

MEMO

To: GTA COVID-19 Assessment Centres, Emergency Departments, Inpatient Units
CC: Toronto Public Health (TPH), Toronto Shelter Support and Housing Administration (SSHA), ICHA Clinical Site Partners, Shelter, Drop-Ins

Homelessness and COVID-19: Testing and Isolation

14 Mar 2020: PLEASE FORWARD WIDELY

Inner City Health Associates provides medical services to people experiencing homelessness across Toronto. Our goal is to manage COVID-19 in a safe, effective, adaptive, and person-centered way for people experiencing homelessness while protecting health care and shelter personnel and communities. Our approach is evolving with partners, TPH, SSHA, hospitals and others.

Our immediate concern is about processes of testing and isolation for Persons Under Investigation (PUIs) who live in a shelter or on the street. This requires careful coordination and communication between, hospital, shelter, community healthcare, and public health providers.

Should people experiencing homelessness with acute respiratory symptom be tested for COVID-19?

YES. Ontario Ministry of Health recommendations (March 12) indicate that individuals with acute respiratory illness who reside in institutions should be tested. "Institutions" include long-term care, prisons, and shelters. Questions about testing in people experiencing homelessness can be directed to Toronto Public Health.

The city-wide protocol for a person experiencing homelessness who meets criteria for isolation for COVID-19 is as follows:

DO: Contact Inner City Health Associates (ICHA) on-call through hospital locating:

T: (416) 864-5431

DO: Arrange transfer to a health care setting if isolation, food, and other basic necessities are not available at the testing site.

DO: Ensure that you have accurate and working contact information for the individual.

DON'T: Send a PUI directly to the street, shelter or drop-in for self-isolation. Such isolation cannot be carried out in these settings and will put the homeless community, shelter residents and staff at risk.

DON'T: Support or endorse any AMA (Against Medical Advice) departure. Communicate with TPH and ICHA immediately if there is risk of AMA departure or if it does occur.

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