



## COVID-19 Screening and Testing Protocol for Family Shelters

Last Updated: 3/24/2020

### Protocol Overview:

In order to maintain a safe environment for clients and staff, family shelter staff will screen clients staying at or entering the shelter for risk of COVID-19, also known as the Coronavirus. If clients are deemed to be at risk of having COVID-19 after initial screening, shelter staff will arrange for those clients to get appropriate care based on guidance from the District Department of Health (DC Health). The purpose of this document is to provide instructions for shelter staff on how to enact this policy.

This screening protocol is a NON-MEDICAL screening, meaning staff are not being asked to do a medical evaluation, such as take a client's temperature. Note that the document is subject to change.

### Who does this protocol apply to?

This policy applies to all emergency shelter facilities for families experiencing homelessness.

### Who should be screened?

- Everyone that comes in the building. This includes – but is not limited to – clients, vendors, visitors, and staff.

### Where should screening occur?

#### At intake (for new clients):

Shelter staff should conduct screening of newly placed clients outdoors before the client goes inside. The staff asking the screening questions should follow federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) social distancing guidelines and try to remain six feet away from the client (known as “social distancing”) while asking screening questions.

#### In shelter (for existing clients):

Shelter staff should use discretion on how to set up a process for screening clients currently in the shelter. Shelter staff doing the screening and clients waiting to be screened should practice social distancing to the extent possible following CDC guidance. Options may include setting appointment times and using cafeteria space to conduct screenings at different tables.

### How often should screening occur?



All clients entering the shelter for the first time or after leaving the premises and returning should be screened before entering the shelter.

Screening of clients remaining on the premises should happen every seven days OR if a client newly exhibits or expresses they have symptoms (e.g. coughing, fever, shortness of breath).

### **What are the screening questions?**

Please see the attached script. The screening will determine whether a client is at high risk of having COVID-19.

### **What happens if someone is determined to be at high risk of having COVID-19 after screening?**

Shelter staff should first determine if the person has sought medical care for known COVID-19 symptoms (fever, cough, shortness of breath) the past 14 days and whether they received instructions to remain isolated or to “self-quarantine.”

Anyone who has been asked to self-isolate or self-quarantine by a medical provider while COVID-19 test results are pending should be moved to a unit with a private bathroom to self-quarantine. If the shelter does not have a unit available, please contact DHS for assistance identifying a temporary quarantine location.

If the client has not sought medical care, shelter staff should connect the person to medical care. If medical care is needed after 10pm, call 911 to arrange transportation to the hospital for medical care.

### **What happens if someone refuses to answer screening questions?**

If they are not showing symptoms, allow the person into shelter with additional guidance on proper hygiene and sanitation protocols according to current [CDC protocols](#).

If they are showing symptoms [persistent cough, signs of fever, chills, and shortness of breath], the client should not be allowed to enter the shelter. In the absence of on-site medical care, staff should call 911 and seek medical care for that client showing symptoms.

### **What happens if someone is waiting for COVID-19 test results?**

Clients that have been tested for COVID-19 and are awaiting test results will return to family shelter to self-quarantine until negative status is confirmed. If families are currently sharing bathrooms, they should be transferred to a unit with a private bathroom – and meals should be delivered to their room. If the shelter does not have a unit available, please contact DHS for assistance identifying a temporary self-quarantine location. During self-quarantine all members of the household awaiting



test results should take precautions to protect themselves and others at the facility, including wearing a mask.

**Should children remain in shelter with their parent while the parent is waiting for COVID-19 test results?**

If the child is able to stay safely with another family member or friend during this time, the child should go there. If not, the child should stay with their guardian and take precautions to protect themselves, including wearing a mask (if available).

**What happens if someone receives a positive test result for COVID-19?**

Clients that test positive for COVID-19 will be transported to a temporary location where the District is providing isolated quarantine. They can be monitored and receive medical attention as needed. DC Health will contact the shelter provider and DHS with further instructions if a client staying in shelter tests positive for COVID-19.

**Where can I turn if I have additional questions?**

For questions or additional information, please email [dhs.covid19@dc.gov](mailto:dhs.covid19@dc.gov).



## DHS Shelter Screening Tool

**Instructions:** The questions in **BOLD** are the questions shelter staff should ask the client. The items in *ITALICS* are follow up actions to take.

### Screening Script:

**“Hi, for your safety and protection, we are taking extra precautions around the outbreak of the coronavirus, also called COVID 19. I need to ask you a couple of questions. It should only take a few minutes.”**

1. Are you currently experiencing cough, fever, and shortness of breath?
  - a. *If no → Allow the person into the shelter or stay in shelter.*
  - b. *If yes → CONTINUE SCREENING. Proceed to question #2*
2. Have you seen a doctor or gotten treatment for these symptoms in the past 14 days?
  - a. *If no → ASK: “Can we connect you with a healthcare professional to seek treatment for your symptoms? We want to take every precaution to keep you safe.”*
    - i. *If yes → Call the FEMS operations center at 202-373-3712 to arrange transport to a healthcare professional. If after 10pm, call 911 to arrange transport to the emergency room for a health evaluation.*
    - ii. *If no → call 911 or connect to on-site medical services and say: “For the safety of other clients, we are not able to allow you into the shelter.”*
  - b. *If yes → CONTINUE SCREENING. Proceed to question #3.*
3. **“Did the doctor or health care facility test you for COVID-19 and give you any guidance that you should stay isolated or “self-quarantine”? Did they give you any paperwork that you can share with me?”**
  - a. *If yes → say: “For people who have been asked to isolate, we have a safe, alternate place for you to stay for the next 14 days. We will arrange transportation for you to the site. Someone will meet you at the site to give you more information.”*
    1. *Call the FEMS Operations Center at 202-373-3712 to arrange transportation.*
  - b. *If no → allow into the shelter.*