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DEPARTMENT OF
HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
Division of Public and Behavioral Health
Helping people. It's who we are and what we do.



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Coronavirus and Vulnerable Groups: Homeless Nevadans

Background

The international community is experiencing an expanding outbreak of respiratory illness caused by a novel coronavirus (COVID-19). The virus is spreading from person-to-person, and cases have been detected in several countries internationally and the United States.

As new information emerges, please remind your community, the risk of novel coronavirus is not connected with race, ethnicity or nationality. Stigma will not help to fight this illness. Sharing accurate information during a time of heightened concern is one of the best things we can do to keep rumors and misinformation from spreading.

What are coronaviruses?

Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses. They usually cause mild respiratory illnesses, such as the common cold. Some coronaviruses have caused more severe illness, such as severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) and Middle East respiratory syndrome (MERS). COVID-19 is a new coronavirus that had not been seen in humans before December 2019.

How does the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) infection spread?

Experts believe the COVID-19 primarily spreads when an infected person coughs or sneezes. Droplets from a cough or sneeze can travel approximately six feet. Another person can become infected if these droplets enter their mouth, nose, or eyes directly or through contaminated hands. An infected person who coughs or sneezes into their hands and touches surfaces such as phones, tables, door handles, or toys can contaminate them. While some coronaviruses can be spread to others through contaminated surfaces, coronaviruses generally do not survive on surfaces for a prolonged period of time. It takes 2 to 14 days after a person gets the virus in their body to become ill.

We serve our community members who are homeless, how can we help prevent COVID-19?

You can help our community reduce their risk for getting and spreading viral respiratory infections, including the flu and the common cold, by following the simple steps below.

- Wash hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.
- Avoid touching eyes, nose, or mouth with unwashed hands.
- Avoid contact with people who are sick.
- Stay home while sick and avoid close contact with others.

- Cover mouth and nose with a tissue when coughing or sneezing, then throw the tissue in the trash and wash hands.
- As our homeless communities may have less access to hygiene products, be sure to have supplies onsite or when you do outreach events.
- Utilize a screening tool to assess symptoms and refer clients to medical care if they are exhibiting signs of respiratory illness.
- In a shelter or in-door setting, separate those who are exhibiting signs of illness from those who are not.

How should I clean the shelter or in-door setting?

- Disinfecting is the responsibility of the facility staff. They are trained to use disinfectants in a safe and effective manner and to clean up potentially infectious materials and body fluid spills – blood, vomit, feces, and urine.
- On a daily basis, clean hard surfaces (desks, tables, countertops, sinks) and clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces (door handles, faucets, railings), bathrooms, and rooms where services may be provided. Use alcohol wipes to clean keyboards.
- Clean surfaces with fragrance-free soap. Thorough cleaning with soap and water will remove most microorganisms.
- Use EPA-safe disinfectants registered for COVID-19 on hard surfaces. Clean the surface first to remove all organic matter. Apply the proper concentration of disinfectant and allow the required wet contact time. Pay close attention to hazard warnings and instructions for using personal protective items, such as gloves and eye protection. Use disinfectants in a sufficiently ventilated space.

Where can I turn for more information?

- [The CDC's Guidance for Administrators of US Childcare Programs and K-12 Schools](#)
- [Nevada's Response to the 2019 Novel Coronavirus](#)
- [2019 Novel Coronavirus, Wuhan, China \(CDC\)](#)
- [Guidance for Travelers \(CDC\)](#)

Public Health Agencies in Nevada:

- Nevada Division of Public & Behavioral Health: (775) 684-5911 (M-F 8:00 AM to 5:00 PM), (775) 400-0333 (after hours).
- In Clark County, contact the Southern Nevada Health District: (702) 759-1300 (24 hours).
- In Washoe County, contact the Washoe County Health District: (775) 328-2447 (24 hours).
- In Carson City and Douglas, and Lyon counties contact the Carson City Health and Human Services: (775) 887-2190 (24 hours).

As with any newly emerging infectious disease, knowledge evolves with time. It is difficult to know the ways the disease spreads, how effectively it spreads from person to person, and how severe the infection is. We will continue to update the Novel Coronavirus Outbreak website as more information becomes available.

Other Resources:

- National Alliance to End Homeless: <https://endhomelessness.org/coronavirus-and-homelessness/>