



# COVID-19 Response Report

June 1, 2020

**Prepared by:**

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## OVERVIEW

*Updates from Barbara Waterhouse, Executive Director*

Since the beginning of the COVID-19 crisis in MA, Circle of Hope (COH) has closely monitored public health data and tracked the progression of the illness. We knew that homeless individuals would be among those most at risk for COVID-19, as underlying health conditions, socioeconomic and racial inequalities, and close proximity to others in shelter make them vulnerable. Approximately 1 in 3 homeless individuals in Boston are testing positive for COVID-19.

When the first case of COVID-19 was announced at UMass Boston, we immediately began sending extra hand soap to all of our partner shelters and programs, along with our usual supplies, to help prevent the spread of the virus. In March, it became clear that COH would need to shift its focus entirely to disease prevention. With our experience helping families displaced by fires and domestic violence through our Emergency Response Program, we were well-positioned to pivot quickly to provide the most-needed items for health.

We began reaching out to shelter directors, offering toiletries, hand soap, and other much-needed supplies. We heard back from family and domestic violence shelter directors first, who were surprised and grateful to hear that we would continue sending supplies for their vulnerable clients. In the earliest 3 months of the COVID-19 outbreak, Circle of Hope delivered 22,000 essential hygiene and PPE items to homeless families and individuals.

**"IT'S AMAZING TO SEE THAT YOUR ORGANIZATION IS STILL OPERATING AND MAKING THESE ESSENTIAL DELIVERIES DURING THIS TIME. IT TRULY MEANS A LOT." - ON THE RISE STAFF**

Larger shelters have presented a greater challenge. Shelter directors responded that they need our donations, but follow-up proved difficult as they were consumed by their own COVID-19 response. At several larger shelters and clinics, our normal drop-off areas are now inaccessible due to new COVID-19 testing tents. We have proactively worked to identify safe new drop-off locations and develop new delivery protocols so that we are still able to deliver essentials to our largest partner programs, including Woods-Mullen Shelter for women in Boston and Bowdoin Health Center in Dorchester.



## OPERATIONS

*Updates from Jody Barnet, Operations Manager*

In early February, we began purchasing as much hand soap as possible from our usual suppliers. As shelves emptied and prices rose, we also reached out to our donors asking them to donate unopened bottles of hand soap or purchase it off our Emergency Response Wish List on Amazon. Throughout February, we sent hundreds of bottles of hand soap to our partner shelters along with our regular monthly deliveries.

By mid-March, it became clear that we needed to prioritize the health and safety not only of the homeless individuals we serve, but also of our volunteers, donors, and staff. When the Stay At Home Advisory took effect, we made the decision to temporarily stop accepting donations of gently-used clothing and cancel all volunteer sorting shifts.

Heidi Wilson, our storage manager and shopper, helped us transform the interior of COH into a warehouse. In order to guarantee we were not spreading illness via our donations, only COH's Operations Manager and Storage Manager were working inside in PPE at a distance from one another. We began sending out only new, unopened boxes of toiletries, hygiene supplies, and essential clothing. Our drivers now make contactless deliveries, picking up orders outside of COH, leaving donations at a designated outdoor area at the shelters, and wearing masks and gloves throughout the process.

As COVID-19 continued to spread, our partner shelters started needing more specific protective items like masks, gloves, and sanitizers. To meet this urgent and vital need, we began reaching out to local organizations and businesses for donations of masks and sanitizer. Our supply partner, Hope and Comfort, and the Needham Rotary Club have provided thousands of toiletries, which we send out every week. Local volunteer groups and companies like Charles River Apparel and Rafi Nova have supplied us with hundreds of disposable and reusable face masks. We teamed up with Life Science Cares to provide thousands of disposable gloves and sanitizers to our partner shelters in Boston and Cambridge. We're continuing to reach out to new companies and organizations every week for more supplies.

We have made 5-7 deliveries each week throughout this crisis and we are in constant contact with our partners. Please see the following page for a summary of our deliveries from March to May.



## DELIVERY SUMMARY

March-May 2020

### SUMMARY

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	March	April	May	TOTAL
<b>Number of Items</b>	9,199	2,454	10,075	21,728
<b>Value of Donations</b>	\$55,523	\$8,512	\$29,187	\$93,222
<b># of Deliveries</b>	18	7	17	42

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### DONATIONS BY CATEGORY

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	March	April	May
<b>Accessories</b>	302	0	0
<b>Baby Equip.</b>	7	3	206
<b>Men Clothing</b>	1,818	24	237
<b>Linens</b>	227	0	93
<b>Toiletries</b>	2,772	1,734	4,183
<b>Women Clothing</b>	2,275	108	834
<b>Infant Clothing</b>	0	6	40
<b>Children Clothing</b>	1,798	304	902
<b>PPE</b>	0	275	3,580
<b>TOTAL</b>	9,199	2,454	10,075

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**GRAND TOTAL: 21,728**

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## FUNDRAISING

*Updates from Christine Ruddy, Development Associate*

Because of COVID-19, we had to move our annual HOPE Blooms fundraiser online. We count on funds raised at HOPE Blooms for a significant portion of our annual operating budget. We're so grateful for the generosity of this year's sponsors, but we did have a budget shortfall this year.

In order to fund the purchase and delivery of PPE and other necessities, we have taken steps to make up for this shortfall. We have applied to state and local COVID-19 emergency grants and continued our general grant applications as well. Since the COVID-19 crisis began, we have received generous grants from Life Science Cares, Boston Resiliency Fund, Howard E. Stark Charitable Foundation, MAXIMUS Foundation, Whole Foods, Bulfinch Group, and Guardian Life. Other funding applications are still pending.

Our landlord, Petrini Corporation, granted us a one month rent forbearance in May. We also applied for and received a PPP loan from Needham Bank to cover staff salaries and rent for an additional eight weeks.

We're also asking our supporters for help. We have an Emergency Response Wish List on Amazon so donors can purchase the supplies that we need and Amazon gift cards so we can purchase items ourselves. We are accepting donations of packaged, homemade masks from local businesses and community groups. Donors can also help by contributing to our Emergency Fund online.



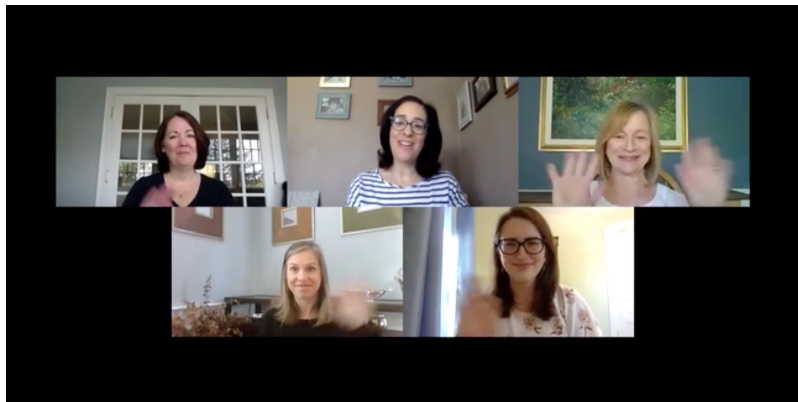
## COMMUNICATIONS

*Updates from Carolyn Conley-Das, Communications Manager*

As physical distancing continues, we want to make it simple and easy for donors, volunteers, and supporters to keep in touch with COH.

Our website now includes a [COVID-19 Response page](#), where supporters can find information about our ongoing deliveries as well as important updates about our operations. We are encouraging people to sign up for our e-newsletter, which we continue sending out 1-2 times per month with key updates. We post daily on social media, sharing photos of our deliveries, quotes from shelter directors, and highlighting our new supply partnerships. We monitor email and direct messages daily and we encourage supporters to reach out with questions.

We've also expanded our communications efforts to include video outreach. We posted and shared an email from Executive Director Barbara Waterhouse on the day of our would-be HOPE Blooms fundraiser, as well as [longer update from the whole staff on May 15](#). We want to reach out to our supporters in as many ways as possible to stay front-of-mind during this ongoing crisis.



### Looking Ahead

Right now, it's not safe for us to accept donations of gently used clothing. We plan to re-open for donation drop-offs when it is safe for everyone. For the time being, we need to continue focusing solely on health, hygiene, and disease prevention. While 1/3 of homeless individuals in Boston are testing positive for COVID-19, we know that many shelter directors were expecting worse. Field hospitals were set up exclusively to treat homeless individuals with COVID-19, and some are already shutting down due to lack of use. We still worry for the vulnerable people we serve, but the good news is that our efforts are working. With distancing and sanitation practices, homeless shelters have avoided the most catastrophic outcomes of universal spread. We will continue providing the items essential for health and safety until this crisis is behind us.