



January 13, 2021

Subject: This guidance reaffirms the need for communities to provide non-congregate sheltering (NCS) for people experiencing homelessness to protect human life and minimize strain on health care system capacity during the COVID-19 pandemic. Local governments are now able to rely upon more stable FEMA cost-share for Project Roomkey. Therefore, as local governments determine how to spend newly available resources, including Project Roomkey and Rehousing Strategy funds, Homekey funding, State General Fund, other Federal stimulus sources, counties are advised to continue to prioritize NCS.

The risks for COVID-19 exposure and infection remain high. California has experienced its highest numbers of cases and hospitalizations this December, and this most recent surge has threatened to overwhelm our healthcare system capacity and many hospitals have had to shift into contingency standards of care. The high levels of transmission have required additional non-pharmaceutical interventions and closures in communities to further prevent the spread of the virus.

In addition, we continue an intentional focus to prevent infection in people who are at highest risk for severe health consequences from COVID-19. Those at higher risk include:

- Individuals over 65 years of age,
- Individuals with compromised immune systems and certain underlying health conditions, including those significantly impacted by the conditions in the places where they live, learn, work, and play (i.e., social determinants of health), and
- Individuals living and working in congregate settings.

Many people experiencing homelessness across California are represented in one or more of these groups. As we have had to implement new [regional stay at home orders](#) due to the concerning surge, it is imperative that efforts to provide non-congregate shelter for individuals experiencing homelessness continue.

We greatly appreciate the partnership of cities and counties across the state that have responded quickly to meet the needs of people experiencing homelessness in their communities. Approximately 23,000 individuals have been served, over 15,000 rooms secured, and over 1,300 trailers deployed via [Project Roomkey](#).

Funding to Support Local Efforts

In March, Governor Newsom directed the first allocation of emergency funding authorized by the Legislature for COVID-19 related activities, including \$150 million for local emergency homelessness actions. To deploy this first funding allocation, the state provided:

- \$100 million directly to local governments, for shelter support and emergency housing to address COVID-19 among the homeless population, and
- \$50 million to purchase travel trailers and establish occupancy agreements for rooms in hotels, motels, and other facilities in partnership with counties, tribes and cities to provide immediate isolation placements throughout the state for homeless individuals.

On November 16, 2020, Governor Newsom [announced \\$62 million in one-time state General Funds from the State's Disaster Response Emergency Operations Account \(DREOA\)](#) to allow Project Roomkey operations to continue while transitioning participants to permanent housing and for technical assistance. To deploy the second funding allocation known as the Project Roomkey and Rehousing Strategy, the state provided:

- \$59 million directly to local governments for continued Project Roomkey operations as well as rehousing activities for current or former Project Roomkey participants.
- \$3 million to contract with experienced housing providers to provide technical assistance to help communities with their rehousing efforts.

\$800 million was made available for motel/hotel acquisition and conversion to housing through Homekey, to address the impacts of COVID-19 by producing over 6,000 units of housing for people experiencing homelessness or at risk of homelessness. As new state resources are made available, including \$300 million for round 2 of the [Homeless, Housing and Assistance Program \(HHAP\)](#), the state will continue to emphasize the importance of investing in non-congregate shelter options for people experiencing homelessness.

For additional information on round 2 of HHAP, contact hcfc@bcsh.ca.gov.

For additional information on Homekey, contact ProjectHomekey@hcd.ca.gov

Costs associated with providing non-congregate sheltering (NCS) and wrap around support for individuals who have tested positive, are exposed or who are asymptomatic but at high risk for severe health impact may be eligible for FEMA, at a 75 percent federal share for eligible populations as defined in the Federal Emergency Management Agency ([FEMA NCS Approval Letter dated March 27, 2020](#)). On December 18, 2020, [Governor Newsom announced](#) that due to the ongoing pandemic, FEMA has waived a previous requirement for Public Assistance funded non-congregate shelters to request time extensions on these shelter operations every 30 days.

Communities are strongly encouraged to utilize this reimbursement to support continued operations and should consider submitting an expedited project worksheet to be reimbursed for costs immediately.

Resources

[CDSS Housing and Homelessness Website](#)

[California Business, Consumer Services, and Housing Agency Website](#)

[California Business, Consumer Services, and Housing Agency Homeless Coordinating and Financing Council Website](#)

[California Housing and Community Development Website](#)

[Flow Chart: COVID-19 Recommended Protocol for People Experiencing Homelessness](#)

[Infection Control Guidance for Local Public Health Response to Homeless Shelters with Suspected or Confirmed COVID-19 Cases](#)