



Preventing the Spread of COVID-19 in Homelessness Service Settings

What is COVID-19

- COVID-19 is the disease caused by the 2019 novel coronavirus
- Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses that can cause illness ranging from the common cold to more serious respiratory infections
- It is estimated that 80% of people infected with COVID-19 have mild to moderate respiratory symptoms
- People over 70 years of age and immunocompromised individuals are at the highest risk for developing severe disease

The Basics: How COVID-19 is Spread and How to Protect Yourself

From person to person via respiratory droplets

- Maintain a distance of 2 metres between all individuals when possible, especially those who are symptomatic

From person to person via prolonged personal contact, such as touching

- Maintain a distance of 2 metres between all individuals when possible, especially those who are symptomatic
- Maintain proper hand hygiene

From touching a contaminated object, then touching your mouth, nose or eyes

- Maintain proper hand hygiene
- Limit hand-to-face contact

In Depth: How to Protect Yourself from COVID-19

To prevent and control the transmission of microorganisms we must focus on the following principles:

1. Risk Assessment
2. Hand Hygiene
3. Use of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)
4. Control of the Environment
5. Administrative Controls

Risk Assessment

- Keep in mind that COVID-19 is spread through droplets from person-to-person and contact with contaminated objects
- Perform a risk assessment before each client interaction:
 - What you will be doing, is there a risk of exposure to the COVID-19 virus?
 - Does the client have symptoms of a respiratory infection?
 - What kind of contact/interaction will you be having with the client?
 - Is there a way to maintain a 2 metre distance with the client during the interaction?
 - Is there a way to avoid contaminating your hands during the interaction?

Hand Hygiene

- Hand hygiene, when done properly, is an effective way to prevent the spread of the COVID-19 virus
- The COVID-19 virus can cause infection when contaminated hands come into contact with the mouth, nose and eyes
- Hand hygiene should be promoted between both staff and clients
- When to perform hand hygiene:
 - Before touching your face
 - Before preparing, handling, serving and eating food
 - After using the washroom
 - After contact with body substances, mucous membranes of the eyes, nose and mouth and non-intact skin
 - Before putting on and taking off PPE
 - Before and after client contact
 - After touching 'regularly touched' items such as door knobs, toilets and sink taps
 - Whenever there is a chance that your hands may have been contaminated!
- Two ways to perform hand hygiene:
 - Handwashing
 - When hands are visibly soiled or feel sticky
 - Use liquid hand soap and warm running water
 - Lather hands covering all surfaces for 20 seconds including between fingers, tips of fingers and back of hands
 - Rinse with warm running water
 - Dry your hands with a paper towel or a hand dryer
 - Refer to 'handwashing' poster
 - Alcohol Based Hand Rub (Hand Sanitizers)
 - Minimum concentration of alcohol should be 60%
 - When hands are not visibly soiled
 - Rub into hands covering all surfaces including between fingers, tips of fingers and back of hands
 - Rub into hands for a minimum of 20 seconds or until dry
 - Refer to 'how to use hand rub' poster

Use Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

- Deciding to use PPE is based on your risk assessment of the situation
 - **Ask yourself: What you will be doing, is there a risk of exposure to the COVID-19 virus?**
- PPE should not be worn when it is not needed
- Social distancing at 2 metres and proper hand hygiene will be the most important way to protect yourself from the COVID-19 virus
- Improper use of PPE can create a false sense of confidence, increase chances of infection and waste supply
- Proper use of PPE is an effective part of infection prevention and control, however it is not a stand-alone method
- **Types of PPE you may be using:**
 - Gloves
 - Should be worn when hands come into contact with symptomatic clients or objects that could be contaminated
 - Should be disposable and single use only - 'one pair for one task'
 - Exercise proper hand hygiene before and after glove use
 - Refer to 'Steps to take off gloves' poster
 - Masks
 - Face masks are intended to be worn by those who are ill to protect those around them from their respiratory emissions
 - Face masks can protect the wearer from large droplets, splashes or sprays
 - It may be appropriate to wear a face mask if you are within 2 metres of an ill person who is unable to wear a face mask
 - N95 masks are different from the face masks discussed above
 - N95 masks are not required as the COVID-19 virus is spread by droplet transmission NOT airborne transmission
 - N95 masks are intended to protect healthcare personnel that are performing aerosol-generating medical procedures (AGMPs) such as intubation
 - Refer to handout on how to put on a face mask
 - Eye Protection
 - Eye protection should be used as a precaution if you are within 2 metres of an ill person exhibiting respiratory symptoms
 - Reusable eye protection should be washed and sanitized between each use
 - Eye protection can be disinfected using a low level disinfectant
 - If you need to be within 2 metres

Control of the Environment

- Set up for a minimum of 2 metres distance between client **sleeping arrangements**
- Set up for head-to-toe client sleeping arrangements
- Regular cleaning and disinfection of sleeping mats
- Regular laundering of sheets
- **Environmental cleaning/disinfecting** of regularly touched items such as toilets, sink tap handles, door knobs at least twice daily
- Commonly used low level disinfectants are effective against the COVID-19 virus
- Follow manufacturer's directions for use
- **Separation** between clients showing respiratory symptoms and clients showing no respiratory symptoms

Administrative Controls

- Do not come to work if you are experiencing respiratory symptoms (in accordance with your workplace policy)
- Have schedules for cleaning and disinfection
- Post educational infection prevention and control materials as a constant reminder to staff and clients