



June 30, 2020

**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 pandemic created by Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) disease. As local governments determine how to spend newly available resources, including Homekey funding, State General Fund, other Federal stimulus sources, counties are advised to continue to prioritize NCS.

Because of our collective actions, California has limited the spread of COVID-19 and associated hospitalizations and deaths in our state. Still, the risk for COVID-19 remains and the increasing number of Californians who are leaving their homes for work and other needs, increases the risk for COVID-19 exposure and infection. California has experienced its highest numbers of individuals testing positive in the last week of June, requiring additional actions 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 individuals experiencing homelessness across California are represented in one or more of these groups. As we continue to move through the Stages of modifying the Stay-at-Home order, 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 in utilizing these resources to quickly respond to the needs of their communities. Over 15,000 rooms have been secured and over 1,300 trailers deployed via [Project Roomkey](#).

## **Continued Monitoring of Temporary Housing Units - COVID-19 County Variance Attestation Form**

Local public health officials are asked to determine if their county meets specific criteria to determine the pace at which they can move through Stages to modify the Stay-at-Home order. One of the criteria that each county must meet relates to the availability of temporary housing units to shelter individuals experiencing homelessness.

The criteria reads,

“Availability of temporary housing units to shelter at least 15% of county residents experiencing homelessness in case of an outbreak among this population requiring isolation and quarantine of affected individuals. Please describe the county’s plans to support individuals, including those experiencing homelessness, who are not able to properly isolate in a home setting by providing them with temporary housing (including access to a separate bathroom, or a process in place that provides the ability to sanitize a shared bathroom between uses), for the duration of the necessary isolation or quarantine period. Rooms acquired as part of Project Roomkey should be utilized.”

### **Funding to Support Local Efforts**

In March, Governor Newsom directed the first allocation in emergency funding authorized by the Legislative 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.

As new state resources are made available, including \$300 million for round 2 of the [Homeless, Housing and Assistance Program \(HHAP\)](#) and \$550 million for motel/hotel acquisition and conversion to housing through Project Homekey, 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](mailto:hcfc@bcsh.ca.gov).

For additional information on Project Homekey, contact [ProjectHomekey@hcd.ca.gov](mailto:ProjectHomekey@hcd.ca.gov)

Costs associated with providing NCS and wrap around supports for individuals who have tested positive, are exposed or who are asymptomatic but 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](#).

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**

[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](#)