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# COVID-19 Supplemental Operations Guide for Resident Services

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Version 2.0

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## Introduction

To support public health officials in preventing the spread of COVID-19, Mercy Housing has adjusted various operating procedures to promote social distancing, and implement precautionary measures, for both staff and residents.

The purpose of this guide is to support employees with the ever-changing and dynamic nature of our operations and resident interactions, as circumstances surrounding COVID-19 continue to change. Included within this guide is summary information previously provided, as well as additional resources and guidance for implementation, intended to support you and your teams in your day-to-day work.

Mercy Housing has developed a [Sharepoint Page](#) dedicated to issues related to COVID-19. This guide is posted on the page and will be updated as guidance changes. We will also update the documents and/or information provided via the links so that you are working with the most up to date information. Always use the provided link as it will be the most up to date version of the document or information referenced in the body of the Guide. You will be notified via email as updates are made to this guide.

## You will be notified via email as updates are made to this guide.

### What is coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19)?

COVID-19 is a respiratory disease caused by a new virus called SARS-CoV-2. The most common symptoms of the disease are fever, cough, and shortness of breath. Most people with COVID-19 will have mild disease but some people will get sicker and may need to be hospitalized.

### The following symptoms may appear 2-14 days after exposure:

- Fever
- Cough
- Shortness of Breath

**If you develop emergency warning signs for COVID-19 get medical attention immediately. Emergency warning signs include:**

- Difficulty breathing or shortness of breath
- Persistent pain or pressure in the chest
- New confusion or inability to arouse
- Bluish lips or face

### How it's spread:

- Between people who are in close contact with one another (within about 6 feet).
- Through respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs or sneezes.

These droplets can land in the mouths or noses of people who are nearby or possibly be inhaled into the lungs. It may be possible that a person can get COVID-19 by touching a surface or object that has the virus on it and then touching their own mouth, nose, or possibly their eyes, but this is not thought to be the main way the virus spreads.

### **How do I know if I was exposed?**

You generally need to be in close contact with a sick person to get infected. Close contact includes:

- Living in the same household as a sick person with COVID-19,
- Caring for a sick person with COVID-19,
- Being within 6 feet of a sick person with COVID-19 for about 10 minutes, OR
- Being in direct contact with secretions from a sick person with COVID-19 (e.g., being coughed on, kissing, sharing utensils, etc.).

If you have not been in close contact with a sick person with COVID-19, you are at low risk for infection and you can continue to go to work.

### **What should I do if I was in close contact with someone with COVID-19 while they were ill, but I am not sick?**

If you have been within six feet someone who has Covid-19 for ten minutes or more, you should monitor your health for fever, cough and shortness of breath during the 14 days after the last day you were in close contact with the sick person with COVID-19. You should not go to work and should avoid public places for 14 days.

### **What should I do if I was in close contact with someone with COVID-19 and get sick?**

If you get sick with fever, cough or shortness of breath (even if your symptoms are very mild), you may have COVID-19. You should isolate yourself at home and away from other people. If you have any of the following conditions that may increase your risk for a serious infection—age 60 years or older, are pregnant, or have medical conditions—contact your physician’s office and tell them that you were exposed to someone with COVID-19. They may want to monitor your health more closely or test you for COVID-19.

If you do not have a high-risk condition but want medical advice, call your healthcare provider and tell them you were exposed to someone with COVID-19. Your healthcare provider can help you decide if you need to be evaluated in person or tested. There are currently no medications to treat COVID-19. If you have a medical emergency and need to call 911, notify the dispatch personnel that you may have been exposed to COVID-19. If possible, put on a facemask before emergency medical services arrive or immediately after they arrive.

### **Employee Illness**

When you are sick or have flu-like symptoms, stay home, get plenty of rest and check with a health care provider as needed. If an employee comes to work and is sick (not just COVID-19 symptoms), they are to be sent home.

*The CDC recommends that you phone a health care provider first; do not overwhelm the health care system.*

## **THE BASICS**

### **Confidentiality Protocol**

It is extremely important that we respect the privacy of our employees and residents for health-related issues. Communications regarding COVID-19 confirmations should not include any identifying information, to include name or apartment number. This includes COVID-19 Incident Notifications, normal e-mail communications or the resident file. You may share identifying information verbally with your ADO and appropriate Mercy Housing personnel.

### **Resident Communications and Postings**

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All properties are to maintain postings and resident notifications as directed by Mercy Housing. The following posters should be displayed on your property, near entrances, at elevators and other areas accessible by residents. The following is a list of postings, which should be displayed on your property:

*Share Facts About Covid-19*  
*What you Need to Know*  
*What to do if you are Sick*  
*Stop the Spread of Germs*  
*Symptoms of Coronavirus Disease 2019*

These displays can be downloaded at: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/communication/factsheets.html>

Additionally, each property should have handwashing postings displayed in the same areas.

These displays can be downloaded at: <https://www.cdc.gov/handwashing/fact-sheets.html>

Resident notifications for *Social Distancing, Common Area Restrictions and Adjusted Operations* are to be posted at entrances, offices and common areas, as appropriate. These notifications may be located at: [Resident Notifications](#)

### **If staff are notified of a suspected case (e.g. neighboring resident):**

If a resident or employee approaches Resident Services Staff, direct them to speak with the Property Manager. Resident Services Staff should share what you learned with the Property Manager immediately, verbally.

Response from Resident Services Staff to Residents: “Thank you for your concern. The well-being of our residents and staff is our top priority. Once we are notified of a confirmed diagnosis, we will take the appropriate measures as directed by the health department and local authorities. If you become aware of a confirmed diagnosis, please let us know and we will follow-up”. **Do not put this information in an email or in writing; please call the Property Manager directly.**

Because the case is unconfirmed, it’s not necessary to communicate this to your Resident Service Manager unless you feel that there may be extenuating circumstances, which you would like to discuss.

### **If staff are notified of an individual quarantine:**

If a resident discloses to you that they are quarantined, be sure to ask the following questions:

- Inquire if they are self-quarantined or is this a directive from a health care professional?
- Inquire how long are they quarantined for?

Direct the resident to also speak with the Property Manager. **Do not put this information in an email or in writing; please call the Property Manager directly.** As noted above, the Property Manager will be taking the lead on having specific conversations about quarantines with residents. Alert the Property Manager and your Resident Services Manager. The Property Manager will lead the response and communicate with the Area Director of Operations. The ADO will then communicate with the broader leadership team including the Resident Services Manager and Director or VP of Resident Services.

### **If staff are notified of a confirmed case:**

If a resident/employee notifies you that they have a confirmed case of COVID-19, immediately contact the Property Manager. **Do not put this information in an email or in writing; please call the Property Manager directly.** The Property

Manager will contact the ADO so that they may initiate our communication protocol to the RVP, Resident Services Director or Vice President and senior leadership. The senior team will have an immediate discussion to review the situation, including the various aspects specific to this situation. You will be instructed on next steps to take to help support the Property Management team in terms of notifications, required self-quarantines and sterilization protocols for affected areas of the property.

If it is an employee and they are at work – send them home immediately. If they are already at home – they may not end home isolation until:

- At least 3 days (72 hours) have passed since recovery. Recovery means not having a fever (temperature at or below 100.3F) and no longer taking fever reducing medications AND there has been significant improvement in their cough and breathing,

AND

- At least 7 days have passed since symptoms first appeared

Employees may return to work when they meet the criteria for ending home isolation but must wear a mask if they still have a cough.

[See CDC guidance for more details.](#)

Be very mindful of privacy laws; you may not disclose the identity of an employee or resident, unless it has been determined that an individual has been in contact with the positive person in question for longer than a casual encounter during a specified period of time. These guidelines will be determined by the senior leaders evaluating the situation.

## **GUIDANCE FOR DEATH AT PROPERTY: COVID Addendum**

It is important to handle any death at the property with great sensitivity. It is not staff's responsibility to determine cause of death or if there is foul play involved. The police will investigate when they arrive.

If you are notified or find someone whom you suspect has died regardless of cause:

- If you are not certain if the person is dead call 9-1-1 immediately, unless they have already been called, even if another person or a family member who may also be in the apartment does not think it is necessary. If you are certain the person is dead call the local police main number.
- Tell the dispatcher that you are aware of a resident who has died or have found a resident who appears to have died.
- The dispatcher will send the paramedics and the police to investigate your report.
- Call the Property Manager.
- Property Manager should then call the ADO.
- Do not enter the unit. Admit only police, paramedics, coroner, or fire department personnel to the apartment and cooperate with them fully, providing as much information as possible. Do not allow anyone else into the unit, other than the surviving resident(s).
- Do not move the resident or any of his/her belongings, don't flush the toilet, don't turn off lights, etc.
- Avoid touching anything. You don't want to disturb the scene in case a crime has been committed.
- The paramedics/fire department/doctor will make the determination if the person is dead or if s/he only appears to be dead.
- When the police arrive, they will investigate and will contact the coroner to remove the body\*. The police will stay with the body until the coroner arrives.
- When the body has been removed and all emergency personnel are ready to leave, if the deceased was the only occupant:
  - Close and lock the door.
  - No one is to enter the unit until further notice.
- Follow any instructions left by the coroner or police in regard to the unit.

- Complete an Incident Report and follow standard procedures for:
  - Reporting a death at the property; and
  - Release of personal possessions to family/next of kin

\*(Note: In some cases, with the elderly or terminally ill residents, the family can make a request to the coroner's office to have the family mortuary pick up the body from the complex. However, *this is not a decision that staff or the family can make – the police or coroner will make this decision.* This may require that police/paramedics/coroner talk with the attending physician over the phone.)

**Additional steps, unless advised by the Authorities that the death was NOT due to COVID-19 and when advised that a resident has died of COVID-19 offsite:**

- Notify the RVP and the COVID Strike Force Team.
- If the resident was at the property at any time in the last 14 days, contact a vendor to conduct an enhanced deep cleaning of all the common areas immediately. Notify residents that the cleaning vendor will be on-site and request that they remain in their units for 30 minutes while the vendor is on their floor cleaning the hallway and common areas.
- No one (including the resident's family) other than any surviving residents, should enter the unit until the later of, the date the coroner or the police have released the unit, in the case of a death at the property, or 14 days after the death. No personal possessions should be released until 14 days have elapsed since the death.
- Once at least 14 days have passed:
  - If there are no other occupants of the unit a vendor should conduct an enhanced cleaning of the unit, before anyone enters – staff or family. If there are other occupants who are not exhibiting any symptoms, offer to arrange an enhance deep cleaning of the unit.
  - Once enhance deep cleaning is complete, if the unit is vacant property management staff can enter the unit and prepare it for the next resident. An additional enhanced cleaning by property management staff of the hallways and common areas is recommended following the unit preparation.

[See annex 1](#) for guidance about talking to residents about a Covid-19 death on the property.

## EMPLOYMENT CONSIDERATIONS

### Meeting Property Needs (Residents/Staff/Building)

During an extraordinary event, such as this global pandemic, it is extremely important that we are proactively communicating with residents and staff, following precautionary measures to prevent/slow the spread of the virus, and maintaining priority and essential business activities at the property on a daily basis.

Where possible, our apartment communities are to remain open for business, even when a mandated “shelter in place” has been issued, as our operations are considered an essential business and it is important for our staff to be able to be present for emergencies.

Mercy Housing apartment communities will remain open, where possible, but will post signs at the building entrance(s) and at office(s) to indicate restrictive measures, including Social Distancing, restricted office access and/or adjusted hours.

### Flexible Work Arrangements

During this time, temporary flexible work arrangements may be explored. If staff can do part of their duties from home, they may request, or management may decide, to allow telework part-time. Special consideration will be given to those staff whose workstation doesn't allow for achieving a distance of at least 6' from others. We realize that many of our team members have family responsibilities that involve caring for children, parents, etc. If schools are closed, please communicate with your supervisor immediately so we can properly manage staffing needs.

If property needs are met, there may be a way to perform part of your job duties from home for at least a portion of the week. Please be present to work if you have a live-in partner or co-parent who can share these responsibilities with you, if possible. The Essential Duties for Resident Services table in the *Operational Priorities* section includes essential services as well as what duties can be completed at home. Staff should consult with their manager regarding which essential functions can be completed at home.

However, with any telework arrangement staff will need to be on property for the following duties:

- Any food distributions, e.g. school lunch, meal delivery or food pantry
- Other site-based duties as assigned.
- Support on other properties if there are staffing shortages.

Each staff should be at the properties no less **than 8 hours per week**. Individual properties may have needs that require more onsite staff presence. Staff who cannot participate in onsite duties must take accrued PTO for that time.

In rare cases, staff may also be asked on a limited and temporary basis to support essential property management functions should property management be temporarily unable to perform them. This may include walking the property, enhanced cleaning protocols, answering the phone, and following up on emergency service requests. In very rare instances, it may also include handling rents until the ADO can collect it, covering the front desk, and notice distribution. Any request to support Property Management's essential functions MUST be approved by the Director/VP of Resident Services for your region. Please note that MHMG has also agreed to expand their support for Resident Services upon request.

If needed, please work with your Resident Services Manager to gain agreement on a flexible staffing schedule at your property for the immediate future. Once the staff and supervisor reach agreement on a work schedule, your Director or VP of Resident Services must approve, and those schedules will be shared with the MHMG RVP.

## Working from Home

With our flexible work arrangements for staggered staffing as well as accommodations for individuals needing to work remotely, various staff will be working from home part time.

While working remotely, it is important that we all focus on the accomplishment of defined work tasks as given by the supervisor. This will allow the staff member to stay productive, and to keep our properties as functional as possible. The [Employee Guide for Remote Access](#) will guide you on technology considerations while working remotely. Should you not have a company-issued laptop, most programs and functions can be accessed through a personal device.

Should you be approved to work remotely and not have a personal device suited for conducting business, please contact your Resident Services Manager to coordinate the issuance of a temporary device from the company.

If you will be working remotely, you are encouraged to follow these recommended practices:

- Take your scheduled morning and afternoon breaks, in addition to your lunch break (required)



- Try to keep the same routine as you normally would as if you were going to the property. Get dressed.
- Designate a specific space for working.
- Keep your designated work area free of clutter and distractions
- Complete daily planning to help keep you focused.
- Make use of technology, such as Teams and Skype, to stay in touch with your team instead of just relying on email. You may also want to check in with a daily call.
- When it is time to end your workday, set work aside and leave it there.

Your supervisor will coordinate with you to determine the priorities around tasks and assignments.

The following are items you **may** take from the office:

- Office Supplies (Paper, Pens, Notepads) in order to keep working
- IT Equipment that is portable (Laptops ONLY; NOT Desktop Computers or Check Scanners)

The following are items that you **may not** take from the office:

- Anything with confidential resident information (e.g. Resident Files)
- Confidential communications
- Desktop Computers, Scanners, Copiers

Here are some [helpful training resources](#) for Mercy's core operational excellence . This training includes brief videos by topic and can be accessed from any device that is connected to the internet.

MercyTech will be offering multiple training sessions to supplement this online training the last two weeks of March 2020.

**All Microsoft Office Products** - [Use this link](#) to access training for all Microsoft Office Products. This training encompasses the following products: Outlook, OneDrive, Teams, SharePoint, Word, Excel, OneNote, Planner, Stream, Sway, Whiteboard, etc.

**MS Teams** – [Use this link](#) to access training for Microsoft Teams. You can also find this training within the MS Teams application by clicking on the help button in the bottom left hand corner of the Teams main menu.

**How to forward your phone calls** - [Use this link](#) to access step by step instructions to forward your phone calls from your office phone to another phone number (Avaya or Megapath desk phones).

## Employee Related Precautions

All employees working on-site are to follow precautionary measures in their day-to-day activities and interactions with other staff and residents.

**Social Distancing** - All staff are to observe *Social Distancing* guidelines when completing work assignments throughout the day. *Social Distancing* is defined as the practice of maintaining a greater than usual physical distance from other people or of avoiding direct contact with people or objects in public places during the outbreak of a contagious disease in order to minimize exposure and reduce the transmission of infection. It is recommended that you maintain a distance of at least 6 feet between you and others and where possible - meet with individuals only and in a larger space, such as a community room or lobby area and well-ventilated areas.

**Handwashing/Sanitizing** - Staff should regularly be washing their hands and/or using hand sanitizer, whenever possible. You are encouraged to not touch your face with your bare hands.

**Suspended Activities** - Staff have been provided with a listing of work assignments, which should be fully or partially suspended for the time being or where limited face-to-face interaction should be observed. See *Operational Priorities* section under *Operational Guidelines*.

### **Wearing Masks**

In the next few months, if they are available, Mercy Housing hopes to be able to provide disposable masks for all site staff and corporate staff that need to go into one of our regional or national offices. Right now, that is not possible due to mask shortages nationally. Luckily, we identified suppliers that may be able to provide us with a limited quantity of surgical masks that are not currently being reserved for healthcare workers. We hope to receive the first shipment in a few weeks. **These first Mercy Housing procured masks will be prioritized for the following staff:**

1. Desk clerks whose workstation has no protective barrier (e.g. glass or plexiglass enclosure) and maintenance staff for use when they have to enter resident apartments.
2. All staff working on site at properties where there is a confirmed COVID case.
3. On site staff supporting food distribution.

### **Other sources of masks/face cloths**

- Should you be able to locate surgical masks locally, you are authorized to purchase those masks and utilize them when interacting with others on the property. If you do not have an account with the local source, you may use petty cash to purchase.
- At properties where there is an existing inventory of face masks, including N95 masks and/or fit-tested respirators, staff are allowed to use their existing inventory of masks when interacting with others, such as maintenance staff completing emergency maintenance requests inside of occupied apartments, desk clerks where there is no protective barrier (e.g. plexiglass enclosure) between the desk clerk and residents/visitors, and staff conducting food distribution. Manufacturer instructions and precautions should always be followed when using these or any other type of PPE. Note masks only offer limited, if any protection against COVID, therefore social distancing and regular handwashing must still be practiced when wearing these.
- Homemade face masks and cloth face coverings are allowed.

Cloth face coverings should:

Fit snugly but comfortably against the side of the face

- Be secured with ties or ear loops.
- Include multiple layers of fabric.
- Allow for breathing without restriction.
- Be able to be laundered and machine dried without damage or change to shape.
- Should be hot washed regularly.

While you may wear these cloth masks yourself, please do not acquire or purchase these for others.

**Please do not share or provide face masks to residents.**

Please remember all masks are not guaranteed protection and should not be considered as such. Staff are to continue strictly observing all precautionary measures, including social distancing (physical space of 6 feet between others), handwashing, and enhanced cleaning measures.

More guidance and information regarding the different types of masks is posted on the [FDA website](#). If you have any questions, please contact your Supervisor.

### **Public Transportation Alternatives**

All employees, who use public transportation are encouraged to find alternative transportation to and from work, where

possible. Should you have reliable transportation, such as a personal automobile, we would encourage you to drive your own car. Another alternative would be to carpool with other staff members if feasible. We recognize that there may be limitations around parking and/or financial considerations in select cases. Should you feel that you are not able to do so without additional support, we would ask that you reach out to your Resident Services Manager to discuss possible solutions.

## Time Off Policies

In response to the growing COVID-19 (Coronavirus) pandemic, Mercy Housing continues to keep the wellbeing of our employees and families at the forefront. Recently, the Families First Coronavirus Response Act (FFCRA) was passed and provides an Expanded Family and Medical Leave that is restricted to Coronavirus (COVID-19) related childcare purposes, and COVID related paid sick leave. Please speak to your Resident Services Manager if you are interested in these programs.

## Employee Assistance Program

Mercy Housing offers an Employee Assistance Program. The EAP offers a variety of services, including mental health services. Please reach out if there is a need. Contact information is as follows:

### Curalinc

Ph: Toll-free:

Web:

Username:

Password:

For additional information, follow this [link](#).

# OPERATIONAL GUIDELINES FOR SERVICES

**The following sections include both updated guidelines as well as considerations and best practices in various operational situations.**

## Operational Priorities

During this period of adjusted operations, each property is being asked to modify daily work activities to prioritize certain tasks and suspend others. In general, we have directed sites to complete as many of their tasks as possible, without coming in direct contact with residents and other staff. For tasks that are not deemed to be critical to our operations, we are suspending these tasks until we return to a normalized operating environment. However, staff have shown great innovation in creating virtual approaches to provide services. For ideas and resources, please join the [Resident Services Covid-19 Programming Microsoft Team site](#) . The team is open to anyone who wants to join.

The chart below details many common resident services activities and if they are priority, essential, as needed, or should be suspended. Check with your supervisor if you have any questions about this list.

Resident Services Essential Activities					
Standard	Priority	Property Type	If Essential or Priority-Methods	Possible Alternative	By phone
<b>Community Participation</b>					
Community Events	Essential/As Needed	All	Conference calls, balcony/hallway events with social distancing		Yes
Resident Volunteering	Suspend/As needed	All		Maybe allowable in select circumstances	No
Community Leadership	Suspend	All			No
Family Reconciliation	Suspend	All			No
<b>Health and Wellness</b>					
Ind Health Coaching (by phone)	*Priority*	All	As part of wellbeing calls		Yes
Food (See new guidelines)	*Priority*	All	Food banks with Social Distancing measure in place/Support school lunches		No
Wellbeing checks (as phone calls))	*Priority*	All	Call all Senior residents daily and vulnerable Family residents		Yes
Behavioral Health Care	Essential /Suspend	PSH only		May be done If can be done virtually or if necessary, for health and safety residents	Maybe
Health Benefits Acquisition	Essential	All	Sign up for SNAP or open season		Yes
Primary Preventive Health Care	Suspend	All			No
Standard	Priority	Property Type	If Essential or Priority-Methods	Possible Alternative	By phone
Health Education Seminars	Suspend	All			No
Physical Activity	Suspend	All			No
Senior Assessments	Suspend	All			Maybe
<b>Financial Stability</b>					
Financial Benefits Acquisition	Essential	All	Virtual support to connect residents with unemployment and other benefits		Yes

Financial Stability workshops and Coaching	Essential/As Needed	All	Virtual support as needed		Yes
EITC	Suspend	All			No
Employment Readiness	Suspend	All			No
<b>Housing Stability</b>					
Eviction Prevention	Essential	All	Virtual Support		Yes
Rental Assistance	Essential	All	Virtual Support		Yes
Lease Education	Essential/As Needed	All	Virtual Support		Yes
Inspections	Suspend	All			No
Housing options	Suspend	All			No
<b>OST</b>					
Provision of remote learning	Essential	Family			Maybe
Regular Programming	Suspend	Family			No
<b>Other</b>					
Application assistance	Essential	All	Can be done virtually		Yes
Technology	Essential	All	If can be done with social distancing		No
<b>Administrative</b>					
Responding to Resident Calls	*Priority*	All			Yes
Coordinating with partners	* Priority*	All			Yes
Coordinating for food banks	* Priority*	All			Maybe
Virtual Meetings with PM	*Priority*	All			Yes
Enter services into Mercy Measures	Essential	All			Yes
Online Trainings	Essential	All			Yes

### 1 on 1 Meetings

In your day-to-day work, we want you to conduct as many of your activities as you can through telephone, e-mail, Teams, Skype and/or written notifications. There are, however, situations where it is difficult not to have an in-person interaction to complete a task, particularly food distribution.

In situations where you are looking to potentially meet with an individual face-to-face, either through their request or yours, we ask that you first try to screen the individual by **asking the following questions** over the phone or through e-mail: (Note: It is understood that at times a resident may simply walk to your office, at which time you should schedule an appointment) **When not meeting with residents, keep your door locked.**

1. Have you traveled overseas recently? If yes, is it to a country with [CDC level 3 restrictions](#)?
2. Have you been told by a public health official that you may have been exposed to coronavirus (COVID-19)?
3. Have you been in contact with someone known to have coronavirus (COVID-19)?
4. Are you experiencing any of the following symptoms? A fever, A cough, Runny nose, Sore throat?

If the answer is 'yes' to any of these questions, you are not to meet with them face-to-face but by phone. Virtual Conferencing with residents is allowed and you are encouraged to use MS Teams. See [annex 2](#) for instructions on how to use teams with non-Mercy Employees.

## Wellbeing Checks

At senior properties and PSH properties, it is recommended that staff conduct a well-being checks by phone with all residents each workday. For family properties, you can target more vulnerable residents. This is a great activity for teleworking. Suggested questions include:

- How are you doing overall?
- Do you need food or other resources (this is a great time to do signups for food bank appointment-see below)
- If you found yourself needing resources or assistance with anything, who would you call?
- Do you need support signing up for benefits, e.g. SNAP, Unemployment, health insurance?
- (If they have school aged children), how is remote schooling going? Do you need any resources?
- Do you need any other assistance?

Here is a [sample script](#) you can use. Dial \*67 before the phone number to keep personal phone numbers confidential. Best Practice is to leave a message and call back in 5 minutes so that individuals screening will know to answer. There is also a new Touchpoint called "Covid-19 Wellbeing check" available for use.

## Food

Right now, a priority service is food distribution. This could be through regular, expanded or pop-up food pantries or by supporting summer lunch while school is out. This service must be maintained as food insecurity is likely to increase among our residents, particularly seniors and residents who are recently unemployed.

### Food Banks and Distribution Guidance

Below are the current best practices for food distributions. Please communicate with your communities the changes. In times of uncertainty, ample communication is necessary to make sure everyone hears the information. As always, if you have questions please reach out to your supervisor. Note, additional resources have been put in place to support food distribution. If more resources are needed to stock your food pantry, talk to your RSM.

If purchasing food:

- Purchase nutrient rich food. Beans, whole grains, rice, canned protein, veggies, nuts and nut butters preferred. Skip Top Ramen or Cup O' Noodle types of foods.
- Consider purchasing in bulk pre-packaged items.
- Contact local foodbanks to see if you can leverage your funding and expand partnerships.

Pre-Bagging Food

- All food should be **pre-bagged** for resident pick up. To promote social distancing, residents will not be able to select their own food. This will create the least amount of face-to-face interaction time and ensures everyone has access to the same food opportunity.
- When pre-bagging, use the following precaution:
  - Wear gloves **and a mask (if available)** when handling food; for your protection as well as for the residents.
  - Wash your hands **Before and After!**
  - If more than 1 person is participating in bagging, make sure that you are at least 6 feet apart and working at separate workstations/tables. Avoid passing items to each other.

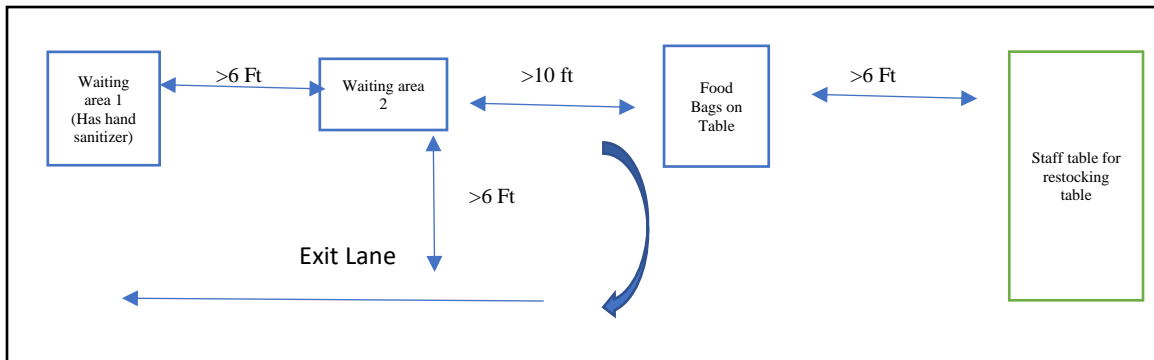
**Drop Off Option: Preferred Method**

- Best practice is to find out via phone which resident would like food and then drop off pre-bagged food at the residents’ door.
- We should just knock on the door and walk away to maintain social distancing.
- Remind residents to dispose of the bags and to wash hands after receiving.



**Pick-Up Option: (Not preferred)**

- If it is not possible to deliver the pre-bagged food, it should be pre-bagged and set out for residents to pick up.
- Ask residents to make an appointment, so that they pick up times at different time slots. Do not have more than 2 residents at any time slot.
- If possible, this distribution **should be outside**. Putting a table in front of a door and placing food out for residents to pick up. A canopy could be used to cover the table as well. **Wear a mask if available.**
- Ask residents to wash hands prior to picking up food.
- Surfaces where food is left out should be cleaned prior and periodically during the distribution. At the end of distribution, cleaned again.
- Let residents know to dispose of the bag and to wash their hands when returning home. This is for their safety.
- Using gloves where possible to handle food, where possible, is a best practice. Disposing of the gloves immediately after use is also important.
- Social distancing measures should continue to be in place. Residents and staff should not come within 6 feet of each other. Limit the amount of people in the food distribution. Use cones/tape to mark where residents should stand in line, 6 feet apart. See example configuration below. The waiting areas are marked with tape and there are two waiting areas in case residents come early. The staff has a table where they place a food bag for each resident as they come in and resupply off a larger table in the back. Be sure to have an “exit” lane so that residents stay 6 feet apart when leaving.



**School Feeding Programs**

Where Mercy Housing is serving as a distribution point for school feeding programs, similar efforts to maintain social distancing as described above apply. Staff should deliver the meals directly to families; when that is not possible, put in place a pickup system as described above.

**Out of School Time**

If schools are closed, OST should also be suspended so that we don’t undermine social distancing. In the meantime, you are encouraged to provide remote learning resources for residents. You can do things such as busy bags, age appropriate

worksheets and sharing other online resources. Make sure to maintain social distancing with any interaction. For ideas and resources, check out [Annex 4](#) or the OST channel of [Resident Services Covid-19 Programming MS Team](#)

Use of video conferencing programming is acceptable. Additional consent forms are not required for video conferencing. You may not record these sessions.



## Applications Assistance / Benefits Acquisition

A key service that can be potentially done remotely is benefits acquisition and application assistance. Due to changes at the federal and state level, residents may need support applying for the following benefits:

- Unemployment Benefits- You can find state-level unemployment insurance information [here](#).
- Expanded SNAP benefits
- Health insurance- Several states have reopened the health insurance exchanges so that citizen can purchase health insurance. This includes:
  - [California](#)
  - [Colorado](#)
  - [Washington](#)
  - This list will be expanded if and when states change their policies

Please remember that loss of employment is always a qualifying event even if it is not open season.

These services can be supported remotely for residents. They can be entered into Mercy Measures as health benefits acquisition (SNAP and Health insurance) and Financial Benefits acquisition (Unemployment insurance).

## Community Events and Programming

If there is staff capacity, creative community events using social distancing is encouraged. This is an opportunity to staff to be creative and think of ways to bring residents together. Fun ideas include balcony singalongs, art contests, hallway bingo, and virtual coffee time. See [annex 3](#) for a list of possible events and activities.

## Other Services

Based on the needs of the property, other services may be required such as behavioral health care and primary preventive care. If there is a service that you think is necessary for your property and it can be done with social distancing in mind, talk to your supervisor.

## Use of Non-Resident Volunteers

In the spirit of social distancing, the use of non-resident volunteers should be limited to only essential services on properties. Volunteers are permissible to support our onsite food banks, lunch distribution, and food pantries. However, extra precautions must be put in place to keep both our volunteers and our residents safe.

### 1. Screening volunteers

First, prior to coming on the property, please ask them to confirm that they answer negatively to the following questions either by phone or by email:

1. Have you traveled overseas recently? If yes, is it to a country with [CDC](#)

## Entering Services into Mercy Measures

### OST-

- The distribution of “busy bags” another remote learning resources can be entered under the “closure” tab of the OST participant summary
- Any programming delivered via video conference can be entered as they would be if they were in-person

## Benefits Acquisition:

### Unemployment Insurance:

Enter under Financial Benefits Acquisition Then answer the following question: Which benefits did you help the resident obtain?

- SSI
- SSDI
- TANF
- Child Support
- Childcare Assistance
- Unemployment**
- General Assistance
- Other

### SNAP/Health Insurance

Enter under Health Benefit Acquisition Then answer the following sub-question:

Which Health Benefits did Resident Services help the resident obtain?

- Medicare**
- Medicaid**
- State Health Assistance
- City/County Health Assistance
- Private Insurance (health exchange)**
- WIC
- Food Stamps (This is SNAP)**
- Other

[level 3 restrictions?](#)

2. Have you been told by a public health official that you may have been exposed to coronavirus (COVID-19)?
3. Have you been in contact with someone known to have coronavirus (COVID-19)?
4. Are you experiencing any of the following symptoms? A fever, A cough, Runny nose, Sore throat?

If the answer is 'yes' to any of these questions, they should not be allowed to volunteer.

## 2. Social Distancing

Volunteers should **wash their hand immediately** upon entering the property and on leaving. If a volunteer looks in any way ill, please ask them to go home.

If possible, volunteers should **be limited in their interactions with residents**, and the volunteer should never be **within 6 ft of a resident or staff member**. In the case of food distribution, require volunteers wear gloves and give them tasks that limit in person to person interactions with residents and staff such as packing the food, calling residents to schedule appointments, or leaving food bags on resident's doorstep. Take every precaution to make sure that surfaces are cleaned before and after a volunteer has touched them.

## Enhanced Cleaning Protocols

**Preventive cleaning is everyone's responsibility on the property to keep the spread of infections down.**

### Preventive Cleaning

Resident Services should follow the preventive cleaning protocols addressed in the March Safety Meeting as follows:

- Sanitize surfaces frequently touched, at least twice a day. These include doorknobs, elevator buttons, sliding windows, remote controls, etc.
- Have hand sanitizer (at least 60% alcohol) available in the office. Wash hands with soap and/or use hand sanitizer before using any office equipment, including computer, printer, telephones, etc.
- Have hand sanitizer available in common areas/lobbies for resident use if possible.
- Work with the PM team to see that the property is properly stocked with soap, cleaning supplies and nitrile gloves (in several sizes).

Wipe desks, phones, printers, and computers daily. It is important to keep common work surfaces and areas clean. Please use sanitizing wipes, soap & water, a bleach & water solution or other products (EPA-approved) to wipe down work surfaces, such as phones, chair arms, desks, computer keyboards, door handles, doorknobs, etc. before use. Always follow the directions on any product labels.

### When Cleaning:

- **Wear disposable gloves and gowns for all tasks in the cleaning process, including handling trash.**
  - Additional personal protective equipment (PPE) might be required based on the cleaning/disinfectant products being used and whether there is a risk of splash.
  - Gloves and gowns should be removed carefully to avoid contamination of the wearer and the surrounding area.
- **Wash your hands often** with soap and water for 20 seconds.
  - Always wash immediately after removing gloves and after contact with an ill person.
  - Hand sanitizer: If soap and water are not available and hands are not visibly dirty, an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol may be used. However, if hands are visibly dirty, always wash hands with soap and water.
- **Additional key times to wash hands** include:

- After blowing one's nose, coughing, or sneezing.
- After using the restroom.
- Before eating or preparing food.
- After contact with animals or pets.

### How to Clean & Disinfect:

**Clean** - Clean surfaces using soap and water. Practice routine cleaning of frequently touched surfaces. High touch surfaces include: Tables, doorknobs, light switches, countertops, handles, desks, phones, keyboards, toilets, faucets, sinks, etc.

**Disinfect** - Use diluted household bleach solutions if appropriate for the surface. Check to ensure the product is not past its expiration date. Unexpired household bleach will be effective against coronaviruses when properly diluted. Follow manufacturer's instructions for application and proper ventilation. Never mix household bleach with ammonia or any other cleanser. To make a bleach solution, mix: 5 tablespoons (1/3rd cup) bleach per gallon of water OR 4 teaspoons bleach per quart of water.

You may also use Alcohol solutions with at least 70% alcohol and/or Household cleaners and disinfectants: Clean the area or item with soap and water or another detergent if it is dirty. Then, use a household disinfectant. Follow the instructions on the label to ensure safe and effective use of the product.

Many products recommend:

- Keeping the surface wet for several minutes to ensure germs are killed.
- Precautions such as wearing gloves and making sure you have good ventilation during use of the product.

### Common Areas, Public Spaces, and Resident Events

At this time, your common area spaces should not be open to residents and the public. This includes community rooms, computer centers, kitchens, fitness centers, party rooms, playgrounds and additional spaces that may be at your community. At this time, laundry facilities are to remain open for resident use.

All resident events (even resident-organized) should be cancelled for March and April. No group gatherings at this time.

### Behavioral Concerns & Related Evictions

The following guidelines are to be implemented for all properties. Each property is to stay updated with city and state requirements for eviction restrictions. Should local guidance be more restrictive and/or have more detailed requirements, the local guidelines must be followed.

- It is important to note that any eviction during a time such as this, should be avoided unless not proceeding would potentially put our residents and/or staff at risk of harm.
- For any lease violation, the Housing Support Plan will be followed.
- Unless otherwise prohibited by local restrictions, legal notices will be served, as is standard, for violations of house rules, including behavior deemed to be egregious/violent/disruptive.
- Each situation will be evaluated individually by the RVP, RSD and GBC President to determine the appropriate course of action, up to and including initiation of eviction.
- For residents currently under an eviction proceeding and/or stipulated agreement for behavioral reasons/house rules violations, the RVP, RSD and GBC President will review each case to determine an appropriate course of action.

### Recruiting and Hiring

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Recruiting and hiring should continue for key positions most vital to the operations of the property. For these positions, try to have interviews done virtually. Use Skype, Face Time or another video meeting technology to conduct these interviews where possible. If you are sure that the candidate is a solid choice, screen them for potential in-person interaction and should you feel comfortable, conduct a face-to-face interaction prior to making a job offer.

On-boarding should be done electronically and through overnight mail, to the degree possible, including new hire paperwork. On the employee's first day, on-boarding activity should be completed observing social distancing measures. Consider setting up periodic check-ins during the day.

If a new employee in their first 90 days is required to self-quarantine, there may be an opportunity to have them spend a few days completing online training and reviewing Operational Excellence. This should be limited to a reasonable amount of time, such as a few days.

## Property Lock-Down & Quarantines

If your property is required by the local health department/authorities to close the office or lock-down the building during a quarantine, the following guidelines will go into effect for daily operations:

Follow all instructions and recommendations given by the public health department. The following guidelines should be observed as long as they are not in contradiction to any instructions or recommendations from the public health department.

### In advance of a Property Lock-Down or Quarantine:

**Resident Telephone Numbers & E-mail Addresses** - If you do not have a current way to contact a resident through telephone or e-mail communication, please work with Property Manager and your residents to obtain updated information, wherever possible. If there are several residents who have not provided this information, you should distribute a notification asking residents to call or e-mail with updated contact information.

**Community Resource List** - Each property is to maintain an active and updated [Community Resource List](#). This form includes contact information for Emergency Services, Local Area Emergency Rooms, Mercy Housing Staff, Local Area Services, and Vendors/Contractors. The form also identifies the location of emergency support documentation on the property. The Property Manager and the Resident Services Coordinator is to keep this list printed in the office and provide a copy to all On-Call Staff. During this time, all staff should maintain a copy at their residence, as having it available during a lock-down will be important.

**First Responder Resident Listing** - Each property is to maintain an active and updated list of residents who have requested assistance, in writing, from first responders during an emergency or crisis situation. The form, [First Responder Resident Listing](#), can be found on Mercynet, in the Forms Library. Please work with the Property Manager to ensure that your property listing is updated with any new requests that have been received and that all staff have a copy. During this time, all staff should maintain a copy at their residence, as having it available during a lock-down will be important.

**Resident Notification** - MHMG have developed a [notification](#), which lets residents know that the office is closed and/or the property has been quarantined by the health department. MHMG will print copies of this notice, in advance, to have ready and available to post in common areas and distribute to residents, where possible. In the event of a lock-down, there may not be a lot of notice or time to coordinate closing site operations and quarantining staff members. Additionally, having them pre-printed would allow any employee, located at the property, to post and distribute them quickly without unnecessary effort. MHMG may ask that you assist in the distribution of the notice.

### In the event of a Property Lock-Down or Quarantine:

**Forwarding Office Telephone Lines** - If at the property when notified or a property closure/lock-down, Resident Services Staff should forward their main telephone line to a number where they can receive calls. If not at the property when notified, know the proper procedures for retrieving messages and changing the outgoing message from a remote location. If additional costs are incurred by staff to use personal communication devices, the company will reimburse for those costs.

**Working Remotely** - The same guidelines for working remotely, not during a lock down or quarantine, will go into effect. For positions that cannot complete their work remotely, they have options available to them, in terms of time off policies. (See Time Off Policies). For employees that may complete work remotely, please refer to that section in this guide (See Working from Home). Your Resident Service Manager will work with the you to determine who may continue their work from home and then staff will be notified of the go-forward plan.

**Communicating with Residents & Staff** - In addition to any administrative work and property coordination that you may be able to conduct during a lock-down, we ask that staff working remotely set-up a schedule to routinely contact residents to check in and see how they're doing. Property Management and Resident Services should each take a group of residents to contact. It is recommended that you reach out weekly, however if you have a vulnerable population and time allows, multiple times per week can be very impactful to our residents, especially those who might feel isolated and not have someone else to talk to during this time.

**Handling Emergencies** - As each situation may be different and there may be varying levels of allowed access to a property, each team will have to do their best, given stated restrictions. Should staff not be allowed or available to be at the site during an emergency situation, over-the-phone coordination with emergency contractors/first responders may be the best that we can do. Residents will need to call 9-1-1 in the event of an emergency.

## **Annex 1: HOW TO TALK TO RESIDENTS WHEN SOMEONE AT THE PROPERTY DIES of COVID-19**

### **Can I tell Residents that the person died of COVID19?**

You can share that the resident has died. You **must** have the family's permission to share the cause of death. In some cases, residents may suspect that that resident's cause of death is Covid-19. Again, you may not confirm this without permission from the family. Nothing should be shared in writing without approval from the RVP of Property Management.

### **What can I tell Residents about their own safety?**

This should be treated like any other Covid-19 case. With an eye toward maintaining confidentiality, provide the "What to do if you were potentially exposed to someone with confirmed COVID19" notice to all residents. This is available in 12 languages on Sharepoint under COVID 19 resources and "Resident Letters".

Share the procedures Mercy Housing is enacting to take care of them and the community. These measures include:

- Multiple enhanced deep cleanings of all common areas will be conducted. Immediately and again within the next 14 days.
- No-one other than any surviving residents, should enter the unit at least 14 days after the death of the resident. No personal possessions will be moved during this time.
- The property staff will continue social distancing practices and encourage all residents to do the same

### **How do I provide any comfort for the residents I'm talking to?**

- Consider the traditions at your property. Have a conference call with Property Management and Resident Services at the property to discuss ideas. How are deaths typically acknowledged? How might we do this in the time of physical distancing? Examples include: a moment of silence, a small flameless candle at the front desk, asking residents to share a memory and post it on their door.
- Spend some time listening. Follow the lead of the resident and give them space to share their fears and grief. For residents who may have been close with the deceased, the lack of a traditional funeral may be particularly challenging. Acknowledge the uniqueness of the situation.
- Offer comfort and honesty. Don't offer personal details about the resident that you cannot share. If you are asked about something and you don't know the answer, say so.
- Speak calmly and reassuringly.
- Be prepared to connect them to additional emotional support resources – either through local partners or by referring them to the Mercy Housing EAP, which is available for residents as well:
  - Ph: Toll-free 1-888-881-5462
  - Web [www.support-linc.com](http://www.support-linc.com)
  - Username: mercy
  - Password: n/a
- Keep checking in with the resident – especially those that you know were close friends of the resident who died.

### **What do I need to think about for myself?**

- Understand and take a moment to think about your own reaction to death.
- Take some time for yourself to react to the emotions that may be coming up.
- Reach out to colleagues, family and the emotional support resources available to you through Mercy Housing's EAP.
  - Ph: Toll-free 1-888-881-5462
  - Web [www.support-linc.com](http://www.support-linc.com)
  - Username: mercy
  - Password: n/a

## Annex 2: Using MS Teams with non-Mercy Employees

You have two options for joining the Microsoft Teams meeting:

1. **Desktop or Laptop** - Click here for instructions to connect via a desktop or laptop. • You will want to use either a Google Chrome or Microsoft Edge browser.

- Once you click on the link to join the meeting, you'll be given two options, you'll want to choose "join on the web instead."

- Enter your name, choose your audio and video settings and click "join now."

2. **Mobile App** - Click here for instructions to connect via a mobile device (*includes iPad*). • You will want to download the Microsoft Teams app from Google Play (for Android) or the App Store (for Apple/ios) - *the app is free.*

- Once you click on the link to join the meeting, you'll be given two options, you'll want to choose "join as a guest."

**Annex 3: Social Distance Friendly Community Events**

DESCRIPTION	HOW TO
Hallway BINGO	Offer BINGO by hallway – maybe 30-60 minutes. Residents would be notified the time Hallway BINGO would occur and a paper BINGO card; let them know the social distance rules (make sure residents are 6 ft apart) ; resident could sit in a chair in their doorway or inside the doorway; BINGO caller would be at the end of the hallway - away from residents (use a karaoke type microphone – be sure to use disposable microphone covers and wipe down the microphone after use). Use a phone app to call BINGO
Musical Mondays	Sing-alongs – either outside ask residents to open their windows or if they have balconies; or in the hallway with residents only able to sit/stand in their doorway. Sing some of the most common songs – or ask residents to suggest and lead a song.
Music on the Move	Contact local churches or even residents who play instruments and ask if they could serenade/play music from outside the building.
Virtual Tai Chi	Virtual Exercise
ZOOM Me In (using MS Teams)	Resident to Resident Conversation
Chair Yoga	Flyers with SIMPLE Yoga Exercises
Color My World	Offer residents a 24 pack of crayons and either go online for coloring sheets or purchase a book and copy pages for resident to color. This can also be done with watercolor paints to encourage creativity.
Positive Affirmations	Leaving positive affirmations for their residents to find around their communities – maybe at the mailbox, restroom or at their door. One note might read, “Since we are isolated and ‘self-quarantined’ I just wanted to bring you a little smile.” Personalized notes such as, “Mr. Smith, I think you are awesome. I look forward to seeing you smile every day,” and “Thinking of You” cards with a special note are allowing residents to stay connected while maintaining safe boundaries.
Busy Bee Bags	Leave care packages near the residents’ apartments, and share habits for happiness, coloring pages, word puzzles, and exercises to reduce anxiety. This might also include yarn for residents who are knitters or enjoy crocheting.
Chronology Games (Seniors)	Provide a sheet that encourages residents to place historical events in the appropriate timeline. This could include 3-4 games and perhaps you could offer a small prize. (stress ball; candy bar; etc)
Thankful Hearts	Encourage residents to write something they are thankful for on a heart shape you provide. Have residents post in windows or on doorways.
Mind Benders	Distribute Sudoku, Kakuro, Crossword Puzzles, Word Search; Fact or Fiction; Playing Cards
Virtual Tea Party	Provide an invitation and attach a COVERED tea bag.
Coping Calendars	Distribute Coping Calendars with monthly newsletters available at <a href="http://www.actionforhappiness.org">www.actionforhappiness.org</a>



Conversation Starters	You may want to think of daily themes to engage your residents in fun, light-hearted conversation.
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## **Annex 4: Remote Learning Resources**

Scholastic Learn at Home - Free Learn at Home Day by Day lessons for ages 4-13  
[www.classroommagazines.scholastic.com/support/learnathome.html](http://www.classroommagazines.scholastic.com/support/learnathome.html)

PBS Kids – Videos, games, and daily newsletters for tips for parents! <https://pbskids.org/>

KQED At Home Learning - <https://www.kqed.org/education/athomelearning>

Duolingo – Free language learning program <https://www.duolingo.com>

Education Companies offering free subscriptions - <http://amazingeducationalresources.com/>

Khan Academy- Free video tutorials and lessons K-12 <https://www.khanacademy.org/>

Educational Apps that don't require Wifi - [https://www.common sense media.org/lists/educational-apps-that-dont-need-wi-fi-or-data?j=7723175&sfmc\\_sub=171948989&l=2048712\\_HTML&u=144132917&mid=6409703&jb=336&utm\\_source=edu\\_nl\\_20200331&utm\\_medium=email](https://www.common sense media.org/lists/educational-apps-that-dont-need-wi-fi-or-data?j=7723175&sfmc_sub=171948989&l=2048712_HTML&u=144132917&mid=6409703&jb=336&utm_source=edu_nl_20200331&utm_medium=email)

Planes and Balloons – Free printable worksheets for Preschool and Kindergarten - <https://www.planesandballoons.com/>