



Working with Local Partners to Prevent and Respond to Monkeypox Transmission

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UPDATED:

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) is tracking an outbreak of [monkeypox](#) (MPX) that has spread across several countries. Successfully preventing and responding to MPX among people experiencing homelessness will require careful planning and collaboration between public health, homeless system leaders, healthcare providers, and people experiencing homelessness at the local level. Continuums of Care should reach out to local public health departments and request a conversation about planning to prevent and respond to MPX within their homeless system. If you face challenges connecting with your local health department, consider reaching out to your state health department.

This document helps communities establish initial conversations internally and with local public health partners to determine necessary MPX prevention measures; establish pathways to vaccination, care, and treatment; identify available isolation spaces; plan communication strategies; and effectively access and utilize data.

MPX, like many public health concerns, may amplify the historic and current racial biases and discrimination embedded in our systems, processes, and practices. Homeless systems should be deliberate in their efforts to make MPX information, care, treatment, and mitigation resources accessible to marginalized subpopulations including Black, Indigenous, and people of color and the LBTQIA+ community. Homeless systems should help reduce stigmata surrounding MPX by communicating [factual information](#) to frontline workers and people experiencing homelessness and hiring [MPX Community Health Ambassadors](#) who can talk to others about MPX facts and vaccination.

Effective community partners acknowledge that people experiencing homelessness may mistrust healthcare providers as a result of historical harm. Providers should use [trauma-informed methods](#) of engagement to build trust and rapport with the people they are serving.

Public Health Discussion Topics

Below are topics that can serve as a starting point for discussions between the homeless system and local public health.

Data and Information About MPX in the Community

1. How many cases of MPX have been confirmed in our jurisdiction? What is the current trend in cases over the past two weeks? Over the past month?
2. What is the demographic breakdown of people with cases of MPX in our community?
3. Are there data publicly available that we can access? If so, how often will it be updated?
4. Does the health department have a staff member or team designated to support groups who may be at higher risk for transmission or severe disease? How can we connect with those staff members?

Communicating With Public Health, Staff, Volunteers, and Guests

1. What is the best way for our homeless service providers to communicate with you if we have a suspected or confirmed case in a facility?
2. How can we stay informed about changes in case counts and changes in recommended prevention strategies?
3. Would it be possible to have someone from the health department conduct trainings on MPX prevention with our facilities' staff and volunteers?
4. Would it be possible to have someone from the health department come in and talk with our guests about MPX signs and symptoms and prevention?
5. What should we tell other guests, staff members, or volunteers in the facility if there is a suspected or confirmed case among another guest, staff member, or volunteer?

General Preparation, Prevention, and Response to Cases of MPX

Homeless service providers should be prepared to prevent and respond to suspected and confirmed cases of MPX in their facilities. Some of these strategies may be similar to COVID-19 prevention activities, but it's important to talk with local public health about what might be different for MPX. Some questions to discuss with local public health can include:

Screening

1. At the beginning of COVID-19, screening was recommended to identify potential cases early. Does public health currently recommend screening at shelter intake for MPX?
2. Since people should not be turned away from accessing shelter because of suspected MPX, if someone does present with symptoms, what should we do?

Isolation

3. Is there non-congregate shelter (i.e., hotels, motels, dormitories) available for isolation for people who have received a positive MPX test result?
4. How long should guests or clients be isolated if they test positive for MPX?
5. If non-congregate settings are not available, what is the best option for isolating people with positive test results?
6. If there are no isolation options available, how can we support a person with MPX to stay in our shelter but also prevent the spread to others in the facility?

Handwashing and Sanitation

7. Are there any resources to support handwashing stations to prevent MPX transmission?

Responding to Suspected or Confirmed Cases

8. How long should a staff member stay away from a congregate setting if they test positive for MPX?
9. Do we need to wait a certain amount of time before entering and cleaning areas of a shelter where a confirmed case may have spent time?

Other Facility Procedures and Considerations

10. What other preparation and prevention measures are suggested for shelters (laundry, waste removal, etc.)? What other preparation and prevention measures are suggested for groups reaching people in encampments?
11. What measures should a shelter take for guests who have animals? Can they recommend an animal care plan?

Pathways to Vaccination

Currently, vaccines are in limited supply and are being prioritized by potential exposure risk. Communities should advocate for accessible vaccines for people who may have challenges accessing vaccination or healthcare services. This will look different in every community and may include populations such as unsheltered people, people living in congregate settings, sex workers, or homeless youth.

Some questions that homeless services can consider asking public health partners regarding pathways to vaccination include:

1. Which vaccines are currently available for MPX?
2. Where are vaccines currently being offered (e.g., pop-up events, local pharmacies, local healthcare clinics, etc.)?
3. Are the currently available MPX vaccines one- or two-dose regimens? How effective is MPX vaccination if people only receive one dose of a two-dose regimen?
4. Who is currently eligible for MPX vaccination? What are the current local requirements for receiving MPX vaccines? If people experiencing homelessness are not currently a prioritized group, when might they become a prioritized group?

5. If there has been a known exposure to MPX in our shelter, can our guests be prioritized for the vaccine to prevent an outbreak?
6. Given the challenges that people experiencing homelessness may face around travel and communication, is it possible to establish a specific place-based vaccination event for people experiencing homelessness?
7. Is preregistration required for MPX vaccination? How can homeless services streamline and support the registration process?
8. What documentation will people need to receive an MPX vaccine (e.g., license or ID, etc.)?

Pathways to Testing, Care, and Treatment for MPX

People experiencing homelessness may face challenges finding options for testing and treatment for MPX. Homeless service providers should be prepared to help people experiencing homelessness complete necessary documents and know where to direct people who may be seeking testing, care, or treatment. Questions to help homeless service providers prepare for this include:

1. Where is MPX testing currently available?
2. How long does it take to be tested? How long does it take for test results to come back? What can homeless service providers do to ensure people can promptly access their test results?
3. What should homeless service providers instruct people to do while waiting for their test results? Should they be quarantined, or are there other prevention measures they can take?
4. What are the current treatments people can receive for MPX?
5. How can we ensure people experiencing homelessness are able to access medical care for suspected or confirmed MPX?
6. What resources are available to help those in isolation deal with [mental health stress related to long isolations and MPX stigma](#)?

Communities that need additional guidance are encouraged to submit an [AAQ](#) and select “Homelessness & Infectious Disease Questions” when faced with the “My question is related to:” prompt.

If your community needs additional assistance, HUD recommends submitting a request for technical assistance (TA). Requests can be made through the [HUDEXchange TA Portal](#). If TA resources are available and the request is approved, a HUD TA provider can offer on-call or on-site TA depending on the complexity of the need.