To: Indianapolis Continuum of Care and homeless system stakeholders  
From: Mayor’s Office, Marion County Public Health Department, Blueprint Executive Committee  
Date: March 30, 2020  
Subject: COVID-19 Homeless System Guidance & Response

Thank you to the organizations that provide shelter, care, services, and outreach to our city’s most vulnerable residents. I know these past few weeks have been extraordinarily difficult for you, especially as the local conditions have continued to evolve.

As a city, our number-one priority is the health and safety of our residents. During this current public health emergency, we continue to pursue policies based on best practices and guidance from the CDC, in collaboration with state and local health officials.

We are committed to ensuring that our community response system takes every practical measure to reduce the risk of exposure to the novel coronavirus among persons experiencing homelessness and those providing vital services.

The virus is most usually spread through close person-to-person contact (shaking hands, touching, hugging); respiratory droplets from coughing or sneezing; or by touching an object or surface that has the virus on it. Due to this type of transmission, those living in shelters or on the street face increased risk of being exposed.

Included with this letter are screening tools for outreach and shelter providers as well as response workflows that can help with decision-making following the screenings. A separate public health infographic will be laminated and posted at known locations where groups may be sleeping outdoors. Developed in partnership with the Marion County Public Health Department (MCPHD) and our Continuum of Care’s HUD COVID 19 Technical Assistance Advisor, this information will change as the environment changes in hopes of further containing community spread of the virus.

There is more we can do to stay safe. We’re working closely with many of you on several crisis response measures, including:

- Placing a supply order focused on personal protective equipment and disinfectant
- Locating portable handwashing stations at several key downtown locations (Monument Circle, Georgia St., City Market, Wheeler Men’s, Central Library, Cathedral Kitchen, Central Christian, Roberts Park CC, University Park, Cultural Trail)
- Working with the Marion County Public Health Department (MCPHD), Indiana State Department of Health and FSSA to isolate and safely quarantine non-critical COVID-19 medical referrals
- Assisting the MCPHD to set up and staff additional facilities for potential use by members of the community who are at high risk because of the COVID-19 outbreak or who are experiencing illness that doesn’t rise to the need for isolation, quarantine, or hospitalization
- Accommodating the need for overflow shelter space in city facilities, hotels, and for the continued use of winter contingency protocols in partnership with the MCPHD
- Arranging for daily food service, delivered by PBSO to our neighbors sleeping outside and in encampment
- Coordinating a weekly call with homeless service providers and regularly updating the CoC Facebook page to provide clear, frequent communication.
**Agencies should track the time and resources spent to address the COVID-19 crisis in effort to ensure eligibility and access to federal emergency relief funds, if available.** We anticipate further federal guidance regarding the potential allocation and use of CDBG, ESG, and HOPWA funds for emergency needs.

The days ahead will challenge us, but our community is strong because we work together. Clear, real-time communication will be vital. Please don’t hesitate to reach out directly to Chelsea Haring-Cozzi ([charing-cozzi@chipindy.org](mailto:charing-cozzi@chipindy.org)), Rodney Stockment ([Rodney.Stockment@indy.gov](mailto:Rodney.Stockment@indy.gov)), Matt Giffin ([Matt.Giffin@indy.gov](mailto:Matt.Giffin@indy.gov)), and me ([Jeff.Bennett@indy.gov](mailto:Jeff.Bennett@indy.gov)) when you need to. Please copy all of us on your communication.

Thank you for your tireless work.

Sincerely,

Jeff Bennett
Dr. Virginia Caine
Rev. David Greene
Blueprint Executive Committee

---

**Additional Resources**
City of Indianapolis: [indy.gov/topic/covid](http://indy.gov/topic/covid)


