



To all staff and residents at The Willing House:

This is TWH's update and guide for living with the COVID-19 crisis. Our community is learning a great deal about adversity, resilience, and living in times of change.

This virus is highly contagious. Centers for Disease Control states: "The virus is thought to spread mainly from person-to-person between people who are in close contact with one another (within about 6 feet). This occurs 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 can be transmitted by individuals who do not have symptoms and the virus can live on surfaces for up to three days. Your hands can pick up the virus from contaminated surfaces, and you can become infected if you then touch your mouth, nose or eyes without first washing your hands.

Symptoms include fever, cough, and difficulty breathing. Although symptoms are mild for many, the virus is fatal for some. Factors increasing risk of adverse or deadly reactions are age, compromised immune system, heart or lung disease, and other indicators of poor general health.

Sources for accurate and helpful information:

Centers for Disease Control is a primary information source on COVID-19 and national developments. The introductory page and topic index lead to background on the virus and disease, informational posters, news updates, and information on protecting us and the people we serve.

www.cdc.gov

The U.S. Chamber of Commerce also has good material for residence providers and staff members.

www.uschamber.com

SAMHSA's Tips for Social Distancing, Quarantine, And Isolation During An Infectious Disease Outbreak includes: reminders about maintaining emotional health and addressing fear, loneliness and other negative feelings that arise in these circumstances.

www.samhsa.gov

The National Council for Behavioral Health has issued guidance for residential behavioral health facilities of all kinds. While most of the guidance is written with clinical facilities in mind it contains many suggestions that non-clinical residences should follow as well.

www.TheNationalCouncil.org



You should also review information provided by the Department of Public Health. Health departments will also have timely information about local resources, business closures, rules about events, etc.

Online meetings are being created everywhere in response to social distancing requirements, the closure of many meeting locations, and the cessation of other community activities. In addition to information provided by national recovery support fellowships and local recovery community organizations, www.InTheRooms.com is a directory of online meetings for many 12-step fellowships and other activities. Many of these meetings have existed for years, and welcome new participants. The home page includes an always-current list of upcoming meetings with connection information. They feature phone and video meetings and a new section on coping with the current situation.

Several statewide NARR affiliate organizations have also produced guidance. The following precautions are recommended by public health experts and are particularly relevant to individuals sharing living quarters or working in residential settings.

- Precautions are important not only for your own protection but also for the protection of those with whom you come in contact – many of whom are at elevated risk from this virus. You can become a carrier and transmit the disease to others without being aware that you have been exposed to the virus.
- Maintain a safe distance from others – six feet or more is recommended. Replace handshakes and hugs with other forms of greeting that do not involve person-to-person contact.
- Do not assume someone is virus-free just because they do not have symptoms. Some infected individuals never exhibit symptoms but can transmit the disease. Lack of widespread testing means limited reliable information about local community risks.
- Avoid touching your face with unwashed/unsanitary hands to avoid transferring the virus to your nose, mouth or eyes and increasing the likelihood of infection.
- Wash your hands frequently and thoroughly (at least 20 seconds) with soap and hot water when available. Do this as soon as possible after touching surfaces that could be contaminated.
- Use hand sanitizer if washing hands is impractical after touching surfaces that may have been contaminated. Check with your residence's management before buying it for yourself since it contains alcohol and restrictions on possession may apply.
- Cough or sneeze into a tissue, or into your elbow/sleeve if tissues are not available.
- If you have symptoms consistent with COVID-19 call your doctor or health care provider, or a local public health resource if you do not have a doctor. Do not go to an emergency room or clinic for testing without having made prior arrangements. Doing so risks infecting others.



- Avoid crowds and events where safe distances cannot be maintained. Avoiding unnecessary interaction with others protects you, and it also ensures that you do not transmit the virus to others.
- Do not share dishes, cups, glassware or silverware with others. Follow residence procedures for cleaning those items promptly after use.
- Avoid inviting visitors to the residence. **Visitors are currently prohibited from any location of TWH. This needs to be strictly adhered to by all house managers and residents. NO EXCEPTIONS!**
- These circumstances are stressful and destabilizing. Self-care is vital, as is staying connected to your program of recovery. Public health precautions include increased physical separation, but that does not mean emotional and interpersonal isolation. Use your phone, text and email to stay connected to others. Skype, Facetime Google Hangouts/Duo, Zoom and other platforms provide connections to others through video chat. If your usual recovery groups are interrupted, seek out alternatives including online meetings.
- Be kind to your housemates. A charitable attitude can go a long way toward helping others who may be struggling. Share these guidelines with residents. Ask them to help ensure their personal and household safety and health while supporting those who are having a tough time coming to grips with our new reality.
- Disinfect surfaces regularly. This is in addition to standard cleaning, and includes countertops, bathroom fixtures, faucets, doorknobs, railings, and any surfaces or equipment that are touched regularly.
- Ensure that you have appropriate cleaning and containment supplies including disinfectant materials, disposable rubber gloves, facial tissues, etc. *If any products are needed, please immediately notify Shaun, Mike, or Liz.
- Have a supply of masks on hand in the event symptomatic or contagious residents need them. Currently masks need only be worn by symptomatic or infected individuals, but that guidance may soon change.
- Use of hand sanitizing gel is a strong public health recommendation when residents can't wash their hands with soap and water. Be aware that these contain alcohol.
- Residents exhibiting symptoms must contact their health care providers. Be sure you know how to connect residents to local medical services if they do not have a doctor or other medical resource of their own. Shaun, Mike, and Liz must be notified **IMMEDIATELY** if any resident may potentially be infected with COVID-19. All house managers should report any such instance and document it accordingly with an incident report, updating as necessary.



- Residents with symptoms should be isolated to the greatest extent possible. This may require temporary moves of residents into designated areas within the residence. See below this list for more information on what to do in the event one or more residents need to be isolated.
- It's easy for individuals to slip into old behavior. Consider posting informational messages in public places, such as these offered by the CDC.
- Since many 12-step and other mutual support activities are unavailable, help residents identify suitable substitute activities including online meetings. Groups all over the country are moving online, using Zoom, Skype and ordinary conference call services. A link to one good source is provided above, and more are going online every day.
- With so many outside activities curtailed, residents need to help each other connect to new relationships and recovery activities. Residents can be asked to help quarantined housemates who cannot run errands or otherwise leave the residence.
- Ensure that staff exhibiting symptoms or diagnosed as having COVID-19 do not continue with active house duties. They must follow the same guidelines as all residents. Make contingency plans for how staff members' duties will be performed in their absence.
- Review your resident interview and acceptance process. It is unwise to admit individuals who exhibit COVID-19 symptoms or who have been diagnosed as carrying the virus. Shaun and Liz have been keeping an updated list of facilities who have had positive COVID-19 tests on site. We are taking extreme precautions and staying in close communication about where a potential resident would be coming from and the level of exposure risk. If/when any new resident arrives at one of TWH locations, the following three steps MUST be followed PRIOR TO THEM ENTERING THE HOUSE:
 - 1) Ask the individual if they are experiencing any symptoms of COVID-19 or are feeling ill in any way.
 - 2) Ask the individual about any potential exposure to COVID-19 and how long it has been since they have been in contact with any person who may have tested positive for the virus.
 - 3) Take the individual's temperature outside. Any temperature over 100 degrees F should be immediately reported to ownership. This resident cannot be allowed into the house and must be advised to see a medical professional to be assessed. Please assist in helping direct to the nearest Emergency Room.



- Restricted commercial activity is creating severe financial problems for providers and for residents. Research and be prepared to guide residents to resources including unemployment, SNAP, and any local programs that might provide financial relief. Many businesses including grocery stores, big box retailers and delivery services are hiring, so be prepared to assist residents in locating those opportunities.
- Monitor local news and public health sources for current information.
- For specific questions please contact www.mashsoberhousing.org You can find contact information on the MASH website about accepting new residents and other providers that are addressing the potential risks arising from new residents in different ways. Some are not currently accepting new applications due either to staffing issues or from a desire to protect current residents. Others are welcoming new residents provided they are not exhibiting COVID-19 symptoms. Be sensitive to the fact that our current circumstances are likely to drive many more people to seeking recovery, including many who do not have safe places to live. They are our brothers, sisters, parents, children and friends. They need our help too.