

# Isolate in place

## Tips for homelessness service settings

Contagious illnesses can affect all individuals. Homelessness services settings are particularly vulnerable to the spread of illness, and some individuals may have a higher risk for severe infection than others. One strategy to stop the spread of illness is “cohorting” or grouping individuals served. Cohorting can be used when single rooms are not available and during outbreak situations. Service providers may need to consider options for cohorting individuals served depending on the population served and the physical layout of the setting. The following are general tips for isolating individuals within a homelessness service setting.

### Individuals must self-isolate if they:

- Are experiencing respiratory symptoms (e.g., cough, sore throat, difficulty breathing, muscle aches, tiredness, nasal congestion, with or without fever)
- Are experiencing gastrointestinal symptoms (vomiting, diarrhea, abdominal pain)
- Present with signs and symptoms of an infectious illness (e.g., new rash)

### General advice

- Wherever possible, aim to keep groups of people together (i.e., by floor or program).
- Cohorting is not just for outbreaks. Grouping the same individuals and staff reduces the risk of spreading infections by minimizing the number of exposures any one person has.
- Provide education and opportunities for persons served and staff to reduce their risk by offering personal protective equipment, information about how to use equipment safely, handwashing stations, and signage throughout the facility.
- Consider the needs of your specific setting and what is practical and possible. Determine what activities can continue in a way that reduces risk and what activities need to stop because they create opportunities for exposure.
- Create policies and procedures that support staff and persons served in the event that someone becomes ill so that everyone knows what to do in advance. This includes having an outbreak preparedness plan, knowing who your infection prevention and control (IPAC) lead is, and knowing how to arrange for supplies, staffing, and testing.

### Planning for physical distancing and cohorting


- Look for ways to maintain distancing within the facility wherever possible.
- Symptomatic individuals who must have contact with others should practice physical distancing, and keep at least two metres between themselves and the other person, and be encouraged to wear a well-fitted mask (if experiencing respiratory symptoms).
- If individual rooms are not available, sleeping spaces should be at least two metres apart. Avoid the use of top bunks and consider barriers between beds (i.e., curtains). Encourage head-to-toe or toe-to-head sleeping arrangements to maximize distance between breathing spaces.

## Cleaning and disinfection

- Make sure that environmental cleaning and disinfection is performed on a routine and consistent basis, and conduct enhanced cleaning and disinfection of high-touch surfaces (i.e., surfaces that are frequently touched by hands) at least once per day and when visibly dirty.
  - Check the expiry date of products and always follow manufacturer's instructions and appropriate contact time (i.e., amount of time that the product will need to remain wet on a surface to achieve disinfection). Increase the frequency of cleaning and disinfection during periods of increased illness or outbreak situations.

## Tips for cohorting individuals served during an outbreak

- Symptomatic individuals should, as much as possible, be placed in a single room with a dedicated bathroom; where that is not possible individuals with similar symptoms should be cohorted together.
- Individuals with symptoms should be placed separately from others until testing can be arranged.
- If an individual needs to go outside to smoke, inform them to keep at least a two metres distance between themselves and others, and not to share their cigarette or drug-use supplies with others.
- People who are self-isolating should not use public transportation, taxis or ride-shares when possible. If necessary, encourage them to don a well-fitted mask and encourage ventilation by opening windows.
- Encourage individuals to wear a well-fitted mask while indoors during periods of increased illness.
- If a single room is not available, consider using a large, well-ventilated room to place persons served who have symptoms together (i.e., cohorting) away from people who have no symptoms.
  - In areas where those who have similar symptoms are staying together, keep beds two metres apart, and consider using temporary barriers between beds (e.g., curtains).
  - When possible, designate a separate bathroom for symptomatic individuals when possible.
  - If your setting is a large open space (e.g., respite site), consider designating a space for people with no symptoms that is separate from ill persons served and use barriers (e.g., privacy screens) to separate the areas.
- See cohorting guidance chart below for individuals who are ill.

	1 person ill	2 to 10 people ill	More than 10 people ill	Majority of people ill
<b>Ideal</b>  <b>Least ideal</b>	Isolate in separate room.	Accommodate together in separate room.	Accommodate together on separate floor in separate section of facility.	Accommodate throughout entire site.
	Isolate in shared room.	Accommodate together in common area.	Accommodate throughout entire site.	
	Isolate in large shared space.	Accommodate together at one area of space.		