

## Public Health – Seattle & King County COVID-19 Response

### HEART (Health Engagement Action Resource Team) Site Visit Summary

**Site, Agency:** DESC Navigation Center

**Address:** Seattle

**Date:** 4/26/2021

**Type of shelter:** 24 hr. Shelter

**Site Contact:** Thomas Regan (Project Manager)

**Public Health Representatives:**

Dora Hendrickson (HEART)

Alexandra Masaitis (HEART/EH)

Marta Lema (HEART/EH)

**Pertinent information:**

- #Census/Residents currently: 36
- # residents before deintensification: 85
- Clients served: single adults and couples
- # staff: 7 (program staff: 2.5 FTE, janitorial staff: 4.5 FTE)

**Context:** DESC's Navigation Center currently serves up to 40 people and has 10 rooms available for congregate sleeping. Two rooms are reserved for isolation and quarantine at this time and only used if people are ill. The program is interested in expanding to pre-covid capacity, if possible. Public Health's HEART team was requested to conduct a site assessment to determine if the shelter can increase capacity while maintaining COVID-19 health and safety precautions (e.g., social distancing, hygiene access).

**Please note:** Any recommendations in this report are intended to support implementation of Public Health guidance to prevent and mitigate COVID-19. They are not directives or requirements. Public Health will not be monitoring or enforcing compliance.

**Strengths**

- Operation Sack Lunch prepares and serves three (3) hot meals a day
- Isolation and quarantine rooms available and near restroom
- Sharps containers available in restrooms
- Janitorial staff available between 6am-8pm, and during weekends.
- Limited chairs in communal areas to prevent overcrowding
- Wall-mounted hand sanitizer dispensers available in hallways

**Summary of top recommendations (see below for additional details):**

- Expanding capacity at this time is not recommended.
- Provide warm water, liquid hand soap, and paper towels at all hand sinks, at all times.
- Determine how many HEPA units the building can support and install them as soon as possible.

- Maintain and optimize bathroom fans, and clean exhaust vents.
- Please see recommendations below about cleaning chemical use.

## Recommendations to reduce community transmission of COVID-19:

### Ventilation

#### *Observations:*

- Windows in sleeping rooms do not open.
- Bathroom exhaust fans did not appear to be functioning. Dust build-up observed on vents.
- Building's electrical system may not support the number of air purifiers needed to adequately clean the air in occupied spaces.
  - Site Project Manager explained that DESC distributed HEPA air purifiers to the Navigation Center, from the bulk order of air units they received from Public Health.
  - Air purifiers are in storage and have not been installed.

#### *Recommendations:*

- Consult your maintenance team to confirm how many air purifiers your building's electrical system can support.
  - If possible, we strongly recommend **placing one (1) HEPA unit in each sleeping rooms, as these are higher risk spaces where clients are unmasked and eating/drinking.**
  - Additionally, consider installing one air purifier in the dining hall, computer area, entry way, and staff office(s).
  - Ask staff and residents to operate air purifiers on Turbo whenever the room is occupied by two or more people. Otherwise operate the air purifiers per the following:
    - Turbo (4 fans) ———— 190 —360 ft<sup>2</sup> room
    - High (3 fans) ———— 160 —190 ft<sup>2</sup> room
    - Medium (2 fans) ——— 120 —160 ft<sup>2</sup> room
    - Low (1 fan) ———— 0 —120 ft<sup>2</sup> room
  - Units should be placed in unobstructed areas where airflow is unrestricted.
  - If possible and if safety permits, elevate HEPA units to be 3 – 5 feet in height. This may be achieved by placing them on a table, stool, etc.
- **Conduct maintenance on all restroom exhaust fans that are not currently functioning.**
- Maximize exhaust fans for all restrooms and kitchens. This includes regular cleanings and maintenance checks.
  - The CDC's [Ventilation in Buildings](#) guidance recommends buildings allow restroom exhaust fans to operate non-stop when the building is occupied. If available, turn on kitchen exhaust fan(s) when the kitchen is occupied or in use.
  - Public Health's recently published [Indoor Air Ventilation Guide](#).
- Open windows and doors, when health and safety permit, to increase fresh air flow.
  - Allowing excess air flow is a particularly good practice during cleaning and disinfection.

- Avoid using portable fans in communal areas unless they can be facing an open window or door, to increase air exhausting (i.e., blowing out) from the building.

### Hand hygiene, mask use and social distancing

#### *Observations:*

- Several hand sanitizer and restroom soap dispensers were empty on the first floor.
- Mask use is required indoors but continues to be a challenge among residents.
- The site is set up to encourage distancing with furniture placement.

#### *Recommendations:*

- Ensure that **hand sinks are always supplied with liquid soap, paper towels and warm water** (at least 100 °F). Hand sanitizer dispensers should be stocked and fully functional.
  - **Note:** Good handwashing is far superior to using hand sanitizer.
- If possible, encourage clients to wash their hands upon entry and prior to meals.
- Continue to have staff meet with clients outside whenever possible. This is a great way to potentially reduce the transmission of COVID-19 while getting people the health benefits of enjoying the outdoors.
- Consider adding and rotating prominent, colorful signs or placard related to social distancing, hand hygiene, and mask use. Select just a few, to draw people's attention to specific information.
  - You may enjoy exploring [Amplifier's take on COVID-19 related posters for inspiration](#).
- Post maximum capacity signs in or near communal rooms and spaces, if needed.

### Sleeping rooms

#### *Observations:*

- Building provides 10 congregate sleeping rooms. Windows in sleeping rooms do not open.
- Two (2) rooms are currently reserved for isolation and quarantine (I&Q).
  - Although not regularly used, one room was occupied during time of visit, by a resident with a disability.
- I&Q rooms are in close proximity to restrooms and a shower room.
- The eight (8) occupied sleeping rooms currently house 4-5 people. Beds were adequately spaced (i.e., at least 6 ft. apart).

#### *Recommendations:*

- **We do not suggest adding more residents to the communal sleeping rooms at this time.**
  - Beds should remain spaced 6 ft. apart or more. Encourage clients to sleep head-to-toe if possible.
- Designating a space for isolation and quarantine on site is a great benefit for several reasons, and especially if someone is positive for COVID, or is showing signs, symptoms, or has recently been exposed.
  - **Continue to reserve one room** (or two rooms if needed/preferred) for isolating and quarantining people on site.

- Restrict use of one bathroom for this resident(s) and disinfect prior to making it available again to other residents. If possible, wait as long as possible (at least several hours) before conducting cleaning. For more information about cleaning when someone is ill, review [CDC's Cleaning & Disinfecting Your Facility](#).
- Install HEPA units as soon as possible.

### Isolation & Quarantine (King County)

#### *Recommendations:*

- To arrange for isolation and quarantine at a King County facility, staff and clients can call the COVID Call Center (206.477.3977).
- Ensure that all staff and clients know about this option, and have a low threshold for calling if they, or someone in the community is feeling “off.” The absence of a fever does not necessarily indicate that a person is COVID-negative.
  - When calling the Call Center, be sure to give instructions to the client to share the context of their situation, for example, if they are living homeless and/or in a congregate setting.

### Cleaning, sanitizing, and disinfecting

#### *Observations:*

- DESC contracts with Hillyard to provide sites with the “Top 10” cleaning system or disinfectant.
  - Hillyard’s QT-TB (surface disinfectant) primarily used on high touch surfaces.
- Clorox Hydrogen Peroxide Disinfectant Wipes were observed in supply room.
- Achieving additional ventilation at this site maybe a challenge. As a result, we have concerns about potential exposure among staff and clients to cleaning chemicals which may result in unintended health consequences.

#### *Recommendations:*

- **If possible, limit use of QT-TB to the bathrooms only.**
  - Use once a day (or more if needed), and when cleaning up after a bodily fluid spill (e.g., diarrhea, vomit, blood).
  - Maximize ventilation in spaces this product is used.
  - Per [Public Health’s How to Clean for Covid-19 and Hepatitis A](#), QT-TB contains more toxic ingredients compared to other products on the list, all capable of inactivating the same viruses.
- Disinfectant other high touch surfaces once a day (or more if needed) using a disinfectant registered on [EPA’s List N of approved disinfectants for COVID-19](#).
- **We strongly recommend switching to less toxic, safer ingredient disinfectants whenever possible**, such as citric acid, hydrogen peroxide, and ethyl and isopropyl-based alcohol.
- The Clorox Hydrogen Peroxide wipes are less toxic, and on [EPA’s List N](#) for products that work against COVID-19.
  - Continue to use this product on high touch surfaces
- Always read product labels for instructions, and always use chemicals as directed.

- For information about mixing a bleach solution for COVID-19, visit CDC’s guidance on [Cleaning & Disinfecting Your Facility](#).
- When surfaces are visibly dirty, scrub them clean before sanitizing or disinfecting. Unlike cleaning products, sanitizers and disinfectants do not fight through dirt and grime.
- **Do not use disinfectants in the kitchen!**
- Dishes and surfaces in the kitchen (e.g., counters, cupboards, sinks, etc.) should be **cleaned and sanitized** with products that are appropriate for food-contact surfaces (i.e., properly mixed bleach or quaternary ammonium). Read labels to verify safety of chemicals being used in the kitchen.
  - Dish soap and water are appropriate for cleaning.
  - If bleach is used to sanitize surfaces, *mix 1 teaspoon with 1 gallon of cool water*.
  - Review handout on [Cleaning, Sanitizing, and Disinfection for Food Distribution Operations](#).
- If possible, provide written instructions above toilets with lids, that remind clients to shut toilet lids before flushing. In rare instances, COVID-19 virus found in feces may become airborne when flushed.
  - Consider installing lids on all toilet seat if/when possible.
- Aim to clean and disinfect restrooms and high-touch surfaces once a day (or more depending on need).
  - High touch surfaces include commonly used door handles, tables, chairs, bathrooms fixtures, flush handles, toilet seats, surfaces in the kitchen, etc.
- Open windows and doors, when health and safety permit, before, during, and after cleaning.
- Avoid cleaning the floors and major areas when shelter occupancy is high. If possible, adjust cleaning schedule to align with the quietest and least dense period(s) of the day.
- Staff and residents engaged in cleaning should always wear proper **personal protective equipment (PPE)** during cleaning (i.e., gloves, disposable masks, eye protection, etc.)

### Animal care

#### *Observations:*

- Shelter serves guests with service animals and pets.

#### *Recommendations:*

- Ensure pets are current on their vaccinations (e.g., rabies, DHLPP (dogs), and FVRCP (cats), etc.).
  - Consider providing clients a list of pet care resources in the area.
- Review the [Pet Management section of the Sanitation and Hygiene Guide](#) for more details.
- Animal waste should be safely cleaned up right away. Surfaces contaminated with pet waste should be cleaned and disinfected.
  - Accelerated Hydrogen Peroxide products work best for disinfecting pet waste, and especially for removing odors. Veterinary specific disinfectants include ‘Rescue’ products. Or use the [EPA’s N List, and put Hydrogen Peroxide in the search](#).

## General health and safety

### *Recommendations:*

- If possible, designate a smoking area that is 25 ft. away from the entrance.
- Consider preparing an emergency drill guidebook for staff (and residents) to review.
- Place garbage bins inside sleeping rooms, if possible. Ask residents to place them outside of their rooms when full, to be collected by staff (every 1-3 days, depending on need).

## Mental health

### *Recommendations:*

- The pandemic can affect people's mental health, including cognition and memory. Posting a calendar (large, bright, happy) can help ground folks and enhance orientation.
- Loneliness, boredom and feelings of grief and loss can be exceptionally acute during this time. Consider having information about 211 and Suicide Prevention readily available.
- HEART is happy to set up and tailor any visits to talk with staff about the challenges and secondary trauma of their work.
- We encourage finding ways to acknowledge clients who are no longer with us (a memorial or photo display, for example).
- Additional resources are listed below.

### Resources:

1. [COVID-19 and People Experiencing Homelessness \(CDC\)](#)
2. [COVID-19 Resources to Support People Experiencing Homelessness \(CDC\)](#)
3. [COVID-19 Stress and Coping \(CDC\)](#)
4. [Coping with Stress During Infectious Disease Outbreaks \(Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, SAMHSA\)](#)
5. [Whole Community Approach \(Federal Emergency Management Agency\)](#)
6. [Domestic Violence Resources](#)  
(National Network to End Domestic Violence)
7. [Human Trafficking Resources](#)
8. [Child and Family Welfare Resources](#)