

Guidance for COVID-19 Work Exclusion: Homeless Service & Shelter Providers

11/04/2020

Introduction

This guidance is for homeless service & shelter providers, local public health, tribal health, and others who need to assess exposure to COVID-19 within a setting for people who are homeless. This guidance has been updated as we have learned more about infections among staff and their use of masks and other personal protective equipment in these settings. This guidance should not be used to assess contact with COVID-19 for health care workers.

General guidance on assessing exposure

- Exposure means having close contact with someone with COVID-19. Close contact is defined as spending a total of 15 minutes or more in any 24-hour period within about 6 feet of anyone with COVID-19. This criteria is meant to serve as a guide to identify contact that needs close evaluation. Many factors should be considered when determining whether someone has had close contact, for example:
 - The length of contact. Fifteen minutes is the general guide. However, even shorter periods of time or longer distances can result in spread of the virus.
 - The likelihood of contact with secretions (e.g., saliva or cough droplets).
 - What, if any masks, face coverings, or other personal protective equipment is worn.
- Contact time is **cumulative**. When assessing contact, add up the time over the course of a day (24 hours) that someone is within 6 feet of anyone with COVID-19.
- If the person with COVID-19 is another provider of homeless or shelter services, assess risk for both work-related and social contacts at work (e.g., contacts who may have eaten lunch or taken breaks with the person with COVID-19).
- Cloth face coverings (whether homemade or store bought) are not considered personal protective equipment and should not be used in place of an N95 or surgical masks when these are indicated.

No work exclusions

- The staff person is not identified as a close contact and there is no contact with secretions during any limited contact with someone with COVID-19.
- The staff person identified as a close contact tested positive for COVID-19 within 90 days before their close contact with someone with COVID-19.

Exclude due to close contact

- The staff member is identified as a close contact of someone with COVID-19 because in a 24-hour period they spent a total of 15 minutes or more within about 6 feet of someone with COVID-19.
 - Note: Duration of contact is cumulative. A number of short interactions throughout a day may add up to 15 minutes or more. Contact times and distance are only a guide and even shorter periods of time or longer distances can result in spread of the virus.
- Prolonged close contact has not occurred; however:
 - The staff member has direct contact with respiratory secretions from someone with COVID-19. Extensive body contact or strenuous physical interaction with someone who has COVID-19 may generate a higher concentration of respiratory secretions or aerosols; no time minimum has been established.

Work restrictions

- Exclude staff from work for 14 days after their last close contact with someone with COVID-19. Staff should self-monitor for symptoms and check their temperature twice a day during the 14 days. If symptoms develop, they should seek health care.

Exclusion and staffing resources

The Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) recommends that staff who have had close contact with someone who has had COVID-19 stay home from work for a full 14 days, counting from the date of their last close contact. People who have had close contact with COVID-19 can get symptoms anywhere from two to 14 days later. Excluding staff for 14 days keeps close contacts who go on to develop infection from spreading the disease.

If staffing shortages become a concern and having staff who are close contacts stay home is not possible, please consult with MDH. Emergency staffing resources are available for service providers for shelters for people who are homeless.

Ongoing prevention strategies

All providers of services for shelters and people who are homeless should keep in mind that working in a supervised living setting increases risks for contact with COVID-19. Ongoing use of face coverings and other personal protective equipment is critical to stopping the spread of disease. Using personal protective equipment, social distancing, and frequent hand washing are vital. All providers of services for people who are homeless should:

- Self-monitor for symptoms and leave work immediately/stay home if any symptoms of COVID-19 develop. Symptoms of COVID-19 can include fever, cough, shortness of breath, chills, headache, muscle pain, congestion, sore throat, or loss of taste or smell. Other less common symptoms include gastrointestinal symptoms like nausea, vomiting, or diarrhea.
- If you are tested because you have symptoms, you should not go to work while waiting for test results.
- If you are a close contact of someone who has COVID-19, you should stay home for 14 days, even if you have a negative test during that time period.
- Perform hand hygiene regularly. Always wash your hands with soap and water after contact with others, especially after contact with someone who has, or may have COVID-19. If soap and water are not available, use alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol.
- Use available and appropriate personal protective equipment when in close contact with a confirmed or suspected COVID-19 case.



Minnesota Department of Health | health.mn.gov | 651-201-5000
625 Robert Street North PO Box 64975, St. Paul, MN 55164-0975

Contact health.communications@state.mn.us to request an alternate format.