

COVID-19 Best Cooling Practices for DHS Shelters

■ Purpose

This document provides the suggested guidance for minimizing COVID-19 transmission due to COVID-19 among New Yorkers experiencing homelessness, while considering the need to provide cool spaces for extreme heat. The details below are best practices, which in implementation should take into account differences among shelters.

■ General Recommendations

- Remind heat-vulnerable people that heat events (heat waves) can be dangerous and instruct them to go to a cool space or a cooling center.
- Engage staff to frequently call or otherwise remotely check on heat-vulnerable clients to help them stay cool and well-hydrated before and during hot weather.
- Instruct at-risk people to stay well hydrated and provide water bottles as available.
- Be aware that the COVID-19 emergency may also put people at risk for indoor heat exposure because they are staying inside for physical distancing.
- Discuss with clients and staff the signs and symptoms of heat-related illness or exacerbation of chronic medical conditions and provide guidance about when to call 911 or go to an emergency room. Signs and Symptoms of Health-Related Illness*:
 - Heavy sweating
 - Nausea or vomiting
 - Weakness
 - Dizziness
 - Headache
 - Loss of Appetite
 - Decreased energy
 - Loss of consciousness
- For more information, visit nyc.gov/health/heat.

■ Shelters

- providers should add additional cooling space in cafeterias, rec spaces, and other common areas which should have available space due to density reduction.
 - Clients will be required to wear masks in these rooms, and social distancing should be enforced.
 - Masks should be made available to clients as needed to access cooling rooms
- Providers should place fans high on the walls and direct fans towards the ceiling to mitigate the spread of COVID-19.
- Fans pointing directly at clients may not be used.
- Providers are encouraged to proactively reach out to clients remaining in congregate sites to inform them that they can seek a reasonable accommodation if they are taking medication or have a medical condition that increases heat sensitivity. Please see Heat Sensitivity Fact Sheet (**DHS-XX2040**).

■ For buildings with Central HVAC

Buildings should follow relevant DOHMH guidelines, which are in conjunction with: CDC, ASHRE (HVAC), & EPA guidelines, including:

- Increasing the exchange of fresh air intake (outdoor air) and air changes per hour (ACH) for HVAC systems.
- Filtration systems must have a Minimum Efficiency Reporting Value (MERV) of 13 or above.

■ Streets

- Water is distributed by providers to clients during summer months.
- During Code Red clients experiencing street homelessness may access cooling rooms in shelters or at City cooling sites.