Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ):
Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH) Providers and COVID-19

UPDATED May 12, 2020

The following guidance was developed by the San Francisco Department of Public Health (SFDPH) for use by local facilities, and will be posted at http://www.sfcdcp.org. This interim guidance may change as knowledge, community transmission, and availability of PPE and testing change.

AUDIENCE: Managers of buildings with tenants in Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH), including SROs

BACKGROUND: Tenants living in Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH) or SROs may become infected with COVID-19. All individuals who test positive for COVID-19 are screened to see if they are able to isolate in their current living situation or need to be placed in an isolation and quarantine setting managed by SFDPH. Building managers should understand the information that SFDPH may share with building managers, as well as what is being done to prevent the spread of infection to others in the building.

Notification of COVID-19 Positive Tenants

What is the process for notifying building management after a tenant of a PSH site has a positive COVID-19 test result?

- All positive COVID-19 test results are reported by the testing laboratories to SFDPH. SFDPH assigns each individual with a positive COVID-19 test to a Case Investigator, who calls the individual for an interview. If an individual says that they live in an SRO or PSH during the interview, the SRO Community Liaison is alerted.

- In addition, once a day, all new cases of COVID-19 are matched by their home address to a database of all privately-owned SROs and Homelessness and Supportive Housing (HSH)/PSH sites. If any new cases have a matched address, the SRO Community Liaison is alerted. This helps us identify individuals who live in an SRO or PSH site who could not be reached for an interview, as well as those who did not identify their residence as an SRO.

- Once the SRO Community Liaison receives an alert, they then notify building management by phone, followed by a formal notification email.

How long does it take for building managers to be notified?

- Building management will be notified as soon as possible, varying from within 24 hours to a few days of a tenant testing positive. The amount of time it can vary due to the time for each step, including the time it takes for the laboratory to process a test and return a result. Once an individual with a new positive test result is assigned to a Case Investigator, the Case Investigator will reach out to that individual within 24 hours. The SRO Community Liaison will contact the building manager within 24 hours of being informed of a case.

Will SFDPH provide the name of the tenant with COVID-19 to PSH staff?

- The identity of the tenant who has tested positive for COVID-19 is protected health information, and typically cannot be shared with housing providers. However, SFDPH is working with HSH to develop a more streamlined communication process so that on-site support staff who are already covered by the
SFDPH privacy matrix can be notified of specific individuals who test positive for COVID-19, and help these individuals to self-isolate as recommended.

Close Contacts and Contact Tracing

What is a close contact?

- Close contacts are most often people who share a home with or who are intimate partners of someone with COVID-19. A close contact is defined as someone who has been within 6 feet of someone with COVID-19 for more than 10 minutes, while the person with COVID-19 was not wearing a facemask, or who has had direct contact with bodily fluids or secretions of someone with COVID-19.

Are people in an SRO who share a kitchen or bathroom considered close contacts?

- While sharing a bathroom or kitchen does not meet the strict definition of close contact, it does increase a person’s risk of contracting COVID-19 compared with those who do not share bathrooms.

What is the process for identifying people who may have been close contacts of a tenant with COVID-19?

- When SFDPH is alerted about an individual with a positive COVID-19 test result, a Case Investigator is assigned to interview that individual. The Case Investigator asks about the individual’s close contacts starting 2 days before their symptoms appear, or 4 days before the date of the test.
- The SFDPH Contact Tracing team then reaches out to close contacts to advise them of their exposure to COVID-19, inform them that they need to self-quarantine for 14 days after their last exposure, and provides resources for medical evaluation and testing. Close contacts receive a daily text to check in about symptoms for 14 days after the date of their last contact with the COVID-19 positive individual. We recognize that daily monitoring by text message is not feasible for many residents in PSH or SROs, particularly for residents without a cell phone, and we can provide technical assistance to on-site support staff around daily symptom monitoring and testing resources.

What if the tenant can’t or won’t give a list of close contacts?

- Case Investigators strive to collect comprehensive information about close contacts during the interview. Since an individual with COVID-19 may not know the names and contact information of close contacts, the SRO Community Liaison Lead can work with building staff to identify close contacts and share their names with the Contact Tracing team for outreach.

Isolation and Quarantine

What is the difference between isolation and quarantine?

- “Isolation” is the term used for people with COVID-19 infection. “Quarantine” is used for people who have been exposed to COVID-19 through close contact. The main difference is how long they must stay in their unit and away from other people in order to prevent spread of COVID-19 to others.

Do all tenants who have COVID-19 or who are close contacts of someone with COVID-19 need to be sent to an Isolation and Quarantine hotel?

- A tenant who tests positive may be able to remain in their current housing situation if they do not share a bathroom, are able and willing to self-isolate by staying in their room at all times, and have a way to obtain food and medications during the isolation period (see the SF SFDPH Home Isolation and Quarantine Guidelines at https://www.sfcdcp.org/Home-Isolation-Quarantine-Guidelines).
What if a tenant who tested positive for COVID-19 is unable to self-isolate at home, and has not been referred to an Isolation & Quarantine hotel site?

- Depending on the information disclosed during a Case Investigation interview, SFDPH may not be aware that an individual is unable to self-isolate at home. When our SRO Community Liaison notifies building management, we ask about shared spaces and communicate the information back to the Case Investigation team to ensure we are offering I&Q hotel room referrals to all appropriate cases. PSH providers often have a more complete knowledge of the situation, and we appreciate your communication to help identify these situations as they arise.

- In addition, if a PSH provider is aware of a tenant with COVID-19 who has not been referred to an I&Q hotel, they can refer the patient themselves using the online referral form: https://covid19isorequest.getcare.com/referral

What if a tenant with COVID-19 declines an I&Q hotel referral, and can’t or won’t isolate in their room as instructed?

- In this event, SFDPH will disclose the identity of the individual with COVID-19 to the PSH provider and work together with PSH/HSH to develop a support plan.

- The COVID-19 Containment Call Center at 628-652-2810 is an additional resource for consultation and assistance daily. This call line provides access to a team of social workers who can triage and refer the client or the PSH/HSH staff to existing resources including medicine pickup, pet care and food delivery, cleaning supplies, and counseling and social support.

- If an individual has left the hospital or an Isolation & Quarantine hotel site against medical advice and returned to the SRO, a nurse specialist can help locate them and assist with referring them back to the hospital or I&Q hotel site as needed.

### Preventing and Containing Clusters of COVID-19 Cases

What is SFDPH doing to prevent and address clusters of cases in SROs?

- SFDPH is monitoring COVID-19 cases identified in SROs for clusters of cases, and identifying the need for additional interventions, including mass testing, based on the details of the identified cases and the buildings. We are prioritizing mass testing (on-site testing of all tenants at a site) based on the number of cases at the site, the vulnerability of residents in the building, and whether data suggests that there is spread of infection within the building.

Where can the other tenants and staff at a site with a positive case of COVID-19 get tested?

- While SFDPH cannot provide testing on-site at every building, SFDPH now recommends testing for all close contacts, regardless of whether they have symptoms, as well as for persons who have symptoms of COVID-19.

- Tenants or staff who have a primary care provider (PCP) should call their PCP to schedule a test. This is preferred, since the PCP will know the person’s medical history and risk for severe COVID-19 illness, and will be able to provide appropriate follow-up care.

- Tenants or staff without a PCP may call the SFDPH New Patient Appointment Call Center for COVID-19 at 415-682-1740 to make an appointment.
• Staff may make an appointment through CityTestSF at https://sf.gov/get-tested-covid-19-citytestsf. Tenants who have had close contact with someone with COVID-19 or who have one or more symptoms of COVID may also make an appointment through CityTestSF.

• A housing provider can call SFDPH Communicable Disease Control and Prevention at 415-554-2830 to schedule a test for a tenant or staff at one of DPH’s alternate testing sites.

**Other Questions**

**When are tenants allowed to leave the building during Shelter-In-Place?**

• Residents who are not in isolation or quarantine may leave their building for tasks essential to health and safety, such as attending an urgent doctor’s appointment or obtaining food or medicine.

**What should our visitor policy be?**

• SFDPH recommends that buildings restrict visitors to only those who are assisting residents with essential needs (e.g., food or medicine delivery).

**How can we get masks for all of our tenants?**

• You can contact the EOC SRO Taskforce at AffordableHousingEOC@sfgov.org for general questions and requests for supplies.

**Can we get assistance with cleaning if we haven’t had a case of COVID-19 at our site?**

• You can contact CleaningServicesEOC@sfgov.org for help with cleaning supplies and janitorial services.

**Additional Resources**

**Order of the Health Officer NO. C19-07c:**


**Health Advisory: Expanding COVID-19 Testing to Asymptomatic Frontline or Essential Workers**

• [https://www.sfcdcp.org/health-alerts-emergencies/health-alerts/](https://www.sfcdcp.org/health-alerts-emergencies/health-alerts/) under: “Health Advisory: Expanding COVID-19 Diagnostic Testing to Asymptomatic Frontline or Essential Workers”

**Stay Safe at Home FAQ**

• [https://sf.gov/stay-home-except-essential-needs](https://sf.gov/stay-home-except-essential-needs) under “Stay Home Health Order FAQs”

**SFDPH Guidance at [https://www.sfcdcp.org/covid19](https://www.sfcdcp.org/covid19), including:**

• **Home Isolation and Quarantine Guidelines for People with COVID-19 and their Household and Close Contacts** [https://www.sfcdcp.org/covid19](https://www.sfcdcp.org/covid19) under “Isolation and Quarantine Directives”.

• **Interim Guidance: Preventing Spread of COVID-19 in Community Congregate Housing Settings for Those Who Are Housed in Private Rooms** [https://www.sfcdcp.org/covid19](https://www.sfcdcp.org/covid19) under “Congregate Living Settings”

• **Preventing the Spread of COVID-19 in Congregate Housing Settings: Frequently Asked Questions** [https://www.sfcdcp.org/covid19](https://www.sfcdcp.org/covid19) under “Congregate Living Settings”