How Homeless Services Have Been Impacted in the Emergent COVID-19 Period

Wednesday, May 20, 2020
1:00 PM EST
# Today’s Agenda

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Current U.S. Situation

COVID-19 Dashboard by the Center for Systems Science and Engineering (CSSE) at Johns Hopkins University

Total Confirmed: 1,529,785

Confirmed Cases by Country/Region/Sovereignty:
- US: 1,529,785
- Russia: 308,705
- Brazil: 271,885
- United Kingdom: 250,138
- Spain: 232,037

91,983 US deaths

Wednesday, May 20, 2020
Web Series Overview

1. How Homeless Services have been Impacted in the Emergent COVID-19 Period

2. How to Proceed after the Emergent Period to Maintain Safety and Advance Services

Stages of Response

**Emergent**

**Period**
- Feb./March to now?

**Actions**
- Change of practices (outreach, sheltering)
- Emergency sheltering (congregate, hotels)
- Staffing impact
- Client Needs

**Intermediate**

**Period**
- Decline or Flat Incidence
- Surge of needs during 2nd, 3rd wave
- Prolonged period of uncertainty

**Actions**
- Prolong expanded shelter capacity
- Testing
- Prevention
- Engaging and Case Planning with Clients

**Longer**

**Period**
- Vaccine—at least 18m
- Treatment, partially effective for severe illness, <18m

**Actions**
- Using the COVID-19 crisis as an opportunity for permanency
- Setting priorities
- Long term changes in service delivery
- Measure Impact
Six Things To Think About

1. Adjusting time horizons
2. Have a plan for testing
3. Life on the streets
4. Start thinking about permanency
5. Prevent a new surge in homelessness
6. Protect victims of domestic abuse
Jason Johnson
Seattle/King County

Director, Human Services Department
Jason.Johnson@seattle.gov
Three simultaneous strategies to slow the spread

- Reinforce the Existing Shelter System to maximize Community Mitigation—Keep more people healthy in the first place.
- Create an Isolation & Quarantine System for pre/post Outbreak Containment
- Create an Emergency Congregate System for the Outbreak
Shelter Reinforcement primarily in Seattle Area & Eastside

1. Reinforce & De-intensify Existing Shelters

We are taking steps to keep existing shelters able to keep people healthy and to remain operating

- Issuing Shelter, Day Center, PSH PH Guidance:
- Centralized, Bulk Cleaning Supplies with online ordering
- Motel Voucher Program (De-intensification)
- Vulnerable Shelter De-intensification
  - DESC Main to Seattle Center
  - St. Martin de Porres to King County Airport and hotels
  - More shelter deintensification is ongoing
- Creating new homeless shelter beds and tiny house villages (Seattle)
- Day Center Cleaning Contract to centralize cleaning for high-traffic facilities and allow day center staff to focus on clients
- FAST Teams to provide onsite technical assistance for shelters and day centers

Subject to Change based on Conditions
1. Reinforce & De-intensify Existing Shelters

2. Create Isolation & Quarantine System for people who cannot be at home or people w/o a home

1. Central Motel (Kent)
   - I/Q for up to 79 people
   - Prioritizing guests who are likely to succeed in I/Q given level of services available onsite

2. Aurora (Seattle)
   - I/Q for up to 23 people

3. Issaquah Motel (Issaquah)
   - I/Q for up to 99 people
   - Possible use as medical step-down or cohort isolation, seeking private medical operator

4. Top Hat (White Center)
   - I/Q for up to 31 people
   - Prioritizing guests who are likely to succeed in I/Q given level of services available onsite

Still Seeking a secure BH-focused I/Q
   - No confirmed site

5. Harborview Hall (Seattle)
   - I/Q for up to 45 people w/ Medical Nexus
   - Would be operated by Harborview Hospital

Subject to Change based on Conditions
Shelter Reinforcement primarily in Seattle Area & Eastside

Subject to Change based on Conditions

1. Reinforce & De-intensify Existing Shelters

2. Create Isolation & Quarantine System for people who cannot be at home or people w/o a home

3. Create Congregate Assessment & Recovery Centers (AC/RC) for shorter-term, emergency mass care to reduce hospital overcrowding

Eastgate AC/RC (Bellevue)
- Congregate Assessment & Recovery for up to 140 people (initial), possible future expansion to 200 people

Interbay (Seattle)
- Recovery only for up to 72 people
- Currently being used as redistribution shelter for 50 people

SoDo (Seattle)
- Congregate Assessment & Recovery for up to 400

Shoreline (Shoreline)
- Congregate Assessment & Recovery for up to 140

South County AC/RC (TBD) NET TBD
- Working to confirm feasibility on a south-County AC/RC site for up to 400 people
Outreach - Navigation Team

Since the COVID-19 Outbreak, The Navigation Team has

- Conducted 6,600 site visits
- Distributed 3,414 public health flyers
- Distributed 1,663 hygiene kits
- Made contact with 2,738 persons

- Public health info
- Hygiene kits
- 7-day/week service on outreach and litter removal routes

Suspended encampment removal operations with exceptions:

- Living structures completely blocking entire sidewalk
- Living structures prohibiting safe entry and exit from building or use of facility
- A public health or safety danger to occupants and/or greater area

Human Services Department

City of Seattle
Hygiene

- Leadership by SPU, and in partnership with Seattle Center, FAS, HSD and Parks
- Accelerate opening of winterized parks comfort stations
- Open temporary hygiene locations with porta-potties and handwashing stations
- Increase access to public libraries
- Open staffed mobile shower and bathroom trailers
Brief Q&A
Jeff Kositsky
San Francisco
Director, Department of Emergency Management
Context

- In July 2016, San Francisco had over 1,000 tents/structures and over 30 large encampments.
- Since July of 2016, San Francisco sheltered over 35,000 people, ended homelessness for nearly 7,000 households and prevented homelessness for approximately 5,000 households.
- The City expanded proven programs during this period, adding over 2,500 housing exits and 900 shelter beds.
- HSOC was formed in 2018 to address street homelessness.
- As a result of this work, in April 2019 there were 381 tents/structures with less than 10 large encampments.
- While homelessness in San Francisco increased 18% from 2015-2019, it increased by 31% in California – reversing ten years of underperformance by the City.
- Since the beginning of the pandemic, San Francisco has seen a significant loss in service capacity, including the loss of over 1,400 shelter beds, and an increase in newly homeless unsheltered individuals. Further, the City stopped enforcing no lodging laws.
- As a result, there were 1,108 tents/structures in April 2020 and over 40 large encampments – essentially reversing 3.5 years of work in six week.
- However, the rate of infection and death remains relatively low in the housed and unhoused populations.
Coordination

• Initial response was chaotic and too slow.

• After about 2 weeks, the City stood up the EOC at the convention center.

• All homelessness operations are now run by three groups are working at the EOC

• **Main issues** have been chain of command and getting clear policy guidelines from DPH; it would have been beneficial to appoint a ‘czar’ to work on homelessness.

• **Main successes** have been fast (two week) implementation of programs such as the SSV.

• While resources are not yet an issues, they are being paid for with ‘monopoly money.’
Outreach

• 80 homeless outreach workers.
• 25 police officers that work with HSOC.
• 20 sanitation workers that work with HSOC.
• 5 nonprofit organizations that do limited outreach.
• Focus has shifted to education, health assessments, maintaining encampments.
• Outreach workers also identifying and arranging transport for SIP clients.
• No additional staff added or planned; after an initial drop-off the situation is stable.
• No known spread among these employees.
• City to begin contracting with BID’s for specific neighborhood projects.
Shelters

• Number of shelter beds lost due to decompression:
  • The shelter system capacity has lost 40% of it’s capacity because of social distancing requirements (over 1,400 beds).
  • Shelter intake is paused to better support sheltering in place at the shelters and navigation center.

• Number of shelter beds repurposed:
  • 540 adult shelter beds have been or will be converted to post-COVID shelter beds in the next few weeks.
  • 186 shelter beds will be converted to a COVID+ shelter.

• Number of congregate shelter beds added or planned:
  • The City is exploring protocols to expand congregate shelter – this has been the primary challenge with expansion.
  • To date we have added 2 new congregate shelter post-COVID shelter sites.
Hotels

- The City opened five hotels with I&Q units with over 1,000 units.
- The City then opened over 1,000/RV parks to decompress the shelters.
- For asymptomatic persons experiencing homelessness, the City is actively developing SIP sites to ensure the most vulnerable have safe spaces to shelter in place for the duration of the emergency.
- Front-line workers may access SIP hotel sites for a two-week respite period, thus ensuring a regular flow into and out of the sites designated for this purpose.
- The goal is to open a total of 7,000 hotel units.
- Challenges have been primarily with identifying and training staff.
Safe Sleeping Villages

• During COVID-19, social distancing practices and protocols for protecting vulnerable individuals has led to a reduction in the availability of shelter spaces in San Francisco.

• People experiencing homelessness began setting up unofficial tent encampments in several neighborhoods, overwhelming the capacity for city agencies to respond.

• The Safe Sleeping Village model is an ‘outdoor shelter’ that provides services while maintaining neighborhood quality of life. We plan to open 10-20 of these sites.
  • Capacity for 50-60 tents
  • Designated spaces (144 square feet each)
  • 12-foot rows between spaces
  • Bathrooms, handwashing, showers (on or off site)
  • Access to food and water
  • Storage and areas for socially-distanced conversations
  • 24/7 site monitors
Housing

Changes to Department of Homelessness and Supportive Housing operations:

1. Coordinated Entry: HSH is still conducting housing assessments and is working to ensure that people placed in hotels and safe sleeping site are assessed for housing. There has been no major slow down or expansion.

2. PSH Placements: HSH is using the COVID crisis to expedite the housing placement process. Vacancy rates are down but there has been no expansion.

3. Problem Solving: HSH has made additional Problem-Solving resources available to help meet the growing demand on the system of care.

4. Rapid Rehousing: HSH and its partners continue to place people into rapid rehousing with no major slowdowns.

5. Homeward Bound: This program, which made up nearly half of all housing placements, has effectively been closed.
Next Steps

- The City is continuing to open hotels (2-4k more) this summer.
- Currently making hyper-local neighborhood plans to address homelessness.
- Working on a testing plan for unsheltered population in June.
- Opening 2 new Safe Sleeping Village this month and possibly an I&Q site.
- Developing longer term plans for:
  - Shelter expansion
  - Hotel acquisition
  - PSH expansion
  - Re-tooling coordinated entry.
Q&A Discussion
Closing & Feedback
Thank you for attending.

Please take a moment and complete a brief feedback poll.