

# County of Santa Clara

## Public Health Department



Communicable Disease Prevention & Control  
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**To: Shelter Providers**

**Subject: Mitigating Risk of COVID-19 Transmission During Inclement Weather**

Shelters continue to remain high risk settings for respiratory infections including COVID-19 and Influenza (flu). Implementation of layered prevention measures, such as vaccination, masking, and improving ventilation, has been essential in preventing or stopping outbreaks in our community. Inclement weather events pose an imminent risk to unsheltered individuals, so during such events, it may be necessary for shelter providers to temporarily expand shelter capacity to accommodate this increased need to prevent the immediate risk of death from exposure to cold temperatures.

Increasing shelter capacity might be accomplished by utilizing overflow areas (e.g. open space or common areas within shelters) for new residents, or by reducing distancing between beds. [Current Public Health guidance](#) recommends that mats/cots/beds, should be arranged so that clients lie head-to-toe relative to each other, and are distanced as feasible. During inclement weather, providers may consider temporarily decreasing this distance.

Since decreasing spacing between clients increases the risk of COVID-19 and flu transmission, it is even more essential to make sure other risk mitigation strategies are being followed within the shelter, including:

- Universal masking for all clients and staff/volunteers, regardless of vaccination status. The shelter should ensure that a supply of masks is available to distribute to anyone who arrives without one.
- Encouraging social distancing as much as space allows.
- Deliver food or stagger mealtimes to reduce crowding in shared dining areas.
- Symptom screening of staff and residents are being conducted routinely and continuously. Any shelter resident experiencing any COVID-19 symptoms, including fatigue, cough, fever/chills, etc. should immediately be separated from other residents until they can be tested, and symptoms resolve.
- Increasing filtration and ventilation with air filtering devices and by opening windows, in dormitories, halls, shared offices, bathrooms, breakrooms, dining rooms, and all common areas. During inclement weather, cracking windows/doors open even a couple inches can still be helpful in improving ventilation and preventing virus from building up in the air
- [Regular testing of shelter residents](#): Test new residents upon admission and 20% of current residents twice a week.
- Continuing to follow the current process of calling the hotline (408-278-6420) and placing residents who test positive for COVID-19 in the isolation hotel.

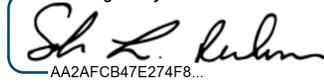
Board of Supervisors: Mike Wasserman, Cindy Chavez, Otto Lee, Susan Ellenberg, S. Joseph Simitian

County Executive: Jeffrey V. Smith

- Continuing to promote vaccines and boosters against COVID-19 and flu to prevent future outbreaks.

It should be noted that increasing bed capacity is likely to be a temporary measure for inclement weather events, and public health may change this recommendation in the future when the risk of COVID-19 transmission increases. For any questions regarding current Public Health recommendations for shelters, please reach out to [community@phd.sccgov.org](mailto:community@phd.sccgov.org). For questions regarding flu or to report a flu outbreak, please call (408) 885-4214 option 3.

In Partnership,

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12/15/2022

Deputy Health Officer