



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

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**\*\*\* PRESS RELEASE \*\*\***

**SAN FRANCISCO INCREASES COVID-19 PROTECTIONS FOR HOMELESS RESIDENTS AND PEOPLE LIVING IN SINGLE ROOM OCCUPANCY HOTELS**

*A \$5 million emergency fund and new Public Health Order will support people living in shelters, single-room occupancy hotels, and permanent supportive housing.*

**San Francisco, CA** — Mayor London N. Breed, Supervisor Aaron Peskin, and the Department of Public Health today announced \$5 million in new investments, as well as a Public Health Order to protect vulnerable populations who are at risk of becoming ill or dying if they contract COVID-19, the disease caused by the new coronavirus. This emergency fund and Order will focus on reducing risk of exposure to the virus for the many marginally housed seniors, people with underlying health conditions, and individuals experiencing homelessness, living in shelters, single-room occupancy hotels (SROs), and Permanent Supportive Housing.

These initiatives include expanded cleaning in shelters, resource centers, and SROs; increased meal offerings and expanded shelter hours for the few shelters that are not already 24/7 to encourage homeless individuals to remain in shelters; enhanced meal delivery programs for individuals in SROs who have been previously advised to limit their outings in the community; and funding to support cleaning in privately owned single-room occupancy hotels. This funding will be released in conjunction with a Public Health Order issued by the Health Officer of the City and County of San Francisco to establish required cleaning and contagion mitigation protocols in SROs and other congregate settings.

These newly established protocols will be enforced by the City to ensure that our most vulnerable populations are protected. As this situation is dynamic and guidance from public health officials may evolve, the City is working with providers of services to homeless individuals and other owners of SROs to continually evaluate their needs based on public health guidance.

“We know that many of our most vulnerable residents—those who could get very sick or die if they contract COVID-19—are living in congregate and semi-congregate settings like shelters and single-room occupancy hotels,” said Mayor Breed. “We have to do more to keep these places clean and work to keep people healthy as this disease spreads within our community. This emergency fund and this Public Health Order are part of our work to respond aggressively to the challenges presented by COVID-19 each and every day. Everyone should continue to follow the best health practices, and we will continue to do the work to deliver more protections for those in need.”



“Our chief concern is for vulnerable populations who are most at risk of getting very sick, or dying, if they get COVID-19,” said Dr. Grant Colfax, Director of Health. “That is why we are recommending that people over 60, or with certain underlying health conditions, stay home as much as possible. For vulnerable people in SROs or shelters, this investment will help them limit their outings, by assuring that food and shelter is available, and that congregate settings are clean environments.”

“The northeast quarter of San Francisco has the highest concentration of people who are vulnerable to this epidemic,” said Supervisor Aaron Peskin. “These are the City’s next steps, informed by meaningful community input and a close collaboration between the Mayor and the Board of Supervisors that will help ensure the public’s health is protected.”

“Delivering meals to elderly seniors living alone in residential hotels addresses an urgent and basic need,” said Rev. Norman Fong of Chinatown Community Development Center. “Seniors are being urged to stay at home to avoid a potentially life-threatening virus yet they lack their own kitchens to cook for themselves. This is an essential and compassionate proposal.”

### **Public Health Order**

The Department of Public Health will issue a Public Health Order to require privately operated SROs meet minimum environmental cleaning standards. This includes cleaning of high-touch surfaces and bathrooms appliances with soap and water followed by CDC-approved household cleaners, availability of hand washing supplies and hand sanitizers, appropriate use of personal protective supplies, posting of signs in multiple languages, enhanced disinfection when areas are affected by COVID-19 patients, and assurance of occupational and safety health standards and training.

The Order will also set requirements to protect the safety of the workers who are conducting the cleaning efforts in SROs, and require that these workers have the training and resources to best protect themselves. The requirements set in this Order will also be issued as a Public Health Directive to all City-funded and City-operated SROs, shelters, and Navigation Centers.

### **Vulnerable Populations Support Fund**

#### *Expanded Cleaning in Shelters, Resource Centers, and Permanent Supportive Housing*

The City will fund roving cleaning crews to provide rigorous cleaning in congregate settings. Additional janitors will move amongst the City’s shelters, resource centers, and Permanent Supportive Housing that contract with the City. These cleaning crews will ensure that City-owned and City-contracted housing and shelter meets the requirements in the Public Health Order.

#### *Support for cleaning in privately owned single room occupancy hotels*

In order to meet the required cleaning and contagion mitigation protocols in the Public Health Order, the City will provide financial support for building owners of privately owned single-room occupancy hotels. The City will also organize an interdepartmental team through its Emergency Operations Center to develop an implementation and inspection program, triaging buildings based on public health.



*Support for People Living in Shelters*

Based on current recommendations from the Department of Public Health, the City is taking active steps to encourage people living in shelters to stay indoors. These steps include expanding meal service and expanding hours where possible and in collaboration with shelter providers and where shelters are not already operating 24/7. As these recommendations from the Department of Public Health may evolve, the City is also preparing alternative approaches.

*Increased Meal Deliveries for People in SROs*

To help vulnerable populations limit their outings, the City will be increasing in-home meal deliveries for people living in both City-funded and privately owned SROs.

*Increased Education and Handwashing for People living Unsheltered*

City and non-profit homeless outreach teams have been providing information about the virus to people living unsheltered. Outreach teams are providing recommendations for staying healthy and are offering hand sanitizer, in addition to conducting standard outreach for access services and shelter. The City has also deployed an initial set of handwashing stations to augment those already operated through Pit Stops and intends to deploy further hand washing stations in the coming days. The Department of Public Health and outreach teams will provide information on the location of handwashing stations for use by all San Franciscans to those living unsheltered and the general public.

**Background on San Francisco's COVID-19 Response**

On Tuesday, February 25<sup>th</sup>, Mayor Breed declared a local emergency in order to better-prepare for confirmed cases of novel coronavirus in San Francisco. The emergency declaration allows the City to mobilize resources, accelerate emergency planning, streamline staffing, coordinate agencies across the City, allow for future reimbursement by the state and federal governments and raise awareness throughout San Francisco about how to prepare for and respond to the novel coronavirus. The City is in regular contact with all hospitals and health facilities in San Francisco, and our health system is prepared to deliver care to everyone in need and provide a coordinated response as additional cases of the novel coronavirus are confirmed.

The San Francisco Department of Public Health began testing for cases of novel coronavirus on Monday, March 2<sup>nd</sup>, and continues conducting tests seven days a week in cases that meet the CDC criteria. On Friday, March 6<sup>th</sup>, the Mayor issued aggressive recommendations by the Department of Public Health to reduce the spread of coronavirus that is now circulating in the community.

Read the recommendations that apply to vulnerable populations, large gatherings, workplace and businesses, schools, transit and health care settings at [www.sfdph.org/dph/alerts/coronavirus.asp](http://www.sfdph.org/dph/alerts/coronavirus.asp) and stay up-to-date on coronavirus news and information.

You can also call 311 and sign up for the City's new alert service for official updates: text COVID19SF to 888-777.



Remember, these are the best ways for all San Franciscans to reduce their risk of getting sick, and preventing COVID-19:

- Wash hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.
- Cover your cough or sneeze.
- Stay home if you are sick.
- Avoid touching your face.
- Try alternatives to shaking hands, like an elbow bump or wave.
- If you have recently returned from a country, state or region with ongoing COVID-19 infections, monitor your health and follow the instructions of public health officials.
- There is no recommendation to wear masks at this time to prevent yourself from getting sick.

You can also prepare for the possible disruption caused by an outbreak:

- Prepare to work from home if that is possible for your job, and your employer.
- Make sure you have a supply of all essential medications for your family.
- Prepare a child care plan if you or a caregiver are sick.
- Make arrangements about how your family will manage a school closure.
- Plan for how you can care for a sick family member without getting sick yourself.
- Take care of each other and check in by phone with friends, family and neighbors that are vulnerable to serious illness or death if they get COVID-19.
- Keep common spaces clean to help maintain a healthy environment for you and others. Frequently touched surfaces should be cleaned regularly with disinfecting sprays, wipes or common household cleaning products.

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