



# Office Hours: COVID-19 Planning and Response

July 10, 2020



# Housekeeping

- A recording of today's session, along with the slide deck and a copy of the Chat and Q&A content will be posted to the HUD Exchange within 2-3 business days
- Event information for upcoming Office Hours, along with copies of all materials can be found here:

<https://www.hudexchange.info/homelessness-assistance/diseases/#covid-19-webinars-and-office-hours>

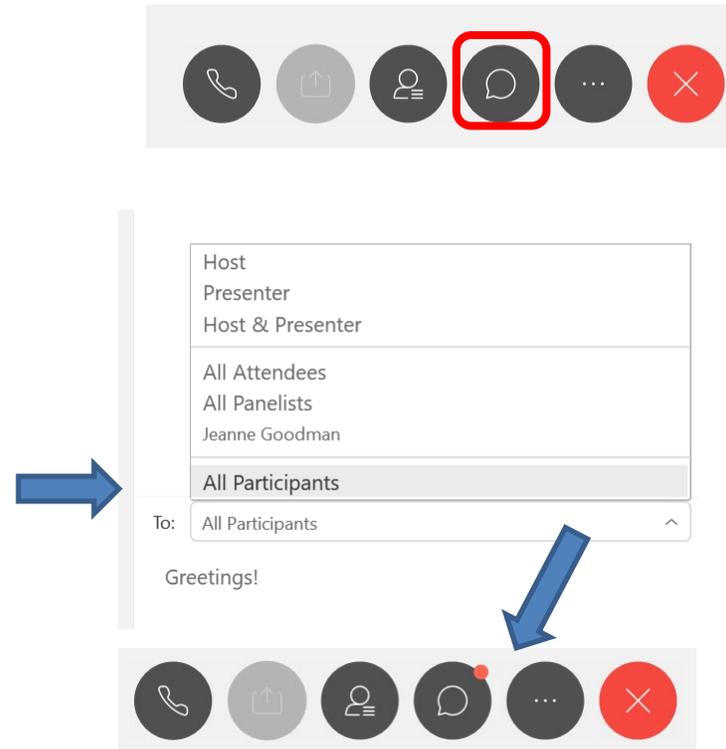
- To join the webinar via the phone, please call in using:  
1-855-797-9485      Access code: 610 976 677

# Chat Feature

Select the Chat icon to make a comment or ask a question.

Be certain the To field is set to **All Participants**

An orange dot on the Chat icon indicates that you have unread messages.



# Speakers & Resource Advisors

## Department of Housing and Urban Development

- Office of Special Needs Assistance Programs
  - Norm Suchar
  - Lisa Coffman
  - Karen DeBlasio
  - Brett Esders
  - Marlisa Grogan
  - Abby Miller
  - Ebony Rankin

## Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

- Martha Montgomery, MD, MHS, COVID-19 Response, Homelessness Unit, Epidemiology and Surveillance Branch

## National Healthcare for the Homeless Council

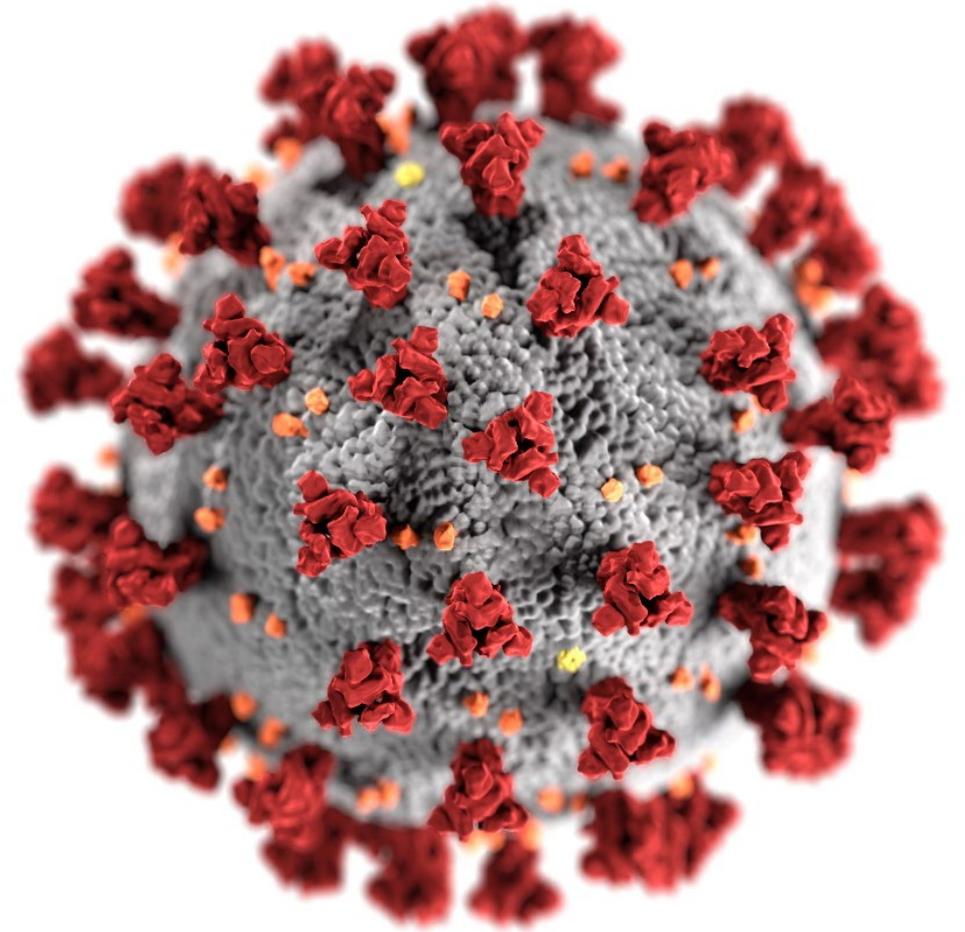
- Barbara DiPietro, PhD, Senior Director of Policy



# COVID-19 and Homelessness

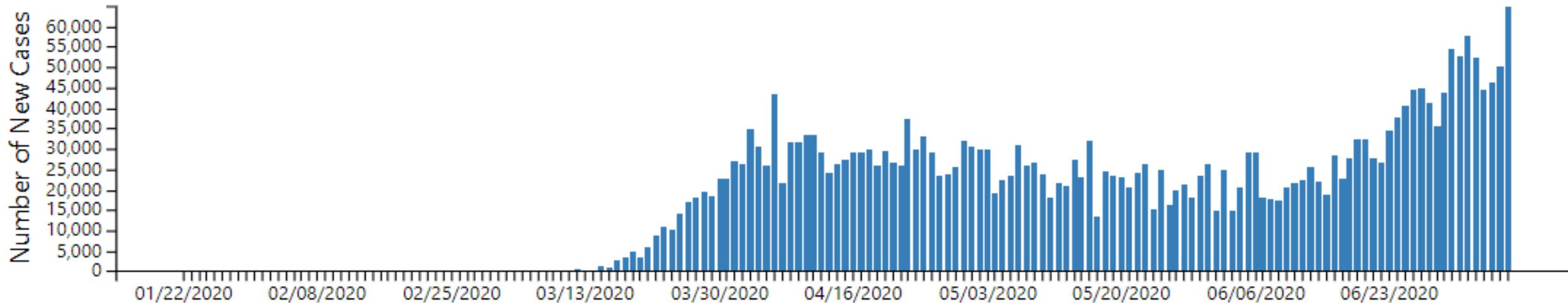
## Guidance Updates

Martha Montgomery, MD MHS  
Homelessness Unit  
Disproportionately Affected Populations Team  
COVID-19 Response



For more information: [www.cdc.gov/COVID19](https://www.cdc.gov/COVID19)

# 3.0 million COVID-19 cases reported in the United States\*



\*Laboratory-confirmed cases as of 7/9/20

# CDC guidance related to homelessness

On CDC COVID-19 site under “Helping Communities Plan and Respond”

## Shelters and other homeless service providers

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/homeless-shelters/plan-prepare-respond.html>

→ Whole community approach, communication, facility layout, facility procedures, supplies, staff considerations

## Providers serving people experiencing unsheltered homelessness

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/homeless-shelters/unsheltered-homelessness.html>

→ Whole community approach, communication, encampments, client considerations, outreach staff considerations



# CDC guidance related to homelessness

On CDC COVID-19 site under “Helping Communities Plan and Respond”

## **Reopening: checklist of considerations for homeless service providers**

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/php/homeless-service-providers.html>

## **Testing strategies for health departments**

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/homeless-shelters/testing.html>



# Testing strategies: Who to test

- People **with signs or symptoms** consistent with COVID-19
- Asymptomatic people with **recent known or suspected exposure** to SARS-CoV-2 to control transmission
- Asymptomatic people without known or suspected exposure to SARS-CoV-2 for **early identification in special settings**



# Testing strategies for homeless shelters and encampments

## Community transmission\*

## Testing strategy

None 

Baseline: Standard healthcare-based testing and testing for anyone who has been exposed

Minimal-Moderate 

Baseline + Consider increased testing for people who are symptomatic or asymptomatic to improve early detection

Moderate-Substantial 

Baseline + Consider facility-wide testing at least once. Follow-up testing weekly until no new cases identified for at least 14 days.



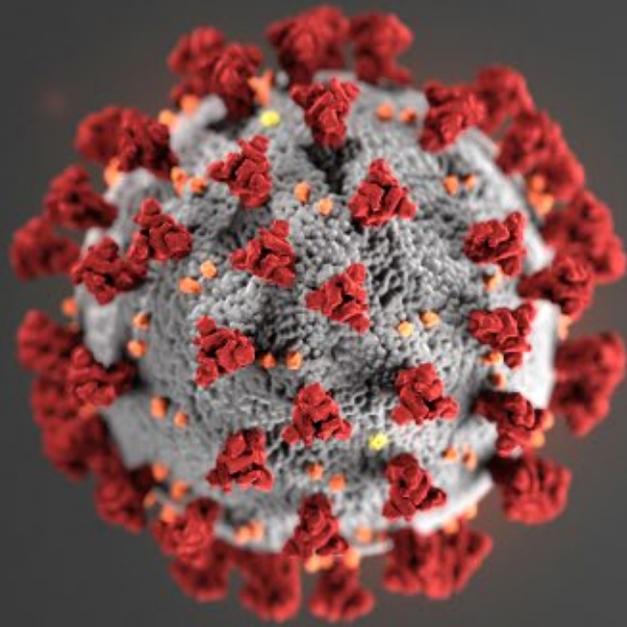
\*specific levels to be set by state and local health departments

# Other CDC materials on homelessness

**Resources landing page:** <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/homeless-shelters/index.html>

- FAQs
- Communications materials for people experiencing homelessness
- Symptom screening tool
- Youth-focused information





For more information, contact CDC  
1-800-CDC-INFO (232-4636)  
TTY: 1-888-232-6348 [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov)

The findings and conclusions in this report are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official position of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.



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*for the*  
HOMELESS  
COUNCIL

# UNIVERSAL TESTING FOR COVID-19 IN HOMELESS SERVICE SETTINGS

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**Barbara DiPietro**

Senior Director of Policy, NHCHC

**Tom Andrews**

CEO, Mercy Care/Saint Joseph's Health System

Atlanta, GA

July 10, 2020

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# NEW ISSUE BRIEF: STRATEGIES FOR PROACTIVE UNIVERSAL TESTING

- Addresses public health authorities, emergency response systems, HCH programs, and other community providers
- Sites federal testing guidance (HHS, CDC, HRSA)
- Re-iterates importance of proactive, universal testing of this population
- Includes operational strategies, common challenges, and recommendations



## COVID-19 & the HCH Community

### Strategies for Proactive Universal Testing

Issue Brief | July 2020

As the response to the COVID-19 pandemic continues to evolve, there is an increasing focus on the need for universal testing (also called “facility-wide testing” or “point prevalence testing”) of both symptomatic and asymptomatic people in greater numbers. This will allow public health authorities to better track the spread of the virus and take appropriate response measures. As the supply and capacity for testing expands, wider testing initiatives targeting vulnerable populations—such as people experiencing homelessness—are not only feasible, they are critical components of effective community response plans.

Many [Health Care for the Homeless \(HCH\) programs](#) have been partnering with their public health authorities to assist with broader-scale universal testing activities. To learn more about these experiences, Council staff conducted in-depth focus groups with five HCH programs, as well as shorter discussions with staff at 12 other HCH programs.

**This issue brief complements the [most recent CDC guidance on testing](#) and provides public health authorities, emergency response systems, HCH programs, and other community providers with feedback about these experiences. It also offers lessons learned and strategies for conducting successful universal testing events among homeless populations.** The goal of this brief is to inform subsequent local testing events with new federal guidance, as well as feedback from the HCH focus groups on what has worked well (and not worked well) in individual communities.

#### Federal Guidance

**HHS:** The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) [COVID-19 Strategic Testing Plan](#) outlines three purposes of testing:

- **Diagnostic testing:** confirm individual cases of viral infection and inform subsequent treatment
- **Testing for contact tracing:** test and monitor persons in contact with infected individuals
- **Universal testing:** to limit the spread of disease and enable public health authorities to assess and manage the risks associated with COVID-19, including testing asymptomatic individuals. Objectives of universal testing include enabling rapid detection, isolation, and appropriate management of persons with viral infections; guiding the implementation of control measures; and detecting and containing

# NEW ISSUE BRIEF: STRATEGIES FOR PROACTIVE UNIVERSAL TESTING

## Operational Strategies

- Getting support
- Partners
- Frequency of testing
- Contact tracing/antibody testing
- Shelter characteristics
- Unsheltered/encampments
- Funding
- Services provided
- Next steps

## Challenges

- Gaining support
- Limited familiarity with homeless populations
- Gaining client trust
- Limited tests/capacity
- Lack of confidence in test results
- Ensuring sufficient services
- Leadership changes
- Locating vulnerable people
- Sharing data

# Mercy Care Atlanta COVID – 19 Testing

Operational Strategies & Challenges  
& Key Partnership with Atlanta CoC



# Operational Strategies

**Partners:** CDC, Partners for HOME (Atlanta CoC), homeless service providers, churches, City of Atlanta, County Board of Health, state volunteer corp, Emory medical students and community volunteers

**Funding:** County special allocated funds, United Way and HRSA (FQHC/HCH)

**Planning:** Picking locations, advanced logistics, marketing, communication & education, access to testing and supplies and focus on high volume testing not targeted (symptom based)

**Operations:** Day of event set-up & processes for flow and safety, staffing and training, education (clients and staff), data collection, specimen handling and transportation, testing results & collaboration with partners with emphasis on good communication strategies related to positives

**Incentives:** For the testing events focused on the unsheltered

**Outreach:** Sheltered and unsheltered, education, distribution of fliers, hand sanitizer, food and hygiene kits



# Challenges

Finding testing capacity and supplies and maintaining both

Developing data collection tools and operational set-up design with proper supplies & equipment

Automated process for linkage to reference laboratory to obtain results

Reporting results efficiently and effectively

HIPAA considerations

Obtaining adequate specimens and retesting

Determining most effective testing modality (nasal, oral, NP or self-swab)

Determining strategies for on-going testing

On-going access to clinicians for testing



# Ongoing & Future Testing

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## New round of testing based on:

- Targeted based on results from previous testing events & those that worked well
- High risk populations
- Geographically dispersed for ease of access by service providers
- Coordinating transportation to events

## New partnerships

- CORE
- Additional counties & churches

## Other

- Additional funding based on success of first round of testing
- Continued educational and outreach focus

## On-going review and pivoting



# Partners for HOME (Atlanta CoC)

- City of Atlanta – COVID Homeless Taskforce: Testing, transportation, isolation, outreach & prevention
- State and city funding appropriated
- Transportation solution initiated April 5<sup>th</sup>
- Isolation hotel opened April 6<sup>th</sup>
- Bi-weekly meetings of the CoC
- Centralization of obtaining and purchasing of supplies (Cleaning, hand sanitizer, PPE, etc.)
- Outreach coordination across all agencies
- Training and education opportunities - CDC
- Prevention: Non-congregate hotel opens in May



# NEW ISSUE BRIEF: STRATEGIES FOR PROACTIVE UNIVERSAL TESTING

## 12 RECOMMENDATIONS

- Prioritize population
- Maximize legal authority
- Educate stakeholders
- Set up provider/public information
- Formalize partnerships
- Set up transportation
- Conduct COVID-19 education
- Provide services at testing
- Ensure safety of clients & staff
- Pursue permanent solutions
- Actively reverse disparities
- Share data

# INFORMING SCIENCE: COVID-19 TESTING AMONG HOMELESS POPULATIONS

CDC-NHCHC project collecting data on testing events

**Goals:** better understand the impact of COVID-19 on this vulnerable group, and to inform public health actions going forward.

**Scope:** Types of tests, client/staff test results, symptoms, demographics

Please fill out the survey (or forward to someone who can!)



<https://airc.cdc.gov/surveys/index.php?s=M3WPXD7AJ9>



# KEY TAKE-AWAYS

1. Leverage CoC authority and partnerships
  2. **Test!** (Use CDC guidance and the lessons learned from others)
  3. Examine your data, compare with others & amend your practices
  4. Train and educate your partners
- **GOALS:** lower impact of/risk for C-19 + improve services & systems

# TESTING

- Testing is a critical component to ongoing COVID-19 response for people experiencing homeless
- Make connections with your CoC, Healthcare for the Homeless and Public Health Department to include homeless populations in your communities testing strategy
- Many health resources are available to pay for testing
- Because so many health resources are available for testing, focus ESG-CV resources on re-housing

# TESTING SHOULD NOT BE A BARRIER TO ACCESS HOMELESS PROGRAMS

COVID-19 negative test results should not be required  
to access shelter and housing programs

# HUD UPDATES



# Next Steps for Accessing Funds

- Submit your substantial amendment(s) – If you have not yet submitted an amendment for Round 1, you may include both Rounds 1 and 2 in your submission. Don't wait!
- There are known ESG costs that can address immediate needs:
  - **Rapid Re-housing** (e.g., Transitioning people from non-congregate shelter)
  - **Non-congregate shelter** (e.g., Continue congregate shelter decompression)
  - **HMIS** (e.g., Ramp up for ESG-CV quarterly reporting – HMIS Leads need additional funding to fulfill their increased role in CAPER reporting)

# Disasters planning during COVID-19

- People experiencing homelessness and vulnerable individuals are at risk
- Types of disasters: hurricanes, tornadoes, wildfires, flooding, regional power outages, and extreme heat
- It is important to take steps today to keep individuals protected from COVID-19 during the community's response and recovery process
- Review and consider response strategies around shelter and recovery with COVID-19 in mind now will aid communities in responding and recovering

# Four Key Recommendations

- Engaging in collaborative disaster planning processes with community stakeholders. Think about who the key stakeholders are who need to be at the table. Red Cross? Office of Emergency Management? Providers?
- Reviewing and modifying your emergency operations plan to address COVID-19 best practices and guidance (i.e. social distancing, reduction in services, access to goods, transportation, access to food)
- Consider how to get people out of immediate shelter into a more medium-term situation. What does that mean to the people you are serving?
- Keeping up-to-date with jurisdictional orders so you are aware of changes in travel restrictions and sheltering requirement (i.e. sheltering-in-place, stay-at-home)

# Resources

- HUD hosted webinar on disaster planning during COVID-19
- [COVID-19 Pandemic Operational Guidance for the 2020 Hurricane Season](#)
- [Preparing for Hurricanes During the COVID-19 Pandemic](#)
- [Disaster Recovery Homelessness Toolkit](#) (non-COVID-19 specific)

**HUD UPDATES:  
ESG-CV AND HOMELESS MANAGEMENT  
INFORMATION SYSTEMS (HMIS)**



# ESG-CV and HMIS

- ESG recipients need to connect with [HMIS Leads](#)
  - Connections should be made soon to ensure proper data collection
- Funding will need to be allocated for data efforts
  - VSPs and [comparable databases](#) too
- HMIS Lead will have new reporting responsibilities
  - Quarterly and Cumulative reports on component type

# ESG-CV and HMIS

- ESG-CV HMIS Project Set Up
- Products available to help:
  - HMIS Allowable Expenses for ESG
  - Rapid Expansion of HMIS: Things to Consider
  - [ESG HMIS Manual](#)

# Intensive TA Workshops: CARES Act Funding Utilization

- 5-week workshop series featuring group video conferencing, working sessions, and individual support
- Action oriented and supportive of current community efforts
- Workshops launch week of August 31st (new sessions will open every 6 weeks)
  - Preparing HMIS During the COVID-19 Health Crisis
  - Housing Problem Solving
  - COVID-19 Response Coordinated Investment Planning
  - Coordinated Entry: Dynamic System Management in Response to COVID-19
  - Strengthening Housing Focused Practices
  - System Modeling, Program Design, and Implementation
  - System Performance Improvement

# Other New Resources Posted

- [Data & Equity: Using the Data You Have](#)
- [Eviction Prevention and Stability Toolkit](#)

# Key Websites

**HUD:** <https://www.hudexchange.info/homelessness-assistance/diseases/infectious-disease-prevention-response/>

**CDC:** <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/homeless-shelters/index.html>

**NHCHC:** <https://nhchc.org/clinical-practice/diseases-and-conditions/influenza/>

**USICH:** <https://www.usich.gov/tools-for-action/coronavirus-covid-19-resources/>

**VA:** <https://www.publichealth.va.gov/n-coronavirus/index.asp>

**HRSA:** <https://bphc.hrsa.gov/emergency-response/coronavirus-frequently-asked-questions.html>

# Federal Partner Contacts

For additional information or assistance, contact:

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention:  
[www.cdc.gov/COVID19](https://www.cdc.gov/COVID19); 1-800-CDC-INFO (232-4636); TTY: 1-888-232-6348
- Department of Housing and Urban Development:  
[HUD Exchange Ask-A-Question \(AAQ\) Portal](#)
- Department of Veterans Affairs High Consequence Infection (HCI) Preparedness Program:  
[vhahcigeneral@va.gov](mailto:vhahcigeneral@va.gov)



# Q & A

