

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

Weekend Update

Date: April 8, 2020. (Covering April 3-7, 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. Convention centers, stadiums converted to emergency shelters | (Edmonton, Calgary; South Africa) |
| 2. 24-hour medical staff stationed at quarantine homeless shelter | (Winnipeg) |
| 3. Mobile supervised consumption vehicle | (Victoria) |
| 4. Significant funding for support for homeless populations | (U.S. Federal Gov) |
| 5. Hotel rooms for vulnerable homeless people or positive-testing homeless people | (Virginia, USA) |
| 6. Armed soldiers/police rounding up homeless people to move to emergency shelter space | (South Africa) |
| 7. All homeless people housed | (Belfast, N. Ireland) |

1.2 In previous updates:

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)
8. Mobile canteens for safer food program delivery (Montreal)
9. Dedicated hospital or separated hospital wing for elderly homeless (Montreal)
10. On-site testing of homeless populations (Los Angeles)
11. Portable hygiene stations installed (Austin; Los Angeles, USA)
12. Outreach workers connecting homeless people with services using printed information (Los Angeles, USA)
13. Motel vouchers to elderly homeless people (Los Angeles, USA)
14. Food parcel deliveries to vulnerable people (UK)
15. Support line for socially isolated individuals (France)
16. Use of parking lots as homeless shelters (white-lined spaces) (Las Vegas, USA)
17. Firefighters will not be responding to emergency medical calls (Montreal)
18. COVID-19 testing near shelters (Winnipeg)
19. Central command team of doctors & public health experts, divided into 2 teams: symptomatic and not (UK)
20. All 'rough sleepers' to be housed (UK)
21. 'Local coordination cell' bridging local authority and Health Authorities (UK)
22. Stopping homeless people congregating in shelters and street encampments (UK)
23. Triaging homeless people into (3): symptomatic; pre-existing conditions but non symptomatic; others (UK)
24. Separating homeless with "significant drug and alcohol needs" from those without (UK)
25. Hotels/hostels/B&Bs to offer accommodation to key workers and vulnerable people (UK)
26. Requisitioning hotels/holiday homes/Airbnbs for homeless (London, Paris, Prague, Barcelona)
27. Outdoor day centres (Montreal)
28. Former Hospital repurposed for homeless population care (Montreal)
29. Homeless isolation sites specifically for families and youth (Montreal)
30. Hotel rooms for families currently in shelters for distancing and access to cooking (Montreal)
31. Emergency housing for families at risk of displacement (Boston, USA)

32. Homeless isolation/treatment shelters with separate floors for homeless people awaiting results and those who are COVID-positive (Montreal)
33. Isolation centre with 24-hour nursing team (Ottawa)
34. Mobile unit (to visit shelters and other sites) (Ottawa)
35. Distribution of tents for distancing (Toronto)
36. 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]
37. Screening at entrance to shelter (Boston, USA)
38. 24/7 Medical tent (Boston, USA)
39. 24/7 Hotline and mobile service to support shelter (Boston, USA)
40. Creation of RV Village to house self-isolating individuals (Los Angeles; Texas, USA)
41. Mobile hygiene clinic that visits camps on a rotating basis to offer showers and toiletries. (Texas, USA)
42. Any symptomatic homeless person immediately housed in hotel while awaiting results (Montreal)
43. Increased access to washing facilities and medical and psychological care (Germany)
44. “Donation fences” where public can hang bags of basic supplies (Germany)
45. Volunteer ride-hailing taxi drivers to ferry homeless symptomatic people to their hotel rooms (London, UK)
46. Anyone experiencing or at risk of homelessness can contact Homeless Hotline (Queensland, Australia)
47. Enhancing Home Assist Secure program to provide support for older people or those with a disability who need essential supplies and services. (Queensland, Australia)
48. Change to homeless food programming: hours, structure, delivery system (Berlin, Germany, Copenhagen, Denmark, Detroit, USA)
49. City contracting restaurants as part of a pilot program to deliver meals to homeless shelters (Cambridge, USA)
50. Plans for “Tiny house villages” (Seattle, USA)
51. Drop-in homeless centers (Montreal; Edmonton; Toronto; Ottawa)
52. Increased shelters for distancing (Ottawa; Toronto; France; Germany)
53. Isolation/recovery specific shelters (Edmonton; Toronto; Atlanta; UK)
54. Hotel rooms booked for 14-day isolations (Toronto)
55. Hotels/Community centers/offices repurposed for shelters/isolation/COVID-19 positive cases (Toronto; France; London, UK; Texas)
56. “Rapid housing access” for shelter users (Toronto)
57. Flexible rent for rent-geared-to-income population (Toronto)
58. Freeze on evictions (France)
59. Outreach education and screening teams (Atlanta; Seattle; New York, USA)
60. Testing sites specifically for homeless population (Atlanta)
61. Expanded Emergency Assistance program/ reduced requirements for Social-assistance (Ontario)
62. 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. Canadian Drug Policy Coalition
 - COVID-19 Harm Reduction Resources <https://www.drugpolicy.ca/covid-19-harm-reduction-resources/>
 - COVID-19 and Ceremonial Spiritual Practices <https://www.drugpolicy.ca/covid-19-and-ceremonial-spiritual-practices/>
Guidelines developed through consultation with public health professionals, First Nations health professionals and Knowledge Keepers / Traditional Healers.
2. U. S. Department of Justice Drug Enforcement Administration (31.03.20). Letter to DEA Qualifying Practitioners - Buprenorphine and Telemedicine COVID-19 Guidance <https://www.samhsa.gov/sites/default/files/dea-samhsa-buprenorphine-telemedicine.pdf>
 - “As a result of the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19), the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) is exercising its authorities to provide flexibility in the prescribing and dispensing of controlled substances to ensure necessary patient therapies remain accessible.”
3. WHO (NEW 6.4.20). WHO/Europe tool for behavioural insights: critical to inform COVID-19 response <http://www.euro.who.int/en/health-topics/health-emergencies/coronavirus-covid-19/news/news/2020/4/new-whoeurope-tool-for-behavioural-insights-critical-to-inform-covid-19-response>
4. CDC (UPDATED 3.4.20). https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/respirators-strategy/index.html?deliveryName=USCDC_2067-DM25135
 - Conventional Capacity Strategies should be incorporated into everyday practices
 - Employ hierarchy: Engineering controls → Administrative controls → Personal protective equipment (PPE). Multiple best-practice options to employ for each
 - Contingency Capacity Strategies (during expected shortages)
 - Administrative Controls
 - Decrease length of hospital stay for medically stable patients with COVID-19
 - Temporarily suspend annual fit testing
 - PPE: respiratory protection and facemasks
 - Use of N95 respirators beyond the manufacturer-designated shelf life for training and fit testing
 - Extended use of N95 respirators
 - Crisis Capacity Strategies (during known shortages)
 - When N95 supplies are running low
 - PPE: respiratory protection and facemasks
 - Use of respirators beyond the manufacturer-designed shelf life
 - Use of respirators approved under standards used in other countries that are similar to NIOSH-approved respirators
 - Limited re-use of N95 respirators

- Use of additional respirators beyond the manufacturer-designated shelf life for healthcare delivery that have not been evaluated by NIOSH
 - Prioritize the use of N95 respirators and facemasks by activity type
 - When no respirators left
 - Administrative controls
 - Exclude HCP at higher risk for severe illness from COVID-19 from contact with known or suspected COVID-19 patients
 - Designate convalescent HCP for provision of care to known or suspected COVID-19 patients
 - Engineering Controls
 - Expedient patient isolation rooms for risk-reduction
 - Ventilated headboards
5. U.S. CDC (4.4.20). Use of Cloth Face Coverings to Help Slow the Spread of COVID-19
https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/diy-cloth-face-coverings.html?deliveryName=USCDC_2067-DM25135

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. Employment and Social Development Canada (4.4.20). Canada announces support to those experiencing homelessness and women fleeing gender-based violence during the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic <https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/news/2020/04/canada-announces-support-to-those-experiencing-homelessness-and-women-fleeing-gender-based-violence-during-the-coronavirus-disease-covid-19-pandemic.html>
 - \$157.5 million to address the needs of Canadians experiencing homelessness through Reaching Home program. Funding could be used for a variety of needs such as purchasing beds/ physical barriers for social distancing and securing accommodation to reduce overcrowding in shelters.
 - \$40 million to be given to Women and Gender Equality Canada (WAGE), up to \$30 million of which will address immediate needs of shelters and sexual assault centres
 - WAGE is also working with the Government of Quebec on the implementation of this important initiative to support women’s shelters and sexual assault centres in Quebec.
 - \$10 million to Indigenous Services Canada's (ISC) existing network of 46 emergency shelters on reserve and in Yukon to support Indigenous women and children fleeing violence.
 - Of the \$157.5 million in Reaching Home funding, Canada’s largest cities will receive allocations in the following amounts: Ottawa (\$7,213,954), Toronto (\$22,169,573), Hamilton (\$2,548,685), Vancouver (\$13,522,453), Winnipeg (\$2,936,322), Calgary (\$13,517,143), Edmonton (\$7,572,510), Halifax (\$1,557,674), St. John’s (\$979,047), Moncton (\$669,162)

2. The Globe and Mail (5.4.20). Edmonton, Calgary turn convention centres into homeless shelters in bid to prevent coronavirus outbreaks <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/canada/alberta/article-edmonton-calgary-turn-convention-centres-into-homeless-shelters-in/>
 - Calgary’s Telus Convention Centre started a trial run over the weekend, providing food and around-the-clock shelter for 50 people as it prepares to add another 250 people
 - In Edmonton, the Expo Centre was transformed into an overflow shelter two weeks ago.
 - "I believe an outbreak within the homeless population is among our greatest public-health risks and we need to get it right and do right by people," Calgary Mayor
 - Alberta has pledged \$25-million for new shelter space, rapid rehousing and a spread of other supports for those experiencing homelessness during the pandemic.
 - Calgary announced last month that it was shrinking the total number of shelter spaces by 400.

3. CBC Manitoba (3.4.20). New units coming to help Winnipeg's homeless population self-isolate, slow coronavirus spread <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/manitoba/self-isolation-homeless-quarantine-covid-19-1.5519730>
 - The province of Manitoba says it is adding 142 more beds at shelters
 - 31 beds will be available to those who need to self-isolate while waiting for test results, or if they've already tested positive for COVID-19.
 - The facility will have 24-hour support for those who are self-isolating, including a team of nurses, physicians, withdrawal management support and staff.
 - Manitoba releasing \$1.2 million for more shelter beds

4. The Star (4.4.20). In this coronavirus crisis, what do we owe homeless Canadians? <https://www.thestar.com/news/canada/2020/04/04/the-best-we-can-do-in-this-coronavirus-crisis-what-do-we-owe-the-homeless.html>
 - Alberta officials would repurpose cavernous convention centres or other spaces, such as churches, to act as overflow for crowded shelters.
 - Alberta has also promised \$60 million for charitable and non-profit groups to support seniors and other vulnerable populations, such as the homeless.
 - Photographs of the Red Deer church-turned-shelter facility with evenly spaced sleeping places [the norm in re-purposed facilities] have been met with sharp criticism, as many question how people will be able to maintain social distancing when they're all sleeping in one room.
 - "We owe them protection, because we have the ability. We're not a developing country that doesn't have the ability to do it," said Cathy Crowe, a street nurse and advocate in Toronto.

5. CTV News (1.4.20). Victoria supervised consumption site to go mobile <https://vancouverisland.ctvnews.ca/victoria-supervised-consumption-site-to-go-mobile-1.4878557>
 - Downtown Victoria's supervised consumption site has transitioned to a mobile service during the COVID-19 pandemic.
 - Meanwhile, the Harbour building will remain open, but only as a triage centre for homeless people who are experiencing respiratory symptoms.
 - Meanwhile, overdose prevention sites in other areas of the island will continue to operate in their facilities.

6. Now Toronto (2.4.20). City reports spike in overdose deaths amid COVID-19 service cuts https://nowtoronto.com/news/coronavirus-opioid-crisis-overdose-deaths/?fbclid=IwAR3gGUcfMfkYRUQDHS0IDW6TPO1RFg3ngPymr0_OOr6DSYK6iIKBtZrum40
 - Self-isolating requirements of the COVID-19 pandemic and a reduction of services at supervised consumption sites are exacerbating the city's response to the overdose crisis
 - On March 31, Toronto paramedics were called to 25 overdoses, including one fatality
 - There are currently nine supervised injection sites in the city but hours vary
 - The City of Toronto appealed to federal government before the COVID-19 outbreak for approval to supply users with prescription heroin through social services, but that request was denied.

- Counsellor Cressy says another request has since been made "because it's not only a tainted illicit drug supply problem that we have." He says the street supply of opioids are increasingly being poisoned.
7. The Globe and Mail (2.4.20). B.C. firefighters ordered to attend immediately life-threatening calls only <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/canada/british-columbia/article-bc-firefighters-ordered-to-attend-immediately-life-threatening-calls/>
- B.C. firefighters have been ordered to stop responding to all but the most dire medical emergency calls during the COVID-19 pandemic, a directive that means they will no longer attend most overdoses.
 - Aimed at limiting first responders' exposure to the new coronavirus and the amount of personal protective equipment needed.
 - The directive states firefighters must go only to the most immediately life-threatening calls, such as cardiac arrest, events that are colour-coded as purple.
 - From Feb. 14th to Feb 20th, VFRS responded to 138 overdose calls; 31 were purple
 - In March, of all medical calls, Vancouver Fire and Rescue Service were first on scene 63.4 per cent of the time.

3.2 UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

1. Wired (4.4.20). For Homeless People, Covid-19 Is Horror on Top of Horror <https://www.wired.com/story/coronavirus-covid-19-homeless/>
- "Homelessness is incompatible with health" Professor of Medicine, UC San Francisco
 - "[Coronavirus is] an enormous crisis superimposed on an existing crisis."
 - CDC recommends 110 square feet per person for people housed together during the outbreak
 - 50% of homeless in the USA are >50 years old. "If they're 50, physiologically, medically, their bodies act more like they're 70 or 80 because of the incredible challenges of being homeless"
 - The federal government has earmarked \$4 bn in funding to help homeless people (and victims of domestic violence in particular) in its Covid-19 stimulus package
 - Expected that as a result of above, shelters will no longer struggle to afford food for their residents, though staffing is still likely to be a problem
2. L.A. Times (4.4.20). Retirement community protests O.C. plan to house homeless people with coronavirus at hotel <https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2020-04-04/ayers-hotel-coronavirus-protest-orange-county-laguna-woods-village>
- County officials recently entered into an agreement to use two boutique Ayres hotels as temporary housing for those without shelter
 - 138-bed hotel will house "medically stable" people who test positive for COVID-19, or who have symptoms and will start receiving clients this week
 - In order to stay at the hotel, homeless people have to be referred for a medical screening and intake by shelters providers, county staff and contractors, hospitals or law enforcement.

3. The Hill (4.4.20) Virginia offering hotel rooms to homeless to curb spread of coronavirus
<https://thehill.com/homenews/state-watch/491182-virginia-offering-hotel-rooms-to-homeless-to-curb-spread-of-coronavirus>
 - Virginia Gov. Ralph Northam (D) on Friday announced \$2.5 million in emergency funding that would go to serving the state's homeless population.
 - Designated Virginians will receive hotel and motel vouchers, food, cleaning supplies, and, if needed, medical transportation.
 - The Federal Emergency Management Agency will also provide aid to people experiencing homelessness who are 65 and older, those with pre-existing conditions, and those who have tested positive for COVID-19.

3.3 INTERNATIONAL

1. CNN World News (2.4.20). South Africa gathered homeless people into a sports stadium. Here too, coronavirus divides rich from poor <https://www.cnn.com/2020/04/02/africa/homeless-community-south-africa-coronavirus-intl/index.html>
 - Country-wide three-week lockdown underway in South Africa
 - Homeless population are being gathered and transported by police-run trucks, while non-homeless are being dispersed from the streets by armed police and soldiers
 - At least 1,000 homeless men rounded up and placed in a soccer stadium in Pretoria with a makeshift methadone clinic attached. People are being housed 10 per tent, with tents originally planned for 3 people.
 - Schools, churches and parking lots are all being converted into shelters
2. CBC (3.4.20). A tale of 2 cities: Belfast housed its homeless, Vegas moved them to a parking lot <https://www.cbc.ca/radio/asithappens/as-it-happens-the-friday-edition-1.5520691/a-tale-of-2-cities-belfast-housed-its-homeless-vegas-moved-them-to-a-parking-lot-1.5521116>
 - The city of Belfast has worked to get every single homeless person they could find off the streets and into shelter
 - 10,000 people presented in 2019 as homeless in Northern Ireland, majority of them in Belfast
 - Photos of homeless people in Las Vegas — a city brimming with empty hotels — sleeping on rectangles painted on the asphalt of a parking lot have sparked outrage.

4. APPENDIX B: Noted Research and news articles

4.1 Articles of Note

1. Monteil, V., Kwon, H., Prado, P., Hagelkrüys, A., Wimmer, R. A., Stahl, M., ... & Romero, J. P. (Journal Pre-Proof). Inhibition of SARS-CoV-2 infections in engineered human tissues using clinical-grade soluble human ACE2. https://www.cell.com/pb-assets/products/coronavirus/CELL_CELL-D-20-00739.pdf
 - The findings hold promise as a treatment capable of stopping early infection of the novel coronavirus.
 - “Here we show that clinical grade hrsACE2 reduced SARS-CoV-2 recovery from Vero cells by a factor of 1,000-5,000. An equivalent mouse rsACE2 had no effect. We also show that SARS-CoV-2 can directly infect engineered human blood vessel organoids and human kidney organoids, which can be inhibited by hrsACE2. These data demonstrate that hrsACE2 can significantly block early stages of SARS-CoV-2 infections.”
 - i. News Article: University of British Columbia News (2.4.20) Trial drug can significantly block early stages of COVID-19 in engineered human tissues
<https://news.ubc.ca/2020/04/02/ubc-led-study-finds-trial-drug-can-significantly-block-early-stages-of-covid-19-in-engineered-human-tissues/>
An international team led by University of British Columbia researcher Dr. Josef Penninger has found a trial drug that effectively blocks the cellular door SARS-CoV-2 uses to infect its hosts.
2. Leung, N. H., Chu, D. K., Shiu, E. Y., Chan, K. H., McDevitt, J. J., Hau, B. J., ... & Seto, W. H. (2020). Respiratory virus shedding in exhaled breath and efficacy of face masks. *Nature Medicine*, 1-5.
https://www.nature.com/articles/s41591-020-0843-2?fbclid=IwAR3zHasy5sNFeM0fgrg30C6oJkZk8_wiaP1qr3CPXDIBk1MzuLRORDAfE6M#citeas
 - Surgical face masks significantly reduced detection of influenza virus RNA in respiratory droplets and coronavirus RNA in aerosols, with a trend toward reduced detection of coronavirus RNA in respiratory droplets.
 - Results indicate that surgical face masks could prevent transmission of human coronaviruses and influenza viruses from symptomatic individuals.

4.2 News Articles of Note

1. NBC News (5.4.20). Coronavirus pandemic a perfect storm for LGBTQ homeless youth
<https://www.nbcnews.com/feature/nbc-out/coronavirus-pandemic-perfect-storm-lgbtq-homeless-youth-n1176206>
 - 20 percent to 45 percent of homeless youth identify as LGBTQ, and among young adults ages 18 to 25, LGBTQ people have a 2.2 times greater risk of homelessness than their non-LGBTQ peers
 - "The need for services is increasing, and the availability of services is decreasing," said Kate Barnhart, executive director of New Alternatives, a New York City-based non-profit for LGBTQ homeless youth.
 - The pandemic has further complicated LGBTQ clients' already inconsistent access to care



Overdose Emergency Response
7th Floor –Suite 721, 601 West Broadway
Vancouver, BC V5Z 4C2
Tel: 604-875-4735
Fax: 604-875-5229

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