



In May 2022, the monkeypox (MPX) virus was identified in the United States and has now been declared a national public health emergency. While MPX is rare and does not spread easily between people without close contact, some people experiencing homelessness may have an increased risk of infection. In addition, people experiencing homelessness are more likely to have limited access to the healthcare resources that prevent, diagnose, or treat MPX.

In addition to talking to people experiencing homelessness about MPX, public health partners and Continuum of Care (CoC) leaders should include them in MPX planning and response discussions to limit disease transmission.

Why Should You Talk to People Experiencing Homelessness About MPX?

- You can help people experiencing homelessness protect themselves against the spread of MPX by providing education about signs and symptoms, sharing prevention measures, dispelling MPX misinformation, and coordinating access to MPX prevention or treatment resources (e.g., vaccination).
- Open communication builds trust. Honest communication and access to accurate information are critical to the success of any public health response effort.
- Early engagement with communities of color, tribal nations, and LGBTQIA+ people reinforces local commitment to ensuring that groups that have historically been marginalized can have questions or concerns addressed fully.
- Culturally competent partners and trusted communicators reduce general medical mistrust, decrease stigma surrounding MPX, and improve prevention uptake and vaccine confidence for marginalized communities.

How Can You Structure Your Conversations with Clients About MPX?

Start from a place of empathy and understanding

Identifying communicators who can authentically convey an empathetic understanding is key to an effective effort. People experiencing homelessness have challenges meeting many basic needs, especially those related to health and healthcare. Navigating the complexity of healthcare systems can be difficult while homeless. For some marginalized groups, current and historical mistreatment or other negative interactions with the healthcare system has fostered a general medical mistrust. It is important to demonstrate an understanding of the range of challenges they experience, including the impact prevention measures will have on them.

Share prevention information about:

- The [symptoms of MPX](#) and how [MPX spreads](#).
- Practical ways to [protect against contracting the virus](#).
- How to [lower the risk of MPX during sex or social events](#).
- Where to go to access testing, treatment, and vaccines.
- Where to find [accurate MPX information](#).

Stick to the facts to help dispel misinformation and reduce stigma

You can help [dispel the misinformation and the stigma](#) associated with the virus by advising your clients that MPX can affect anyone and encouraging them to take practical steps to protect themselves. Use inclusive language in your conversation, such as “us” and “we.” If sharing MPX-related images, use [credible, non-sensationalized images](#) of people from diverse backgrounds and racial/ethnic groups.

Frame the conversation around clients’ needs and concerns

Welcome questions and treat people respectfully. When you do not have the answer to a client’s MPX question, offer to research the answer and follow up with them. Discuss these questions with your colleagues to develop the best possible responses and leverage endorsements of MPX testing, treatment, and vaccination resources made by people that your clients trust.

Keep doors open

It is respectful and strategic to allow time for people to think about the issue, consult other information sources, and talk with other community members. Starting the dialogue early gives clients time to think about things and allows you to understand and address the concerns or questions being raised. Two-way communication demonstrates that community voices are valued.

Use a variety of communication channels

Reinforce having one-on-one conversations about MPX prevention, testing, and treatment with those you serve. The use of other communication channels may also be helpful for communicating with your clients, such as:

- Social media—Twitter and Facebook page postings.
- SMS/text messages—Many people experiencing homelessness have smartphones and use texting as a regular form of communication.
- Bulletin board postings—Print out graphics and other materials and post them in an easily accessible place in your facility.

Additional Resources

- [**CDC—Reducing Stigma in Monkeypox Communication and Community Engagement**](#)