



## Interim Guidance: Preventing Spread of COVID-19 in Community Congregate Living Settings for Those Who are Housed In Private Rooms

March 11, 2020

**AUDIENCE:** The following interim guidance was developed by the San Francisco Department of Public Health for use by staff and residents living in community congregate living settings where individuals and households are living in their separate room and there may be sharing of bathrooms or cooking facilities between households. A household is all the people who may live in an independent enclosed space. This includes:

- Single resident occupancy hotels (SROs)
- Permanent supportive housing (PSH)
- Shelter or transitional housing with private rooms

For the purposes of this guidance, this does NOT include: adult homeless shelters or navigation centers (for which guidance can be found [here](#)), 24 hour drop in centers, residential care facilities for the elderly (RFCEs, including Board and Care), residential mental health or substance use disorder treatment program, medical respite, or long-term care facilities (for which guidance can be found [here](#)).

This guidance and the others referred to above can be found online at <http://www.sfgdcp.org/covid19>

### **BACKGROUND:**

Novel coronavirus disease, or COVID-19, is a new respiratory disease that can spread from person to person. Most people who get the infection have no symptoms or mild symptoms of a cold. Some people have gotten very sick from it and need to be hospitalized – especially people who are older and have chronic medical conditions like heart disease, lung disease, diabetes, kidney disease and weakened immune systems. The most common signs and symptoms of infection include fever, cough, difficulty breathing, fatigue, muscles aches, sore throat, headache. Nausea, vomiting, or diarrhea are less common symptoms of COVID-19 infection. At present, there is no vaccine to prevent COVID-19 and no treatment after someone has been exposed to COVID-19. The best way to prevent the spread of the virus is to avoid being exposed to the virus.

### **GUIDANCE FOR RESIDENTS:**

Although the risk of getting COVID-19 is currently low, there are many cold or flu infections you can get which can look just like COVID-19 and will make it hard to take care of your daily activities.

#### **Practice everyday preventive actions that can help prevent the spread of germs:**

- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- Stay home when you are sick, except to get medical care.
- Cover your coughs and sneezes with a tissue, under the neck of your shirt, or into your elbow.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after going to the bathroom; before eating; and after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing. If soap and water are



not readily available, use a hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% ethanol. Always wash your hands with soap and water if your hands are visibly dirty.

- If you have symptoms of a cold or flu (such as cough, runny nose, sore throat, etc), wear a face mask when you are around other people.
- Clean frequently touched surfaces and objects daily (e.g., tables, countertops, light switches, doorknobs, and cabinet handles) using a regular household detergent and water.
- Get your flu shot to protect against flu which has symptoms similar to COVID-19.

**Prepare for the possible disruption caused by an outbreak:**

- Make sure you have a supply of all essential medications for your family. Ask your provider or pharmacy to give you several months supply of medications, if possible, to reduce the number of times you have to go to a pharmacy;
- If you care for a child, make a child care plan if you or a care giver are sick;
- Make arrangements about how your family will manage a school closure; and
- Make a plan for how you can care for a sick family member without getting sick yourself.

**When working with service providers** (such as home health aides, IHSS, social workers, case managers):

- If you have symptoms of a cold or flu, please wear a mask when seeing service providers.
- If you notice a service provider has symptoms of cold or flu, ask them to wear a mask before seeing you.

**If you have symptoms of a cold or flu or if there is an outbreak of COVID-19 in your community**, limit your interactions with others.

- Stay at home and in your room as much as is possible.
- Avoid spending time in community lounges and other common spaces in your building.
- Limit visitors.
- As much as is possible, avoid going to public places where close contact with others might occur, such as:
  - Shopping centers
  - Movie theaters
  - Stadium
  - Libraries
  - Community centers
  - Public transportation. If you need to take public transportation and you have symptoms of a cold or flu, please wear a mask. You can ask your facility manager or healthcare provider for a mask.
  - Group meals and food pantries. If you rely on these for food and you have symptoms of a cold or flu, please wear a mask if one is available.



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### **GUIDANCE FOR CONGREGATE LIVING FACILITY MANAGEMENT AND STAFF:**

**Stay up to date** with local and state COVID-19 activity and developments (in addition to CDC):

- <https://www.sfdph.org> Up to date information on COVID-19 and whether these is an outbreak in San Francisco will be posted here.
- <https://www.sfdcp.org/covid19> Answers to frequently asked questions.
- <https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/Pages/Immunization/ncov2019.aspx> California info.

**For detailed mandated cleaning instructions**, see “Order of the Health Officer No. C19-04” which sets forth “Minimum Environmental Cleaning Standards for Business, Schools, and SRO Settings” that Residential Hotels must fully and immediately comply with. See the following:

- Order of the Health Officer No. C19-04: <https://www.sfdph.org/dph/alerts/files/OrderC19-04-signed.pdf>
- COVID-19 “Minimum Environmental Cleaning Standards” for Business, Schools, and SRO Settings: <https://www.sfdph.org/dph/alerts/files/CoVid-19-Business-and-SROs.pdf>

### **Provide education for staff and clients:**

Place signs that encourage cough and sneeze etiquette, hand hygiene, and staying home when sick ([English](#)) ([Simplified Chinese](#)) ([Spanish](#)), at the entrance to your building and in other areas where they are likely to be seen such as:

- Gathering areas
- Dining areas
- Bathrooms
- Staff lounges

Train employees and residents to clean their hands often with an ethanol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60-95% ethanol or wash their hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. Soap and water are preferred if hands are visibly dirty.

### **Provide hygiene and prevention materials:**

- Provide easy access to soap, water, hand drying resources, and ethanol-based hand rubs at:
  - All entries
  - Dining areas
  - Shared bathrooms
  - Kitchen areas
  - Public phones
  - Computer stations
  - Elevators
  - By the doors of community rooms
  - By the bedsides of ill individuals



- Encourage the use of and distribute disposable face masks to any resident with a cough or other cold or flu-like symptoms. Staff with cold or flu-like symptoms should be encouraged to stay home.
  - If someone is coughing or sneezing, have them wear a disposable face mask when they are within 6 feet of other people
  - Change the mask if it gets saturated
  - Wash hands after changing mask

**Ensure that adequate supplies are present and maintained:**

- Hot and cold running water. Hot water should be maintained at 100°F. If temperature control is automatic, ensure that it does not exceed 120°F
- Liquid hand soap
- Paper hand towels
- Ethanol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60-95% ethanol
- Facial tissues– place at entrances and community areas
- Plastic-lined wastebaskets– place at entrances and community areas
- Disposable surgical masks
  - For clients who are coughing or sneezing
  - For staff working closely with sick clients
- Gloves in a variety of sizes (for staff)
- Disposable gowns (for staff)
- Signs addressing hygiene ([English](#)) ([Simplified Chinese](#)) ([Spanish](#))
- Disposable wipes for staff to clean surfaces

**Remind staff members to use Standard Precautions.**

- Remind staff who provide care for residents to use Standard Precautions for any interactions that require potential contact with body fluids with particular emphasis on hand hygiene. Standard Precautions include:
  - Wearing gloves if hand contact with blood, body fluids, respiratory secretions or potentially contaminated surfaces is expected.
  - Wearing a disposable gown if clothes might become soiled with blood, body fluids or respiratory secretions.
  - Wearing a mask if respiratory secretions are expected to contact mouth and nose.
  - Changing gloves and gowns after each encounter and washing hands or use alcohol hand sanitizer immediately after removing gloves.
  - Washing hands with soap and water when hands are visibly dirty or contaminated with respiratory secretions.

**Update your master cleaning schedule and instructions**

- **For detailed mandated cleaning instructions**, see “Minimum Environmental Cleaning Standards for Business, Schools, and SRO Settings” that was referenced above:
  - <https://www.sfdph.org/dph/alerts/files/CoVid-19-Business-and-SROs.pdf>



- Train staff in how to mix and use disinfectants and sanitizer solutions.
  - Follow all label instructions
  - Use damp cleaning methods. Dry dusting or sweeping can cause airborne virus droplets.
  - Change mop heads, rags, and other cleaning items frequently
- Provide staff with gloves for cleaning
- Wipe down commonly used surfaces (for example, doorknobs, keyboards, remote controls, desks) before each use with disposable wipes.
- Clean all common areas at least daily; clean heavily used surfaces more frequently (e.g. doorknobs, elevator buttons, public phones, banisters, tabletops, handrails, workstations, and countertops)
- Empty trash receptacles frequently
- Clean toys daily, and discourage sharing of plush toys (such as teddy bears) between children
- Regularly clean air vents and replace filters, especially on air purifiers (like HEPA filters)
- No special disinfection products are required.

**Encourage all staff and clients to get the influenza vaccine to prevent illness that is similar to COVID-19.**

**Actively encourage sick employees to stay home.**

- Staff with cold or flu-like illness should not work until 24 hours after fever and other symptoms have gone.
- Ensure sick leave policies allow employees to stay home if they have symptoms of infection.
- Do not require a healthcare provider's note for employees who are sick with cold or flu-like illness to return to work, as healthcare provider offices may not be able to provide such documentation in a timely way.
- Staff developing cold or flu-like symptoms while at work should immediately don a facemask, notify management, and leave work.

**Offer masks to sick residents.** Offer residents who have cold or flu-like symptoms to wear a mask when they leave their room.

- Please note many residents may have chronic coughs that do not indicate they have a new infectious illness. Residents with chronic, non-infectious coughs do not need to wear a mask.
- Many residents may have lung diseases that prevent them from wearing a mask. Do not require or force residents to wear masks.
  - **If a client refuses to or is unable to wear a mask:**
    - Have staff members wear masks when interacting with the ill resident.
    - Offer ill residents to eat at a different time or in an area separated from others.



- Improve ventilation in the room/floor to the extent possible
- If within the purview of your duties,
  - Cancel the ill person's nonessential appointments at other agencies, group sessions, etc.
  - If the client has medically necessary appointments, such as dialysis or chemotherapy, the sending facility should fill out a Medical Facility Communication Sheet; call the receiving facility ahead of time to notify them of the patient's infectious status and the patient should wear a facemask during transfer and his/her entire visit.
  - Limit the number of staff/visitors who enter the ill resident's room. Staff/visitors should be instructed on how to wear a facemask and how to perform hand hygiene and other universal precautions

**For residents who have confirmed COVID-19 infection and their close contacts.** The San Francisco Department of Public Health, in partnership with the city's Emergency Operations Center and other city agencies, will explore alternative housing, food, and transportation services for residents who have confirmed COVID-19 and their close contacts to help protect the community's health.

**To reduce the likelihood of COVID-19 cases:**

- **Restrict ill visitors.** Post signs at the entrance instructing visitors not to visit if they have symptoms of cold or flu such as fever, cough, runny nose, difficulty breathing, etc.
- **Mealtimes**
  - If feasible, stagger mealtimes to reduce crowding in shared eating facilities.
  - Stagger the schedule for use of kitchens
- **Food and Cooking Facilities:**
  - Clean shared cooking facilities at least weekly.
  - To the extent possible that is legally allowed by your building codes, allow residents to have in-unit cooking devices such as microwaves and hot plates.
- **Bathrooms**
  - Clean shared bathrooms at least weekly.
  - If feasible, stagger bathroom schedule to reduce the number of people using the facilities at the same time.
  - If feasible, have one designated bathroom for ill persons (if possible, designate a bathroom close to their rooms/beds)
- **Recreation/Common Areas/Group Activities**
  - Create a schedule for using common spaces.
  - Hold fewer large group activities such as "house meetings" in favor of smaller groups.



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- Consider cancelling group activities.
  - **Transport**
    - Transport fewer people per trip so passengers don't sit too close together.
  - **Staff activities**
    - Don't hold large meetings when information can be communicated in other ways.
    - Consider conference calls instead of in-person meetings