

Infection Control and Winter Planning – Module 1 Script

Hello and welcome to the Infection Control and Winter Planning series. This series is designed for shelter providers, Continuums of Care lead agencies, and others who serve people experiencing homelessness.

This is the first of five modules in the Infection Control and Winter Planning series, which was created to assist your community in its winter planning and infection control measures.

The PowerPoint presentations and videos of all the modules in this series are available on the HUD landing page. Should you need more in-depth technical assistance related to infection control and prevention in congregate facilities like emergency shelters and day centers or in your non-congregate shelters, please visit the HUD Exchange at www.HUDExchange.info. In the “Program Support” dropdown at the top of the homepage, select “Request In-Depth Assistance” and follow the instructions on the next page.

At the end of each module, there will be a list of resources and referrals for you to review.

The goal of this module is to teach you about infection control measures so you can mitigate the spread of contagious viruses like COVID-19, the flu, and mpox, formerly known as monkeypox. As more people move indoors for colder weather, it is important to maintain strong infection prevention and control practices to avoid spread and keep all staff, volunteers, guests, and residents healthy. Infections, especially respiratory viruses like the flu and COVID-19, can spread quickly without adequate infection prevention and control measures in place.

Before reviewing infection control measures and mitigation strategies, we’d like to emphasize:

Staff should call emergency medical services if a resident has severe warning signs of COVID-19, the flu, or any other illness that includes:

- Difficulty breathing or shortness of breath.
- Difficulty speaking in full sentences.
- Persistent pain or pressure in the chest.
- New confusion or an inability to rouse.
- Lightheadedness.
- Blue discoloration of lips, face, or nail beds.
- Dehydration (dry mouth and skin, dizziness, headache, fever and chills, rapid breathing, rapid heart rate, or muscle cramps).

Staff should review emergency care procedures with local public health partners.

Let's dig deeper into how to protect ourselves, shelter staff, and residents.

Shelter staff and residents can protect themselves and others from the spread of infectious disease by incorporating infection control measures in their daily life. Wearing a mask, washing hands or using an alcohol-based hand sanitizer, practicing proper cough and sneezing etiquette, and staying home when not feeling well will help reduce the spread of viruses this winter.

In addition, shelter staff and residents should wear PPE, stay up to date on vaccinations, be aware of signs and symptoms for common infections, and get tested if they are symptomatic.

To support shelter staff and residents, building partnerships with local health departments, mobile health units, and community healthcare providers is critical for infection mitigation. Later in the presentation, we will share some ideas with you about outreach and community collaboration.

HUD has developed several resources that your community can use to educate shelter guests and staff about infection control. Please see the resources at the end of this presentation or visit the HUD Exchange resource library to search for information about infection control at <https://www.hudexchange.info/resources/>

We've reviewed how you can protect yourself and others through masking and proper hand, cough, and sneezing etiquette—now let's talk about how to mitigate the spread of viruses in a building.

Ensure your shelter or congregate facility has a cleaning protocol in place that includes:

- Frequent cleaning of high-touch surfaces using disinfectant wipes.
- Wet or dry cleaning methods depending on the type of infection.
- A laundry plan for cleaning clothes, towels, and linens for guests that have an infectious disease.

To learn more about operational considerations for congregate facilities, please view Module 4 in this series.

Before you can implement winter plans, it is important to have the most current information about what is happening in your community. Let's talk about what mpox is, how it is spread, and what your community should consider while planning infection control measures.

Mpox is an infectious virus that causes flu-like symptoms and a rash that can last for up to a month. It is primarily spread through skin-to-skin contact or by sharing or touching the personal items (clothes, cigarettes, utensils/dishes) of someone who is infected.

The flu-like symptoms can be uncomfortable and the rash can be itchy and painful, so if you are concerned that a shelter resident or staff member has mpox, please connect that person with a healthcare provider as soon as possible.

If you discover that a resident has signs and symptoms of mpox or has tested positive, you should:

- Help the resident access local healthcare providers to evaluate treatment and

vaccination options.

- Identify temporary isolation space based upon facility policies and procedures.
- Temporarily isolate the resident away from others including animals until all scabs fall off and a fresh layer of healthy skin has formed. This may take two to four weeks. Consult the local or state health department or the healthcare provider caring for the individual to determine when to discontinue temporary isolation.
- Have infected individuals cover any skin lesions with long pants and long sleeves, bandages, or a sheet or gown if they need to leave the temporary seclusion area or if areas are not yet available. Ensure the individual has bandages and proper coverings while isolating.

In addition, healthy residents and staff should:

- Wear a surgical mask to reduce the risk of transmission if the resident moves around the facility, goes outside, and/or must travel.
- Discourage the resident from sharing clothes, towels, cigarettes, or vape pens with others, or coming into sexual and/or close intimate contact with other people.

Staff should speak with other residents about possible mpox exposure and connect them with local public health partners to discuss testing and vaccination options. Clean the infected areas of the facility as soon as possible and establish additional cleaning times if necessary.

View HUD's flyers and other resources specific to mpox in the HUD Exchange resource library by typing "mpox" in the "Browse the Resource Library" search bar.

When a resident tests positive and is placed in temporary isolation, rest and recovery is the top priority. Work with public health partners to:

- Ensure that residents receive routine welfare checks. If you notice signs of trauma, screen for recent victimization to see if they need additional healthcare support beyond testing and treatment for mpox.
- Connect residents to care through telehealth appointments and allow them to have access to their phones and internet access.
- Refer residents to other resources such as mental health services as appropriate.
- Inform individuals refusing to isolate of potential community exposure and attempt to problem-solve.
- Provide additional items such as baby supplies, books, toys, games, etc., if an entire family has been placed in temporary isolation.

When a new resident or family is admitted to shelter, sharing information will be key to reduce the spread of any infectious disease. Individuals may be hesitant to disclose symptoms and/or contact with an infected individual for fear of refusal into shelter; assure all individuals that they will not be refused shelter based on this information.

Ask new residents if they have experienced any symptoms related to mpox, COVID-19, and/or the flu within the last two weeks. Make sure your shelter screening documents are updated to include all relevant communicable viruses.

Provide new residents with up-to-date information about viruses and infection control. Offer infectious disease mitigation handouts that include signs and symptoms so they can share the information with any family members with them. Work with local public health partners to create flyers in alternate languages if necessary.

Provide information about how to access available vaccinations and other resources that can help keep them healthy and safe.

If there is a current outbreak of any infectious virus in the facility, explain the situation clearly and honestly and provide information about isolation, signs and symptoms, and how residents will be supported during their time in shelter. Next, explain what the facility requires to keep everyone safe in the event of a virus outbreak.

For access to flyers and handouts, visit the HUD Exchange resource library at www.HUDExchange.info/resources/. In the filter feature on the left, check the box marked "ESG: Emergency Solutions Grants Program." Finally, write "flyers" in the "Browse the Resource Library" search box. Share the resulting flyers and resources with residents and shelter staff. For more information about communication strategies, please review Module 2 in this training series.

Now that you are aware of the signs and symptoms of infectious viruses and how to mitigate their spread, here are some ways you can partner with local organizations and healthcare providers to support residents and your staff:

- Partner with emergency management and/or public health authorities to identify and access appropriate, non-congregate settings for isolation, such as hotels and motels. If you don't have these relationships in place, reach out to your Continuum of Care lead agency for support.
- Continue to partner with public health, community-based, and culturally specific organizations on vaccine information, access, and distribution. Review HUD's COVID-19 vaccine messaging toolkit for resources you can use in your community to increase vaccinations for infectious viruses like COVID-19 and the flu. The toolkit includes resources to address individuals who lack vaccine confidence that you can use in your planning efforts.

Thank you for joining us. Before you go, please make sure you save the resources we have provided that offer additional information about infection control. Be sure to check out the next module, Module 2, which will focus on communicating with residents about infectious viruses.