

# PANDEMIC COMMUNICATION: COVID-19 HOMELESSNESS PROVIDER UPDATE

6 APRIL 2020

This update is prepared by the Capital & Coast, Wairarapa and Hutt Valley District Health Boards. It is consistent with Ministry of Health advice. The Ministry of Health remains the definitive source of information.

Our focus is on ensuring you have the information you need, when you need it, in order for you to care for your staff and the people who depend on your service.

Any questions regarding this communication may be directed to [COVID-19Questions@ccdhb.org.nz](mailto:COVID-19Questions@ccdhb.org.nz). All emails to the COVID-19 email address will be logged and responded to by an appropriate team member.

## PURPOSE OF THIS ADVICE

The purpose of this advice is to give you some guidelines and resources you can use to work safely onsite with people in your transitional or shelter accommodation.

- Understanding COVID-19
- Preventing the spread
- Supporting the homeless community
- Share resources with you

## UNDERSTANDING COVID-19

People who are sick with COVID-19 are likely to show the following symptoms:

- Fever
- Cough
- Shortness of breath

They may show other flu-like symptoms as well.

COVID-19 is spread by droplets through direct or close contact with an infected person who has symptoms – particularly coughing. The virus doesn't have wings or legs so it needs help to move from one person to another. It is important to prevent the spread by practicing simple steps such as distancing, hand hygiene and good cough etiquette.

## PREVENTING THE SPREAD

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### PHYSICAL DISTANCING 2M APART

Because transmission is by droplet, it is important to maintain a two metre (2m) distance between every person you are in contact with, and ensure they are doing the same with everyone they are in contact with.

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### GOOD COUGH ETIQUETTE

The person with the symptoms should practice good cough etiquette such as coughing into a tissue or their elbow or wear a mask. Dispose of tissues immediately.



**Droplet and Contact PPE is not required except for suspected and/or confirmed COVID-19 cases. Again, refer to Attachment 1.**

### ACCESS TO DROPLET AND CONTACT PPE

We will ensure that you have enough Droplet and Contact PPE onsite if COVID-19 is suspected in your facility.

For providers in Capital & Coast DHB or Hutt Valley DHB, if you have questions about accessing please email [PPE\\_COVID19COMMUNITY@ccdhb.org.nz](mailto:PPE_COVID19COMMUNITY@ccdhb.org.nz)

For providers in Wairarapa DHB, please email [Danielle.Farmer@wairarapa.dhb.org.nz](mailto:Danielle.Farmer@wairarapa.dhb.org.nz) to request access to PPE for your facility.

### TRAINING FOR STAFF ON USING PPE:

We can support a lead person from your facility, designated by you, to assist and train other people in your facility on using PPE.

For providers in Capital & Coast DHB or Hutt Valley DHB, please contact [Mikaela.Shannon@ccdhb.org.nz](mailto:Mikaela.Shannon@ccdhb.org.nz) to arrange this support.

For providers in Wairarapa DHB, please email [Danielle.Farmer@wairarapa.dhb.org.nz](mailto:Danielle.Farmer@wairarapa.dhb.org.nz).

Ministry of Health information is also available for essential workers in health and non-health workplaces on [using personal protective equipment](#).

**Attachment 2 (pictured) shows the steps to put on PPE safely as does this [PPE instructional video](#).**



## CARING FOR THOSE SUSPECTED OF OR INFECTED WITH COVID-19

If you are caring for someone with COVID-19, or suspected COVID-19, you must wear the appropriate PPE. If you don't have the appropriate PPE, keep your distance and avoid contact with the person. Contact and inform the person's GP if they have one, or phone Healthline's dedicated COVID-19 number: 0800 358 5453.

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## GATHER INFORMATION

Gather information from the person, including any existing medical conditions. A basic screening template is being developed and will be circulated to assist with this.

Help people describe how they are feeling by asking about their symptoms and when they first noticed them. Try to gauge the severity of the symptoms by using a 1 - 10 scale (10 being the worst). Take their temperature if possible. An oral temperature of 38° constitutes a fever. Common symptoms of COVID-19 (coronavirus) are fever, cough, and shortness of breath.

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## ISOLATE IF POSSIBLE

If possible, designate a room and bathroom for clients with respiratory symptoms to separate them from others. Clean and/or disinfect the room and bathroom daily. If individual rooms are not available, consider placing the person in a large, well-ventilated room, increase spacing between beds, use sheets to create temporary barriers between beds, and arrange beds so that clients lie head-to-toe.

Avoid housing the sick person in a room with people who are at increased risk of complications from COVID-19 such as older adults and those with asthma, HIV/ AIDS, diabetes, and pregnancy.

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## CARE GUIDELINES

If you are caring for a person with COVID-19 you will need to wear the appropriate PPE (see Attachment 1). The following is recommended care for a person with COVID-19, or suspected COVID-19.

- Provide the sick person with a mask.
- Encourage the person to lie down and rest.
- Prevent dehydration. Encourage the person to drink plenty of water, clear soup, decaffeinated tea, or juice.
- Provide a blanket if possible.
- Encourage the person to wash their hands frequently and provide them with hand sanitizer, a box of tissues and a plastic bag or lined garbage can to dispose of tissues.
- Encourage the person to cough into their elbow area or cover their mouth with tissues or paper towels when they cough or sneeze.
- Have meals brought to the sick person's room if possible.
- Check on the person every two to three hours. If they could be at high risk for complications from COVID-19 (those who are older or have underlying health conditions) check on them more regularly if possible.

## IF URGENT MEDICAL HELP IS NEEDED

If you need to get urgent medical help for the person:

- call **111** and ask for an ambulance
- tell the ambulance officers that your guest may have COVID-19 infection.

Severe Symptoms

- Extremely difficult breathing (not being able to speak without gasping for air).
- Bluish lips or face.
- Persistent pain or pressure in the chest.
- Severe persistent dizziness or light-headedness.
- New confusion, or inability to arouse.
- New seizure or seizures that won't stop.

## SUPPORT & RESOURCES

### EMERGENCY HOUSING AND OTHER WELFARE SUPPORT

If new homeless arrive at your facility and you have no available capacity to house them, the Ministry of Social Development has a helpline for welfare support including access to emergency accommodation on 0800 559 009. In the event you are unable to access support through this helpline, your local Council’s Welfare Team may be able to assist:

- Wellington City Council – (04) 801 3683
- Hutt City Council - 0800 4888 2489
- Porirua City Council - (04) 237 5089
- Masterton City Council – (06) 370 6300

Other helplines available:

- There is a disability helpline available 0800 DISABILTY (347 225)
- Call WREMO 0800 141 967 for access to food, medication and cleaning supplies.
- Call WREMO 0800 0508 754 163 for access to temporary accommodation



**Refer to Attachment 3 for a one-stop shop of getting the help you need.**

### MEDICAL SUPPORT

GPs remain open and can be accessed in the usual manner. The Team for Assertive Community Treatment (TACT) and Te Roopu Aramuku Whararoroa is a service for people with persistent, long-term mental health and/or substance dependency problems, and is available for people who are homeless.

Initial contact with TACT should come through our 24/7 mental health and addictions contact centre [Te Haika](#), phone **0800 745 477**.

If you live in the Wairarapa and want to contact the adult community mental health team or child and adolescent mental health service, you can call **0508 432 4320**.

### TRANSPORTING WHĀNAU

The Ministry of Housing and Urban Development has developed [Guidance for Housing and Housing Support Service Providers](#), which includes the following information on transporting whānau.

If you need to transport whānau to their new accommodation, to the supermarket or to a medical appointment and they DO NOT have symptoms of, or a confirmed diagnosis of COVID 19, then the COVID 19 website states that the use of private vehicles is allowed, with physical distancing being practiced. This would allow the transportation of a single passenger at a time, utilising your service’s private company vehicles, with the passenger being transported in the opposite back passenger seat to the driver. Regular cleaning of these vehicles would also be recommended.

Where individuals or whānau DO have SYMPTOMS of or a CONFIRMED DIAGNOSIS of COVID 19, services should call Healthline for guidance before deciding whether it is appropriate to use private vehicles to transport that whānau (0800 358 5453).

## STAFFING

We have established a 3DHB Workforce Office as a central team to support workforce needs in our communities. We are urging any provider that may have staff available to be re-deployed either on an ongoing basis or for one-off pieces of work, as well as those providers who desperately need more staff to deliver essential services, please get in touch with us by email:

[COVID-19CommWorkforce@ccdhb.org.nz](mailto:COVID-19CommWorkforce@ccdhb.org.nz)

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## GOING TO WORK

Staff cannot go to work if they have:

- cold or flu symptoms. Workers should be symptom free for 48 hours before returning to work.
- been overseas or in close contact with someone confirmed with COVID-19 in the last 14 days. They must self-isolate for 14 days from the date of departure or close contact.

If you develop symptoms (fever, cough, breathing difficulties, or other flu-like symptoms) within 14 days of being overseas, or within 14 days of contact with a confirmed case of COVID-19, you should phone Healthline on 0800 358 5453.

## STAYING SAFE

Much of what you are doing is business as usual for you and you will follow your normal processes and procedures for working with your residents. However, there are some guidelines you can follow to keep your staff safe.

- Residents who have been using alcohol or drugs for a long period of time may have difficulty stopping use and experience withdrawal symptoms or experience distress if unable to access substances. The New Zealand Drug foundation has provided information regarding [withdrawal and how to respond](#).
- Some residents may not be able to self-isolate due to issues with addiction or mental health and insist on returning to streets. In these situations, it is likely to be safer to let them do this than try and prevent them from doing so.
- Some residents may experience distress due to withdrawal from tobacco. They may benefit from nicotine replacement therapies provided through primary health services.
- Make sure your residents understand how to keep themselves safe by preventing the spread – keeping a 2m distance from others, washing hands as often as possible, and sneezing into a tissue or elbow.

## CLEANING AND FOOD HANDLING

Always wear disposable gloves when cleaning. Dispose of used gloves in a rubbish bin. Wash your hands immediately after handling these items.

You can use hand sanitiser (containing at least 60 percent alcohol) if soap and water are not available and if your hands are not visibly dirty. If using hand sanitiser, cover all surfaces of your hands and rub them together until they feel dry.

Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth with unwashed hands.

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## GUIDANCE FOR CLEANING

The Ministry of Health website has [excellent cleaning advice](#) for infection control within your facility.

- Wash dishes in the dishwasher if you can.
- Clean all 'high-touch' surfaces such as table tops, doorknobs, bathrooms and toilets every day with antiseptic wipes or disinfectant.
- Clean toilets with a separate set of cleaning equipment (disposable cleaning cloths, mops, etc).
- Clean floors with disinfectant every day.
- Wash laundry in warm or hot water and dry thoroughly. Wear gloves while handling soiled laundry.

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## COVID-19 AND FOOD SAFETY

Infected food handlers could introduce the virus to the food they are in contact with by coughing and sneezing, or through hand contact. However, this can be avoided by following the [appropriate standards](#). It is important anyone handling food informs their employer, avoids preparing food for other people, and seeks medical advice if they think they have symptoms of respiratory illness

## QUESTIONS

Again, please email any questions to [COVID-19questions@ccdhb.org.nz](mailto:COVID-19questions@ccdhb.org.nz) and a member of our team will respond.

## THANK YOU

We would like to recognise and thank you for the work that you are doing. We are aware that our community providers are front and centre in the COVID-19 response and we appreciate your commitment and professionalism in these challenging times.

## Rachel Haggerty

Incident Controller  
Community IMT