.

6. The Tyee (2.4.20). Inside the Struggle to Keep Victoria's Homeless Safe from COVID-19
<https://thetyee.ca/News/2020/04/02/Homeless-Victoria-COVID-19/>
 - Shelters have been forced to reduce capacity because the number of beds or mats did not allow for physical distancing. One seasonal shelter has closed, others have reduced the number of beds, and stopped accepting new clients. As a result, the homeless population is becoming more visible around Victoria's increasingly deserted downtown streets.
 - The City of Victoria is allowing those without homes to temporarily camp in Topaz Park
 - Other organisations are working to set up a staffed outdoor shelter for 80 people at Royal Athletic Park, a stadium close to the city centre
 - Federal funding, announced Monday, is giving Victoria an additional boost with more than C\$1.3 million going toward programs to address homelessness.
 - A 2018 moment-in-time count found 1,525 homeless people in Greater Victoria, but precise numbers are difficult to pin down

7. Montreal Gazette (1.4.20). Coronavirus: Montreal announces new measures for homeless
<https://montrealgazette.com/news/local-news/coronavirus-montreal-announces-measures-for-homeless/wcm/2a660639-0716-4abe-945f-5432a7c43bf7/>
 - Montreal is ramping up measures to help homeless people during the COVID-19 pandemic, with three new shelters, three more day centres and a mobile canteen.
 - Combined with two shelters that opened last week at the downtown YMCA and Place Guy-Favreau, the new hostels will accommodate 350 people

3.2 UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

1. INDY Week (29.3.20). What the Stay-at-Home Order Means for Durham’s Homeless
<https://indyweek.com/news/ninth-street-journal/what-the-stay-at-home-order-means-for-the-homeless/>
 - Durham residents have been ordered to stay at home as much as possible but this exempts homeless people, who are being encouraged by ministries, advocates and government officials to seek shelter
 - City and county departments and external services providers are in ongoing communication to establish “the screening, treatment, and housing protocol for the homeless population
 - All free meal services are now served in to-go packaging. Donation services such as a clothing “closet” are suspended
 - The Urban Ministries of Durham has also created an Amazon wishlist to help stock items. According to their website, they are struggling to find thermometers, bottled water, Clorox bleach, spray disinfectant and hand sanitizer.
2. Myrtle Beach Online (31.03.20). South Carolina officials setting up quarantine housing for homeless with coronavirus
<https://www.myrtlebeachonline.com/news/coronavirus/article241618591.html>
 - The state Department of Health and Environmental Control is working with local officials across the state to establish resources for people who contract COVID-19 and don’t require hospitalization, but do need shelter while recovering
 - Primarily includes the unsheltered homeless population, approx. 1,700 people
 - Counties are preparing quarantine housing but many have not yet opened
 - There is some state funding available to help counties support their plans for isolating homeless or indigent individuals, but all specifics, including transportation to quarantine housing, providing meals, ensuring people don’t leave the property and offering mental health services, are being developed locally
 - Some organizations are working to get asymptomatic homeless into vacated hotel rooms
3. L.A. Times (2.4.20). Coronavirus spreads in Los Angeles’ homeless community - Los Angeles Times
<https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2020-04-02/coronavirus-in-l-a-homeless-community-spreads-to-9-confirmed-cases>
 - There are nine confirmed cases of coronavirus among Los Angeles’ homeless population today

- Challenging to know exactly where in the county these homeless people had been, but so far there had been no clustering of cases.
- Public Health staff quarantined 22 homeless people from a shelter in their own rooms
- L.A. County Office of Emergency Management has 460 rooms ready this week — including 112 trailers at Dockweiler State Beach — and is preparing to open 442 more rooms. Only 51 people were using them as of Tuesday – usage will increase as numbers of cases rise.

3.3 INTERNATIONAL

1. Chronicle.lu (32.3.3). MSF Expands Europe Activities in Fight against COVID-19
<https://chronicle.lu/category/charity-volunteering/32279-msf-expands-europe-activities-in-fight-against-covid-19>
 - In Italy, Belgium and Spain, MSF has expanded its activities to support nursing homes for the elderly.
 - In Belgium, France and Switzerland, the organisation also helps vulnerable groups, such as the homeless and migrants, who are living in precarious conditions.
2. CNS (30.2.20) Update: Across Europe, churches offer empty facilities to help fight COVID-19
<https://cnstopstories.com/2020/03/30/update-across-europe-churches-offer-empty-facilities-to-help-fight-covid-19/>
 - In addition to expanding shelters for the homeless during Italy’s COVID-19 lockdown, Catholic dioceses and parishes are offering rooms to medical personnel exhausted by long hours at work or who will not go home to avoid the danger of spreading the virus to their loved ones.
 - Across Europe, Catholic dioceses and religious orders are offering to turn church facilities into spaces needed for health care or housing during the COVID-19 pandemic.
3. Daily Times (28.3.20). Coronavirus crisis hits Romania’s ‘invisible’ homeless
<https://dailytimes.com.pk/584447/coronavirus-crisis-hits-romania-invisible-homeless/>
 - Largely denied any government help, an estimated several thousand homeless people face an especially tough time in the capital of one of the EU’s poorest countries.
 - Aid organisations in Romania have been forced to close their doors due to a lack of masks and disinfectant. Only the Parada foundation in Bucharest, which offers hot meals and the opportunity to shower, has refused to close its doors.
 - The Romanian government on Tuesday asked district town halls to identify those in need and provide them with shelter and food.
 - But the setting up of reception centres will take time, and in Bucharest, the temperature currently dips below 0 degrees Celsius (32 Fahrenheit) at night.

4. APPENDIX B: Noted Research and news articles

4.1 Articles of Note

1. CDC. (UPDATED 2.4.20) COVID-29: Strategies to Optimize PPE & Equipment
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/ppe-strategy/index.html>
 - All U.S. healthcare facilities should begin using PPE contingency strategies now.
 - i. Maximize use of engineering controls, such as barriers and maintained ventilation systems, and administrative controls, such as altering work practices to minimize patient contacts.
 - ii. Cancel elective and non-urgent procedures/appointments.
 - iii. Reserve PPE for HCP and replace PPE normally used for source control with other barrier precautions such as tissues.
 - iv. Use re-usable PPE that can be reprocessed.
 - v. Use PPE beyond the manufacturer-designated shelf life for training.
 - vi. Consider allowing HCP to extend use of respirators, facemasks, and eye protection, beyond a single patient contact.
 - U.S. healthcare facilities experiencing PPE shortages may need to consider crisis capacity strategies, which must be carefully planned before implementation.
 - i. The effectiveness of crisis strategies is uncertain and they may pose a risk for transmission between HCP and patients.
 - ii. Consider using intact PPE that is beyond the manufacturer-designated shelf life for patient care activities.
 - iii. Carefully prioritize PPE use for selected care activities. This could include reserving sterile gowns and gloves for urgent sterile patient procedures, such as surgery, and reserving respirators for aerosol-generating procedures and patient care with airborne transmitted disease risks, like tuberculosis, measles, and varicella.
 - iv. If no commercial PPE is available, carefully consider if alternative approaches will reduce the risk of HCP exposure and are safe for patient care.
 - As PPE becomes available, healthcare facilities should promptly resume standard practices.
2. CDC. (UPDATED 1.4.20) COVID-29: Decontamination and Reuse of Filtering Facepiece Respirators using Contingency and Crisis Capacity Strategies. <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/ppe-strategy/decontamination-reuse-respirators.html>
 - Disposable filtering facepiece respirators (FFRs) are not approved for routine decontamination and reuse as standard of care. However, FFR decontamination and reuse may need to be considered as a crisis capacity strategy to ensure continued availability.
 - Based on the limited research available, ultraviolet germicidal irradiation, vaporous hydrogen peroxide, and moist heat showed the most promise as potential methods to decontaminate FFRs. This document summarizes research about decontamination of FFRs before reuse.

4.2 News Articles of Note

1. WATCH LIVE: Global News (2.4.20). B.C. health officials to provide Thursday update on coronavirus response https://globalnews.ca/news/6768566/bc-coronavirus-update-april-2/?utm_source=site_banner_persistent
 - Provincial health officer Dr. Bonnie Henry announced six fatalities Thursday, along with 55 new confirmed cases.
 - One of those new cases is at the 378-cell Okanagan Correctional Centre.
 - Public health order issued barring health-care staff from working in more than one care home facility during the outbreak (not yet in force).
 - Workers at the 21 facilities where there has been an outbreak are currently barred from staffing any other seniors' homes.
 - Health Minister Adrian Dix acknowledged “we need to do better” at communicating quarantine regulations at B.C. airports. Canadians returning from international travel are legally required to self-isolate for 14 days, under penalty of fines or even jail time.

2. Province of British Columbia. (2.4.20) Supply Products and Services to Support B.C.'s COVID-19 Response <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/safety/emergency-preparedness-recovery/covid-19-provincial-support/supply-products-services>
 - B.C. Government is looking for both medical and non-medical products and services to help with the response. These include:
 - Procedure-, surgical- and N95-type masks, face shields, nitrile and vinyl gloves
 - Hand sanitizers, surface disinfectant wipes, zip-lock bags
 - Thermometers and viral swabs

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