

# Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19)

## San Bernardino County Department of Behavioral Health Guide for Residential Substance Use Disorder Treatment

The San Bernardino County Department of Behavioral Health is asking for your assistance to slow the spread of the novel (new) coronavirus in San Bernardino County. Globally, there continues to be a growing number of people infected with this virus which causes “coronavirus disease 2019” (abbreviated COVID-19). According to the World Health Organization, the worldwide spread of COVID-19 now qualifies as a pandemic. We need to work together to slow the spread of this infection locally.

We strongly recommend that all organizations review and update their emergency plans and consider ways to continue essential services if onsite operations must be reduced temporarily. We are particularly concerned about how a case of COVID-19 in a residential substance use disorder treatment settings (including substance use disorder treatment and sober living environments) such as yours might lead to the rapid spread of disease. We would like to provide you with some general information about COVID-19, as well as specific actions you should take to help slow the spread of respiratory infections, including COVID-19.

We encourage you to visit the CDC website for Interim Guidance for Businesses and Employers (<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/guidance-business-response.html>). Additional information can be found on the CDPH website on Novel Coronavirus (<https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/Pages/Immunization/ncov2019.aspx>).

### **Background Information**

#### **What is novel coronavirus?**

Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses. Many of them infect animals, but some coronaviruses from animals can evolve (change) and infect humans, then spread from person-to-person. Diseases from coronaviruses in people typically cause mild to moderate illness, like the common cold. Some, like the SARS or MERS viruses, cause serious infections like pneumonia.

#### **What are common symptoms of COVID-19?**

Information to date shows this new virus causes symptoms consistent with a respiratory illness, such as cough, fever, and, in some, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing.

#### **How are coronaviruses spread?**

Like other respiratory illnesses, such as influenza, human coronaviruses most commonly spread to others from an infected person who has symptoms through:

- Droplets produced when an infected person coughs or sneezes.
- Close personal contact, such as caring for an infected person.
- Touching an object or surface with the virus on it, then touching your mouth, nose, or eyes before washing your hands.

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Do not assume that someone is at risk for novel coronavirus infection based on their race/ethnicity or country of origin.

### **What preventive measures should residential treatment centers take to prevent the spread of COVID-19?**

- Encourage and support your staff to stay home when they are sick. If they have tested positive for COVID-19, remind them to stay home and not return to work until they have been medically cleared by a healthcare provider.
- Provide alternative work assignments to reduce exposure risks for staff who are over 65, pregnant or otherwise immunocompromised whenever possible.
- Provide adequate supplies for good hygiene, including easy access to clean and functional handwashing stations, soap, paper towels, and alcohol-based hand sanitizer (especially near food areas and restrooms).
- Minimize close contact and the sharing of objects such as cups, food, and drinks.
- Routinely clean and disinfect all frequently touched surfaces and objects, such as doorknobs, bannisters, countertops, faucet handles, and phones. Use the usual cleaning agents and follow the label directions.
- Provide clients of the facility and employees with accurate information about novel coronavirus and steps they can take to protect themselves and their families.
- Post information in common areas that serve as reminders of the need for all clients, employees and volunteers to engage in personal protective actions (<http://wp.sbcounty.gov/dph/coronavirus/>).

### *Everyday personal prevention actions include:*

- Wash hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds or use alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol especially after going to the bathroom; before eating; and after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing.
- Cover coughs and sneezes with a tissue, and then dispose of the tissue and clean hands immediately. If you do not have a tissue, use your sleeve (not your hands).
- Environmental cleaning should be done with EPA-approved healthcare disinfectants consistent with recommended wet contact time. Reference: California Department of Public Health AFL for Environmental Infection Control for the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) (02/19/20)

### **What practices should we adopt or change to slow the transmission of respiratory illnesses?**

- Assess all clients at the time of admission for symptoms of fever (temperature > 100.4 °F), acute (defined as the last 14 days) cough, and acute shortness of breath. Quickly move clients who present with one or more of these symptoms into an area that is isolated from the rest of the facility.
  - Designate a separate sick room (ideally in an area with an accessible bathroom) where clients with cold and flu symptoms can be housed in a separate building, room, or designated area.
  - Beds in this area should be placed at least 6 feet apart, when possible, and positioned head-to-toe.
  - Mobile screens can be used to encourage compliance with separation areas.

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- Place clear signage outside all isolation rooms to identify it as an isolation room.
- Symptomatic clients should eat meals separate from clients without symptoms.
  - If symptomatic clients need to move through areas with clients without symptoms, they should be encouraged to perform hand hygiene, wear a surgical mask, and minimize the time in these areas.
- As much as possible, have staff exclusively assigned to work with people who are ill; avoid having the same staff providing services to clients who are ill, also providing services to clients who are asymptomatic.
- Whenever possible, staff assigned to work with people who are ill should be offered fit tested N-95 masks to reduce airborne transmission of viral particles.
- High-risk clients, defined as clients who are over the age of 65 or have a chronic medical illness (chronic lung, kidney or heart disease, diabetes or other immune compromising disease such as cancer) should be isolated separate from symptomatic clients.
- Monitor staff for fever or acute respiratory symptoms (cough, shortness of breath, runny nose) before they start work
  - Staff with mild respiratory symptoms, but no fever should put on a surgical mask when interacting with clients. Staff should be trained to use surgical masks appropriately.
- Staff should wear personal protective equipment (PPE) such as masks, gloves or gowns only in the following conditions:
  - Staff interacting with symptomatic individuals should provide a facemask to the client and put on a facemask themselves during close contact with clients.
  - If staff is providing direct clinical care to a client that would involve contact (including administering medications, performing a physical exam or procedures), they should put on a facemask, gloves, eye protection and gown.
  - Make facemasks, eye protection, gowns, and gloves, available in clinical care areas for staff performing clinical duties.
  - Ensure all employees clean their hands, including before and after contact with clients, after contact with contaminated surfaces or equipment, and after removing items such as gloves, gowns and masks.
  - Make sure tissues are available and any sink is well-stocked with soap and paper towels for hand washing.
- All group activities, including group counselling, should be replaced with one-on-one counseling maintain appropriate social distancing and to minimize close contact.
  - Group activities should be minimized and replaced with individual encounters, as much as possible including communal dining.
- Hand hygiene stations (sinks with antibacterial soap and alcohol gel products) should be readily available throughout the facility, esp. at the entrances of the facility. Make sure tissues are available and any sink is well-stocked with soap and paper towels for hand washing.
  - Ensure employees clean their hands according to CDC guidelines (<https://www.cdc.gov/handhygiene/providers/index.html>), including before and after contact

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with clients, after contact with contaminated surfaces or equipment, as well as *before* and *after* removing items such as masks, gloves and gowns.

- Educate and remind clients to perform hand hygiene throughout the day, particularly after using the restroom and prior to eating their meals.
- Remind clients and staff to avoid touching their face with their hands.
- Position a trash can near the exit inside any client rooms to make it easy for employees to discard items such as gloves, masks and gowns.
- Increased frequency of environmental cleaning should be done with EPA-approved healthcare disinfectants consistent with recommended wet contact time.
  - Reference: California Department of Public Health AFL for Environmental Infection Control for the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) (02/19/20) <https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CHCQ/LCP/CDPH%20Document%20Library/AFL-20-14.pdf>
- Ensure there are no shared utensils, cups or linens and clients are requested to wash their hands prior to eating meals.
- Encourage and remind clients without symptoms to report to staff any new symptoms, including fever, cough or shortness of breath.

**How can our facility respond if there is increased community transmission of COVID-19?** Increased community transmission of COVID-19 would indicate growing risk to the general public and that additional precautions may need to be taken to contain any local community transmission.

- Have a plan to communicate with your staff and clients. Identify and address potential language, cultural, and disability barriers associated with communicating COVID-19 information to workers and those you serve.
- Plan for worker absences. Waive requirements for a healthcare provider's note for employees who are sick with acute respiratory illness to validate their illness.
- Plan for ways to continue essential services if on-site operations are reduced temporarily.
- Post signs at facility entrance instructing visitors and clients to alert staff if they have fever, cough or shortness of breath.
- Have a plan for quickly directing people who have signs or symptoms of a respiratory infection to an area of the facility that is isolated from other parts of the facility.

### **What should we do if we need to transfer patients to the hospital?**

If you plan to transfer the client to higher level of care due to worsening respiratory status, notify emergency services that the client has an undiagnosed respiratory infection.

- If multiple clients in your facility become newly sick with fever and respiratory symptoms, notify San Bernardino Department of Public Health (800) 782-4264 as well as the CDC Emergency Operations Center (EOC) at 770-488-7100.

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### If my staff have questions I cannot answer, who may I direct their questions to?

- Residents of San Bernardino County may call the COVID-19 hotline at (909) 387-3911 from Monday through Friday, from 9 a.m. – 5 p.m. for general information and resources about the virus.

### Additional Resources

- <http://wp.sbcounty.gov/dph/coronavirus/>
- <http://wp.sbcounty.gov/dph/wp-content/uploads/sites/7/2020/03/Low-Cost-Clinic-Information.pdf>
- California Department of Public Health: <https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/Pages/Immunization/nCOV2019.aspx>
- CDC Resources for Healthcare Facilities: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/healthcarefacilities/index.html>
- CDC Healthcare Infection Prevention and Control FAQs for COVID-19: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/infection-control/infection-prevention-control-faq.html>
- CDC Coronavirus main website: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>
- CDC Healthcare Supply of Personal Protective Equipment: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/healthcare-supply-ppe.html>

If you have questions and would like to speak to someone call the San Bernardino County Information line 2-1-1 which is available 24 hours a day.