

NH'S EMERGENCY HOUSING COLLABORATIVE

Update and Plan Status- April 27, 2020

Supporting New Hampshire's Individuals Experiencing Homelessness during the COVID-19 Pandemic.

In early April, work began on a plan to meet the needs of individuals experiencing homelessness during the COVID pandemic. Through key partnerships across government, philanthropy, non-profits, businesses, and communities, there has been much progress and work continues. Planning and implementation is evolving to meet the needs identified by those at the front line providing supports and services.

To date, over \$240,000 from philanthropy has been given to shelters and outreach programs to support staffing, portable handwashing stations, portable shower bags, technology, cleaning supplies, and personal protective equipment. The Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) has committed an additional \$3M of funds from the CARES Act to:

- 1) Provide essential dollars to support direct care staff supporting people experiencing homelessness;
- 2) Provide additional dollars to shelters for increased cost due to the COVID pandemic; and
- 3) Provide additional dollars to support permanent housing for individuals and families experiencing homelessness.

The State of New Hampshire has also committed funds to support the cost of local decompression solutions. The resources from philanthropy and communities has assisted as bridge until other resources were identified. The approach taken has enabled solutions to develop based on the strengths and needs of each community.

Support to Providers:

1. Beginning April 27, 2020 for eight weeks, DHHS will provide a weekly allocation to contracted agencies to support the increased staffing needs.*
2. Decompression. Shelters have been encouraged to reduce the numbers of individuals residing in the shelter to meet safe social distancing. There has been great success for meeting this need locally. Many communities have worked closely with the local shelters to identify locations to meet this need locally. The State of NH, in partnership with Housing Action NH has been working locally and will continue to assist shelters with decompression needs through the pandemic.
3. The Department continues to support the shelters to restrict admissions during the State of Emergency. Each shelter shall discuss this with the Bureau of Housing Supports (BHS), with a focus on how they will assist those who are not admitted with locating shelter.

4. Shelters are providing services and activities to encourage people to stay in the shelter and comply with the Stay at Home orders. BHS has made funding available to cover some of the additional costs.
5. The BHS continues with the following formal mechanisms to provide guidance to the shelters:
 - a. Calls twice weekly with all shelters to address systemic concerns, share best practice, and resources.
 - b. Weekly calls with individual shelters to address shelter-specific needs and guidance.
 - c. Based on these calls, BHS will continue to provide updated guidance.
 - d. BHS follows and provides guidance from the Center for Disease Control for the following protocols:
 - e. Screening- <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/homeless-shelters/screening-clients-respiratory-infection-symptoms.html>
 - f. Cleaning- <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/organizations/cleaning-disinfection.html>
 - g. US Interagency Council on Homelessness Resources - <https://www.usich.gov/covid-19/>
 - h. Facility Recommendations- Please refer to the CDC guidance at the attached link: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/homeless-shelters/index.html>
6. Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) has been made available and will continue, as long as it is available and needed. In addition to requesting this from State Emergency Operations Center (Emergency Support Function 8 – Health & Medical), it can be requested from local public health partners like the city/town health officer, the city/town Emergency Management Director, or the regional Public Health Network. For questions and guidance regarding PPE, the COVID-19 website <https://www.nh.gov/covid19/> has the most current information.
7. DHHS, Housing Action NH New Hampshire Housing Finance Authority, and Community Development Finance Authority are partnering to support the unique business needs of shelters

*Requires formal approval by the US Housing and Urban Development.

Reduction of Community Spread for Unsheltered Individuals:

Based on preliminary data from the Point in Time (PIT) Survey in January, there are approximately 182 people who are unsheltered in the state. It is best if people remain in their home communities close to available services. To support this, the following has occurred:

1. Many local providers have worked successfully within their communities to identify options for clean personal sanitation. Through the work of Housing Action NH and the support of philanthropy, purchases have been made for portable hand washing stations and portable shower bags.

2. In an effort to support permanent housing for individuals and families, through funds made available through the CARES Act, BHS has committed a total of \$1.3M* for rapid rehousing and homelessness prevention, which includes housing stability case management.
3. Outreach services continue to encourage people to take measures to mitigate the spread of COVID-19. Housing Action NH in partnership with the Community Action Programs of New Hampshire has made materials available statewide. Examples of such items include: personal hygiene kits, shower trailers, solar powered charging banks, and masks for staff and those seeking assistance.

*Requires formal approval from the US Housing and Urban Development.

Quarantine/Isolation for Individuals Diagnosed or Suspected to have COVID-19

A Quarantine/Isolation site has been established and opened on Monday April 20, 2020 for those meeting the criteria for this level of support. A additional site will open the week of April 27, 2020. As needed, additional sites will be developed. Following a clinical recommendation for an individual who is homeless or staying in a shelter to self-monitor, quarantine, or isolate t and assistance is needed to identify resources to meet that recommendation; the medical provider or shelter manager may call the state's EOC at 271-2231. The EOC will contact the Quarantine Assessment Team Lead (QATL) for Tier 3 people. QATL will contact the hospital or shelter to determine next steps, which includes a clinical assessment to determine if the person meets the criteria for the Quarantine/Isolation site.

Process:

1. Call comes to EOC.
2. EOC refers call to QATL
3. QATL contacts referral source to assess status and needs of the individual.
4. If state supported quarantine/isolation is indicated, the QATL Lead:
 - a. Identifies and activates the appropriate site.
 - b. Arranges for transportation to the site.
 - c. Arranges staffing for the site.
 - d. Contacts person's current community supports, if indicated.
 - e. Notifies Bureau of Housing Supports (BHS), Melissa Hatfield and/or Kristi Schott, of the admittance.
 - i. The Quarantine Assessment Team will do an assessment of the individual to identify needs.
 - ii. It is not anticipated that BHS housing supports/services will be required upon admission. Initial focus will be on stabilization and nutrition/medical/behavioral supports.

- iii. Plan will be developed person by person, day by day, based on what is presented.
- iv. BHS will review to determine what services/supports the person may be receiving and work with the EOC to develop an individualized plan for the person.

For typical Housing calls that go to 211, if a COVID calls comes in, 211 will reach out to the EOC. No change of the typical process.

EOC is only handling calls for individuals who are experiencing homelessness and have clinical assessments with referrals for self-monitoring, quarantine, or isolation.