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**CITY OF SANTA CRUZ COVID-19 HOMELESS RESOURCES**

**Frequently Asked Questions**

**Updated April 21, 2020**

**How is the City protecting persons experiencing homelessness (PEH) from contracting COVID-19?**

The City is working closely with the County, which is the lead agency on the community’s responses to the coronavirus pandemic. The County has put into place new hygiene facilities; Homeless Outreach and Service Sites (HOSS), which are walk-up sites for health assessment, resources and educational info; increased shelter opportunities; isolation and quarantine (IQ) shelter for PEH who have been exposed to or diagnosed with coronavirus.

**What does the City plan to do if a PEH is diagnosed with, or has been exposed to, coronavirus?**

The County has secured medically supported hotels rooms for PEH who are sick with or being isolated or quarantined from coronavirus.

**Isn’t the City required to provide hotel rooms for all PEH during this time?**

No. Center for Disease Control (CDC) guidelines recommend shelter for PEH who are vulnerable to COVID -19 and/or being isolated or quarantined from exposure. The County has secured a number of hotel rooms for these purposes.

**What about Governor Newsom’s “Room Key” initiative – doesn’t it mandate that all PEH be given hotel rooms?**

No. In tandem with the CDC guidelines, the Governor’s initiative aims to protect public health by isolating the most medically vulnerable PEH, thinning out the shelter population for social distancing, slowing the rate of spread of COVID-19 and, in turn, flattening the curve. It does not mandate that hotel rooms be provided for all PEH.

**How are PEH accessing food during the County’s Shelter In Place Order (SIP)?**

The County Emergency Operations Center (EOC) is setting up a network of food providers to supply three meals a day at the alternative care sites (ACS), expanded shelter (Vets Halls), and quarantine/isolation shelter as the first phase of PEH food distribution. The program will scale-up in two additional phases; one to provide meals at current shelters, and the next for the HOSS programs and those living unsheltered in encampments.

**Where can PEH wash their hands in Santa Cruz?**

There are a number of [existing and new facilities](https://arcg.is/1n1Hr8) for handwashing.

**Where can PEH find out about all of the resources available to them during the coronavirus pandemic?**

The [County COVID-19 webpages](https://santacruzhumanservices.org/Home/COVID-19HomelessServicesInformation) have the most up-to-date information for PEH.

**Is it true that the City hired a new homelessness manager with money from the state that was intended to help homeless people during the pandemic?**

No. The recruitment for a homelessness manager was underway long before the COVID-19 outbreak. The position is paid for by City general funds and funds from the City’s enterprise accounts.

**Why isn’t the City using empty school gyms/the Civic Auditorium/empty UCSC dorms for homeless shelters at this time?**

The County is taking the lead on identifying sites for new shelter capacity to serve PEH, including those exposed or sick with COVID-19, those at increased risk of complications from the virus, and the general homeless population. There are many sites under consideration at this time including City-owned facilities. If and when the County requests a City-owned facility for shelter provision, the City stands ready to provide the site and will work with the County to leverage other sites in the community such as those owned by partner agencies, UCSC, and school districts.

**What is the City doing with all the money the state is providing to help with homelessness during this time?**

Funding from the state to help with homelessness during the coronavirus pandemic goes to counties and Continuum of Cares (COCs) which locally is administered by the County. The County of Santa Cruz has implement a number of new measures to help, such as new hygiene stations and areas where PEH can have their health assessed, increased temporary shelter capacity so that PEH living in shelters can comply with recommended social distancing, hotel rooms for PEH who are at risk for or isolating/quarantining from COVID-19.

**Are there going to be new shelters or encampments run by the City during the SIP and if so, where can the community expect to see them?**

No. The City will not be running any new shelters during the SIP order. However, new shelters run by the County may be sited within the City’s jurisdiction. Once such shelter that opened on April 3rd is located at the Santa Cruz Veteran’s Hall.

**How are local hotels being used for shelter during the crisis?**

Local hotel rooms are being utilized to support the County’s response to the COVID-19 crisis in our community. Rooms are being used to shelter homeless persons in need of medical care, isolation and quarantine. There may be a future need for rooms to shelter healthcare workers or first responders in need of quarantine; the County has not expanded its focus to these additional uses yet.  The County is in the process of developing criteria for selecting hotels to be part of the COVID-19 sheltering program.  Hotels that are interested in being considered for sheltering purposes for the homeless can contact Kimberly Finely at [Kimberly.Finely@santacruzcounty.us](mailto:Kimberly.Finely@santacruzcounty.us).  In addition, the governor released information on a [statewide program to utilize hotel rooms](http://cert1.mail-west.com/rm8Dyj8Q/8Dgtmyuzjanmc7/10tq3r71/nq8Dhe1kn7i/a3r718Dqv/thp8/yfl/pc0vbl?_c=d%7Cze7pzanwmhlzgt%7C17e3n8cugysl0pc&_ce=1586476318.c3642076f4d362440047292963f34214) for shelter. [Resources for hoteliers during the coronavirus crisis](https://calodging.com/coronavirus-information-resources) can be found on the California Hotel and Lodging Association website.

**Is it true that homeless shelters aren’t providing appropriate space for PEH to practice social distancing, encouraging an outbreak of coronavirus in local shelters?**

No. New shelter space and capacity is being added weekly to ensure that PEH who choose shelter have appropriate space to practice social distancing. In Santa Cruz that includes the recently opened Vets Hall and expanded space at the Armory. In addition, the County has located several sites in Santa Cruz where PEH can receive health assessments and rapid shelter referrals.

**What is the City/County doing about new camps that are popping up?**

The City and County are developing new Homeless Outreach and Service Sites Plus (HOSS+) to ensure that individuals in highly congested encampments are provided with an opportunity to create additional social distancing and ultimately a pathway into the new COVID-19 shelter system. Those new HOSS+ sites are currently under development and are hoped to be deployed by April 30, 2020.

**Is the City towing/what is the City doing about PEH living in cars?**

Police are citing vehicles, and towing only for unusual circumstances or if an officer deems a vehicle a hazard or nuisance. If PEH are using vehicles to shelter-in-place CDC guidelines discourage dispersing them.

**Why is a HOSS located at Depot Park?**

Homeless outreach and service sites (HOSS) are being located in areas where PEH are either living or are receiving services. Depot Park is in one of those areas. These sites are open for very limited hours (typically 2-4 per week) and provide critical resources like food and water, in addition to health assessments and shelter referral.