

Detroit CoC COVID-19 Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

(Updated March 20, 2020)

We will be compiling your questions into this document on a rolling basis. Our responses are based upon federal and state guidance when applicable and/or the efforts of other communities that merit emulation. We will work to regularly update this list so check back frequently. If you'd like to submit any additional questions, please complete the form [linked here](#).

Q: Our PSH consumers encounter shelter consumers, they are out in the community, have guests, etc. Should agencies be taking any precautions with our PSH residents? For instance, should or can visitors be legally limited or banned?

A: Yes, agencies should be educating PSH as well as RRH clients on the risks related to COVID-19. We've linked to some flyers that can help as you work to educate clients ([linked here](#) – the first 4 may be the most useful for your educational purposes). Regarding the restriction of visitors, PSH residents, agencies, and landlord need to abide by the lease. While guests may not be able to be banned, residents can be encouraged to limit guests. In recent guidance published by HUD, they remind stakeholders to ensure that their responses remain faithful to obligations under the Constitution, Fair Housing Act, the Americans with Disabilities Act, other Federal laws and related regulations.

Q: How can we protect clients in congregate living environments?

A: The City of Detroit and the Detroit Health Department developed guidance to protect clients and staff in congregate settings. Below we detail the overarching recommendations. We encourage you to consult the full guidance ([linked here](#)) for more details. We also welcome you to access a compilation of resources for all Detroit CoC Providers ([linked here](#)).

- Keep shelter staff and residents informed, and keep lines of communication open
- Develop or review a Continuity of Operations Plan
- Alter workflows where necessary
- Encourage regular environmental cleaning
- Encourage proper handwashing and cough etiquette among residents and staff
- Implement environmental controls
- Implement screening procedures
- Manage and isolate suspected cases

Q: Can homeless households still access Coordinated Entry (CAM)?

A: Yes, they can! We have modified things slightly to try to keep everyone healthy and safe. We have limited the access sites for Coordinated Entry and have ceased face-to-face navigation activities (we do encourage for navigators to engage with clients over the phone and through other creative means, however). For more information on where clients can present to meet with a CAM worker, [click here](#). CAM processes are changing daily to adapt to the needs of the Detroit CoC. Please check CAM's website regularly ([linked here](#)) for the most up-to-date information.

Q: Do we have specific guidance for shelter operations in light of COVID-19?

A: Yes, we do. You can access it by [clicking here](#). The city of Detroit also hosted two webinars to discuss this guidance. You can access them by clicking [here – 3/13/2020](#) and [here – 3/16/2020](#).

Q: Do we have specific COVID-19 guidance for TH and PSH providers who serve clients in congregate living situations?

A: We expect TH and PSH providers who serve clients in congregate settings to follow the shelter guidance provided by the city of Detroit ([linked here](#)). The alternate shelter sites coordinated by the City of Detroit for clients who exhibit symptoms of COVID-19 are available to these TH and PSH providers as well.

Q: We know that exits from shelter should be limited. What if someone has an opportunity to exit to permanent housing – is that okay?

A: Yes, absolutely! And we encourage you to facilitate this transition as quickly as possible.

Q: Should we still conduct home visits with clients in PSH and RRH?

A: Initial HUD guidance stated that “home-based services in transitional and permanent housing are essential and should be continued” with modifications to adjust for public health concerns and safety. However, as the situation progresses rapidly and social distancing becomes increasingly enforced, we do not want providers to put themselves or clients at unnecessary risk of exposure. We ask that providers use their discretion when choosing to enter a client’s home, asking clients about symptoms and any recent travel. If providers choose to enter the home, we recommend that they keep at least 5-6 feet distance between themselves and the client. We also ask providers to consider that COVID-19 likely has and will continue to cause a fair amount of stress and anxiety for tenants. Clients may be experiencing increased anxiety and depression, feelings of isolation, and a sense of overwhelm due to a lack of access to community engagement and resources. If in-person meetings are not possible, we encourage agencies and case managers to continue engaging with RRH and PSH tenants in the safest and most appropriate manner - over the phone, via email or texting, Facebook-messaging and other innovative ways of using technology (based on what your agency allows).

Q: Is the new 12-month RRH financial assistance limit still in effect with the increasing consumer need during COVID-19?

A: We know that the CoC Board recently approved an RRH policy update which limited financial assistance to CoC and City-funded RRH clients to 12 months. In light of the rising financial uncertainty many Michiganders are facing across the state due to COVID-19, the CoC and the City are relaxing this limit. If an RRH client is nearing 12 months of financial assistance and would be put at risk of returning to homelessness due to the cessation of support, we encourage you to continue providing assistance (up to HUD’s 24-month limit).

Q: Is public transit still available? Is it safe?

A: After the brief closure on 3/17, public transit in Detroit has resumed is currently still operating. In fact, the Mayor has announced that passengers can ride free of charge until the COVID-19 crisis has abated. Personnel are doing what they can to make transit as safe as possible for Detroiters. They following steps have been taken:

1. Effective March 18th, all DDOT fares are suspended in order to reduce the extent of close contact between drivers and passengers.
2. The Mayor’s Office will work diligently to make certain there are appropriate restroom facilities where they have been lost due to the recent business closure orders. Where replacement businesses have not yet been identified, temporary portable toilets with hand sanitizers will be installed by Thursday, March 19th.
3. Effective immediately, the following full cleaning schedule and staffing will be implemented (for each terminal):
 - 1030am – 230pm: 10 new cleaning staff. Will provide 10 minute clean for average load of 40 buses
 - 530pm – 200am: 10 additional cleaning staff. Will provide 30 minute clean for average load of 120 buses
4. End of Line Cleaning Schedule effective March 18:
 - a. 12 cleaning staff currently working one 12-hour shift will be increased to two 12-hour shifts of 20 cleaning staff each, providing 24 hour service
 - b. End of line cleaning will be done on the following routes: St John, Fairlane Mall, Northland, 3rd and Michigan, Beaubien and Jefferson, Rosa Parks, 8 Mile and Gratiot, State Fair Transit Center.
 - c. Cleaning protocols will require use of a new rag for each bus, with the sanitizing of high touch points with a 10 / 1 ratio disinfectant.
5. The seat immediately behind the driver will remain vacant unless used by Transit Police officers.
6. Drivers will be supplied a minimum of 2-5 pair of gloves and adequate number of disinfectant wipes at the beginning of each driver’s shift. We will provide masks upon request whenever available.
7. Union/management coordination. Union leadership and management will work continually to address any health-related issues through the DDOT Safety Committee, which will be supported by the Mayor’s Office and the Detroit Health Department.

Q: I heard that COVID-19 can be transmitted by talking. Is this true? If so, how are we supposed to protect people from that?

A: The most recent research does indeed indicate that COVID-19 can be transmitted through droplets that exit a person’s mouth while talking. Maintaining the 5’-6’ distance between individuals should provide adequate protection from transmission through talking.

Q: Is there anything we can do to help prevent our clients returning to homelessness and/or experiencing a loss of resources during this time?

A: *There have been many initiatives released over the passed few days targeted towards ensuring that Michiganders, and Detroiters specifically, do not lose stability amid these tumultuous times. We have provided links to the updates and resources we are aware of. We encourage you to continue to check www.michigan.gov/coronavirus daily for the most up-to-date information.*

- *Detroit has taken steps to re-start any shut-off water, prevent future shut-offs, and make water bills more manageable throughout COVID-19. Read more about it by [clicking here](#).*
- *Governor Whitmer has expanded unemployment benefits to protect a wider range of people impacted from COVID-19. Read more about it by [clicking here](#). There was also recent communication from the MI Department of Treasury about the potential of additional resources for those laid off due to COVID-19. This communication can be accessed by [clicking here](#). If a consumer loses their job due to COVID-19, we encourage you to have them call the Treasury's Collection Services Center for support at 517-636-5265.*
- *Bagged Meals (breakfast and lunch) are available for families to access while their children are away from school. Read more about it by [clicking here](#). Detroit Public Schools also has an array of other resources posted on their website that could be useful to share with consumers ([access website here](#)).*

Some additional items to look out for:

- *State officials are working to declare a state-wide moratorium on evictions, foreclosures, water shut-offs, and heat shut-offs. On 3/18/2020, Governor Whitmer signed an Executive Order extending the deadline for Michigan residents to pay back taxes to May 29, 2020 (or 30 days after the state of emergency is terminated) to help residents avoid foreclosures.*
- *There are discussions around expanding Medicaid to provide additional assistance for the medical expenses incurred from COVID-19.*
- *MDE has petitioned to the Federal Government for a series of waivers that allow for Emergency Food Assistance Programs to be more accessible to Michiganders by removing unnecessary barriers.*

We also urge providers to recognize that clients may experience a change of income during this time. We encourage you to check in with clients about this and to be open to adjusting the rent contribution expected of each household accordingly. Further, as mentioned above, we have loosened the 12-month limit for CoC and City RRH providers in light of COVID-19. If an RRH client is nearing 12 months of financial assistance, we encourage you to continue providing assistance (up to HUD's 24 month limit) if the cessation of funding could put the client at risk of returning to homelessness and re-entering our shelter system. MSHDA is also having discussions about lifting their 6-month limit for RRH assistance. We will keep you posted as we hear more.

Q: I saw the governor issued a restriction on entry into care facilities. What does this mean for shelters?

A: *The care facilities referenced in Governor Whitmer's executive order on 3/14/2020 are referring to medical facilities. This restriction does not have any direct impact on shelters. We do, however, continue to urge shelters to practice social distancing, health screening, and sanitation protocols in alignment with the City of Detroit's interim guidance as well as the federal guidance provided by HUD and the CDC.*