

HOME VISITS DURING AND AFTER A PANDEMIC

Communities will want to continue supporting Housing First participants to retain their housing during COVID-19 and in pandemic recovery. Housing First participants will likely need this support more than ever given changes to community services, requirements for physical distancing and isolation, and the mental health challenges this presents. Home/support visits and connections will require creative approaches in order to keep everyone safe.

See the Government of Canada's [companion document](#) on how the Homeless Individuals and Families Information System (HIFIS) can support Home Visits during an outbreak.

Tips for Conducting Home Visits During Response and Recovery

- **Increase Contact:** Wherever possible, increase contact during this time, such as contacting a participant on a weekly basis or more frequently for those that may need increased communication. Plan to connect with participants at consistent days and times.
- **Connect Virtually or By Phone:** Choose a method based on what is most convenient for the participant.
 - Consider providing tenants with access to Wi-Fi and a smart phone or tablet to make web-based communications and text messaging possible.
 - Provide virtual support through a variety of applications, such as Skype, Zoom, Facetime, Google Hangouts, WhatsApp, or Instagram video calling. Text messaging clients can also go a long way.
 - Phone support – [Check out some great examples from Spain](#).
 - TELUS has offered some communities free phones to remove communication barriers.
- **Continue communication through other means:** Possibly due to lack of minutes or lack of internet/phone lines, communication can still be accomplished via:
 - Typed notes that can be placed into a Ziplock bag, wiped down and visible through the plastic, and passed under a doorway.
 - Small dry-erase boards that can be left for both participant and worker.
 - Weather permitting, standing outside while being mindful of appropriate [physical distancing](#) guidelines and other health measures or orders that are in effect at the time. Demonstrate physical distancing by using tape on the floor outside of a unit, and intentionally lay out how you will interact with the person, and when you can be expected at the unit. This may help participants to 'see' physical distancing practices in action to inform their other interactions.
 - Check out [CAEH's COVID-19 Resource on PPE](#) for considerations and resources on when staff and clients should use PPE and how to properly don and remove PPE such as masks and gloves.
- **Calls should cover:** How the participant is dealing emotionally with the situation; a standard Home Visit checklist (see below); and follow-ups on any other areas of concern.
- **Always end a home visit by scheduling the next one.**

- **Home Visit Checklists:** Create home visit checklists that can be dropped off, completed, and made available for pick up later. Alternatively, create online checklists that participants can complete electronically. Here are some pieces to include a checklist:
 - Food security
 - Rent payment or the creation of an honest monthly budget tool
 - Home maintenance/cleanliness. See [Public Health Canada’s Guide on Cleaning and Disinfecting](#) and CAEH’s COVID-19 Resource on [Promoting Healthy Practices](#) for more information.
 - Guest management or a plan for guests that adheres to physical distancing measures
 - Physical and mental health supports – Ensure clients have phone numbers or online access to available supports in your community
 - Medications
 - Linen and mattress conditions
 - Issues or interactions with neighbours
 - Substance use
- **Other Support Areas and Ideas:**
 - Work with participants on how to access food/grocery delivery or pick up services
 - Use this as opportunity to connect participants with family and natural supports
 - [Encourage Meaningful Activities](#) (reading, physical exercise, cooking new dishes)
 - [Teach mindfulness exercises](#)
 - [Discuss harm reduction strategies](#)
- **Self-Isolation Problem-Solving:** If a participant needs to self-isolate, complete an inventory with them about what things need to be handled to ensure that they self-isolate and remain housed.
- **Transportation:** Consider alternatives to transporting clients in your own vehicle such as a designated transport service or van that has been repurposed as part of your community’s response. Provide bus tickets, taxi chits, or vouchers for trips to essential services.
- **Landlord Connection** – connect regularly with landlords to identify any concerns or things that are going well and to update them. Be proactive and connect on a consistent basis.
 - Encourage landlords to establish virtual ways to communicate with participants.
 - Ensure that safe methods for handling problems or challenges are established including prioritization of tenancy issues.
 - Be aware of special COVID-19 pandemic supports for tenants and landlords – see [CAEH’s COVID-19 Resource on Eviction Prevention](#) for further information.

Disclaimer: This document is a collection of resources and/or ideas compiled by the team at CAEH. Please follow [Public Health Agency of Canada guidelines on COVID-19](#) as the primary resource for all health-related concerns.

CAEH will continue to update this resource as new information or ideas become available. Please refer to the CNH3 website Resources page at cnh3.ca/resources for additional information. If you have an idea or resource to share or are seeking further support, please contact us at info@caeh.ca.