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***** PRESS RELEASE *****

SAN FRANCISCO TO OPEN NEW SHELTER AT MOSCONE CENTER IN RESPONSE TO COVID-19 AND NEED FOR MORE SOCIAL DISTANCE IN SHELTERS

Moscone Center West will provide spaces for people who are currently living in City shelters and Navigation Centers; will allow for social distancing in existing shelters and Navigation Centers

San Francisco, CA — San Francisco today announced a plan to create more social distance at the City’s shelters and Navigation Centers by opening a new shelter at Moscone Center West. The new facility at Moscone West will open next week and will operate throughout the duration of the public health emergency, which Mayor London N. Breed declared on February 25th.

“At a time when we’re encouraging everyone who can to stay home and stay six feet apart when they do go out, it’s important that our shelters and navigation centers also have the space to follow the public health requirements,” said Mayor Breed. “That’s why we’re creating this new space at Moscone West, to help create more space in our existing shelters and allow for required social distancing. At the same time, we are focused on ensuring our health care system has the resources available to treat patients who are sick and need medical attention, and that we have the hospital beds we need to handle a surge in COVID-19 patients.”

This plan will allow the City to relocate some people who are currently in shelters and Navigation Centers to Moscone West, where they will continue to have access to meals, showers and hygiene products, and case management provided by the City and non-profit providers. Referrals to transfer people into Moscone West will come from the Department of Homelessness and Supportive Housing (HSH) in consultation with the Department of Public Health (DPH).

Opening Moscone West as an alternate shelter location is part of a larger effort underway by the City to provide temporary housing or shelter for health care workers, first responders, and vulnerable populations and residents who are under a medical directive to self-quarantine or isolate. This population includes people who live in congregate settings such as single-room occupancy hotels, supportive housing with shared kitchens and bathrooms, and shelters and Navigation Centers.

DPH remains focused on ensuring there are enough hospital beds available in San Francisco to treat patients with COVID-19. To this end, the City has prioritized securing hotel rooms to allow the hospital system to discharge individuals who cannot self-quarantine or isolate who 1) have tested positive for COVID-19 or 2) who are under investigation (PUIs), who no longer need to be hospitalized but do not have housing available to self-quarantine.



Individuals moving into the hotel rooms will receive City services, including three meals per day, hygiene products, and access to nurses. As of March 26, the Human Services Agency (HSA) has secured leases for over 300 hotels rooms for this purpose, and plans to finalize leases for an additional 3,000 hotels rooms next week. Referrals into self-quarantine hotel rooms will come through DPH and will be made based on the medical needs of the patient.

The City continues to negotiate hotel leases to support additional populations, including:

1. Seniors and vulnerable adults in Laguna Honda Hospital and others in congregate facilities who can be in hotel rooms with a relatively low level of care;
2. COVID-19-exposed and COVID-19-positive frontline health care workers and other first responders; and
3. Vulnerable populations who are living unsheltered on the street (age 60+ and those with underlying health conditions).

To date, the City has received proposals from numerous hotel partners to provide more than 11,000 rooms to help relieve pressure on local hospitals during an expected surge in COVID-19 patients. The City anticipates bringing hotel rooms online on a rolling basis to meet the needs of health care workers, first responders, and vulnerable populations as needed by DPH. All hotel facilities require a unique plan to provide the necessary security, staffing, and meals.

“San Francisco is looking ahead to ensure our hospitals have capacity to treat patients throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. Securing more temporary shelters and housing supports our public health systems and keeps more hospital beds open. We’re providing our most vulnerable residents and first responders with safe spaces to isolate if they were exposed to the virus,” said Trent Rhorer, Executive Director of the San Francisco Human Services Agency. “We’ve seen tremendous collaboration and support from the business community. San Francisco hotels and large facility operators are opening their doors to help our City slow the spread of coronavirus.”

“This expansion of hotels and Moscone West to serve people experiencing homelessness and others who need to isolate is a tremendous step forward in our response to COVID-19, especially for the most vulnerable in our community,” said Abigail Stewart-Kahn, Interim Director of the Department of Homelessness and Supportive Housing. “This expanded capacity will help create greater safety for our homeless neighbors give the constraints of living in a congregate environment. I am deeply appreciative to the City staff and service providers who are working tirelessly to keep our homeless response system functioning and expanding during this crisis.”

“The Hotel Council and all of our member hotels are united with Mayor Breed and Governor Newsom to contain and mitigate the effects of COVID-19 and to help house our first responders and also vulnerable populations,” said Kevin Carroll, President and CEO of the Hotel Council of San Francisco. “When this crisis is over, we will be ready to once again welcome the world back to ‘the City that Knows How.’”

To prevent the spread of COVID-19 in congregate shelters and protect the health of the guests and staff, HSH has made several changes to the shelter system, including temporarily pausing



referrals into shelters to stabilize the existing communities within the shelter and limit the number of guests at each site. HSH has also extended stays at all shelters and Navigation Centers so that no guests are asked to leave because of time limits during the shelter-in-place order. Additionally, HSH and its nonprofit service providers have extended the hours of shelters, added meals, and enhanced cleaning protocols to limit the need for guests to leave the shelters and slow the spread of the virus.

In an additional step to protect the health of shelter guests and staff, DPH has created a shelter health screening tool that is now available at all shelters, navigation centers, and transitional housing programs along with the supplies needed to implement the protocol. This tool assesses the health of each shelter guest and provides guidelines on how to assist guests who are symptomatic.

HSH is recommending that shelter providers implement, to the best of their ability, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) [Guidance for Homeless Service Providers](#), which calls for social distancing, increased cleaning, and enhanced care for shelter guests.

For additional information about the City's guidance for people experience homelessness during the COVID-19 outbreak, please visit: <https://sf.gov/information/covid-19-and-people-experiencing-homelessness>.

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