

July 2, 2020

To: County and City Partners

Subject: **Mask Recommendations for Homeless Shelters**

Wearing a cloth face covering or a face mask is important to minimize the spread of COVID-19 and I urge you to have guests and staff wear face coverings as much as possible.

COVID-19 transmission is widespread in our region. People living homeless are especially vulnerable. Maintaining physical distance of at least 6 feet from others and basic hygiene are the best steps you can take to protect yourself. People with COVID-19 can spread the virus before they show symptoms.

We recommend shelter guests wear cloth face coverings when they are in:

- Common areas.
- Restrooms.
- Hallways or stairways.
- Anywhere where people congregate.

We recognize this may not work for all shelters, but strongly urge shelters to encourage the use of face coverings to protect their staff and guests from illness.

Face Covering Exceptions:

1. **Children:**
 - Under age 2 should never wear a face covering for safety reasons.
 - Age 2-4 should wear a face covering in all public settings when an adult can supervise to make sure the child uses it safely.
2. **Not required for people:**
 - With a disability that makes it hard to wear or remove a face covering.
 - With difficulty breathing.
 - Who have medical advice that wearing a mask poses a health risk.
 - Who have hearing impairment and use facial expression and mouth movement to aid in their communication.
 - Communicating with someone who lipreads. In this case a person may temporarily remove their mask.
 - Who are eating or sleeping.
 - Who have safety concerns.

Each shelter can create its own policy to respond to guests who decline to wear a mask.

We recommend shelter providers continue to advise guests to use face coverings when in outdoor public settings. This includes guests who are currently unsheltered or become unsheltered.

Thank you for your partnership to fight the spread of COVID-19 in our community.

Sincerely,



Anthony L-T Chen, MD, MPH
Director of Health