COVID-19 COMMUNITY RESPONSE

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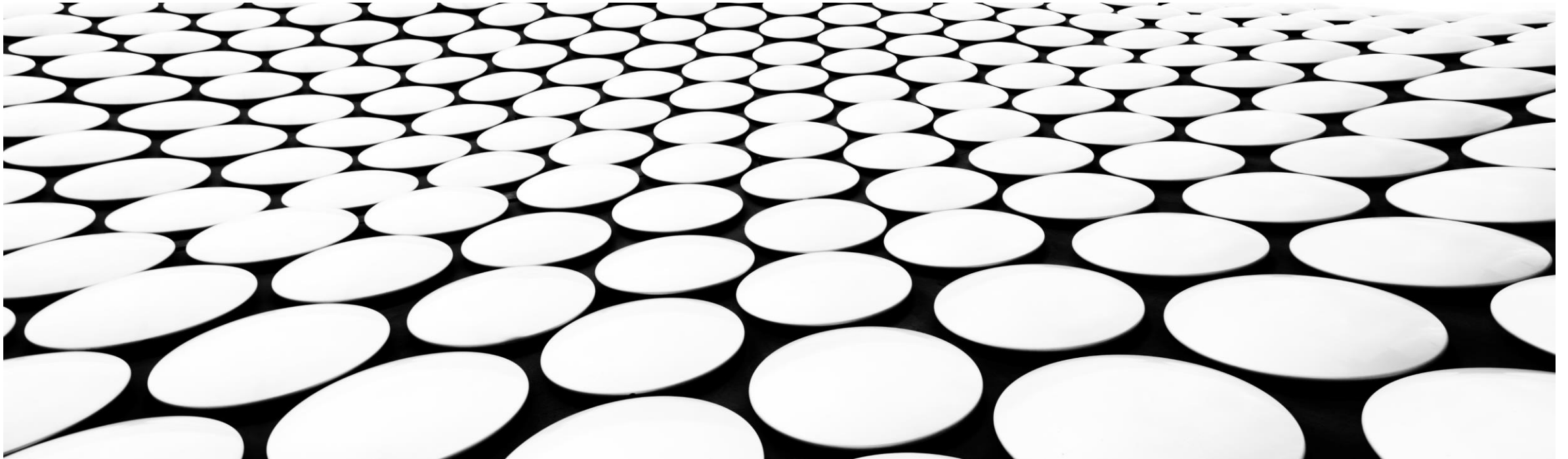
LOCAL PLANNING BODY TOOL

UPDATED 4/9/2020

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PLANNING

If not you, WHO?

If conversations about how your homeless crisis response system is responding to COVID-19 are not happening, start them now. Either identify a leader (Chair, committee lead, etc) or if no one has the capacity, volunteer to take the role yourself.

- Your time spent on this can be charged to the System Coordination funds. If your community has already spent them down, ask about requesting more.

- If you have congregate shelters in your community this planning is critical for the health and well-being of shelter residents, people seeking shelter, shelter staff and their families.

Pay for a Good Web Meeting Service! BoS will cover your costs for a year of Zoom or another service of comparable price and the Coordinator will give tutorials on how to use it.

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PLANNING POINTERS

People to have on your response planning calls:

- HARA leadership

- Housing Program leadership

- Shelter Program leadership

- Health Department representative (Find the contacts here)

- Emergency Management (Find the contacts here)

- County and Local Government representatives

- United Way and other local foundation representatives

- American Red Cross

- Food Pantry leadership

- State Partners: ESP, MSHDA, MDHHS

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PLANNING POINTERS

When you are ready, don't forget your local media:

- Find a way to reach potential landlords: "To keep America safe, everyone needs a place to isolate"

- Have coordinated asks for support needed; home furnishings, homemade masks, food donation/preparation, etc

  - Advanced Planning Note: *This could be in-kind match!*

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PLANNING POINTERS

Conversation Starters

Some questions for your Health Department and Emergency Managers to lead the conversation can be found here:

Questions to Assist CoCs and Public Health Authorities to Limit the Spread of Infectious Disease in Homeless Programs

You may also ask attendees to prepare by watching the following resources covering the Isolation and Quarantine processes implemented by King County/Seattle WA: Webinar Here and Other Materials Here

- With the head start Seattle has had in learning to slow the virus spread, we can learn a great deal through their attempts to provide isolation and quarantine for all people (not just homeless) that did not reach the level of medical care needed to enter the hospital but could not safely isolate or quarantine at home for any number of reasons.

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PLANNING POINTERS

Start with a Common Vision

If all partners can agree that you want to see people in safe places and that you also want to avoid a post Covid-19 mass exodus from extra shelter spaces, you can work on a plan to use shelter and housing in ways that make the most sense for your community.

One tool you can start from will be the example shared by Community Rebuilders, which will be presented today and saved on the website.

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SHELTERING

As a community you need to determine how to address sheltered and unsheltered homelessness in safe ways. Even if your only shelters are not publicly funded, HMIS participatory, active LPB members– the population they serve are still at high-risk of contracting and having complications from COVID-19. This means it is everyone's best interest to support the shelter by having a strong community plan for isolation and quarantine.

Note: Plan with what you have now, not with what you might get or currently need. If you don't have personal protective equipment (PPE) then do not create plans that require those items in order to work safely for all involved. Plan with safety of all people involved in mind!

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SHELTERING

- Wherever possible work to limit the number of people in congregate settings. This guidance from HUD helps to explain the different circumstances in which a community might use non-congregate shelter approaches: Non-Congregate Approaches to Sheltering for COVID-19 Homeless Response

- Seek out new partners and locations as possible shelter sites, designate separate facilities for people needing to isolate or quarantine

  - Some communities are working out deals with empty motels– the ones with outside room entrances are ideal!

  - Create plans for how people can get and keep food in these settings

- CARES Act funding will offer a much wider use than funding previously allowed, whenever possible use funding to get as close to permanent housing options as you are able

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SHELTERING: STAFF PROTECTION

Many are turning to homemade masks in the absence of available medical supplies. If you are doing this, it is imperative that anyone opting to wear them be fully aware of the limitations and act accordingly.

- Healthcare provider (HCP) use of homemade masks: In settings where facemasks are not available, HCP might use homemade masks (e.g., bandana, scarf) for care of patients with COVID-19 as a last resort. However, homemade masks are not considered PPE, since their capability to protect HCP is unknown. Caution should be exercised when considering this option. Homemade masks should ideally be used in combination with a face shield that covers the entire front (that extends to the chin or below) and sides of the face. (Centers for Disease Control)

  - On this site you can also read about how to safely remove and discard masks that have been worn.

- Please note that homemade masks cannot block small, airborne particles like those that spread COVID-19 and these aerosolized particles may remain infectious in the air. https://www.sciencenews.org/article/coronavirus-covid-19-ppe-face-mask-shortages-creative-solutions

- Don't forget that eye protection is just as critical as a mask for the mouth and nose! Gloves and gowns protect a person from transmitting the virus that can survive on their clothing.

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SHELTERING: STAFF PROTECTION

- New guidance suggests that homemade masks are most effectively as spread prevention when everyone wears them to prevent their own exhalations from spreading the virus

- In this type of use, the masks should be distributed to all people within a facility to be worn anytime people are in common areas

- Masks should be washed regularly, plan on more than one mask per person to allow for safe washing

- Still practice distancing and disinfecting; masks do not replace other safety precautions

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HOUSING

- Continue to move people into permanent housing to reduce the risk of more exposure.

- Some communities are reporting new units become available that were previously short-term rentals now that vacation travel is prohibited. Reach out to the community to offer steady monthly rent for these open units.

- Re-arrange housing search and inspection procedures to allow for virtual tours and inspections (approved in ESG)

- HUD is allowing us to request waivers to change some project operations to more quickly get people housed (HQS done virtually, less than one-year lease, not gathering disability documentation in PSH, not meeting monthly). Each CoC-funded provider must make their own waiver request to HUD, MSHDA has completed the ESG waiver request and will provide updates as available.

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HOUSING

- Move case management to phone or video call whenever possible. Explore all options to check in with participants without meeting in person

- Reassure all participants that they can reach you as needed and that their rent will continue to be paid on time

- Keep on top of all new updates to share with participants: Unemployment filing, Food pantry and SNAPS, Stimulus checks, US Census, etc.

- Practice prevention by having negotiations with landlords to prevent large judgements after eviction moratorium lifts

- Remind all Public Housing Authorities and PSH providers that they cannot evict residents at this time, but encourage them to seek out mediation to prevent large amounts of arrears from growing

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FUNDING

Funding is coming!

The CARES Act will be providing additional ESG funding to your community through MSHDA. Your MSHDA Homeless Assistance Specialist will help you in setting up your budget lines that can look quite different from your normal ESG budget. The typical budget line requirements will not apply to these funds.

FEMA Public Assistance is available for local governments in creating isolation and quarantine shelter spaces. This can help with broader community planning beyond just homeless services. Work closely with you Emergency Managers and county/city government to apply for this funding.

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RESOURCE COMPILATIONS

- [MI Balance of State Website](#): Links to updates and materials most relevant to the work in BoS communities (updated weekly at least)

- [All things COVID-19 on the Campaign to End Homelessness Website](#): Centralized state location for resources (updates are slower)

- [MCAH Compiled Resources and Information for the State of Michigan](#): HMIS and links to all the partner sites (quickly updated)

Get updates as they occur from all state partners (and ask questions)

- COVID-19 Weekly Dialog with Michigan Homeless State Partners hosted by the Michigan Coalition Against Homelessness (MCAH): [Register](#) (Wednesdays, 1 - 2 PM Eastern)

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ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Prevent virus spread:

How to clean groceries (and ways to think about all surfaces)

How to safely remove PPE

Where ask questions:

- COVID Specific: Call the COVID-19 Hotline at 888-535-6136, 7 days a week, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. or email COVID19@michigan.gov 24/7.

- Homeless Resource Specific: MDHHS-homeless@michigan.gov

- ESG specific: MSHDA-HS@michigan.gov

- HMIS specific: mihelp@mihomeless.org

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BEST WEBINARS

There are a million webinars and new ones each day. Thankfully, MCAH has created a calendar listing them all for your ease! Find it at www.mihomeless.org

The most beneficial national webinars to date have been by USICH highlighting successful models. Also, nearly all webinars are being recorded and posted on the websites of the hosting agency, and we will link to the best ones at MIBOSCOC.com/covid-19-resources.html

NAEH started their own webinar series, but the demand was greater than the number they could allow to register. Find all the recordings here: https://endhomelessness.org/resource/covid-19-webinar-series/

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